

Fruits of the Holy Spirit – Fr. John Nosan

In Don Dolindo Ruotolo's book on the Holy Spirit, he wrote about the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The soul with the help of God's grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit "produces acts of virtue, imperfect and tiring at first, in reaction to the opposition of its own corrupt nature; later, better and more gratifying with the increase of grace and the activity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which the exercise of virtue obtains from God. These fruits are like the ripening of the first acts of virtue - at first, still immature and sour fruits - afterwards, leaving the soul with profound joy and pleasure, as it were, in the tasting of ripened fruit..." (p.95).

"The fruits are distinguished from the infused virtues and from the gifts, as an action is distinguished from a power to act. In fact, the fruits... are acts, actions, deriving from the holy habits which the Holy Spirit gives to the soul. Not all acts of virtue... merit the name of fruits, but only those accompanied by a certain spiritual sweetness. This spiritual sweetness pervades the soul when, with the grace of the Holy Spirit and the docility which this gives, the soul performs an act of virtue with love and generosity." (p.95-96). "The highest degree of perfection of the fruits consists in the beatitudes, which are a prelude to eternal life.

As there is such a diversity of fruits in nature, so too in the fruits of the Holy Spirit, although the Church lists twelve principal fruits: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, long-suffering, gentleness, faith(fulness), modesty, continence and chastity.

1) Charity consists in loving God with one's whole heart, mind and strength, and from this love is born a love of neighbour, a love of God in His image. "Hence, it is steady, impartial, and heroic in its every manifestation, and possess the highest value even in its least outpouring, because charity is the admirable alchemy which can change rocks into precious gold."

2) Joy arises out of this love, and transcends all the joys of this world. "The joy which comes from the Holy Spirit does not grow dim even in tribulations. During those times, this joy can increase when tribulations are testimony to the love of God, as St. Paul could exclaim: I overflow with joy in all our troubles" (2 Cor 7:4)."

3) Peace results from our submission to God and from our union with our neighbour. "'For the soul... peace is the tranquil security of possessing [God] and of being in His grace. This is the peace of the Lord which surpasses all understanding, as St. Paul says (Phil 4:7)".

4) Patience makes us bear any adversity for love of God. "In adversities, [the

soul] becomes recollected in the gentle arms of God's providence and rejoices in believing with firm hope that God will take care of all. The tempest roars about, yet it is neither disturbed nor suffers because of it. Rather, it sails with Jesus Christ in the stern of the battered boat, awakens Him with the most affectionate prayers, and has faith that when he arises, He will calm the storm as he did on the lake (cf. Mt 8:23-27)".

"The multiple facets of patience, are fruits of habitual grace... which moves us to accept suffering for the love of God; of faith, which makes us see God in everything; of hope, causing us to abandon all to Him; of charity, compelling us to love Him with all our heart; of justice, urging us to acknowledge ourselves as sinners in need of every means of atonement; of fortitude, which keeps us steady in adversity and sustains us in bearing with it; of prudence, prompting us to avoid confrontations and quarrels; and of temperance which moderates and restrains any reactions that we might have. From these strong roots, the flower of patience blossoms by means of the Holy Spirit..."

5) Kindness inclines us to treat our neighbour with affability and courtesy, even if our enemy. "Kindness makes one sociable, civil, and pleasant in speech and in comportment, notwithstanding the rudeness, bad manners, and harshness of others. It is a great sign of holiness of soul..." "The kind soul is holy, because such a soul loves God alone and acts out of love for Him; is one, because that soul is wholly for each person; is manifold, because it is wholly for all; is subtle, because that soul penetrates to the bottom of hearts with its sweet charm; is eloquent, because it is so moving in its speech; is active, because it gives with generosity; is undefiled, because it has no hidden agenda in what it does, and is most pure in its affections."

6) Goodness inclines us to do good to all without discrimination."Kindness itself, gives to goodness... a warmth...Goodness is kindness in action. Goodness, infinite goodness - effect of the soul's union with God - is poured out by the Christian soul upon its neighbour, benefitting and healing, in imitation of Jesus Christ..." Peter announced to the centurion Cornelius, how Jesus went about doing good.

7) Longsuffering makes us persevere in patience, making us open-handed and generous with all. "On encountering delay in the realization of its plans, the soul knows how to await the moments of Divine Providence, and how to practice goodness and patience with one's neighbour, without becoming weary from resistance and opposition." "He is longsuffering, who does not trust in himself, but confides in God; he is not anxious, but abandons himself to God and does not cease to do good, ever going forward, not relying on his own powers, but on the help of divine grace."

8) Gentleness makes us indulgent with the weaknesses of our neighbour, restrains our anger, and makes us bear calmly the privations of life. "A person is defined as gentle who adapts to others, who is tractable, docile, flexible, easy to get along with, calm in suffering." "Gentleness makes the Christian a dove without

bitterness, a lamb without anger, all sweetness poured out in speech and in conduct, in the face of another's rage. Like Jesus... who invited us... 'Learn of me who am meek and humble of heart (Mt 11:29).

9) Faith(fulness/Fidelity) is truth-keeping in promises. Faithfulness "makes us maintain our pledged word, assumed tasks, and agreed-upon contracts; moreover, in respect to our neighbour, it keeps us from being suspicious, evil-minded, incredulous of anything he says, insincere, manipulative, and betraying." "Keeping one's pledged word, as well as being prompt in meeting appointments and observing prescribed schedules, is a virtue which glorifies God as truth."

10) Modesty makes us compose our outer appearance, and control our actions so as to edify others. "Modesty... sets the mode (in the sense of norms for good behaviour) i.e., regulates the pleasing and dignified manner of dressing, of walking, of speaking, of laughing, of playing." Etiquette and good manners which we should all cultivate comprise a part of modesty. It is said, that from one's actions, one can assess the inner man hidden in one's heart, if he be fickle, if he be proud, if he be troubled, if he be serious, constant, pure and mature. Hence, St. Augustine states "Let there be nothing in your actions which might offend the glance of anyone, but be such as are befitting your sanctity." "In the face and in the comportment of saints, one reads holiness; and their modesty is the halo of light which makes them known to the world, to its edification."

11) Continence makes us abstain even from legitimate pleasures, and keep within proper limits our exterior and interior sentiments. "Continence keeps the inner man in order, and... contains concupiscence within appropriate limits, not only as regard sensual pleasures, but also those related to eating, drinking, entertainment, and other pleasures of material life."

12) Chastity makes us repress disorderly desires of the flesh, and makes us preserve purity of soul. "Continence consists in struggle... and chastity consists in peace. Chastity is the victory won over the flesh which makes the Christian a living temple of the Holy Spirit. The chaste soul, whether virginal or married... rules over its body in great peace, and feels in itself the ineffable joy of intimate friendship with God. Jesus himself said: Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

The Christian who lives chastely "is a soul in which the Holy Spirit can work freely because, concupiscence being chained, all the other passions are fairly easily brought under control; he is a soul, therefore, who can rise to great holiness, and whose voice in prayer penetrates the heavens and is heard more readily by God." "In the chaste soul, the Holy Spirit completes his wonderful work of elevating a man to God, and of making him a sharer in the divine nature." (CHS, p.99-112)

May the BVM obtain for us an outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and may she help us in cultivating these gifts so as to produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Amen.