

LESSON SIXTEENTH.

ON THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

* 176 Q. What are the effects of confirmation?

The effects of confirmation are an increase of sanctifying grace, the strengthening of our faith, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

“Increase,” because we must be in a state of grace, that is, having already sanctifying grace in our souls when we receive confirmation. “Strengthening,” so that we have no doubt about the doctrines we believe.

* 177 Q. What are the gifts of the Holy Ghost?

A. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

* 178 Q. Why do we receive the gift of fear of the Lord?

A. We receive the gift of fear of the Lord to fill us with a dread of sin.

On account of the goodness of God and the punishment He can inflict.

* 179 Q. Why do we receive the gift of piety?

A. We receive the gift of piety to make us love God as a Father, and obey Him because we love Him.

* 180 Q. Why do we receive the gift of knowledge?

A. We receive the gift of knowledge to enable us to discover the will of God in all things.

* 181 Q. Why do we receive the gift of fortitude?

A. We receive the gift of fortitude to strengthen us to do the will of God in all things.

Some know the will of God,—what they should do,—but they have not the courage to follow the dictates of their conscience. For example, a person goes with bad company: the gift of knowledge will teach him that he should give it up; but the gift of fortitude will enable him to do what his conscience shows him to be right.

* 182 Q. Why do we receive the gift of counsel?

A. We receive the gift of counsel to warn us of the deceits of the devil, and of the dangers to salvation.

The devil is much wiser than we are, and has much more experience, being among the people of the world ever since the time of Adam—about 6000 years. He could therefore easily deceive and overcome us if God Himself by the gift of counsel did not enable us to discover his tricks and expose his plots. When at times we are tempted, our conscience warns us, and if we follow the warning we shall escape the sin. Counsel tells us when persons or places are dangerous for our salvation.

* 183 Q. Why do we receive the gift of understanding?

A. We receive the gift of understanding to enable us to know more clearly the mysteries of faith.

“**Mysteries,**” truths we could never know by reason, but only by the teaching of God; and the gift of understanding enables us to know better what His teaching means. The apostles heard and knew what Our Lord taught, but they did not fully understand the whole meaning till the Holy Ghost had come.

* 184 Q. Why do we receive the gift of wisdom?

A. We receive the gift of wisdom to give us a relish for the things of God and to direct our whole life and all our actions to His honor and glory.

“Relish,” a liking for, a desire for.

* 185 Q. Which are the beatitudes?

A. The beatitudes are:

(1) Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(2) Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.

(3) Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

(4) Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.

(5) Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

(6) Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

(7) Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

(8) Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The beatitudes are part of a sermon Our Lord once preached to the people on the Mount (Matt. v.). When Our Lord wished to preach, the Jews would not always allow Him to enter their synagogues or meeting-houses; so He preached to the people in the open air. Sometimes He stood in a boat by the seashore; sometimes on a little hill, with the people standing or sitting near Him. Did you ever think how you would have acted if you lived at that time and were present when Our Lord preached? How anxious you would have been to get near to Him? How you would have pushed your way through the crowd and listened to every word? Why, then, do you sometimes pay so little attention in church or at instructions when the words of Our Lord are repeated to you?

Our Lord instituted a Church which, as we know, is sometimes called the kingdom of heaven. In this sermon He laid down the condition for being good subjects of His kingdom; that is, He gives the virtues we should practise to be good children of the Church. He tells us what rewards we shall have for practising these virtues and leading a holy life: namely, God's grace and blessing in this world and everlasting glory in heaven.

(1) "**Poor in spirit.**" One is poor in spirit if he does not set his heart upon riches and the goods of this world in such a way that he would be willing to offend God in order to possess them, or rather than part with them. Thus one who has no money but who would do anything to get it, would be poor, but not poor in spirit, and therefore not among those Our Lord calls blessed. If we are really poor and wish to be poor in spirit also, we must be contented with our lot—with what God gives us—and never complain against Him. No matter how poor, miserable, or afflicted we may be, we could still be worse, since we can find others in a worse condition than we are. We do not endure every species of misery, but only this or that particular kind; and if the rest were added, how much worse our condition would be! The very greatest misery is to be in a state of sin. If we are poor and in sin, our condition is indeed pitiable, for we have no consolation; but if we are virtuous in poverty, bearing our trials in patience and resignation for the love of God, we have the rich treasures of His grace and every assurance of future happiness. On the other hand, if one is very rich and gives freely and plentifully to the poor and works of charity, and is willing to part with riches rather than offend God, such a one is poor in spirit and can be called blessed. It is a great mistake to risk our souls for things we must leave to others at our death. Sometimes those who leave the greatest inheritance are soonest forgotten and despised, because the money or property bequeathed gives rise to numerous law-suits, quarrels and jealousies among the relatives, and thus becomes a very curse to

that family, whose members hate one another on its account. Or it may happen that the heirs thoughtlessly enjoy and foolishly squander the wealth the man, now dead, has labored so hard to accumulate, while he, perhaps, is suffering in hell for sins committed in securing it. Again, how many children have been ruined through the wealth left them by their parents! Instead of using it for good purposes they have made it a means of sin ; often lose their faith and souls on account of it ; and in their ingratitude never offer a prayer or give an alms for the soul of the parent, who in his anxiety to leave all to them left nothing in charity to the Church or the poor. Surely it is the greatest folly to set our hearts upon that which can be of no value to us after death. When a person dies men ask: What wealth has he left behind? But God and the angels ask, What merits has he sent before him?

(2) "**Possess the land**"—that is, the promised or holy land, which was a figure of the Church. Therefore it means the meek shall be true members of Our Lord's Church here on earth and hereafter in heaven, and be beloved by all.

(3) "**That mourn.**" Suffering is good for us if we bear it patiently. It makes us more like our blessed Lord, Who was called the Man of Sorrows.

(4) "**Justice**"—that is, all kinds of virtue.

"**Filled**"—that is, with goodness and grace. In other words, if we ask and really wish to become virtuous, we shall become so. St. Joseph is called in Holy Scripture "a just man," to show that he practised every virtue.

(5) If we are "merciful" to others, God will be merciful to us.

(6) "**Clean of heart**"—that is, pure in thoughts, words, deeds, and looks.

(7) "**Peacemakers.**" If persons who try to make peace and settle disputes are called the children of God, those who, on the contrary, try to stir up dissensions should be called the children of the devil. Never tell the evil you may hear of another, especially to the one of whom it was spoken; and

never carry stories from one to another: it is contemptible, and sinful as well. If you have nothing good to say of the character of another, be silent, unless your duty compels you to speak. Never be a child of the devil by exciting jealousy, hatred, or revenge in any one; but, on the contrary, make peace wherever you can, and be one of the children of God.

(8) "**Suffer persecution.**" Therefore, when you are badly treated on account of your piety or religion, remember you are like the martyrs of your holy faith, suffering for virtue and truth, and that you will receive your reward.

* 186 Q. Which are the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost?

A. The twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost are charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, and chastity.

"Fruits," the things that grow from the gifts of the Holy Ghost. "**Charity,**" love of God and our neighbor. "**Peace**" with God and man and ourselves. With God, because we are His friends. With man, because we deal justly with all and are kind to all. With ourselves, because we have a good conscience, that does not accuse us of sin. "**Benignity,**" disposition to do good and show kindness. "**Long-suffering**"—same as patience. "**Modesty, continency, and chastity**" refer to purity in thoughts, words, looks, and actions.