

Gifts of the Holy Spirit: An 8-Day Retreat with St. Ignatius and St. Alphonsus

Begin your retreat with the Offertory Prayer to the Holy Spirit, acknowledging the Spirit as your true God and uniting yourself with the adoration of the angels and saints

Offertory Prayer

*Holy Spirit,
Divine Counselor,
I adore You as my true God,
with God the Father and God the Son.
I adore You and unite myself to the adoration.
You receive from the angels and saints.*

*I give You my heart
and I offer my ardent thanksgiving
for all the grace which You never cease to bestow on me.
- St. Alphonsus Ligouri*

Day 1: Holy Fear

Preparatory Prayer: "I ask God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and ways may be directed purely to the praise and service of God" (SE46).*

Prelude: Reflect on holy fear as a gift that acknowledges the vast difference between God and humanity, instilling respect and awe, leading to conversion and a deeper relationship with Him.

Holy fear, sometimes called "fear of the Lord," is one of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Holy fear does not mean being scared of God, but rather recognizing the vast difference between God and humanity. Through this gift, we acknowledge His greatness and our own sinfulness. It instills in us a profound respect and awe for God, leading us to conversion and a deeper relationship with Him. Read the psalm first for understanding. Read a second time to listen for which words resonate. Read a third time to let the psalmist's words become your prayer.

Petitionary Prayer: "O Giver of all supernatural gifts, who filled the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with such immense favors, I beg You to visit me with Your grace and Your love and to grant me the gift of holy fear, from falling back into my past sins, for which I beg pardon" (St. Alphonsus Ligouri).

Meditation: Psalm 34

1 Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him out and he went away.
2 I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall be always in my mouth. 3 My soul will glory in the LORD; let the poor hear and be glad. 4 Magnify the LORD with me; and let us exalt his name together.
5 I sought the LORD, and he answered me, delivered me from all my fears. 6 Look to him and be radiant, and your faces may not blush for shame. 7 This poor one cried out and the LORD heard, and from all his distress he saved him. 8 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he saves them. 9 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the stalwart one who takes refuge in him. 10 Fear the LORD, you his holy ones; nothing is lacking to those who fear him. 11 The rich grow poor and go hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. 12 Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you fear of the LORD.
13 Who is the man who delights in life, who loves to see the good days? 14 Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking lies. 15 Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. 16 The eyes of the LORD are directed toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. 17 The LORD's face is against evildoers to wipe out their memory from the earth. 18 The righteous cry out, the LORD hears and he rescues them from all their afflictions. 19 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed. 20. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him from them all. 21 He watches over all his bones; not one of them shall be broken. 22 Evil will slay the wicked; those who hate the righteous are condemned. 23 The LORD is the redeemer of the souls of his servants; and none are condemned who take refuge in him.

Reflection: How have I experienced God answering my prayers? When do I notice His closeness and presence in my life? What blessings am I particularly grateful for today?

Day 2: Piety

Preparatory Prayer: "I ask God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and ways may be directed purely to the praise and service of God" (SE46).*

Prelude: Piety, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is also referred to as the "spirit of godliness". It manifests as a deep reverence for God, who is our Father, and moves us to see others as our brothers and sisters in Christ. Furthermore, it helps us to honor and worship Him, who is all-loving and all-good, and live our faith with devotion and humility. Piety gives us the grace to depend on God for all things. Notice how Jesus imparts this message to His disciples.

Petitionary Prayer: "Grant me the gift of piety, so that I may serve You for the future with increased fervor, follow with more promptness Your holy inspirations, and observe your divine precepts with greater fidelity" (St. Alphonsus Ligouri).

Meditation: Matthew 6:5-18

Teaching About Prayer.

5 *"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. 7. In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. 8. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

The Lord's Prayer.

9 This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread; 12 and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; 13 and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one. 14 If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

Teaching About Fasting.

16 When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

18 so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."

Reflection: How have I experienced the fatherly love of God in my life? Who in my life has been an example of His love and goodness? What longings do I carry in my heart that I wish to bring to Him this day?

Day 3: Knowledge

Preparatory Prayer:

"I ask God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and ways may be directed purely to the praise and service of God" (SE46).*

Prelude: Knowledge is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the consciousness of an object, fact, or principle that can be reached by cognitive faculties. Knowledge of God can be attained by both natural reason as well as divine revelation. The gift of knowledge from the Holy Spirit helps us to judge correctly about matters of faith, to discern God's will, and to live according to His truth. Notice how Jesus affirms Peter's knowledge is a grace from the Father.

Petitionary Prayer:

"Grant me the gift of knowledge, so that I may know the things of God and, enlightened by Your holy teaching, may walk, without deviation, in the path of eternal salvation" (St. Alphonsus Ligouri).

Meditation: Matthew 16:13-20

Peter's Confession About Jesus.

13 When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi^u he asked his disciples, "*Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*" 14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "*But who do you say that I am?*" 16 Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus said to him in reply, "*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. 18 And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*" 20 Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah.

Reflection:

Who in my life has helped me to grow deeper in my faith? Who has helped me to know and love God more deeply? What am I discerning now as I seek to know God's will?

Day 4: Fortitude

Preparatory Prayer:

"I ask God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and ways may be directed purely to the praise and service of God" (SE46).*

Prelude: Fortitude, also known as courage, is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as one of the four cardinal virtues. Fortitude helps us to face challenges with strength, resolve, and firmness. Fortitude helps us to pursue difficult goods and avoid the hard-to-avoid evils and protects us from being overwhelmed by fear. Read the scripture first to understand. Read a second time and be attentive to how Jesus' words resonate.

Petitionary Prayer: "Grant me the gift of fortitude, so that I may overcome courageously all the assaults of the devil, and all the dangers of this world which threaten the salvation of my soul" (St. Alphonsus Ligouri).

Meditation: John 15:18-27

The World's Hatred.

18. *"If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. 19. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. 20. Remember the word I spoke to you, 'No slave is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21 And they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me. 22. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin; but as it is they have no excuse for their sin. 23. Whoever hates me also hates my Father. 24 If I had not done works among them that no one else ever did, they would not have sin; but as it is, they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25. But in order that the word written in their law might be fulfilled, 'They hated me without cause.' 26 "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. 27 And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.*

Reflection:

Where in my life do I feel called to be more courageous? What challenges are obstacles for me in Christian living? What worries or fears overwhelm me and keep me from being attentive to God's activity in my life?

Day 5: Counsel

Preparatory Prayer: "I ask God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and ways may be directed purely to the praise and service of God" (SE46).*

Prelude: Counsel is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that aids us in making choices in accordance with God's will. It is particularly helpful for making moral decisions as it enables a person to judge rightly and promptly the correct course of action. This gift of the Holy Spirit helps us to align our lives with the teachings of the Church and helps us to grow in virtue and holiness. Notice how Jesus calls on His disciples to do His will in word and deed.

Petitionary Prayer:

"Grant me the gift of counsel, so that I may choose what is more conducive to my spiritual advancement and may discover the wiles and snares of the tempter"
(St. Alphonsus Ligouri).

Meditation: Matthew 7:21-29

The True Disciple. 21. *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.*

22. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' 23. Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'

The Two Foundations. 24 *"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. 26 And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. 27. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."* 28 When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Reflection:

How do I make time to listen and reflect on God's will when I have a decision to make? What choices are before me now that I seek God's help in discerning? How does the enemy distract and tempt me?

Day 6: Understanding

Preparatory Prayer: "I ask God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and ways may be directed purely to the praise and service of God" (SE46).*

Prelude: Understanding is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that enables believers to comprehend the truths of faith through both reason and divine revelation. This gift is bestowed at Baptism and is cultivated through the sacraments to aid us in growing in holiness. With the gift of understanding, we can grasp divine mysteries of faith that surpass human reasoning.

Petitionary Prayer: "Grant me the gift of understanding, so that I may apprehend the divine mysteries and by contemplation of heavenly things detach my thoughts and affections from the vain things of this miserable world" (St. Alphonsus Ligouri).

Meditation: 1 John 4:1-6

Testing the Spirits.

1 Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, 3 and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God. This is the spirit of the antichrist that, as you heard, is to come, but in fact is already in the world. 4 You belong to God, children, and you have conquered them, for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5. They belong to the world; accordingly, their teaching belongs to the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We belong to God, and anyone who knows God listens to us, while anyone who does not belong to God refuses to hear us. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.

Reflection:

What do I seek to understand more deeply in my faith journey right now? What "worldly things" hinder my spiritual journey? What does it mean to me that I belong to God?

Day: 7 Wisdom

Preparatory Prayer: “I ask God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and ways may be directed purely to the praise and service of God” (SE46).*

Prelude: Wisdom is among the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, originating from a deep reverence for God, who is all-loving. It is the ability to make sound judgments and guide oneself according to God’s divine will. Wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit which enables us to love Him and Serve Him in all our actions and choices.

Petitionary Prayer: “Grant me the gift of wisdom, so that I may rightly direct all my actions, referring them to God as my last end; so that, having loved Him and served Him in this life, I may have the happiness of possessing Him eternally in the next” (St. Alphonsus Ligouri).

Meditation: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

1 When I came to you, brothers, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, 4 and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive (words of) wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power, 5 so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. The True Wisdom. 6 Yet we do speak a wisdom to those who are mature, but not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away. 7 Rather, we speak God’s wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory, 8 and which none of the rulers of this age knew; for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written:

“What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him,” 10 this God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God. 11 Among human beings, who knows what pertains to a person except the spirit of the person that is within? Similarly, no one knows what pertains to God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we speak about them not with words taught by human wisdom, but with words taught by the Spirit, describing spiritual realities in spiritual terms. 14. Now the natural person does not accept what pertains to the Spirit of God, for to him it is foolishness, and he cannot understand it, because it is judged spiritually. 15. The spiritual person, however, can judge everything but is not subject to judgment by anyone. 16. For “who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to counsel him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

Reflection: What areas of my life is the Lord calling me to rest on His wisdom instead of my own? When have I sensed the Lord speaking to me in my life? What attachments do I desire to be rid of so that I may direct all my actions to God alone?

Day 8: Life in the Spirit

Preparatory Prayer:

“I ask God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and ways may be directed purely to the praise and service of God” (SE46).*

Prelude: Read the traditional translation of the [First Principle and Foundation](#). Ask God to help you to understand. Read a second time. Notice which words draw you in and or what words you sense resistance. Read a third time. Reflect on the questions below.

Petitionary Prayer:

Write your own petitionary prayer. Speak directly to the Lord from your heart. Ask Him for what you are desiring.

FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION (SE:23)

BY ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

(TRANSLATION BY LOUIS J. PUHL, SJ)

- "Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.
- The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created.
- Hence, man is to make use of them in as far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.
- Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.
- Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created."

Reflection: What words or phrases speak to me from St. Ignatius' First Principle and Foundation? What part of the principle and foundation do I notice is most difficult for me to live out? What does it mean to me that the Lord desires to bestow on me the many gifts of the Spirit so that I may live in greater freedom and do His Will? What gifts of the Spirit do I desire most in my life today?

Final Reflections: Savor the graces from this Gifts of the Spirit retreat. Give praise to the Lord with gratitude for all He has done, and for the graces you have received. End with a Colloquy, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.