

The Gift of Fear of the Lord

And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord (Is 11:3)

Intellectual gifts

- At their summit, like a flash of the very light of God, is the intellect. It makes us resemble the angels and puts a trace of God's image upon our souls.
- Wisdom: judges divine things.
- Understanding: makes us penetrate divine truths.
- Knowledge: judges creatures.
- Counsel: directs our acts.

Gifts that pertain to the will and the passions

- Piety: guides and directs our relations with God and men (perfects the will).
- Fortitude: takes away the dread of danger (perfects the **irascible appetite**, which responds to difficulty in obtaining or avoiding good or evil; passions of fear, daring, and anger).
- Fear of the Lord: establishes the proper relationship between Creator and creature and moderates the disordered impulses of our concupiscence (perfects the **concupiscible appetite**, which moves creatures toward pleasant sensible goods and away from what is hurtful).

Servile Fear

- There is a fear that keeps us from sin and brings us close to God, but it is imperfect. Theologians call it “servile fear,” the fear of punishment. There is no doubt that this fear keeps us many times from falling into sin, but the motive is of an inferior order and without the nobility proper to love. Servile fear is not the gift of fear of God.

Filial Fear

- There is another fear that is called filial. **It consists in the repugnance that the soul feels at the thought of being separated from God.** This fear **comes from love.** It is true that perfect love casts out a certain type of fear, but there is also a fear that is, we might say, **the basis of love.** Whosoever desires, whosoever loves, experiences a profound **fear of being separated** from the loved one, of displeasing him. Love cannot be conceived of without this fear. One who loves deeply has a fear that is above all other fears—fear of separation from the beloved. This is the gift of fear which is directed by the Holy Spirit.

The Beginning of Wisdom

- The fear of God is the **beginning of wisdom** in the sense that this gift produces the first effect in the divine work of wisdom. **Servile fear** is the beginning of wisdom, as the foundation is the **beginning of a building**. In a more perfect sense, **filial fear** is the beginning of wisdom because, in order to possess divine wisdom, **we need to unite ourselves so closely to God that nothing can separate us from him.**

Degrees

- The gift of the fear of God, in the **first degree**, produces horror for sin and strength to overcome temptations.
- In the **second degree** of this gift, the soul not only stays away from sin, but clings to God with profound reverence, avoiding even insignificant acts that are signs of imperfection.
- A marvelous effect is produced in the **third degree** of this gift: total detachment from the things of this earth. That is why theologians say that this gift produces the first of the beatitudes: that of poverty of spirit.

How to Cultivate the Gift of Fear of the Lord

- **Meditate often on:**
 - Infinite grandeur of God.
 - His attributes: 1) Simplicity, 2) perfection, 3) goodness, 4) infinity, 5) ubiquity, 6) immutability, 7) eternity, and 8) unity.
 - His power over us.
 - Considering, in the light of faith, what sin is.
- **Flee** all that can generate in us a **lack of respect** for God and for holy things.
- Habituate oneself to **exercise good manners and courtesy** in treating with God.