

Dear brothers and sisters, during this lent, we are reflecting on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We examined the first three gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding and counsel. Today we think about what the Lord does, He always comes to support us in our weakness with a special gift, the gift of fortitude. With the gift of fortitude, the Holy Spirit gives us strength and frees our heart from fears, obstacles and uncertainties, so that the Word of God can be put into practice, in an authentic and joyful way. This gift of fortitude helps us to remain faithful to the Lord and His Gospel even in our difficulties and weakness as many saints did in their lives, to carry on our lives, our work, our families and our faith. Once Pope Francis in one of his audience spoke of the gift of fortitude in times of trial. He said "The Holy Spirit fills those who open their hearts to Him with the gift of fortitude, the strength to carry on our lives and witness our faith, despite the difficulties that life can sometimes present us with". As St. Paul said: "I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me" (Phil. 4:13), in our everyday life, in difficult times, the Lord always gives us strength, He never gives us more than we can handle.

The readings of today's liturgy help us to grasp the importance of this gift. In the first reading we see the Israelites were thirst and dying for water. They were weak without food and water in the desert. They were not strong enough to walk through the desert. They needed water to quench their thirst and get strength to proceed. So they pleaded Moses to help them with water. When Moses prayed to God on behalf people, God said to him "Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink." Rock symbolizes the strength and fortitude. God is the rock of our salvation. So from God, the rock of our salvation, people receive the water, the strength, the fortitude, to refresh them and renew their faith and enthusiasm in the desert of their weakness. In the second reading St. Paul speaks of the love of God is poured in our hearts through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In our weakness and our helplessness, God gives us courage, the gifts of fortitude to face our difficulties and to rise from our sinfulness.

In the gospel, the immorality of the Samaritan woman shows her weakness, her falling in to sin that she had five husbands. Her empty jar symbolizes her emptiness of heart that she needed to fill it with the living water that can make her strong and refreshed. And when Jesus said to her, " whoever drinks the water I shall give, will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." We see that the word of God changed her life, made her get up again strengthened by God. She left her water jar at the well and went into the town with full of living water, full of faith and grace of God and said to the people that she had seen the Christ. The weakness of the Samaritan woman symbolizes our own weakness. We have come here with our emptiness at altar of our God to draw graces for our lives. Jesus Christ fills us with the gifts of His Spirit, body and blood. Jesus is our strength, He is our living water who fortifies us and gives us the refreshment and renews our strength and enthusiasm to get up again and walk through our lives. Like the Samaritan woman let us also go and announce the good news that we have seen the Christ. Whenever we may be tempted to allow ourselves be overtaken by laziness or despondency, especially when faced with the hardships and trials of life.

Whenever we feel weary or discouraged along the journey of faith, let us pray to the Holy Spirit to grant us the gift of fortitude, to refresh us and to guide our steps with renewed enthusiasm to live our lives following Jesus. May God be with us and bless us all. Amen.