

### **3: The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit**

In our previous lectures, we examined the basis for Aquinas's ethics, from the nature of virtues and God's imparting of the virtues to the believer, to the role of the Holy Spirit. Beyond the imparting of some degree of all the virtues and providing the means of intimate relationship to and with God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit also brings the gifts and fruits of the Spirit to the life of the believer. The gifts and fruits of the Spirit will be the focus of this lecture.

**I. A Brief Recapitulation:** Thus far in our analysis of Thomas Aquinas's ethics, we have discussed the nature of the seven virtues as well as the second-personal means by which we receive them as a gift, at once but in limited fashion, contemporaneously with the Holy Spirit, who within us and places us in direct, friendly relationship with God. Building upon our pneumatological foundation, we will be looking at Aquinas's take on the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. In dealing with the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, we are reaching the true heart of Aquinas's ethics.

An acronym for the seven infused virtues: CHFJCT – Charity – Hope - Faith  
Wisdom – Justice – Courage - Temperance

**II. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit:** As discussed previously, when a person begins the life of faith, the Holy Spirit infuses the individual with the principal virtues instantaneously, and simultaneously with the Holy Spirit's indwelling. In like manner, the Holy Spirit brings the seven gifts of the Spirit into the believer's life as well. According to Aquinas, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are habits by which a person is enabled to obey the Holy Spirit.

They share qualities with the virtues inasmuch as they are given by the Holy Spirit and cannot be corrupted by human action. While similar in many regards, they are also separate. The gifts are the movements of the Holy Spirit by which the believer is enabled to act in accord with the virtues. It is through the gifts that the virtues adhere to us.

The Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit may be recalled by the acronym PFFWUCK, and are as follows: Piety - Fear of the Lord – Fortitude – Wisdom - Understanding Counsel – Knowledge. It is important to note that while similar in many ways to the infused virtues (and four of them have direct analogues), the gifts of the Holy Spirit are of a different nature. The gifts are second-personal, and directly stem from the closeness of our relationship to God.

The gifts can be broken into two groups: The three moral gifts: Piety - Fear of the Lord – Fortitude - The four gifts of the mind: Wisdom – Understanding - Counsel Knowledge

**III. The Fruits of the Holy Spirit:** The fruits of the Holy Spirit also come with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They govern our actions and reactions to unpleasant situations in life. An example would be mildness. When one is wronged, one can focus exclusively on that wrong, or one can choose to remember that there is more to the other person than the specifics of that circumstance.

Choosing to react by taking into account the wrongdoing of a situation, but also the fact that the other individual is more than this specific action and indeed may be with you in heaven one day, is an example of mildness.

There are twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit, and they are as follows: Love – Joy - Peace – Patience – Longsuffering – Goodness – Benevolence – Mildness - Faith Modesty – Contenance - Chastity

Note that both patience and longsuffering are in this list, and that they are below love, joy, and peace. The Holy Spirit does not make bad situations seem suddenly good. There is still suffering; however, if we are living with the fruits of the Holy Spirit, that suffering should not be able to take away our love, joy, and peace.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. How do the gifts of the Holy Spirit relate to the virtues?
2. How do the fruits of the Holy Spirit manifest in our lives, and how does this change our outlook?