



### From A Bishop's Journal (705)

#### “Be Sealed with the Holy Spirit, the Gift of God” (4)

**O**n May 27 I was happy to publish a pastoral letter on the good and great sacrament of Confirmation. If only we could rediscover together this sacrament, it would be good for our Church and the whole world.

#### The Blessings of the Spirit

In the book titled *Je fais route avec toi* [I Journey with You] we have a wonderful description of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is a brief but dynamic description:

“I welcome the gift of wisdom, to help me give more room to the Lord, in my life.  
I welcome the gift of intelligence, to help me understand the Word of God as a guiding light in my life.  
I welcome the gift of wisdom, so as to live and love as Jesus did, despite everything.  
I welcome the gift of counsel, to be able to make good decisions that help me live as a true Christian.  
I welcome the gift of knowledge so as to find, in the light of the Gospels, answers to life's important questions.  
I welcome the gift of filial love so as to live as a real son, a real daughter of God, a real brother, a real sister to all humans.  
I welcome the gift of worship and praise in order to pray the Lord, to worship Him and give Him thanks.”

#### At the Heart of Daily Life

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not meant just for special occasions, however, they are also meant to affect our day-to-day life.

- The gift of wisdom is not meant only when making great decisions; it is meant for every day of our lives. Wisdom makes us discover or rediscover God's presence in our lives, our day-to-day lives. It is today that God is with us: I ought to repeat this every day. God is present in all of life's moments, and He never fails me. Let us not be afraid to take time for God, to spend at least one hour a week to thank Him for His presence, and to tell Him how this presence of His is important to us.
- The gift of intelligence is not only for times of study: it is for knowing God better and better, and for knowing His Word. It would be very important to take a few minutes a week to read the Word of God and learn about His great plan of love for each one of us.
- The gift of counsel is not only for the great moments of our lives. It is given to us to help us

constantly adjust our wills to the will of God, and to always take the best path, for our happiness and that of others.

### **From Day to Day**

- The gift of courage is not only for times of serious trials, like sickness and death. We all need courage, every day. You all know what happened to Christopher Reeves of Superman fame. After falling from a horse it took him daily courage, one day at a time, 300% of courage!
- The gift of knowledge is not only for use in school: It is throughout our lives that we must learn and deepen our understanding of the true meaning of life, love, and death. It is the gift that helps us discern the will of God and carry it out day by day.
- The gift of filial love and of fraternal love is not only meant for the day of marriage. It is every day that we must see ourselves as children of God, as brothers and sisters to each other: we belong to the same family, and it is love that binds us to one another.
- The gift of worship is not for use only for the great times of the year, but for every day, as it is given to help us worship God, pray to Him, and thank Him, very simply, with the heart of a child.

You see, the gifts of the Spirit follow us each day of our lives. I so much want to tell you over and over again about this wonderful presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

### **Important Promises**

One rite that often goes unnoticed or does not get sufficient attention from us is the renewal of our baptismal promises and the solemn profession of faith. Is this last a simple promise, or a commitment? I personally consider it a commitment by the future confirmed, to live as friends of Jesus, “even if it’s hard.” Years ago there was a very popular French hymn called *J’engageai ma promesse au baptême* [“I Pledged My Word at Baptism”]. We used to sing it at our Profession of Faith or at the annual parish mission: “I pledged my word at baptism, but it was others who swore the oath in my name. Today I answer for myself: I pledge myself freely, today.” In the letters that the future confirmed wrote to me, they say that it is their turn to freely commit themselves to the Lord, to live the Lord’s “commandment.” And the Lord’s ever-new commandment is always the same: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your spirit, and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.*” In its great simplicity, this twofold commandment requires the strength of the Spirit, so as to live it fully throughout the year.

### **Some Concerns**

One of my major concerns today, and one of my greatest fears is to think and even realise that tomorrow or the day after, the newly-confirmed will have quickly forgotten this great event that is Confirmation. The letters they have written are beautiful, but will they remember them in a year, a month, or even next Sunday? Several tell me that they want their love to be contagious, that they want to love God throughout their lives, that they are committing themselves to the Church “for good...” This is my concern: I am afraid that they quickly forget this as early as next week. In many places we no longer see our young people in church until the time of their school graduation, or on their wedding day. Can I, as bishop, expose the sacrament of Confirmation to such a void?... This is the question I have, and that several pastors, catechists, and parents themselves ask... I tell these young people persistently: “My dear friends, never forget what you are celebrating today: the presence of the Holy Spirit at the heart of your lives.” I must have as much faith regarding each sacrament as I have regarding the Word of God. We read in Isaiah 55: “*For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it*

*fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I have sent it.*” As Jesus says in his parables on the Kingdom of God, the seed in the earth continues to develop and grow day and night, and one day it shall be as a tree planted in the middle of our ground.

+ François Thibodeau *gm*

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.  
Bishop of Edmundston

07-11-07