

How do we identify “holiness”? Or in other words: what is the evidence of holiness? If holiness is defined as an intimacy with Christ that results in a life of love and virtue, then what *specific characteristics* may be associated with holiness? Well this weekend as we celebrate the great Solemnity of Pentecost, which 50 days after the Resurrection of Christ, officially marks the end of the Easter season, we’re reminded of the *absolute necessity* of God the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, in each of our lives as we continue to strive for holiness.

As we consider the birth of the Church at Pentecost with the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, we’re reminded that *without* the Holy Spirit in our life, there can be no holiness. Sadly I feel at times, that as Catholics, we only talk about the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Confirmation, and then the other 363 days of the year we don’t consider just how important God the Holy Spirit is in our own life of faith and in our relationship with Christ in and through His Church.

Remember brothers and sisters that our Lord Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit *precisely* so that we could be sanctified or made holy as His disciples—*precisely* so that we could remain within the love of our

Savior and live the gift of our Catholic faith with courage and joy. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to be holy and live as faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So within the context of the Holy Spirit, let's get back to my original questions at the beginning of this homily: how do we know if someone is holy? The Church would answer this important and legitimate question in saying that holiness can only be identified and detected in a soul that is *filled* with the Holy Spirit—in a soul where the Holy Spirit actively dwells and is fully present. Furthermore, holiness or this divine presence of the Holy Spirit within a soul can be explicitly identified primarily by one's possession of the cardinal and theological virtues, and *more specifically*, one's manifestation of what the Church would call the “gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.”

Now what are the “gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit”? Well *along* with the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, the “gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit” are really the empirical evidence, if you will, of holiness. Christ's Church teaches that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are

wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (which is really a loving wonder and awe of God). Moreover, the sacred Tradition of the Church, based on chapter Five of St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians, lists 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit. In contrast to the fallen and evil works of the flesh, the fruits of the Spirit are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

Brothers and sisters, if we want the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth, as we prayed for in the Responsorial Psalm, then we must be open to receiving His gifts and bearing His fruits in our daily lives. If we want a better world and if we want to truly be holy, happy, and free, then with the help of God's grace, we must lovingly seek the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit with *every fiber of our being*. Our world is in great need of witnesses to Christ whose lives beautifully radiate the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, each of us received the Holy Spirit into our hearts at our Baptism and Confirmation, the same Holy Spirit Who was sent by our Lord Jesus Christ at Pentecost to lead the Church into all Truth and keep

us within the love of the Father. So in light of our Baptism and Confirmation, when we as individuals received the Holy Spirit, we have to ask ourselves: do we seek on a *daily basis* to live our Baptism and Confirmation by being attentive to the Holy Spirit's presence in our hearts? Do we even seek the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit with an eagerness to conform our lives completely to Christ our Savior?

If we're struggling to be holy, overcome sin, and live our Catholic faith in its fullness, then do we call upon the Holy Spirit *daily* to help us? Do we have a close relationship with the Holy Spirit, as our Lord Jesus intended us to have? Do we *repeatedly* ask the Holy Spirit on a *daily basis* to sanctify us and fill our hearts and minds with His gifts and fruits?

Brothers and sisters, our world is crying out in desperation for men and women who are filled with the Holy Spirit! We need faithful disciples of Christ whose lives heroically bear the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit—whose lives are defined by prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. The world is so hungry for authentic manifestations of

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

As we prepare to worship and receive our victorious Savior in the Most Holy Eucharist, let us ask our Lord Jesus to fill our hearts and minds with the Holy Spirit so that in receiving the Spirit's gifts and bearing His fruits, we may love as God loves and be holy as He is holy.