

THE GIFT OF COUNSEL.

We have seen how necessary for the sanctification of a Christian is the gift of fortitude ; but it is not sufficient ; there is need of another gift, which completes it. This other gift is *Counsel*. *Fortitude* needs direction. The gift of *Knowledge* is not the guide of *Fortitude*, and for this reason,—that *Knowledge* teaches the soul her last end, and gives her general rules for her conduct ; but it does not bring her light sufficient for the special application of God's law to particular cases, and for the practical doing her duty. In those varied circumstances in which we are to be placed, and in the decisions we must then form, we shall have to hearken to the voice of the Holy Ghost, and this voice speaks to us through the gift of *Counsel*. It will tell us, if we are attentive to its speaking, what we must do and what we must not do, what we must say and what we must not say, what we may keep and what we must give up. The Holy Ghost acts upon our understanding by the gift of *Counsel*, as he acts upon our will by the gift of *Fortitude*.

This precious gift bears upon our whole life ; for we are continually obliged to be deciding on one of two sides or questions. How grateful, then, should we not be to the Holy Ghost, who is ever ready to be our counsellor, if we will but permit him ! And if we follow *his* direction, what snares he will teach us to avoid ! how many illusions he will dispel ! how grand the truths he will show us ! But, in order that his inspirations may not be lost upon us, we must be on our guard against such miseries of our nature as the following : natural impulse, which is but too often the sole motive of our acts ; rashness, which makes us follow whatever feeling happens to be uppermost in our mind ; precipitation, which urges

us to judge or act, before we have seen both sides of the case; and lastly, indifference, which makes us decide at hap-hazard, out of a repugnance we have to take the trouble of examining what is the best course to pursue.

By the gift of Counsel, the Holy Ghost saves us from all these evils. He corrects the impetuosity, or, it may be, the apathy of our temperament. He keeps the soul alive to what is true, and good, and conducive to her real interests. He introduces into the soul that virtue which completes and seasons every other,—we mean discretion, whereby the other virtues are harmonised and kept from extremes. Under the direction of the gift of Counsel, the Christian has nothing to fear; the Holy Ghost takes the whole responsibility. What matters it, therefore, if the world find fault, or criticise, or express surprise, or be scandalised? The world thinks itself wise; but it has not the gift of Counsel. Hence, it often happens, that what is undertaken by its advice, results in the very opposite to what was intended. Was it not of the world that God spoke, when he said: *My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways my ways?*¹

Let us, then, with all the ardour of our hearts, desire this divine gift that will preserve us from the danger of being our own guides; but let us remember, it will only dwell in us on the condition of our allowing it to be master. If the Holy Ghost sees that we are not led by worldly principles, and that we acknowledge our own weakness, he will be our Counsel; if he find that we are wise in our own eyes, he will withdraw his light, and leave us to ourselves.

O Holy Spirit! we would not that thou shouldst ever abandon us. Sad experience has taught us how fraught with danger is all human prudence. Most

¹ Is. lv. 8.

cheerfully do we promise thee to mistrust our own ideas, which are so apt to blind and mislead us. Keep up within us the magnificent gift thou gavest us at Baptism : be thou our Counsel, yea, unreservedly and for ever ! *Show me, O Lord, thy ways, and teach me thy paths. Direct me in thy truth, and teach me : for thou art the God who canst save me ; therefore have I waited on thee, all the day long.*¹ We know that we are to be judged for all our works and intentions ; but we know, too, that we have nothing to fear so long as we are faithful to thy guidance. Therefore will we attentively *hear what the Lord God will speak in us* ;² we will listen to thee, O Holy Spirit of Counsel, whether thou speakest to us directly thyself, or whether thou sendest us to those whom thou shalt appoint as our guides. Blessed, then, be Jesus, who has sent us such a Counsellor ! and blessed be thou, O Holy Spirit ! who deignest to give us thine aid, in spite of all our past resistance !

¹ Ps. xxiv. 4. 5.

² Ibid. lxxxiv. 9.