

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C
Fr. Chad S. Green
Holy Family Catholic Church
Kirkland, Washington
20 January 2019

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 96
1 Corinthians 12:4-11
(see 2 Thessalonians 2:14) John 2:1-11

Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Each of Us Has Been Gifted

Saint Paul wrote about the gifts of the Holy Spirit to three different early Christian communities: the Ephesians; the Romans; and, as we heard in today's Second Reading, the Corinthians.¹ Beginning today, for three consecutive Sundays we will hear from this section of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, in which he teaches us about the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Over these three weeks, there are three lessons that Saint Paul wants us to learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Today, the first lesson: each of us has been given spiritual gifts by God for the benefit of the community.² Next Sunday, the second lesson: each gift is necessary for the whole community to thrive.³ Finally, the Sunday after that, the third lesson: a gift is only valuable and useful to the community, when it's expressed with Love.⁴

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Let's focus today on the first lesson: *each of us has been given spiritual gifts by God for the benefit of the community.*

Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians about spiritual gifts, perhaps because he noticed in them a tendency to compare gifts with one another, and to argue or brag about which gifts were better, more important, or holier than the others. The correction Saint Paul made for the Corinthians remains important for us today in our own discipleship, as we are also called to mature in our understanding of the Source and the importance of all the spiritual gifts.

Saint Paul's point is this: If each of us has been given spiritual gifts. And it's the *same* God who has given us these gifts.⁵ The *same* God Who loves all of us; Who knows all things;

Who is always working for the greatest good in each of our lives; Who died for us so that we might live with Him forever in Heaven; Whose plan is for *all* people to be saved.⁶

Then who are *we* to decide which gifts are better? Or more needful? Or holier for the purpose of fulfilling God's plan of salvation for all people?

Who are *we* to decide something like that?⁷

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Who are we...? Yet, we do it, don't we? All gifts from God are good, needful, and holy in our world. They are only deemed "better" or "worse" on *our* end – *not* on God's end. *We* assign value or lack of value to God's gifts. *We* see things from our own limited perspective, rather than from God's loving perspective.⁸

And we believe lies about our spiritual gifts. Maybe we believe the lie that we have not been given any particular spiritual gifts. Or the lie that our spiritual gifts are not valuable or important. Or the lie that other people's spiritual gifts are better than ours. And then we desire to have *their* gifts instead of our own.

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Yesterday there were over 150 people here at our Social Hall for the Called & Gifted Workshop.⁹ They came together to learn about and discern their spiritual gifts. The discernment process began by answering an inventory of questions to identify areas of possible giftedness. Similar to other spiritual gift tests or personality tests that you might be familiar with, the instructions are clear: Answer the questions based on who you *are*. Based on *actual* experiences you've had. Based on *actual* feedback you have received from other people.

Don't answer the questions based on who you'd *like* to be. Or on who you think you *should* be. Or on who you are working on *becoming*. Simply answer the questions based on who you actually *are*.

For example, if a question is something like: *Do you get spiritual fulfillment from serving the poor?* When reading the question, your first thoughts might be: Serving the poor is a good thing. Jesus calls us to serve the poor. Serving the poor is something I know I *should* do. And I've been *meaning* to make a meal for New Bethlehem Day Center...

And then we are *tempted* to answer this question based on our thoughts that put value on the spiritual gift of serving the poor. Rather than answering the question based on our *actual* experiences. And having *faith* that, even if God hasn't given me the spiritual gift of serving the poor, He *has* given me *other* valuable and important spiritual gifts that will be revealed in my discernment.

Going through the process of answering these questions is, in itself, an exercise of learning Saint Paul's first lesson about spiritual gifts. It's an exercise of *humility*. That is, having *faith* that our Loving God has given you – given each of us – valuable and important spiritual gifts. We don't need to manufacture answers to the questions in order to create spiritual gifts for ourselves. Our Loving God has already given each of us valuable and important spiritual gifts.

But, if you look at your life and recognize that, even though serving the poor is a good thing, and you've been meaning to volunteer at or bring a dinner to New Bethlehem, and you know that Jesus said, "Whatever you did for the least of my brothers, you did for me."¹⁰ You might be feeling some pressure to answer a question like this based on who you'd *like* to be, rather than who you *are*.

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That being said...Even if your spiritual gift is *not* serving the poor, that doesn't mean you aren't called to serve the poor. Maybe you aren't called to devote your life and lead a ministry that serves the poor. But, you *are* still called to put your particular gifts to the use of the community. And you can do that in your own ways, which might include making a meal for New Bethlehem or donating to St. Vincent de Paul. Please check out Page 9 in today's Bulletin for many ways that you can help. It's because of your continued generosity that these programs keep running and helping so many of our brothers and sisters in need. OK, back to the homily...

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It takes *humility* to accurately discern our spiritual gifts. *Humility* to admit that a particular attractive spiritual gift may not be something God has given you. And *humility* to trust that there is a question coming up that *is* related to your spiritual gift. And it is just as *valuable* and *important* of a gift.

That's what humility is: recognizing our place before God. Knowing that He is the Creator and we are the creatures. Having faith and hope in Him and His plan for our salvation. And trusting in His Providence to always give us what we need.

My friends, as Saint Paul teaches us today, God gives us what we need in a special way by blessing us with spiritual gifts. Those aren't gifts for us to keep. Those are gifts for the benefit of *others*.¹¹ God blesses *others* and provides for all when *we* put the gifts He has given us into *action*. And He trusts us to discern, develop, and activate our gifts for the benefit of others.

How do we do this? Most importantly, by prayer. At least a little bit each day.

Consistently talking with God about what inspires us and moves our heart is the most important way that we can discern, develop, and activate our gifts.

We can also be helped immensely by ministries here at Church, such as the Workshop from yesterday. Also, coming up, on February 22-23 we will welcome Dr. Mary Healy to teach us about spiritual gifts.¹² And on April 5-6 we will welcome Bart Schuchts from the John Paul II Healing Center to teach us about the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we receive in Baptism and Confirmation.¹³

During the next two weeks we'll continue to learn from Saint Paul how we can discern, develop, and activate the spiritual gifts God has given us.

¹ Ephesians 4:11-12; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31

Peter also wrote about spiritual gifts in 1 Peter 4:10-11: "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever preaches...whoever serves..."

² See 1 Corinthians 12:7: "To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit."

³ See Second Reading for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

⁴ See Second Reading for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C: 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

⁵ See 1 Corinthians 12:4-6: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone."

⁶ See John 3:16-17: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

Also see John 12:47: "[Jesus cried out and said] ... for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world."

⁷ God is the One Who distributes gifts in the way He sees fit (i.e., the best way). See 1 Corinthians 12:11: "But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes."

⁸ See Matthew 16:23: "[Jesus] turned and said to Peter, ... 'You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.'"

See also Mark 8:33.

⁹ See <https://siena.org/called-gifted>

¹⁰ See Matthew 25:40, 45

¹¹ See 1 Corinthians 12:7: "To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit." That is, for the benefit of others.

Also see *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 799: "Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world."

Also see CCC 951: "Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit 'distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank' for the building up of the Church. Now, 'to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.'"

Also see CCC 2003: "There are furthermore special graces, also called charisms after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning 'favor,' 'gratuitous gift,' 'benefit.' Whatever their character - sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues - charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church."

¹² See <https://www.shms.edu/content/dr-mary-healy>

¹³ See <https://jpiihealingcenter.org/team-members/bart-schuchts/>

Also see <https://jpiihealingcenter.org/training-and-equipping/#days-of-equipping>