

# Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

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*God's Life Within Us, Leading Us to Him*

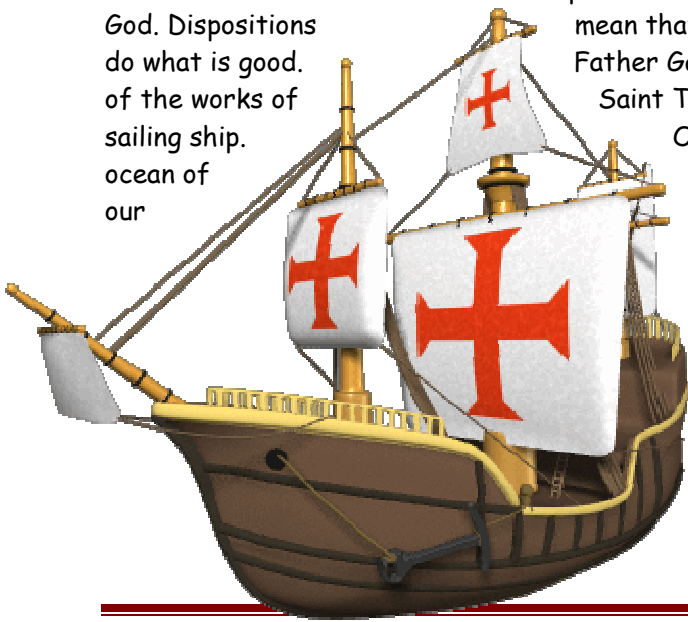
## What in Heaven's Name are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

So, you're going to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. You're going to be confirmed in the faith and sealed with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Are you aware of what a tremendous power you will be given on that day? The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are your keys to truly entering into the life of God.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are the result of the Holy Spirit's intimate unity in our hearts forming us into the likeness of Christ through movements of love. The Holy Spirit is the Person of the Holy Trinity who is most intimately present to us. He dwells in our hearts through sanctifying grace from the moment of our Baptism. His purpose is to unite us to God in love. In order to do that, He needs to first transform our hearts so that we can receive God's love.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are qualities of our nature caused by the Holy Spirit. The theological term for them is "infused dispositions." Infused means placed into our souls directly by God. Dispositions mean that they empower our souls to receive goodness and to do what is good. of the works of sailing ship. ocean of our

mean that they empower our souls to receive goodness and to Father Garrigou-Lagrance, a Dominican theologian and teacher Saint Thomas Aquinas, uses an really good analogy of a Our souls are a ship trying to make our way across the life toward God. Before Confirmation, we are making way using only oars (which represent our virtues and our own efforts). Once we receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, we are given sails that can catch the wind (the Spirit) and propel us toward God more quickly.



# Doing Our Part



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Of course, just because a ship has sails doesn't mean that they're going to be used. In order to catch the wind, a ship must have its sails unfurled and correctly trimmed. The same is true of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Gifts are the sails - the change in our souls that makes us capable of catching the wind of the Holy Spirit. However, if our "sails" are furrowed,

we will not catch the wind. The sails are there. The wind is blowing. But we stand still in our spiritual lives because we have not unfolded the sails and tied them down properly. Sometimes our sails are unfurled, but they are not trimmed correctly. In these cases we may be making progress in our spiritual journey towards God, but not as quickly as we could be. So what do we need to do to make sure that we are doing our part to take full advantage of the power the Holy Spirit wants to give us?

## Preparing to receive the Gifts

This time of preparation before your Confirmation will determine whether or not you sense a change in your life after receiving this important Sacrament. It is very easy to go through the motions of receiving the Sacrament without really being conscious of what you are receiving. If you choose to just go through the motions, you will still receive the "sails" of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, but they will be folded and will not help you make any progress on your journey to God. The ship will move along slowly with the current, or maybe a bit faster with a lot of work rowing on your part, but you will soon get tired and bored with your faith life - and that is a real shame!

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***What are some things you can do to prepare your heart to receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit during Confirmation?***

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On the other hand, if you choose to use this time to truly prepare to receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, you will experience the fullness of the wind that is the Holy Spirit. Your ship will move quickly and powerfully through the sea of life. You will find your faith life an exciting adventure with meaning and purpose, and never boring. This kind of preparation is what Confirmation preparation is all about. If you dedicate yourself to this process, you will

- Learn about each of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, what it is and what it will do for you, so that you will know what to expect
- Identify the virtues that you can build now in order to be positioned to receive each Gift in the most powerful way
- Make a plan to prepare yourself to receive each Gift - it will be up to you to follow through with this plan and actually do the "heart work" of preparation

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***What are some signs of a closer relationship with God that you might expect to see in your life once the Gifts of the Holy Spirit begin to take effect? In other words, what effects might you expect the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to have on your life if you prepare for them?***

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## **Cooperating with the Gifts After Confirmation**

Just as importantly as the preparation you do now to receive the Gifts is your willingness to cooperate with the Gifts - to keep your sails open and trimmed. Here are some things that you can do to continue to receive the full power of God acting in your life.

- Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least every three months. Sin is the largest obstacle to receiving the power of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Because these gifts flow from God's love, we need to be in a loving relationship with God in order to receive their power. Mortal sin is like folding up your sails altogether so the wind of the Holy Spirit doesn't move you at all. Venial sin is like having poorly trimmed sails so that the wind can move you, but not nearly as fast as it could. Go to Reconciliation and get your relationship with God healed from the effects of sin. Then you will have finely tuned sails, ready to receive the Holy Spirit's wind.
- Go to Mass - intimacy with God is where it's at!
- Continue to grow in virtue (good moral habits) that help you "fine-tune your sails." The Gifts of the Holy Spirit perfect those virtues that we have attained, and the virtues help us to cooperate with the Gifts.
- Continue to grow in your faith through prayer and works of charity.
- Identify which of the Gifts the Holy Spirit has especially strengthened in you. There are usually two or three that the Holy Spirit really pours on - these are your main sails. These

are usually Gifts that correspond with natural gifts that you already have. See how God wants to use these Gifts through you to bring goodness to the world. How is He calling you to serve?

# Using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

## Becoming Christ-Like

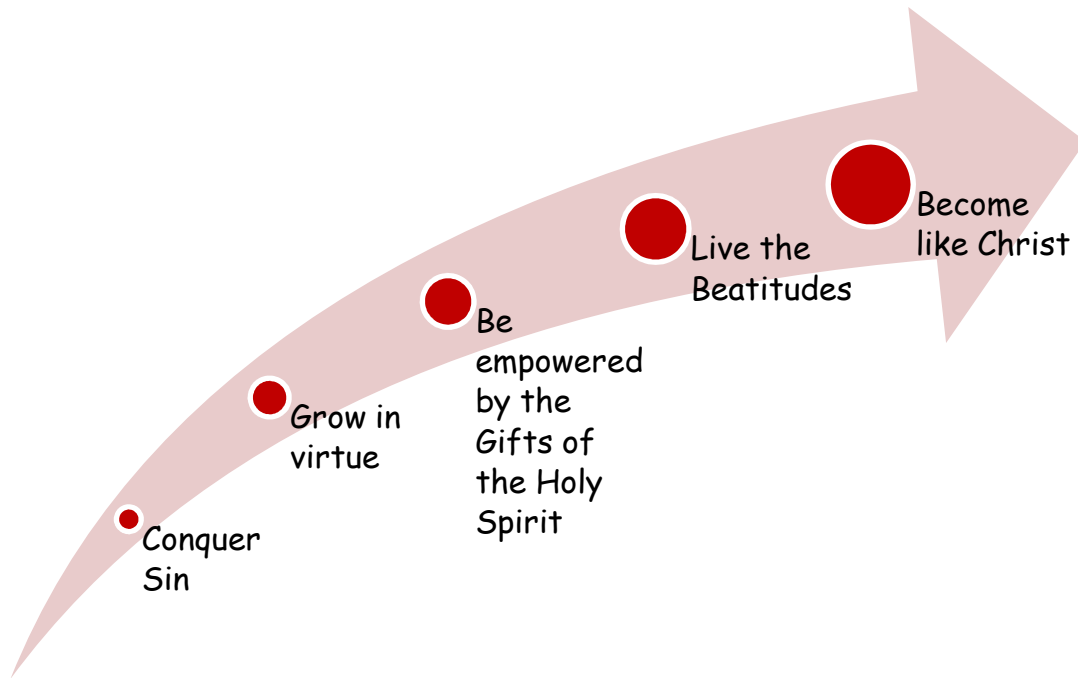
We find the Gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in the prophet Isaiah, describing the coming Messiah:



Saint Augustine teaches that the Gifts of the Holy Spirit empower us to live out the Beatitudes, and that the Beatitudes are perfections of love found in Christ. The path to perfection described by Saint Augustine might look something like this:



This transformation is an ongoing process called *conversion*. Spiritual masters talk about conversion like a journey up a mountain, starting at the base of the mountain and climbing toward the summit. The base of the mountain, the beginning of the journey of conversion, is working to get rid of mortal sin in our lives and to grow in virtue. This is an act of the will on our part, done with God's help. The summit of the mountain is devotion - deep intimacy of and love for God. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are the rocket launch that gets us to the summit.



Travelling this path to perfection is not shortcut by receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. If you haven't yet started down this path when you are Confirmed, you cannot expect the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to manifest themselves strongly in your life. On the other hand, it is not too late to begin down the path. Even after you are confirmed, once your heart is properly aligned with the Holy Spirit through virtue, the Gifts will begin to work in your life.

But why wait? The path to God is an exciting adventure. Spend your time now preparing to receive the Gifts. Spend your time after your Confirmation identifying how God is calling you to use these Gifts to grow closer to Him. Find out what adventure God has in store for you!

## The Charisms & Your Vocation

Another part of figuring out what adventure God is calling you to is to discern what charisms He is giving you. Charisms are lesser gifts (lesser because they are not directly connect to a relationship with God) that God gives us with which to serve other people. Like the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Charisms come especially with the Sacrament of Confirmation.

*Read Romans 12:6-8 and 1Corinthians 12:8-10*

*What are some of the charisms that the Holy Spirit gives us to serve the Church?*

While some of these charisms seem exciting and extraordinary (healing, speaking in tongues, etc) and others seem a little more ordinary (teaching, hospitality), the fact is that the charisms are shaped in each of us according to who God created us to be. Any charism in the soul of a person called to greatness (as we all are!) is exciting.

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***What charisms do you think most match your natural abilities? Which charisms would you most like to receive?***

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God is calling you to greatness. Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, He is empowering you and shaping you to become a great saint. He wants you to have an intimate, loving relationship with Him. He wants you to animate your life with love for Him and for your neighbor. He wants you to become active members of His family, the Church. That's what Confirmation is all about.

Finally, consider the gifts that God has given you and how He might be calling you to use them in your future vocation. Is God preparing you to be a priest? Is He preparing you to become a religious sister or brother? Is God preparing you to raise a family? One way to figure out your vocation is to see how God has prepared you, what gifts He has given you.