

THROUGH FREEDOM TO LOVE: THE PROGRESS OF EACH PERSON

THROUGH THE VIRTUES, THE BEATITUDES, AND THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. The Christian moral life is the use of freedom to grow into the true love of God. The virtues, the Beatitudes, and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are ways through which God gets us to this perfection of human life.

A. The modern world highly values freedom, but does not understand it well. For people usually understand freedom as merely the ability to do what one wants. Simply following desires, however, is another form of slavery, a slavery to desire that ends in death.

1. Earthly desires, in the end, come from forces beyond ourselves, such as biology, chemistry, popular trends, advertisements, and the like. If we simply live in accordance with those desires, we are slaves to those tendencies.

2. When one sins, one is letting these desires get control. As Jesus says, “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” John 8:34.

3. Furthermore, all such desires if not redeemed, end in death, for death claims an end of human life. See Romans 6:12-14.

B. Freedom is valuable above all else because it is a participation in God’s creative goodness, whose essence is love. As the Vatican II Council said, “Genuine freedom is an exceptional sign of the image of God in humanity. People gain such dignity when, freeing themselves of all slavery to the passions, they press forward towards their goal by freely choosing what is good.” Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) (1965) 17. Or, as St. John Paul II put it in chapter 8 of his last book *Memory and Identity*, “Freedom is for love.”

C. This progress towards God in love means seeking and living out the good, the true, the beautiful, and the holy.

1. We can love the good in God, in each other and in all creation. Seeking this goodness is at the essence of the call to love, which in turn is what gives freedom its final purpose.

a. The reason why freedom is so important is that freedom is needed for true love, and love is the participation in the very nature of God Himself. See, e.g., 1 John 4:7. For true love of its nature is a free gift, freely given and freely received. This ability to love, and thus to be like God, is so central that it is the essence of the two greatest commandments taught by Christ: first love of God, and second, love of neighbor. See, e.g., Matt. 22:34-40.

b. This love is not mere sentimentality, but rather shows itself in sacrifice, such as the love of a husband working for his wife, the love of a mother sacrificing for her children, the love of a scholar in pursuit of the truth, the love of a soldier fighting for his country. These loves come to their height in the love God has for us, the love shown from the Cross, which we are meant to imitate. That sacrificial love, with faith and hope, alone leads us beyond death. See 1 Cor. 13:12-13. Thus, he who would save his life must lose it. See Mark 8:35.

2. Love, however, depends upon truth, for we cannot seek and love the good if we do not know what the good is. And we cannot desire and celebrate the good of God or another person without knowing who they really are and what that is good for them and for ourselves. As St. John Paul II went on to say in Memory and Identity, “There is no freedom without truth.”

a. Love of our mere opinions *about* others is, in the end, self-love. Truth brings real contact. Thus, we are endowed with an intellect to know the truth. All truth finds its source in God Himself, the source of all reality. And thus to live in the truth is to be guided by God Himself. See Prov. 4:18; John 1:4-5, 8:12.

b. Thus, love and truth go together. As Pope Emeritus Benedict points out in his 2009 paragraph 3 of his encyclical letter Caritas in Veritate, “Without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality. Love becomes an empty shell, to be filled in an arbitrary way. In a culture without truth, this is the fatal risk facing love.” Truth needs love, lest it become cold; love needs truth lest it become false and superficial. Freedom needs both to make us the people we are called to be.

D. The virtues, the Beatitudes, and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are all ways in which we grow into this true love.

1. The virtues are the ways in which we exercise the excellence of human life and become professionals, even geniuses at human nature, and thus more enabled how to love.

2. The Beatitudes are ways in which we grow in the heroic joy and nobility of love.

3. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are the ways in which we lived inspired (Spirit filled) lives and thus are able to taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

4. The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are the glorious results of living this life of true love and thus being sons and daughters of the Almighty God.

II. The natural and supernatural virtues make us excellent human beings, able to use our full abilities to live at a glorious level.

A. The Church, as well as ancient philosophy, defines a virtue as a regular and consistent disposition to do the good easily and naturally and to give the best of ourselves. See Catechism 1803. The virtues thus give the ability to obtain this true freedom, the ability to participate in the creative goodness of God.

1. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and other ancient philosophers took the idea of excellence (e.g., a trade, a skill, or a sport), and applied it to excellence at being a good and happy human being, which they defined as virtue. Before that time, there was not much abstract notion of virtue, but rather codes of moral rules and stories, real or mythological, about what a good person is.

2. Aristotle systematized descriptions of different types of virtues. From his works we get the idea of the cardinal virtues: justice, prudence (meaning clear thinking), fortitude, and temperance (meaning self-control.) The book of Wisdom, written about 200 B.C. picks up on these virtues and describes them as central to the acquisition of wisdom. See Wis. 8:7. These virtues have become central to Christian explanations of the good life. See Catechism 1805-1809.

3. Catholic thought has used much of the Aristotelian system for describing the human virtues. And, from St. Paul's writings, we understand that God brings us further to the heights of excellence with the theological virtues, faith, hope and charity. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 1:15-23; Col. 1:3-5.

- The human virtues, and especially the cardinal virtues, can and should be understood by everyone, albeit incompletely. As with other matters of natural reason, not everyone will understand them, but they can.

- It is only by the sanctifying grace given through the sacraments that we receive the supernatural virtues, faith, hope and charity. These virtues allow us to be in relationship with God Himself through Jesus Christ and to act as sons and daughters of God.

B. The cardinal virtues work together to make a good human, as can be understood by anyone using right reason. They involve maintaining a middle level between extremes.

1. Prudence is clear thinking, the ability to decide what is true, what is right, how to achieve the good, and the desire to get things right, both intellectually and practically. Prudence is not simply caution, but rather a willingness act and think

intelligently. When deciding on a course of action, prudence guides on to consider the information available, carefully apply general principles to it, and by means of this careful thought make decisions about the best course to take.

2. Temperance, or self-control, is the ability to control the passions so that one can use them for good, and so that one is not controlled by them. It is a rightful attitude towards human desires, whether physical, intellectual, aesthetic, and even spiritual. Being temperate means controlling such desires, rather than being controlled by them. This virtue operates mostly by restraining one from seeking pleasures or other goods that we tend to want to excess, but it also allows for the enjoyment of good things as free gifts. Thus, as with the other virtues, it is a mean between extremes.

3. Fortitude is the willingness to do what is right, and to avoid evil, especially when such righteousness is difficult or tiresome. Fortitude spurs on one to do good things we may shrink from, and keeps us from backsliding, although rightly understood it also restrains people from excessive risk-taking. Fortitude operates primarily by urging us onto a goal that is worth pursuing. It complements temperance, which operates primarily by restraining us from desires that are wrong or excessive. But it also a restraint from foolhardiness (i.e. the taking of risks for goals that are not worth it) and presumption (the taking on of a greater goal than we are able to achieve.)

4. Justice is the desire to maintain and establish right relations with others by giving them what is their due. Fairness is the aspect of justice that rewards good and punishes evil. However, justice goes beyond that, showing kindness and mercy even when strict fairness does not demand it in order to bring about right relations between people, and between us and God. In order to establish right relations between us and God, justice not only gives others what is due to them by their actions, but also what is due to human nature. Thus, caring for those in need and reconciling people is a part of justice. Above all, rendering to God what is His due, in worship, obedience, and dedication, is the highest form of justice.

C. We receive the supernatural virtues in baptism, and maintain them through the sacraments, prayer, penance and good works.

1. Faith is the willingness and ability to trust in what God says, especially in Scripture and in the Church. It is based upon a trusting relationship with God, and is maintained by regular contact with Him and by carrying out His will. It is not merely an intellectual belief in propositions, but a deep trusting relationship with God Himself. The literal translation of the Nicene Creed that we recite at

Mass would say that we believe into one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, i.e., through our faith, we enter into a deep relationship with them.

2. Hope is the ability to trust in God's guidance of one's own life, of the lives of people we know, or the Church, and of the world. It is opposed to presumption (the idea that God will save everyone regardless of what we do) and despair (the idea that a situation or a person is hopeless.) It also opposed to false worldly hopes that mere institutions or programs are the ultimate solution and an excessive condemnation of things in the world. There is an excitement, for we do not know what events the future holds, but rather know God's promises to sustain us through the unknown. As St. Paul says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for God is the one who, for His good purpose works in you both to desire and to work." Phil. 12-13.

3. Love (agape in Greek) is difficult to define. It involves a perception of the goodness of God above all, and of other persons because they reflect God's goodness. It is the controlling principle behind all of the other virtues and moral laws. See, e.g., Matt. 22:34-40. It should also be the controlling principle of all human loves (e.g., for spouse, for family, for friends, for country, and for interests.) See 1 Cor. 13:1-13. As C.S. Lewis points out in The Four Loves, the love of God is built upon and controls all human loves so that they can be more fully themselves, while complementing each other. As St. Thomas points out, the love of God brings about a peace within the self because it orders all human desires and loves toward the beloved and above all toward God. See Summa Theologica II-II q. 29.

III. The Beatitudes are ways in which we live out the heroic joy and nobility of love.

A. As the Gospel of Matthew recounts, Jesus spoke of the Beatitudes right at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, which in turn gave the overview of the new life of grace He offers. See Matt. 5:2-10; see also Luke 6:20-24 (with a shorter list of the same Beatitudes.)

1. In translating the words of Jesus, the evangelists used the Greek term *makarios* to express what we call in English blessed. In popular parlance, this term could mean either: (1) highly favored, but also happy because of an internal disposition; or (2) rich and prosperous. But, as with Plato in his great work *The Phaedo*, there was an older meaning, for the term also describe the joy and glory of the pagan heroes of the mythological age.
2. Thus, the term blessed responds to the desire for nobility, advancement, and heroic joy. But the actual Beatitudes that Jesus sets forth are almost the opposite of the ways the world pursue for these goals. Becoming noble,

prosperous and heroic in God's eyes is very different that pursuing these goals in the world.

3. As Pope Emeritus Benedict wrote, "the standards of the world are turned upside down as soon as things are seen in the right perspective, which is to say, in terms of God's values, so different from those of the world." Jesus of Nazareth Part I (2006) 71.
 4. These teachings of Jesus build upon similar teachings from the old covenant. For the prophets and Psalms has described the blessedness of the faithful life. See, e.g., Ps. 1, 16:20, 29:9, 32:1, 122:1; Jer. 17:7-8. But Jesus took the teaching in a much more radical direction.
 5. The Beatitudes describe a joy even now that is a first promise of the joy that will belong to all of the elect. For the Beatitudes describe the faithful as blessed even now due to a greater future. See Catechism 1717. The kingdom of God is at one level present even now, even as we await the fulfillment later.
- B. The first Beatitude offers joy to the poor of spirit, for even now they have the kingdom of heaven.
1. As St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi demonstrated so well, there is an excitement, and adventurousness of life that come from relying on God.
 2. The Old Testament did warn against the temptations of wealth and taught that the poor must be protected. But Jesus takes this teaching to a higher level, calling for a radical trust in Him.
 3. As C.S. Lewis pointed out in his book *Perelandra*, people want wealth to control their future and have the goods that they seek. The joy of the Christian life comes from openness to the goodness that God wants.
 4. In seeking material things, it is important to ask the question: is this acquisition going to help me carry out my vocation, be a better person, or serve others; or do I want it for the sake of the pleasure of ownership, because someone else wants it, or the pleasure of buying.
- C. The second Beatitude promises joy even to those who weep and mourn, for one day they will be consoled (or even laugh, as Luke puts it.)
1. It is a great paradox, for we are meant to be joyful Christians. The Bible mentions joy about 250 times. And St. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Philippians 4:4.

2. However, joy and sorrow are not opposites, but in fact complement each other.
 - a. Sorrow and happiness are emotions, and each are fitted for different circumstances. Sorrow is rightful at certain times, such as death, unemployment, poor health, and above all at sin. Sorrow at such things comes from goodness, compassion and finally love. For when we love others, we are sorrowful and things that harm them. And, because we love God, we are sorrowful at sin.
 - b. Jesus Himself wept at the death of Lazarus, at the hardness of people's hearts, and at the impending destruction of Jerusalem. See John 11:35; Mark 3:4-5; Luke 19:41-44.
 - c. Joy, by contrast, is a sense of the divine with us. It is, as St. Thomas Aquinas points out, the overflowing of love. And, as C.S. Lewis says in his autobiography Surprised By Joy, described that sense of joy and said it always involves a sense of sorrow for it points to a realm that we do not have, evokes a longing never satisfied on earth. The very love that gives us joy also opens us up to sorrow at evil things.
3. The world would say that we should protect ourselves from such sorrow by limiting love. But Jesus says to take the risk of love. When all things are restored in Christ, the sorrow that was associated with true love will now receive its compensation by being fulfilled in the greater realms.
- D. The third Beatitude offers blessings to the humble of heart, giving them the assurance of permanent lands in the eternal realms.
 1. Beatitude is often misunderstood, for many think it implies weakness or merely letting evil go unpunished. The Bible, however, describes Moses as the meekest of men. See Num. 12:3. He was meek because he sought the glory of God, not his own glory. And so he defended his countryman, rather than seek the glories of the palace. When the people sinned against God, he was angry, but he did penance for them.
 2. The Old Testament basis for this Beatitude is Psalm 37, which calls for a trust in the Lord without anger or frustration that the wicked often seem to be doing well. Verse 11 contrasts the permanence of God's blessings with the transience of the wicked. Verses 9 and 29 likewise describe their inheritance as the land. And from Psalm 25, which describes those who are repentant of sins and listen carefully to God. They will inherit the permanence of the land.

3. Thus, far from weakness, this Beatitude calls for confidence in God and the willingness to trust Him regardless of the circumstances. There is a willingness to see the goodness of God where it is, rather than where we want it to be.

E. The Fourth Beatitude promises joy for those willing to hunger and thirst for righteousness, for their desires will be satisfied.

1. This beatitude has both a symbolic and a literal meaning.

- a. The symbolic meaning is that we are meant to have a passionate desire for promoting the greater kingdom; injustice should be felt as hunger and thirst that we desire to overcome. There are analogies to scholars thirsting for knowledge or an athlete hungry for the victory.

- b. But there is also a very literal meaning. For in the faith, we are called to fasting at times, giving up food, drink and other things we like to make up for sins and to increase our spiritual sense. Moses fasted both times when going up Mount Sinai, once for prayer, the other for the penance at the sins of his people. Daniel fasted before his visions; Esther to make the prayers of her people more effective when she was to go to the king. John the Baptist lived in the desert to make his witness and preaching better. And Jesus likewise fasted at the beginning of His public ministry.

2. There should be a sense of holy discontent, a hunger for a greater realm. Examples from the saints include St. Theresa of Calcutta feeling a burning desire to bring God's love to the poor, sharing in Christ's love for souls. We likewise think of the hunger of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton to educate children or St. Francis Xavier to gain converts. This zeal leads to a great sense of purpose in our lives.

F. The Fifth Beatitude promises joy to the merciful for they themselves will be open to God's mercy.

A. Mercy means overcoming the effects of sin generally, and thus includes both forgiveness of sins and the works of mercy, such as feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, and praying for the living and dead.

1. As St. John Paul II said in his encyclical on God the Father, *Dives in Misericordiae* (Rich in Mercy) justice and mercy must go together. Mercy without justice is relativism and laxity. But justice without mercy is harsh, and gives the victory to sin over love. Mercy and justice both serve love, reflecting a desire to overcome its effects.

2. As the St. John Paul II pointed out in paragraph 62 of that encyclical, “The parable of the prodigal son show that . . . the relationship of mercy is based on the common experience of that good which is man, on the common experience of the dignity that is proper to him.” Sin diminishes in us the image of God, but cannot remove it. God the Father, remembering that glorious dignity that His image brings about in us. Knowing that dignity, He is offended by the sin that mars it. But, precisely because His is so offended, He will not simply let the person remain in that state, even if in a sense they have merited it.
- 3.
4. It is not as though we can earn God’s mercy. Rather, by showing mercy to other people, we enter into the realm of grace in which our own sins are forgiven.

G. The Sixth Beatitude promises joy to the pure of heart, for they will be given the vision of God.

1. Purity of heart leads to clarity of mind, which in turn enables us to sense the greater kingdom. By contrast, as St. Thomas Aquinas said, cloudiness of mind is the first daughter of unchastity and gluttony.
2. Purity of heart means a control of all desires both with reference to action, and with reference to thought. People often believe that, as long as they are not hurting anyone else, what happens in their mind cannot be sin. But instead, it is from the heart that sins come; and so it is important to guard the heart against evil. In fact, our list of the capital vices comes from an early list of the sinful thoughts.
3. There is a Chinese saying, “In every man is an eagle and a serpent. The one who wins is the one whom you feed.” It is important to feed the mind with good knowledge, images and senses to appeal to our better instincts.
4. On the one hand, good art, music, literature, architecture and the like present the good in the form of the beautiful, as St. John Paul II pointed out in his 1999 letter to artists. However, evil culture can present vice in the form of the attractive. And so it is important to be careful about the culture one engages in.

H. The Seventh Beatitude promises joy to peacemakers for they will be worthy of the status of sons and daughters of God.

1. Peace here is not merely the absence of fighting or war, but a positive friendship and good relations among us and between us and God. Thus,

friendship, mutual prayers, repentance from sin and forgiveness are all a part of establishing the peace of God.

2. The contrary to this peace is not only warfare and fighting, but also the isolation and ignorance of neighbor common in the modern world. Such things as gossip, poverty, and the skewed view of the human person as an object of pleasure are thus contrary to the peace of God.

3. The peace of God is not one that accepts evil and injustice, for such states cannot be the lasting grounds for peace. Rather, the peace of God seeks to overcome such obstacles by the common pursuit of goodness, truth, the beauty of heaven, and the holiness of God. We seek a peace within ourselves by conversion that leads us to be able to build peace upon earth. See James 4:1-4.

I. The final Beatitude promises joy to those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for even now the kingdom of God shines on among them.

1. This persecution can be outright violence or government opposition, or (as with the West) it can often be more subtle, trying to keep people from living out their faith by social and economic pressure, rarely spoken but in the background. And thus all people are called to be courageous in the face of such opposition.

2. Such persecution indicates that one has touched someone's conscience and one is making progress against the devil. If one's words were meaningless or having no impact, they would not be worthy of opposition. Thus, the very fact of persecution, while itself contrary to God's will, indicates that one is having an effect, as with St. John the Baptist before Herod, or St. Thomas More before Henry VIII.

3. At the end of the Beatitudes, Jesus indicates that, when we are suffering persecution for the Gospel, we are joining with the mission of the prophets themselves, and carrying on their role.

IV. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit allowed us to live at life inspired by the Holy Spirit to sense and feel the goodness and splendor of God.

A. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit fulfill the ancient prayers and prophesies that all of the faithful would be receive the fullness of the Spirit.

1. Moses prayed that the Holy Spirit would come upon all of God's people and that they would all prophesy. See Numbers 11. The prophets spoke of a day to come in

which all people, from least to greatest would be filled with the Spirit and know the Lord. See Jer. 31, Joel 3:1-1.

2. Jesus promised at the Last Supper to send His Spirit upon His disciples that they would understand His words and bring the faith to the world.

3. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured forth upon the early Church, and they brought the Gospel to people throughout the known world. See Acts 2,

4. Likewise, now the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to us at baptism, and then brought to more fullness at Confirmation that we may live in a prophetic manner, guided by the Holy Spirit. As Pope Leo XIII said in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit Divinum Illud Munus (That Divine Office), “The just man . . . needs those seven gifts which are properly attributed to the Holy Spirit. By means of these gifts the soul is excited and encouraged to attain the evangelical beatitudes which, like the flowers that come forth in the spring time are the signs and harbingers of eternal beatitude.” As Pope Leo XIII, building upon the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, said, the guides act as sails that allow the ship of each soul to take up the breeze of the Holy Spirit and travel more swiftly and surely to our eternal homeland.

5. The list of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit is in Isaiah chapter 11, where he describes the Spirit of God guiding the great king who is to come. They are fulfilled completely in Jesus Christ. However, Jesus sends the Spirit to each of us as well. And so we share in His mission to bring this glory to the world.

B. The Gift of Wisdom involves the perceive all things with the eyes of God. All things, our lives, human history, all forms of knowledge come together in the love of God.

1. In any natural field (e.g., history, sports, construction) many are able to do specific things well or know specific things. But the true genius will get the big picture, to relate things to each other. Wisdom gives us that comprehension of the whole of our lives and indeed of all of salvation.

2. Wisdom thus enables us to perceive each person, not as merely affecting us or society, but as God sees him, with divine love. Thus, as St. Thomas Aquinas says, wisdom is allied with love.

3. Wisdom is especially needed in this age of specialization and the hurried pace of life, in which it is easy to lose sight of the unity of all things and the goal of life.

C. The Gift of Understanding gives us the ability to perceive the reality of things in depth, and especially to comprehend the truths of the faith with a feel for them, a sense of their meaning

1. One can draw an analogy to secular fields, such as economics, math, literature, or even learning a language. It is one thing to learn the individual facts and principles, but it is a greater thing to get a feel for the subject, a sense of the meaning of the fact.

2. The gift of understanding gives us a feel a sense of the truths of the faith. For example, we truly sense the meaning and power of passages in the Bible, we truly feel Jesus present with us in the Eucharist and His forgiveness in Reconciliation, or we truly sense the meaning of the life of a saint and his intercession for us.

3. St. Thomas Aquinas associates this gift with the beatitude, “Blessed are the pure of heart.” For cleansing our minds not only of sinful thoughts, but also of excessive thoughts, and being disciplined in learning, allows one’s spirit to awaken more to a sense of the essence of the things of God.

D. The gift of Knowledge (Scientia in Latin) allows us to judge the value of created things.

1. This gift avoids both materialism, which would see created things as the final reality, and also an excessive other-worldliness that would reject the goodness of this world.

2. For example, one thus senses nature as created by God, and giving glory to Him. “The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky proclaims its builders craft,” as Psalm 29 says. Sr. Francis was especially known for this sense of God in nature.

3. Likewise, we sense the talents, wealth, time, and even body we have as a trust given by God for a time to glorify Him. Thus, we try to use them well, as with the faithful stewards in the parables of the talents and gold coins. But we are not distressed at their loss either, knowing that they were going back to God in any case. Ps. 29:1. Bringing faith to the created world

E. The gift of counsel enables us to make decisions in the light of the greater kingdom.

1. This gift if allied with the virtue of prudence, but goes further giving us insights into ideas and inspirations that would not be obvious, as well as deterring us from things that seem right, but are not in God's will.
2. In some situations, faith and reason make the answer clear. But in other situation, the right course of action is not obvious. There are the great decision, such as one's vocation, or perhaps a new job offer. But there are also daily decisions, such as how to allocate time, or how to deal with a difficult situation. The gift of counsel gives us the guidance of the Holy Spirit in such times.
3. St. Ignatius of Loyola recommended having a "felt sense" of Jesus, Mary and the angels

F The Gift of Fortitude enables us to live out the faith when it is difficult, knowing that sacrifices are offered in union with Jesus and the company of heaven.

1. Fortitude is a natural virtue that is needed because good things often patience, difficulties and even suffering. Natural fortitude spurs us on such difficulties and in persevering despite discouragement.
2. As a gift of the Holy Spirit, fortitude goes further and gives us a sense that suffering joins one to Christ. It thus gives us the ability to draw strength from the presence of Jesus Christ. See, e.g., Col. 1:24; 1 Peter 4:12-13; Acts 5:40-42.
3. We also know that, as the Letter to the Hebrews says, we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, i.e., the angels and saints, urging us on to victory.

G. The gift of piety gives us a delight in rendering to God the praises that are due and in establishing His justice and peace on this earth.

1. It can be tempting to see prayer and works of justice as a mere duty. But instead, there should be appositive delight in worshipping God as the Psalms express over and over again. And likewise, there is a delight at engaging in creative goodness and making this world a better place.
2. There is a natural delight in the company of friends, when all the pieces fall into place for a project, when a home is finally cleaned, or when one is able to resolve a difficult situation. There should be a natural delight in the presence of God and in making this world a fitting place for Him.

H. The gift of the fear of the Lord involves an anxious anxiety to make everything right for Him, knowing that He is with us.

1. If a prominent guest were in one's home, one would be excited, but also anxious to make everything right for him. We know that Christ is with us in the Eucharist, and likewise our souls and churches are meant to be Temples of the Holy Spirit. There is thus an excitement, but also an eagerness to be sure that everything is right for the Almighty God.

2. When we make everything right for God, we are glad to be in His presence. And thus paradoxically, the fear of the Lord leads, as Isaiah and Sirach say to delight in God's presence. See Isaiah 11, Sirach 1.

V. The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are ways in which the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives.

A. The list comes from chapter 5 of Galatians, which contrasts the works of the flesh from the works of the spirit..

1. The letter speaks about Christian liberty and about our calling as sons and daughters of God. See Gal. 4:1-4. The letter argues that the old Jewish ritual laws were as a guardian for awhile. But now with the Holy Spirit we are able to go out into the world more with the freedom of the children of God.

2. But towards the end of the letter, St. Paul wants to make it clear that this freedom from the ritual law is not meant to be license to indulge in mere desire, which leads to death. And so he contrasts the works of the flesh, which lead to corruption with the works of the Spirit, which lead to everlasting life.

3. These fruits of the Holy Spirit are also a sign that one's spiritual life is authentic. For, as Jesus says, by the fruits you shall know them. See Matt. 5:26; see Matt. 12:33

B. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are indications that the Spirit is at work in a person, above the level even of natural reason and virtue. See St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica I-II question 70, article 1. As St. Thomas Aquinas also explains, the fruits of the Holy Spirit makes one's life more delightful, at least if understood in the ways of heaven. There may be a connection to the tree that Ezekiel and the Book of Revelation speak of that provides food and medicine to the nations. See Ez. 47:12; Rev. 22:1-2.

C. The letter to the Galatians lists nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. However, due to the fact that some of the terms have more than one meaning, it is traditional to list twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity. See Catechism 1832.

D. St. Thomas describes the progress of the fruits of the Holy Spirit as follows. God inspires love in our hearts. And as we come closer to the beloved (God and neighbor) we experience joy. That joy gives a peace to our hearts because our desires become more unified and content. And the joy likewise gives us the patience to deal with hardships. That love and joy then inspires us to goodness and kindness; those two ideas are related but St. Thomas says that goodness relates more to action, and kindness more to an attitude of sympathy. Likewise, this joy will lead to a generosity of heart that leads us to do great things for others, a gentleness that leads us to deal well with the faults of others, and a faithfulness that leads to honesty and trust. Likewise, the love and joy of the Spirit will lead us to be modest and not seek excessive attention, to be able to control desire, and thus to be chaste and therefore able to offer pure love.

E. The idea here is that, through the Holy Spirit, we will be able to show forth the true prosperity in the ways of the kingdom. In the famous parable of the sower, Jesus described how the word of God bears fruit thirty or sixty or a hundred fold when it falls on good land. See Matt. 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-12; Luke 8:3-10. The fruits of the Holy Spirit describe how it is that this great bounty takes place in our lives.

VI. In his famous book Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle distinguished between three levels of human goodness and three levels of evil. The first two levels of goodness are: (1) the disciplined, those who generally do what is right, but with a great deal of struggle; and (2) the virtuous, those who do what is right more naturally and easily. The first two levels of evil are: (1) the undisciplined, those who struggle to do what is right but frequently fall much short of it; and (2) the vicious, those who do not even try to do what is right, instead justifying what is wrong. He also described, at the lowest level, the brutish and, at the highest, those whose dispositions are “heroic, indeed divine.” The brutish person engages in evil beyond ordinary vice and selfishness (e.g., cruelty, perversions, grotesqueness.) The heroic, indeed divine person, rises to a level of goodness (e.g., heroism, generosity, passion for truth) well above what we would think of a regular person as doing. The virtues, the Beatitudes and the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit enable us to rise to this level that is heroic, indeed divine.