

Today I want to give a teaching homily on the second reading from I Corinthians, chapter 12. Let me refresh your memory from five minutes ago. “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom, to another, the expression of knowledge . . . to another faith by the same Spirit; To another gifts of healing . . . ; to another mighty deeds; to another, prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another, varieties of tongues; to another, interpretation of tongues. But the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.”

I want to look closely at these words of St. Paul because these gifts of the Spirit are central to the life of the Church, although we may have forgotten that – and they are important to our parish, and to the whole Catholic Church, for growing in holiness. As Catholics we don't

talk about the Holy Spirit much, but we need to know the Spirit if we're to live the Catholic life to the fullest.

There are two kinds of gifts of the Holy Spirit. The first kind are personal gifts, meant for our own individual spiritual growth. We read of these gifts in Isaiah 11. They are wisdom, knowledge, counsel, understanding, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. Maybe you vaguely remember these from confirmation class.

The second kind of gifts of the Holy Spirit are called "charisms." The charisms are what St. Paul is talking about here, and what I want to concentrate on today. The charisms are described most fully in the passage from I Corinthians we just heard. These charisms are manifestations of God's power and glory given to individuals, both lay and ordained, not for their individual growth, but for the growth and building up of the whole Church. The charisms are meant to be used for others. Let's look briefly at these charisms St. Paul listed.

Some of the charisms are about doing things. The gift of healing: Which allows a person to be God's instrument in bringing about the physical, emotional, or spiritual healing of someone. The gift of faith: which allows someone at a given moment to call on God's power with certainty that excludes doubt. This is not a matter of general belief in doctrine. It's a gift for a moment of need. The gift of miracles: Which allows a person to be God's instrument in an instantaneous healing or some other marvelous display of God's power.

There are also intellectual charisms. For instance, the gift of wisdom: Which gives a person an insight into God's plan for the community. (Note the difference between the personal gift of wisdom from Isaiah 11 – which allows an individual to have an insight into his or her own situation). The gift of knowledge: Which allows a person an insight into a mystery of God, a clarity of doctrine and the ability to express it to others in a way they can understand. And the gift of

discernment: Which means being able to discern the source of an inspiration, whether from the Holy Spirit, oneself, or the Evil Spirit.

Finally, there are the Charisms of words. The gift of prophecy: Whereby someone gives God's message for the whole community. The gift of tongues: wherein a person speaks and prays in a tongue unknown to him – sometimes with a message for others, or more commonly (and this is an exception about the Church-wide focus of the charisms) for oneself. And the gift of interpretation of tongues: Which allows someone to translate the praying in tongues of another person, so others can understand it.

These charisms or gifts are: freely given to an individual; the gift is supernatural, but not magic; while the person may exercise the gift often, the person never personally owns the power of the gift; the gift is God's power working for others for the building up of the community – at God's command; and the gift is exercised with the full consent of the individual.

Why do these charisms matter? Because they're supposed to be part of the ordinary working of the Catholic Church. In our Gospel we hear of the first of the miracles or "signs" that Jesus performs – the turning of water in wine at Cana. Jesus, in His public ministry, regularly performed signs and wonders. It was just part of the experience of Jesus. AND THAT IS STILL SUPPOSED TO BE THE CASE.

St. Paul in I Cor: 12 tells us that. The Spirit still wants to perform signs and wonders among us, and through us. We have been given the same charisms that the ancient Catholics of Corinth were given – we're just not aware of it or using them very well. We Catholics tend to think only saints are given such gifts. But the charisms are not given by God as a reward for a person's holiness. They are the normal equipping of all baptized and confirmed people for the mission of spreading the good news of the Gospel of Jesus. Again, remember, the charisms are not for the individual who uses them. They are for the good of others. But these charisms lie dormant in most of us.

As Pastor here I want to open us up more to the Holy Spirit. That's one of my priorities for the parish. Last Fall we had a Life in the Spirit Seminar to learn about, and pray for, the Baptism in the Spirit and the unleashing of charisms within our parish. Just this weekend we had the Called and Gifted Workshop to help discern one's charisms. This Spring we will have a couple more events at the parish centered on the same goal of experiencing and growing in our knowledge and love of the Holy Spirit's gifts. These are: Dr. Mary Healy's mission and healing service on February 22-23; and The JPPI Institute's Days of Equipping on April 5-6. Please save those dates and come.

We should not think of our faith as only a philosophy of ideas, or merely a set of moral rules. It is an interaction and encounter with the Person Jesus Christ, who wants to share His life with us – including the signs and wonders He Himself did. Amazing stuff is supposed to happen when we become Disciples of Jesus, and it will, if we let the Spirit work.