

Sat Chit Anand

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Gifts of the Spirit

In response to last week's announcement about my getting confirmed today, I received dozens and dozens of lovely emails congratulating me and sending blessings. I was amazed and humbled by the overwhelming positive response, which was so affirming and supportive. It was truly wonderful to receive such support and encouragement and well wishes and blessings. Thank you to everybody for all your emails. I am in awe and filled with gratitude! It was a most special day, and the ceremony was beautiful. The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred by the Bishop who lays hands on you and anoints you with the seal of the Holy Spirit. You are bestowed with the seven gifts of the Spirit: (1) wisdom, (2) understanding, (3) knowledge, (4) counsel, (5) courage / fortitude, (6) reverence, (7) awe and wonder. These gifts are summarised as follows:

1. With the gift of WISDOM, we see the Divine at work in our lives and in the world. We are able to perceive the deeper significance of events, and the wonders of nature, historical events, and the ups and downs of our lives take on deeper meaning. We are able to see how the present and the past work together and affect the mystery of the future. We see God as the Source of all, abiding within everyone and everything, and therefore we treat all with dignity.
2. KNOWLEDGE is more than an accumulation of facts – it is an intuitive knowing and understanding. The beauty and meaning of the Scriptures is revealed to us. The gift of knowledge helps us to reflect, contemplate and meditate on the mystery of God and the Trinity. In silent meditation we are able to access God's guidance.
3. With the gift of UNDERSTANDING, we understand our plan and purpose. We understand ourselves better. We are all made in the image and likeness of God and we come to better understand our deeper nature. We also grow in our understanding of God and the sacred mysteries.
4. The gift of COUNSEL is also known as right judgment. We are able to discern the difference between right and wrong, and we are guided to make the right decisions and to do what is right. When faced with moral dilemmas, we are more apt to make the better or more moral decision.
5. With the gift of COURAGE / fortitude, we overcome fear and are willing to take risks. We are willing to stand up for what is right, even if it means accepting rejection, verbal abuse, or even physical harm and death. The gift of courage gives us the firmness of mind that is required to face challenges in life with courage and strength.

6. The gift of REVERENCE allows us to recognize and respect our total reliance on God, and to have humility, trust, and love. Our hearts open to worship God, and we develop an intimate personal relationship with God as the Divine Father (Abba / Amma).

7. AWE AND WONDER open our eyes to the glory and majesty of God. We know that God is the perfection of all that we desire: perfect knowledge, goodness, power, and love. This gift is also called the gift of fear, which is described by Thomas Aquinas as the fear of separating oneself from God.

I will end with a fuller version of the beautiful quote from Isaiah that spoke to my heart: "Here is my chosen one in whom my soul delights. I have endowed you with my spirit ... I have taken you by the hand and formed you ... I have called you by name - you are mine. Should you pass through the sea, I will be with you; or through rivers, they will not swallow you up. Should you walk through fire, you will not be scorched and the flames will not burn you. You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Truly, God is hidden with you ... Does a woman forget her baby at the breast, or fail to cherish the son of her womb? Yet even if these forget, I will never forget you. See, I have branded you on the palms of my hands ... For now your creator will be your husband. Your redeemer will be the Holy One. Yes, like a forsaken wife, distressed in spirit, God calls you back ... With everlasting love I have taken pity on you ... For the mountains may depart, the hills may be shaken, but my love for you will never leave you, and my covenant of peace with you will never be shaken, says the Lord ... Pay attention, come to me; listen, and your soul will live. All humanity will come to bow down in my presence."

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Sarah, Brenda, Leela and Jeremy (wearing red scarfs) with Bishop Fr Frank and Fr Johan after Confirmation Ceremony

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