

**Pastoral Perspective**

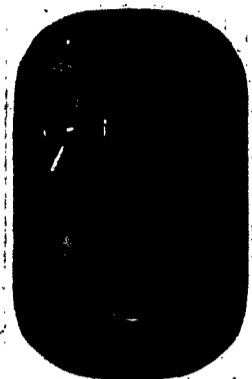
**By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan**

# Holy Spirit's Gifts: Discoveries in Discipleship

**FEAR OF [REVERENCE FOR] THE LORD**

[The second in a series of eight meditations for the Resurrection-Pentecost season.]

Last week we spoke of the Holy Spirit as the Gift par excellence: the Promise of the Father, the Legacy of the Son. Now we shall



consider the Holy Spirit as the Giver of gifts. The distinction is most important because, while the Gift was bestowed upon the Church in answer to the prayer of Jesus and in fulfillment of the Father's promise, the gifts are bestowed on individual Christians as and when the Spirit in His wisdom pleases.

While the gifts of the Spirit are beyond number, traditional Christian theology has looked to Isaiah 11:1-2 for the standard sevenfold gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. We will consider the last first.

**What is fear?**

To the psychologist fear is a feeling of disquiet or fright caused by pain. To the fundamentalist preacher fear, garnished with "fire and brimstone," is a conversion-inducing mechanism. To the superficial bible-reader fear is the best one-word description of the Old Testament. In all three cases fear is an inhibiting factor, since it radically undercuts man's self-determination. Though at times a safeguard, fear is generally a restraint, and therefore not a highly prized, positive gift.

**What is fear of the Lord?**

In a genuine setting of faith, fear can take on one of two aspects. When confronted by one's own sinfulness and ingratitude, fear becomes an expectation of punishment. When it takes on confidence in the presence of the holiness and goodness of God, fear becomes a type of reverence or awe at the overpowering reality of God.

In this sense the wise men of Israel speak of fear as "the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 110:10). Sirach composes an impressive litany which makes the fear of the Lord the equivalent of piety (Sirach 1:11-20). "Reverential fear" leads the way to blessings (Psalms 112:1, 128:1). Mercy and reward

without end await him who fears the Lord (Luke 1:50; Apoc. 11:18). Seen in this light, fear of the Lord or religious awe is not a psychological paralysis, nor an intellectual resignation, but rather a way of understanding, a posture of reverence towards the world of mystery.

It would be wrong to think that fear of the Lord means keeping a respectable distance from God. Quite the contrary, fear of the Lord, because it is the beginning of wisdom, is meant to unite us so closely to God that nothing can come between us. Through His self-surrender to death, Christ conquered sin, death and the fear that separates, the fear that can never be transformed into love. "Love will come to perfection in us when we can face the day of Judgment without fear, because even in this world we have become as He is. In love there can be no fear, for perfect love casts out fear. To fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is still afraid is still imperfect in love." (1 John 4:18).

Thus, the spiritual gift of fear is meant to bring us through various stages of moral development. The Holy Spirit moving us with His gift of fear wants to teach us these values: resistance to spiritual mediocrity, a discernment of true values, a genuine self-knowledge before God, commitment to truth, justice and love.

In a word, fear of the Lord teaches the eager disciple of Jesus that the first lesson in genuine love is: *Sursum corda!* (the uplifting of hearts) — not so much in terms of emotional release, or even energetic outreach, but rather in terms of determining what will constitute the object of worthy and continuing pursuit. Because the initial stages of genuine, Christian love are the most difficult, fear of the Lord shows the way from the very outset.

To fear the Lord means to make Him our immediate norm and our ultimate concern. To fear the Lord means to surrender our worthless fears for the only worthwhile pursuit: love of God and love of neighbor. To fear the Lord means to accept the full plan of life, blueprinted by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ the Lord!

What, then, are the discoveries in discipleship to which fear of the Lord can lead?

They are three: **self-donation, self-realization, self-consecration:**

**Self-donation.** The Letter to the Hebrews has a key statement on how far fear of the Lord (in the sense explained) can lead. Chapter 5, verse 7 reads: "During His life on earth, Christ offered up prayer and petition, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had power to save him out of death, and because of his religious awe, Jesus' prayer was heard." Love for the Father was the only factor that overcame Jesus' fear in the Garden. Only the Spirit is able to transform fear into perfect love!

**Self-realization.** Edward J. Farrell writes: "Paradoxically, what we most fear is love. Our enemies can neither ask nor get anything from us — we are comfortable because we can maintain our autonomy. If, however, someone loves us completely, abandons oneself totally to us, then we are no longer our own. Love evokes love. Often we try to insulate ourselves against such love because it asks the same in return. Partial love we can handle, but total love begets a running fear in us; instinctively, we hide. Fear of the Lord is fear of His Love, fear of His generosity, of His asking. . . . He makes such a gift of himself to us that we become His gift to others. We discover that we are most ourselves when we are His and therefore belong to others." (SURPRISED by the SPIRIT, 79-80)

**Self-consecration.** Abraham Heschel observes: "A return to reverence (i.e., religious awe) is the first prerequisite for a revival of wisdom, for the discovery of the world as an allusion to God. Wisdom comes from awe rather than from shrewdness. It is evoked not in moments of calculation but in moments of being in rapport with the mystery of reality. The greatest insights happen to us in moments of awe. A moment of awe is a moment of self-consecration. They who sense the wonder share in the wonder. They who keep holy the things that are holy shall themselves become holy." (BETWEEN GOD and MAN, 53-54)

In his magnificent highpriestly prayer, Jesus as Our Master and Model embodies all three of these Spirit-given dimensions. **Self-donation:** "Father . . . I have glorified you on earth and finished the work that you gave me to do." **Self-realization:** "Father, may they (i.e., the disciples) be one in us, as you are one in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me." **Self-consecration:** "For their sake I consecrate (i.e., offer in sacrifice) myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth." (John 17:4,21,19.)



Mrs. Tomonto . . . Msgr. Bailey . . . Father Malecki . . . Father Russell . . . Mrs. McAuliffe

## The Five Recorders

**Their Role at Bishops' Meeting**

By CHARLES RANDISI

Syracuse — Each of the five small groups had a recorder. This person took notes on his session and the questions that were discussed there. He then prepared a report which was submitted to the whole body of the conference and the executive panel, which was made up of Cardinal Terence Cooke, and Bishops Francis Mugavero of Brooklyn, David Cunningham of Syracuse, and Edwin Broderick of Albany.

Group I's recorder for the first day was Mrs. Irene Tomonto, who is half of a couple active in the Christian Family Movement in New York City. She spoke of the need for organization on the parish level. "Strong parishes must address themselves to the

needs of people in the parish family," she said. She reported on the value of Pre-Cana conferences and other sacramental preparation.

Msgr. Joseph Bailey, director of the Family Life Bureau in Ogdensburg, recorded for Group II. His group spoke of the need to update guidelines for the education of seminarians, particularly in the field of "family life concerns." The principal medium for family life education efforts should be the pulpit, he said, but other media, like television programs to present bishops' messages must be explored.

Father John Malecki, co-director of the Consultation Services Center, in Albany, reported on Group III (Bishop Hogan's group). The State

Catholic Committee, he said, needs to be recognized as an effective source of information regarding legislation affecting family life. The group as a whole endorsed "education in human sexuality," he said, "not just the cognitive transmission of ideas, but of values."

The recorder for Group IV was Father Howard Russell, chancellor of the Diocese of Albany. He said that the group felt that "precise thinking" was necessary with regard to mixed marriages. "We must be careful of thinking that what feels good to me is right." His group also said that the parish "needs to emphasize more concern for those in special situations, like the childless, the widowed, the separated and divorced.

Group V was reported on by



Bishops Hickey and Hogan hard at work.



Bishop Hogan confers with Msgr. Charles J. Fahey, chairman of the State Council of Catholic Charities Directors, and Auxiliary Bishop Francis J. Harrison of the Syracuse Diocese.

Mrs. Catherine McAuliffe from Syracuse. Marriage counseling, her group thought, should not be used only during marital

crises, but "all through life. Couples should have someone to turn to," for example after the birth of the first child.