

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

(Extracts from talks given to the Women's Union in May 1929)

I. The Miracle of Pentecost

Pentecost is a renewal, repetition and re-experiencing of the Pentecost miracle. Each year at Pentecost the Holy Spirit wishes to continue and complete progressively and organically in our lives what he initially brought about in one fell swoop amongst the apostles, disciples and women. So it is that we too can expect the Holy Spirit to descend effectively and powerfully upon us during these days.

The miracle of Pentecost will be all the more effective amongst us, the more we imitate the situation of the apostles and disciples. They prepared themselves by gathering as a group around our Lady. We rejoice because we have been able to spend Pentecost here at Schoenstatt in the last few years, since we have a parallel for the Upper Room here in our little shrine. Practically speaking, the more we gather around Our Lady in our little shrine at this time, the more we will replicate the model of the Upper Room, and the more powerfully we can expect the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit to be poured out on us.

We have often said over the course of the years that the psychology of a place of pilgrimage lies in the fact that even

physical contact with the place mediates grace. How much more grace can we expect if we use this time to gather around Our Lady with open and ready hearts and an inner attitude of surrender!

The Holy Spirit is the Creator God. He has brought about a new creation in us. At every Pentecost he wishes to make this new creation more complete. We know this new creation. In courses and retreats we have been led more deeply into the mysteries of this new divine state of being, into the divine life. We have been introduced into what constitutes this new state of being, this new life. It is the Holy Spirit who creates this divine life in us. It is he who gives us the capacity, the ability, the potential, the faculties, the capacity to receive the supernatural virtues, the moral virtues. It is he, too, who gives us the seven gifts. Through actual grace he constantly keeps us inwardly in motion so that our supernatural, spiritual life cannot calcify.

What makes Pentecost especially dear to us, however, is the thought that it is the declaration that both the individual and the community have come of age, just as the apostles experienced it at the time. As individuals they had come of age, but so had the Church. The inner, spiritual life, however, comes of age when the gifts of the Holy Spirit are poured out on us abundantly. So if we expect anything special during these days, it is an increase in the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit the soul is able to master greater and greatest difficulties with a certain ease and almost as a matter of course. The gifts of the Holy Spirit equip us for Christian heroism. For us this is the most important point.

Christian heroism! Radicalism! You are familiar with the many mottoes that have been coined here over the years. They all amount to the same thing - to re-directing all our efforts towards Christian heroism and striving for holiness. Thus we can see the gifts of the Holy spirit as new abilities, or, to put it more clearly - seen from a psychological point of view - as new drives which are set up in opposition to our purely natural drives.

Is there anyone amongst us who, in quiet hours, does not notice that there are not just tendencies and impulses within us, they are even extremely strong tendencies and impulses? Let us call them drives. Unfortunately they drive and urge us too often and too strongly in a negative direction. They drive us on to sensuality, envy, anger and all those other things that blossom in the garden of our hearts. However, in our supernatural, inner life, there is also a supernatural urge, or drive, which has been set up in opposition and contradiction to these innate, ignoble drives. These are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. How much reason we have, who at times experience such strong drives and passions within ourselves, to implore the Holy Spirit: Please come, Holy Spirit, and unfold these fundamental, supernatural drives in my poor, sick, weak and unbridled soul!

If you would like another image, think of a rower rowing against the current of a river and into the teeth of the wind. He has to muster all his strength. This is the soul equipped with sanctifying grace, with the natural and supernatural virtues and with actual grace. In the first stages of our religious life, we had to make great efforts to get on, to lift ourselves upwards onto the path of the virtues. How much of our own activity was involved, how much of our own effort we had to put into it!

However, when the Holy Spirit takes hold of us tangibly through his seven gifts, our souls can be compared with a rower who has put up a sail. If the wind is favourable and the sail is filled, he will get ahead quickly with little personal effort, even when going up stream. These are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful! We may well say this prayer more ardently today. We may well cling more ardently to our Lady, clasp her hand and close our ranks so that the Pentecost miracle, the Pentecost storm may break out over us in the most effective way possible.

II. The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Beatitudes

1. The Gift of Counsel

What do we understand by the gift of counsel? It is the supernatural capacity that enables us to see clearly in the most

intricate affairs of life. In ordinary language we would speak of a capacity. I have the capacity to hear, smell, see, feel. These are natural abilities. But there are also supernatural abilities and capacities. The gift of counsel should be seen as a supernatural capacity that enables us to see clearly in the most complicated situations of life, and to make the right decisions.

Fruit: Kindness

If we wish to align the gift of counsel with the fruits of the Holy Spirit and the eight beatitudes, we could say that anyone who possesses the gift of counsel enjoys the fruit of kindness. St Thomas maintains that there is no parallel for the gift of counsel amongst the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Other theologians are of the opinion - and I do not think that it is unfounded - that whoever possesses the gift of counsel also knows how to deal with others and accept them as members of the Body of Christ. In this sense such people know how to accept what people say and do to them. If they have the right attitude to others and to the problems they cause them, in other words, if they have the spirit of the gift of counsel, their entire being will be permeated by a fine, warm benevolence towards others.

Beatitude: "Happy the merciful"

If we think of the eight beatitudes, the gift of counsel corresponds with: "Happy the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." We can

sense how the person who possesses the gift of counsel will rise above the most complex problems in a mature and benevolent way. We are after all concerned with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The sail is set, the wind can fill it. So the person who is gripped by the Holy Spirit, who is inwardly saturated with the gift of counsel, will rise above the most difficult problems of life in a mature way.

"Happy the merciful!" Theologians say that whoever wishes to be merciful towards others must possess the gift of counsel to an outstanding degree and in an outstanding way. These few prosaic theological thoughts give us a definite direction for our inner life. If you want to apply them afterwards to yourself in meditation, consider how many complicated problems and situations ensnare us daily, and almost continuously, as teachers, as educators, as people who are striving for holiness according to the ideals of the Movement. I shall come back to this afterwards. Consider how difficult it is for us to find the right solution in individual instances. Our situation in the professional sphere is complicated. Our situation with regard to leading our groups may also be complicated. How many problems we have to confront, and to which have to find a solution! These are problems that concern the Movement and our existence. And, lastly, there is the complicated situation of our own personal lives. Who can advise us here? Who will help us to discern the spirits in our own hearts in the right way? We know that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit is wrestling with the principles of the world and of self-love in our decisions. The stronger our drives are, and the more powerfully our environment influences us - and this

cannot be under-estimated - the more we depend upon the Holy Spirit with his gift of counsel.

We should, therefore, spontaneously call upon the Holy Spirit for help before we make decisions about what to do, or about our inner and professional lives and life within the Movement. "He knows all things." This is what we say so often in the Introit during these days: "The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole earth, alleluia, and that which holds all things together knows every word that is said" (Wis. 1,7). Indeed, he is everywhere and knows every sound. So he also knows what comes from the devil, or from our own sick nature. He knows what he has inspired in our hearts. It is to him that we must turn, he is the one we must ask.

I remember well how some time ago, one of our priests who belongs to the Union and who is by nature really not particularly gifted, told me that in his seminary days the director had advised him to pray one of the hymns to the Holy Spirit each morning and evening. He has done this throughout his life. And the result? Whenever he is in the confessional he has solved the most difficult questions. When he checked afterwards, he always found that he had given the right advice. He attributed this to the Holy Spirit, or, to put it more subjectively, to his surrender to the Holy Spirit.

I think, therefore, that we should cling to the Holy Spirit far more when we feel so alone in the world these days. We are so

helpless in the face of the most complicated issues in our personal and professional lives and the life of the Movement. We know of course, that he is also a Spirit of order. He may speak to us inwardly and personally through the gift of counsel, but at the same time he also directs us towards the rightful authority. That is to say, in personal, spiritual matters he directs us to our spiritual leaders or confessors, and in matters concerning the Movement he directs us to the person responsible for the Branch. What about questions in our professional lives? This course should actually shed light on the chaos of the present confusion in education.

Come Holy Spirit! Do we not want to say this today? Do we not want the individual verses of the Sequence of Pentecost to re-echo strongly in our souls?

“Bend the stubborn heart and will,
Melt the frozen, warm the chill,
Guide the steps that go astray.”

In quiet moments today let us ponder on the individual thoughts of the hymn and awaken the corresponding emotions in ourselves. All of you have brought problems, cares and difficulties with you. It would be a pity if we came without them! It would be a sign that our spiritual lives had calcified We should always have trials and difficulties, otherwise our stay at

Schoenstatt would no longer give us anything that really penetrates us deeply. That is why we want to ask the Holy Spirit to give us the gift of counsel during these days. Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful! So much for the gift of counsel.

2. The Gift of Fortitude

Now the gift of fortitude. Once again I shall begin by telling you briefly what we mean theologically by the gift of fortitude, then I will offer you some practical applications. The gift of fortitude gives us the supernatural ability to go our way courageously and victoriously, and with a certain ease, in the most intricate difficulties, no matter whether these difficulties come from the devil, from our own sick nature, or from the world.

Those who possess the gift of fortitude, who are so entirely under the influence of the Holy Spirit. who can say that the sails of their souls are, as it were, spread out for the Holy Spirit to blow into, will also be able to remain relatively composed and at peace in the face of the problems they meet at work. After all, they possess the gift of fortitude! This does not come from their own efforts, however, it is not achieved by rowing! No, it is the Holy Spirit who fills the sail. Those who possess the gift of fortitude also have the capacity to resist their inner inclination to be sad and pessimistic. It is the Holy Spirit who does three-quarters of the work for them, who takes at least three-quarters of the burden away.

Those who possess the gift of fortitude also have power over evil spirits. To some extent they are also inwardly independent of physical suffering or physical illness. However, please do not forget that we cannot achieve this state through our own ethical efforts. The Holy Spirit has to give it to us. Come Holy Spirit!

In Acts 8, 6-8 we see the gifts of grace exemplified in practice. "Philip went to a Samaritan town and proclaimed the Christ to them. The people united in welcoming the message Philip preached, either because they had heard of the miracles he worked, or because they saw them for themselves. There were, for example, unclean spirits that came shrieking out of many who were possessed..." Those who possess the gift of fortitude can also expect the Holy Spirit to drive out the devil - at least in the sense that the devil is chained up two or three times in their soul, and is unable to harm it. The soul rises inwardly, it is set free, it can no longer be influenced by the devil. We know that the devil attacks mystically gifted people in a special way, but we also know that the Holy Spirit opposes these attacks with his power, so that they come to nothing.

"Several paralytics and lame people were also cured. As a result there was great rejoicing in that town" (Acts 8,8). Here too, we can see that if we possess the gift of fortitude, if our souls are gripped by it, we are lifted spiritually above all the physical and spiritual suffering that we drag around with ourselves. It is not as though we do not feel these difficulties, or suffer deeply under

them, but we are inwardly distanced from them. The will remains strong and anchored in God.

Fruits: Forbearance and Patience

The fruits that correspond with the gift of fortitude are forbearance and patience. Looking into practical life we can say that if we are given the supernatural gift of fortitude by the Holy Spirit, we will be patient and forbearing. We will be patient with ourselves! But *here we* mean patience as a gift of the Holy Spirit, not patience we have acquired by own activity. The Holy Spirit has to give it to us. Patience is essential for us, especially for us who are so tense and nervous as a result of being overburdened at work.

Uplifting understanding! Benevolent, reverent understanding of the children entrusted to us! We can strive for all these qualities as a result of our own efforts, but it is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray and beg the Holy Spirit for them during these days! Therefore, "Come Holy Spirit!"

Beatitude: "Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right"

The gift of fortitude also has a counterpart in the beatitude "Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right, for they

shall be satisfied". Our Lord understands the human heart. He always takes our longing for happiness into account. Therefore he always prefaced the hard demands of the beatitudes with the promise that this drive to be happy will be satisfied. "Happy!" "Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right!" If we possess the gift of fortitude, we will hunger for what is right, we will hunger and thirst for holiness; we will feel urged to overcome the greatest difficulties, we will feel inwardly healthy, alive and ready for action.

Do you see how important it is for us to use the few days here expressly for growing in inner maturity? We need to expose our souls to the inspirations, the influence of the Holy Spirit. That is why our favourite place during quiet moments should be our little shrine. You would do well to meditate and pray more intensely about these theological truths. They may seem to be so dry, yet they can give a sure direction for our entire lives.

May I make a few, brief applications? Ask yourselves: How have I shown fortitude in my life until now? Where did I manifest it ethically? I seem to have stumbled backwards and forwards to such an extent when confronted with the difficulties of my inner life! Suddenly sensuality came to the fore - we were caught completely off guard. Was this the gift of fortitude? If we crept away into our little hiding place when anti-Christian ideas were being thrown around, was this the gift of fortitude? Can fear of others be reconciled with the gift of fortitude? I do not mean that it is our task to protest loudly by arguing, especially with our colleagues. But through our life and our entire being we should at least show that we think in a Catholic way, and that we are in

total opposition to the modern anti-Christian trends in education. I repeat: it is perhaps not necessary, perhaps it is not even prudent, to argue in these matters. We should rather give the lead and create an atmosphere by all we are and do. Can you see how the gifts of the Holy Spirit also penetrate into our professional lives?

You could also think for a moment of your own struggles and striving. How much love, peace and joy - as fruits of the Holy Spirit - are wasted on us, because, due to our inner reservations, we have been far too self-centred, we worry and scratch far too much around ourselves. This is a proof that our souls are not yet gripped and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Do you realise that the person who is inwardly carried by the Holy Spirit, the mature person, teacher and member of the Movement, who is kind, patient and long-suffering, is just the person whom our time needs? Therefore, once again, take your inspiration from the Pentecost Sequence and from today's liturgy. Pray the Sequence often. You will find many little lights which will warm your hearts and give them a direction. However, everything ultimately depends upon our becoming aware of our helplessness during these days. We should reach out with open hands and not try to obtain the fruits, which correspond to the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, by our own efforts. No! The Spirit of God has to do it! We always come back to the same thing: I want to unite myself inwardly with our Lady in these days. She must help me through her activity and intercession, so that the Holy Spirit, who strengthens the supernatural life within me, will help me to become the mature person, who, in spite of the handicaps of

modern life, is an exemplary Catholic teacher and mother to her children, and a holy member of the Movement.

3. The Gift of Piety

We have already said that we can only become mature in all the fields mentioned through the Holy Spirit. If we want to be declared mature in these days, it means that we are hoping and waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit in our little shrine. The Holy Spirit makes us mature through his seven gifts. Let us recall that through them everything in our lives takes on vast dimensions. The difficulties we have to overcome take on vast dimensions, but so too do the successes we shall reap in overcoming them. It does not matter whether they are difficulties which are outwardly visible and make their appearance through great moral battles, or difficulties in softening our austere, hard, brittle, impetuous nature.

The Holy Spirit matures us through the gifts of counsel and fortitude. Let us consider two further gifts: those of piety and fear of the Lord. In order that you may understand me correctly, let me repeat that the gifts of the Holy Spirit demand great horizons. Through his gifts the Holy Spirit wants to lead us to Christian heroism.

What is the essence of the gift of piety? I think I can sum up in two points what theologians say about it:

a) The gift of piety makes the soul exceptionally submissive and

devoted to God.

b) The gift of piety makes the soul exceptionally kind and benevolent

towards our neighbour.

a) The gift of piety makes people exceptionally submissive and devoted to God. Enlightened by faith we all know what ultimately awaits us. In the light of faith we know what glories God has given us in the wonder-world of being a child of God. We also know what we should do. Yet in spite of that our poor nature is and remains so extraordinarily hard. Why is that so? Because the Holy Spirit has not yet taken full possession of us with his seven gifts and, above all, with the gift of piety. It may be that he has not yet considered it the right moment to give us this gift in large measure; it may also be that, through our negligence, we have prevented him from penetrating more deeply into our souls.

The Holy Spirit wishes to mellow this hardness in our nature to some extent. He wants to soften it. In various places in Holy Scripture we find this sort of activity of the Holy Spirit expressed in the image of wax. Fire softens the wax. It melts the wax. So it is that under the influence of the gift of piety our souls become gentle, extraordinarily gentle, like wax. And this wax reacts to all

that the Spirit of God breathes onto it. The wax is pliable; it adopts all the forms of God easily, quickly and joyfully, no matter whether the Lord manifests himself in the form of a child, or as the Crucified, whether he invites the soul to mortify itself, or entices it on to self-surrender, or self-denial. The wax is soft, it immediately takes on these forms with great ease.

In all these thoughts I have put before you, I would like to stress the extraordinary degree of the action of the Holy Spirit, otherwise we are dealing merely with the virtue rather than the gift of piety. If we see this clearly, we will also feel far more inclined to call to the Holy Spirit more deeply and earnestly: "Please do it! See to it that my heart becomes gentle!" As the psalmist says: My heart has mellowed through repentance. A person who is so strongly influenced by the Holy Spirit feels exceptionally secure in the heart of God - as a child in the heart of the Blessed Trinity. One can sense how childlike such a person is; he or she is a person of only one idea. They only have eyes for God, for his honour and joy.

Fire melts wax and makes it malleable. So it is that all confusion and darkness in the soul melt away. The soul, as it were, loses itself in the most tender, fine and noble love for God, so that it not only takes on the forms of God, but also loses itself completely in God. You see how everything points towards your womanly nature. You see also how the Holy Spirit may find comparatively fewer obstacles to his activity in the soul of a noble-minded woman, because her nature is automatically receptive, if she has remained pure.

b) This is the first thing the Holy Spirit gives us through the gift of piety - he makes our souls submissive and devoted to God. Secondly, he makes us kind and benevolent towards our neighbour. You will find the basis for this in what I shall say next. Through this gentleness towards others, the person who is filled with the Holy Spirit shares in two of God's attributes. God loves himself infinitely. He also loves us human beings for his own sake. He created us, he is our creator. He has redeemed us and given us his divine life. He has made us his children. He has allowed us to share in his own qualities.

For the same reason, and in as much as God loves himself and his own honour, he also loves his creation, especially his intelligent creation - that part of creation which is inspired and graced by God. Yes, we can say that he loves it to the extent that he loves himself. He loves it endlessly, because he loves it for his own sake.

Once again, do you see how everything takes on extraordinary proportions? So the people who are gripped by the gift of piety, after God's example, love others for God's sake. Such people have a very tender inclination - I mean here, as a drive of the will and heart - a very tender yet strongly flowing inclination or urge towards others for God's sake. They love their neighbour as God does, because God does.

We do indeed find some saints - and particularly women saints - who felt a stronger affectionate love for people than for God. This did not detract from their love for God, however. We are speaking here of affectionate, rather than effective love, and it is quite conceivable that a woman, who by nature is strongly oriented to motherliness, would be prepared - like St Paul - to go through hell for love of others. Of course this is ultimately and expression of their love for God. This is strongly expressed, but whoever knows human nature, and above all woman's nature, knows that it is not uncommon. Here we have the one attribute of God - he loves himself for his own sake.

The second attribute of God is that his love is of itself so immense that it urges him to reveal his kindness to human beings to the limits of his omnipotence, that is, to pour himself and his possessions upon them. Here you have not just the type of his love, but also the degree.

It is the same with people who are borne by the gift of piety. They are continuously inclined, urged, even driven, to share with others all that God has given them by way of natural and supernatural gifts. They have no mean reservations; there is no narrowness of heart, mind or feelings to urge or drive them on. They would never say: I would like to keep something for myself... others may not know what I know ... I must be put onto a pedestal..." etc. Certainly not, the gift of piety urges us to let others share in everything that God has given us.

Consider for a moment whether we have possessed and practised love for our neighbour to such an extent. Why then is there so much bitterness, so much offence taken? Why are we so cold and hard in dealing with our children and other people? There you have it - our hearts have not yet been mellowed through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are still far too primitively self-centred. Of course, I cannot achieve this of myself - only the Spirit of God can do it. "Come Holy Spirit! You must achieve the miracle of my inner, spiritual transformation". Only the Holy Spirit can do it.

We are striving to become such benevolent women, because it is the only real super-power in our modern world. We can only achieve it if the Holy Spirit melts our hearts - with love for God, but also with love for our neighbour. We should ask ourselves whether we have sought our holiness merely in formalism, in mortification and sticking legalistically to resolutions. This is not true holiness. Of course, true holiness does require us to accept obligations, but in essence it consists in losing ourselves in God and in others.

c) Finally the gift of piety enables us to feel with God and our neighbour. Do you realise how the Holy Spirit, who is the teacher, the expert in the art of educating, frees the soul more and more from itself? He takes everything from the soul - its intelligence, its will, even the emotions of the heart - and attaches and binds everything in us to himself, to God and the divine.

Compassion! Feeling with God, with our Lord, but also with our neighbour! Can a person hurt God? Surely not. He is the Lord, the Lord of Hosts. But here we are thinking in human terms. When God is offended, the person who is strongly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and above all, of the gift of piety, feels deeply offended. We cannot hurt God as such, but people are able to offend our Lord through sin. Put into human terms, feeling with God, who is a spirit, becomes real when transferred to the God-Man. He suffered once. People who are under the influence of the Holy Spirit turns towards the Lord with the finest feelings, the feeling of compassion, with all their love and self-surrender. If the Lord is offended through disloyalty and sin, the heart bleeds, the soul weeps. It knows no greater evil than sin, since it knows no greater good than God and the God-Man. Let us pray, then, that the Holy Spirit may soften our hearts today and give us a tender feeling of compassion for our Lord.

Compassion! The gift of piety also enables us to be compassionate towards our neighbour. If people bear their cross as God wants them to, even if they are imperfect, make mistakes or commit sins, we feel with them. We suffer deeply under these things, but we do so benevolently. So there can be none of this fanaticism that wants to convert the world in a moment; there is none of this urge, this drive to reform the world. Instead there is a quiet, inner glow that consumes self for God and for our neighbour.

You surely sense how in these few prosaic words I am actually painting the highest ideal of woman for you.

"Within my heart there is an image,
so beautiful and fine,
embodying the richest blessings -
it is the image of our Queen."

This is the image; it is embodied in our Lady. When you have time for meditation think about Our Lady as the Holy Spirit's masterpiece. Note how the respective gifts of the Holy Spirit took on shape and form in her life.

Fruit: Gentleness - Beatitudes: "Happy the Gentle"

Now you will ask, which of the fruits corresponds to this gift of the Holy Spirit. It is gentleness. "Happy the gentle - they shall have the earth for their heritage." Gentle people are not colourless or characterless. No, think of gentleness as I have described it to you. Through it we share in God's omnipotence, especially in the field of education. Even Our Lord did not achieve anything through harshness and strictness. What he did was modified by gentleness. When he was hard or strict without being kind at the same time, he was condemning. He could be

strict! When he was educating people, his attitude was always backed up by gentleness, in the way I have described it to you.

If you would like a criterion by which to measure the extent to which the gift of piety has become your own, ask yourself whether you have really rejoiced during these days because of the Comforter - the master craftsman, the expert educator - whom our lord has sent and given to us. The Epistle says: "Rejoice Sion's sons, rejoice in the Lord your God, for he will give you a teacher of righteousness." He has been given to us, and he is given to us each day anew.

Are our hearts rejoicing in this consolation? Are our souls so set upon God, is the Holy Spirit so much the central value of our lives, that we rejoice because he has already taken possession of our souls with his grace? If not, then we are still lingering on the bottom step of the spiritual life. Of course, you must distinguish here between joy of the emotions and feelings, and a joyful disposition of the will. The latter is what counts. Perhaps the Holy Spirit will give us the gift of joy in these days, so that our feelings may find more satisfaction in thinking of the great gifts he offers us. "I shall not leave you orphans. I shall come to you again and your hearts will rejoice, alleluia." Are our hearts rejoicing that he comes to us through the Holy Spirit? We do not want to drink from the clouded fountains of joy which the world offers, but rather from the fountains which flow from God, the fountain which is the Holy Spirit.

4. The Gift of Fear of the Lord

The gift of fear of the Lord enables the grace-filled soul

- i. to fear nothing as much as sin,
- ii. to regret nothing as much or as deeply as sin,
- iii. to do so for the noblest motives - for God's sake.

Please note the extremes referred to; nothing should be more feared, nothing more regretted, and this for the noblest of motives. If you are ever led by God to the heights of contemplation, you will become aware of these gifts in yourself to a high degree. Let us meditate a while on some thoughts, not to make our hearts restless, but so as to awaken a longing in ourselves to call out: "Please come, Holy Spirit, and give me these qualities! My heart is still so hard. It still has such false values. What you esteem most is by no means the most important to me. What you consider detestable is not nearly as detestable to me."

People who are largely ruled by the Holy Spirit fear nothing as much as sin. Their soul can be compared to a spectacle in nature. Imagine a dark, pitch-black night. Thunder and lightening gradually appear on the horizon. Clouds become thicker and thicker. All of a sudden the lightening flashes out, piercing the

dark. One peal of thunder follows another. That's how it is with such a soul. Flashes of insight from the Holy Spirit light up the soul, enabling it to see things that are shrouded in impenetrable darkness. And the soul breaks down. It is so shattered that it no longer sees any way out. It sees its own misery, weakness, drives, baseness, or sinfulness extremely clearly in this light.

Afterwards the Holy Spirit sows such tender yet deeply-penetrating stirring in the soul that it acquires an exceptionally strong abhorrence of sin and takes extreme care to avoid every sin and imperfection, even the smallest. Again, let me remind you that the gifts of the Holy Spirit take on extraordinary dimensions. The soul hates sin to an extreme. Nothing on earth can be so attractive, great and beautiful that it could capture the soul. Indeed, the soul would give up the entire world and all its splendour and glory if it is placed before the alternative of renouncing these glories or committing even the smallest sin or imperfection. It would be ready to endure the very greatest suffering and torture rather than offend Almighty God even in the smallest way.

A saintly person once said that if God were to create an ocean of fire, darkness and sulphur, and he had the choice of avoiding it by committing a sin, he would prefer to throw himself into that sea rather than commit even the least sin. From the lives of the saints you know that this is the basic attitude of souls that are led by God into the mysterious paths of his love. You know that such utterances are commonplace in their lives. Perhaps you have at

times copied them. However, under the influence of the Holy Spirit the saints also meant these words very seriously.

This brings us to the second stirring the Holy Spirit awakens in the soul. He is not content with merely awakening feelings of abhorrence, but also vigorously completes what he has begun. He sees to it that such souls are exceptionally careful about actually protecting themselves from faults, imperfections and sins. It can happen that such people will go through life untouched - even amidst the greatest dangers, and also amidst the neo-pagan spirit of our times. Outwardly they seem to be the same as everyone else. They carry out their duties, they are serene and cheerful and do not attract much attention to themselves. But if anyone were to look more deeply into the depths of their souls, they would sense the great care with which the Holy Spirit is leading them. That is why they are able to go through life untainted and untouched in spite of the traps of the world and the devil.

Don't we all long for this? We cannot withdraw from the world, we have to live in it. However we want to become holy; we would like to have a deep abhorrence for sin, and we hope to receive it, for only then can we expect the Holy Spirit to lead and guide our souls to an extraordinary degree. Where and how can we implore this grace? Will we obtain it by our own activity and striving? It is true, nothing will come to pass without our co-operation. However, if we really want to become holy, we must place the main emphasis on trust and prayer. We may not expect such profound fruits to result from our own activity. Instead, we

should constantly repeat: "Come Holy Spirit! Fill my heart with your grace. Lead and guide me. I cannot."

We are awaiting a renewal of the Pentecost miracle at Pentecost. It would indeed be a miracle if my apathetic, unbridled, superficial heart were to acquire such a fine feeling, such an abhorrence for sin, and if it were to try to avoid every imperfection with the greatest care. "Thrice Admirable Mother, pray for us!" May our dear Mother prove that she is really admirable in these days, by admirably imploring for the descent of the Holy Spirit for us to an extraordinary degree.

We have dealt with the first effect of the gift of the fear of the Lord. The second is that people who are strongly influenced by the Holy Spirit regret nothing as much as sin. We all know from our own experience that all too often it is just when we are seriously endeavouring to be good, when we use all the means at our disposal to try to follow up the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and when we try to erect a wall against the spirit of the world in our hearts and lives, that we find ourselves repeatedly giving in to our impulses, limitations and sinfulness. You know from previous retreats that because he is a wise educator God permits these faults and sins for our good, so that we do not become proud, so that in our striving we may turn more and more towards him and away from ourselves, so that we may mistrust and even detest ourselves, and acquire limitless confidence in him and grow in love for him.

This also happens to those who are influenced by the Holy Spirit to an extraordinary degree. If the soul has committed such faults and imperfections, what happens? Here we come to two great graces, two fine, penetrating feelings which fill the soul and spur it onwards. Firstly, there is a deep feeling of guilt because of sin, and it is an exceptionally deep feeling. Secondly, there is an exceptionally strong urge to do penance - to punish ourselves in order to eradicate sin and our impulsive inclinations with fire and the sword. Indeed such a soul regrets the smallest failing to an extraordinary degree. By way of comparison we could say: surely no mother would lament the death of her child as deeply and bitterly as this soul does the smallest mistake and imperfection. It feels it will be condemned to the terrible fires of hell on account of its imperfections, faults and sins. It is convinced of its own baseness and deeply regrets its failings and unseemly behaviour.

What I have said before applies here too: the soul is not content with merely having these feelings. A deep feeling of guilt impels it onward to undertake works of penance. Not even the most wicked sinner who has committed the most evil crimes would be prepared to do penance to the extent that this soul is prepared to go for even the smallest sin or unseemly conduct.

Let us apply these thoughts to ourselves. What do we regret most? When we are overlooked, when we are not praised, or get the blame, we cannot sleep for nights because we are so upset by this little disgrace. Is this the Holy Spirit speaking in us? We cannot bear it when our children offend us, when they are not as

respectful as they were before, when we are not honoured or esteemed at the College, when people look down on us and pull their noses up at us! Yet we hardly even notice the mistakes and sins we commit and the unseemly things that we do - or we note them only superficially.

Does the Holy Spirit not have a tremendous task in our regard? Will he not bring about a new creation in us if he re-moulds our hearts in this way? Come Holy Spirit! Let us frequently and earnestly repeat: "Thrice Admirable Mother, pray for us! After all you are working miracles in the spiritual rather than the physical order in Schoenstatt. You will work miracles of grace, also the miracle of my becoming so perceptive and acquiring such a deep abhorrence of every sin and Imperfection, as has been described."

The third point is that the soul abhors and regrets sin and imperfection, but not for its own sake. We have often experienced this in the past. We too had deep feelings of guilt when we committed faults and sins. On closer inspection, however, we find that there is more pride than humility in this. We regret our actions not so much because we have offended God, but because it happened to us. We caught ourselves in the act and no longer appear so virtuous in the public eye and to those closest to us. In quiet moments, either consciously or unconsciously, we often said it would never happen to us! But now it has!

The soul under the influence of the Holy Spirit hates and regrets sin for the most noble of motives: for God's sake. It approaches God from two points of view:

i) It hates and regrets sin out of an immensely deep reverence for God. It is aware of a tremendous, endless distance separating us, a poor, weak creature, from God - God from God, light from light! This is common with deeply spiritual people even in the early stages of the spiritual life, and all the more so if the Holy Spirit has drawn them deeply to himself and given them the light of contemplation. And when, in the light of this gift, the soul looks upon the infinite majesty of God, it experiences deep feelings of guilt and the need for punishment, merely because it is a creature and God is the Uncreated One.

If our souls have remained noble and pure, when we kneel before the tabernacle, or if we have got into the habit of not going to bed at night until we have looked up at our Lady to see whether she is satisfied with us or not, does it not also happen at times that we feel guilty, even if we are not aware of how we have failed? It may be that when we look into her pure eyes, or at the tabernacle or a crucifix, we feel guilty of something. The mere awareness of our creaturehood can fill our soul with a very profound sense of our distance from God, and enkindle in us an exceptionally strong desire to be annihilated.

What is happening in such a soul? It feels it should sink into nothingness if, through this annihilation, it could prevent even the

smallest sin in others or itself. This is its best attitude. Hence you will understand how earnestly the person who has been overawed by the greatness and majesty of God will strive to keep all imperfection far at bay. Others regard this as madness when the soul has sunk into its own nothingness, when it is in fact gripped by the desire to be annihilated, because most people have no idea what this means - here human reasoning is set aside and only God counts.

We can also look at ourselves in the light of what has been said. How miserable we feel when we have been too sensitive. We anticipate even from a distance that others will offend us - irrespective as to whether there is a basis for this or not. We are upset to the very roots of our being. We are quick to call to God: "Why send this? Why to me? I have so much suffering to bear, there is such a heavy cross in my life, I have troubles at home, difficulties at work and now this comes on top of it all!" The person who is gripped by the Holy Spirit has an entirely different scale of values. "Come Holy Spirit! ... Work this miracle in me!"

You realise what a high ideal we are placing before ourselves. By way of consolation we can, however, say: we cannot achieve this of our own strength and activity. The Holy Spirit has to do it for us. Let us reach out our hands time and again and call: "Come Holy Spirit! Please work the miracle! Thrice Admirable Mother, pray for us! You will be even more admirable if I, a poor creature, can experience such a transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit."

ii) We have now dealt with the one point of view from which the gifted soul approaches God. To this we must add an exceptionally deep and tender bridal love. If your hearts have remained pure, sensitive and childlike, you will understand well how the bride, in view of this love, is especially careful to avoid everything that would displease her Bridegroom in the least, or cause him pain. So it is that in a grace-filled soul reverence unites with love, but it is an exceptionally fine and tender love. It is something so tender that an ordinary person is simply unable to understand it. People who do not know the mysterious ways of God simply cannot understand such a person.

What about our poor hearts? How much we would like to love in this way and to be like this! How much we would like to give lavishly of all that God has given to us through our capacity to love in a supernatural and natural way. To whom does the soul who is deeply filled with the Spirit give this love? To God! "My God and my All!"

Here too we can draw parallels. It is so easy to talk, but knowing about things does not mean that we practise them. Knowing about these gifts does not necessarily mean that the Holy Spirit has given them to us. However, we may not become anxious when we realise so strongly how great the gap is between what we are and what we should be. What we must take home with us is the silent and trembling longing: "Lord, create a new heart in me!" This is merely the realisation that we have not yet achieved

our goal. We are still far too uncontrolled. That's why we should be filled with silent longing coupled with dissatisfaction with ourselves, but also with great trust, because year by year, through the intercession of our Lady, the Holy Spirit will add new rings of growth to our soul, until we have finally acquired this deep feeling of warmth, this supernatural gift of the fear of the Lord.

The Fruits: Self-control and Chastity - The Beatitude: "Happy the poor in spirit"

If you were to ask which fruit of the Holy Spirit corresponds with the gift of the fear of the Lord, I would say self-control and chastity. The relevant beatitude is the first one: "Happy the poor in spirit!" Such a soul is indeed poor in spirit, although probably not in the way we usually mean it. Poor in spirit! Of myself I am nothing, nothing but sin! That is what Vincent Pallotti used to say: Of myself I am nothingness and sin; on the other hand, there is our great, almighty God!

When am I on the way to receiving this virtue? When I have an exceptionally strong inclination to mistrust myself and to be dissatisfied with myself. This must be coupled with an exceptionally strong inclination to trust limitlessly in God. I am then inwardly so flexible that I no longer see the observance of the letter of the law as the be-all and end-all of everything. This rigid adherence to duty is nothing else than the cushion of self-righteousness, and the beginning of the calcification of our

spiritual lives. I must remain flexible, I must hold onto this feeling of distance, the awareness that God is ruling and leading me, as well as the awareness of my own weakness and the power and goodness of God.

The Holy Spirit Lives in our Hearts

In the liturgy we are led more deeply into the love the Holy Spirit gives us. Faith, hope and love! We are speaking here not of the gift of grace, but of the supernatural virtue of love. It is the Holy Spirit who gives it to us. He himself is the personification of the love between Father and Son. If he gives himself to us, then, together with himself, he gives us the love he personifies. In the liturgy this love is referred to as a fire. It is the fire which was enkindled in the heart of the God-Man. He took this fire up to heaven in order to send down the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, who is to implant and enkindle this glowing, consuming fire in our souls.

So it is the Holy Spirit who enkindles and develops our natural and supernatural ability to love. "The love of God has been poured out into our hearts." Love is poured out by the Holy Spirit. That is why we want to open our hearts and our hands. If the Holy Spirit lives in us in this way, if he gives us his love, ultimately it is because he wants to love himself through our human hearts.

Think about what this means! The Holy Spirit loves himself by means of our human hearts! That is the meaning of the supernatural virtue of love. Let us pray ardently: "Lord, graciously pour out the Holy Spirit into our souls. His wisdom has created us and his providence guides us." You should then consider all that God has poured out upon you through your ability to love and longing to love.

If the Holy Spirit is to fill us and reign so completely in us through his love, if he is to set us on fire, he has first to implant purely natural love into our souls. However, he does not stop there. He knows how to deepen the fine and finest stirrings in the soul. It is he, after all, who lives in us and rules us through his wisdom and providence. It is he who urges us to be constantly on guard, to protect the holy fire through serious mortification.

I think if you bear these thoughts in mind, and if you were to ask once again why the Holy Spirit gives us love, then I would have to say more clearly what I said before: he gives us love in order to love God and others measurelessly through our human hearts. He loves the Blessed Trinity through us. He loves our neighbour through us. Therefore, if I have difficulties or antipathies, if I cannot get on with some people because there is so much about them that displeases me, if I feel repelled by them - this is all based on natural sympathy and antipathy. It is not God's love. The Spirit of God loves everyone. The only thing he hates is sin. If my love is ruled by God's love, then through my human heart the Holy Spirit wants to love also those people for

whom I feel a natural dislike, because they are so undisciplined and unreasonable, or because they want to be the centre of attraction.

Let us therefore beg the Holy Spirit to penetrate us and take possession of us still more deeply, with the fire of his love. "Send forth your Spirit." Send forth your Spirit and I will be made new. My inner life will be made new. I will become a mature person, a mature teacher and member of the Movement who is equipped to face all the difficulties of life. I will become a person who strives for holiness, with the world under my feet and with my entire being growing more and more into God.

Translator unknown. Edited by M. Cole