



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

# Reflections

## July 2015 – The Real Gift

In May 1952, C.S. Lewis responded to a letter he had received from a lady who was a recent convert to Christianity. Lewis stated that all our prayers are being answered and thanked God for it, and shared with her a concern about whether she was possibly “just a trifle too excited”:

It is quite right that you should feel that “something terrific” has happened to you... Accept these sensations with thankfulness as birthday cards from God, but remember that they are only greetings, not the real gift. I mean that it is not the sensations that are the real thing. The real thing is the gift of the Holy Spirit which can’t usually be—perhaps not ever—experienced as a sensation or emotion. The sensations are merely the response of your nervous system. Don’t depend on them. Otherwise when they go and you are once more emotionally flat (as you certainly will be quite soon), you might think that the real thing had gone too. But it won’t. It will be there when you can’t feel it. May even be most operative when you can feel it least.<sup>1</sup>

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis noted that moods will change, whatever view your reason takes, and stated that:

unless you teach your moods “where they get off”, you can never be either a sound Christian or even a sound atheist, but just a creature dithering to and fro, with its beliefs really dependent on the weather and the state of its digestion.<sup>2</sup>



Lewis’s advice for Christians not to depend on their feelings is applicable whether a person is a new convert or has been following Christ for many years. Our faith is not dependent on our feelings, but on the trustworthiness of God and Holy Scripture. And since everyone’s life has ups and downs, it may be comforting to remember Lewis’s words that the Holy Spirit may be most operative when we can feel Him least.

*“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”*

ACTS 2:38 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>*The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis*, Vol. III, *Narnia, Cambridge and Joy*, 1950-1963, edited by Walter Hooper, HarperSanFrancisco, 2007, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup>C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperOne, An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), pp. 141-142.