Gifts of the Spirit

Teacher Background

Isaiah, one of the Hebrew prophets, lists these gifts of the Spirit as follows: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord [awe and wonder], and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2-3).

Catholics believe that when they are anointed with the special oil called "chrism" at Baptism and again at Confirmation, they receive the Holy Spirit in their lives. The Church teaches that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, alive in the world today, dwelling with people and in people, guiding and giving strength.

Wisdom

Do you tend to live for the moment, or do you try to look ahead and consider the future? If you jump right in and worry about the consequences later, you probably haven't called on the gift of wisdom.

Wisdom is about looking ahead, making the best of things until good times came along. Wisdom listens to people with more experience. Sometimes it weighs all the evidence and makes a different decision, but wisdom listens first.

Understanding

All the gifts of the Spirit are connected. Wisdom and Understanding are certainly linked. Does someone you know seem to have problems? Try being a listener, not giving advice, but listening. The gift of understanding helps you to really hear what another person is saying. Sometimes that's all that is needed.

Someone using the gift of understanding has other skills as well, like the ability to keep a confidence and never gossiping about anything that is shared.
Right Judgement

Right judgment or counsel is a gift you can exercise all the time. Not a day goes by that you don't have to make dozens of decisions. Some are pretty easy, like what to have for lunch. Some aren't so simple. Should you cheat in a test? Would your friend be better off if you told his parents that he was smoking or would you be betraying him?
The gift of right judgment assists you to weigh all the alternatives and consequences, to consider all you have been taught by your parents and responsible adults and to pray for guidance. You can be confident that God will be with you in your decision if you take the time for the thoughtful consideration that leads to right judgment.

Courage

Acting on your judgments requires courage. Are there any situations in school that are getting out of hand? Maybe you can exercise your gift of courage to solve the problem.
Courage involves sticking up for others, even when that might make you unpopular. It means believing in positive values and then trying as best you can to live those values in daily life.

Knowledge

A person demonstrating the gift of knowledge doesn't take things at face value, but looks for the reasons and the results. Such a person might ask the Holy Spirit's help in dealing with the things that don't make sense right now.
A knowledgeable person is someone who knows that they don’t know everything; that other people sometimes have more experience or wisdom. Knowledgeable people seek to understand things so that their lives and the lives of others will be richer.
Awe and Wonder
Awe and wonder is the gift of stopping to appreciate things, to smell the flowers! Have you ever seen a sunset that just blew you away? How about the colours of the trees in autumn or the immensity of Uluru or the Great Barrier Reef? Did you ever see a new baby and wonder how it is possible that those tiny fingers really can grasp yours and those little ears can hear?

God inspires us with awe all the time. We are created in the divine image. That doesn't mean we look like God, but it means that we have a spiritual dimension and we can ask the Spirit to fill us with all the gifts that we need to live according to God's will.

Reverence
Reverence is a natural follow-on to awe and wonder. If the sunset blows us away, how can we join in destroying the ozone layer so the sun will become an instrument of terror? Why are people burning down the forests instead of watching the trees change colour? Is it necessary to throw tires and tin cans into the water rather than enjoy the Great Barrier Reef with wonder?

Reverence means respecting God and God's creation. People who neglect the gift of faith or reverence don't see God's hand at work in creation. A person with the gift of reverence sees the presence of God in all things.