

# The Gift of Piety

“You have received a Spirit of adoption as sons,  
by virtue of which we cry, Abba, Father!” (Rom 8:15)

# The Virtue of Justice

- A group of virtues has been provided for us, with justice at the center, by which all our relations with God and our neighbor will be ordered and disposed.
- For those to whom we owe some heavy debt, there is **justice**; for our obligations to God, there is **religion**; for our parents, our family, and our country, there is **piety**; for our benefactors, there is **gratitude**; and so on for all our relations with other people.

- But virtue is always limited by the human stamp of imperfection. The Holy Spirit will have to act upon our relationship with others by means of a gift.
- The gift of piety unifies in an admirable way all these relationships, guides them, and makes them more profound, more perfect.

# Gift of Piety

- The gift of piety is inspired by the **Spirit of adoption** by which we call upon God as our **Father**.
- Since he is our Father, we should have a deep **filial affection** for him in our hearts, because it is proper that children love their Father.
- **The gift of piety**, or rather, the Holy Spirit through the gift of piety, **develops in us this filial affection**. Thus we are concerned about the honor and glory of our Father because we are his children.

# Natural Piety vs the Gift of Piety

- Piety, in the **natural order** and in the order of the virtues, refers **principally to our parents**, and as a logical consequence, to the fulfillment of our duties toward all our relatives, toward all who make up our family, even to love of country.
- **Piety, as the gift of the Holy Spirit, leads us to knowledge of God the Father and to a sense of our fraternity with all men.** St. Francis of Assisi understood this really well.

# Principal Effects of the Gift of Piety

- With respect to God, the gift of piety **inspires us with sentiments of confidence and prompts us to give ourselves to him**. St. Thérèse of Lisieux and her “little way” is a great example of this. In the high degrees of this gift, the Holy Spirit infuses into souls the desire to be united with Jesus Christ the Victim, in order to expiate the sins of the world and to promote the glory of God.
- With regard to our brethren, in the first degree of this gift **the soul gives itself generously to others**, in the way proper to the gift. The second degree is no longer an overflow of generosity whereby the soul gives what is superfluous: it now **gives what it needs itself**. The last degree of this gift, particularly in those dedicated to the apostolic life, **consists in giving oneself without reserve**, in giving everything for others (like St. Maximilian Kolbe).

# How to Cultivate this Gift

- Often meditating on the events and texts of Scripture which speak of **the mercy and kindness of God**; and to read either the **lives of the saints** who depict these virtues, or classical and devotional literature which make us deepen our understanding of them.
- Being faithful and constant in the **exercises of piety**, both in those commanded by the Church, and in our particular devotions.
- Transforming the ordinary actions of life into acts of religion, **doing them to please the heavenly Father**; in such wise, one's entire life becomes a prayer and, therefore, an act of filial piety toward God and of fraternal charity toward one's neighbor.