

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

Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12:12-30
(see Luke 4:18) Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Each Gift Is Needed

Last week we began the first of three weeks of learning about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the Second Reading last week, this week, and next week, we hear from Saint Paul teaching the Corinthians about the gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹ Teaching – and even correcting – them for their attitude and behavior regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That is, what might have been their tendency to compare gifts with one another, or to argue about which gifts were better or more important than others. The teaching and correction that 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 that God is the Source of all gifts. And because He is the One who gives all spiritual gifts, each one is important to Him.²

Over these three weeks, there are three lessons that Saint Paul offers for us to learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Last Sunday, the first lesson: each of us has been given spiritual gifts by God for the benefit of the community.³ Today, the second lesson: each gift is necessary for the whole community to thrive.⁴ Finally, next Sunday, the third lesson: a gift is only valuable and useful to the community, when it's expressed with Love.⁵

+++

Last week, I preached about the importance of humility in our spiritual gifts. Humility is the “constant realization of the relationship between each individual and God.”⁶ Part of realizing that relationship is believing that God has given each of us spiritual gifts. That we don't need to envy other people's spiritual gifts or try to manufacture our own spiritual gifts. Because of our

relationship with God, each of us has been given a spiritual gift. A gift that God already thinks of as necessary and important for us to share with the world.

And, if God thinks my spiritual gift is necessary and important – who am I to think it's *not*? And – what can I do to show that I also think it's necessary and important? Well, one of the best things I can do is to actively discern my spiritual gifts. Firstly, by spending time in prayer each day. Consistently talking with God about what inspires me and moves my heart is the most important way that each one of us can discern, develop, and activate our gifts.

Another way is to come to some of the ministries that we're offering here at Holy Family. For example, last week, 150 people came to the Called & Gifted Workshop to actively discern their spiritual gifts.⁷ Coming up, on February 22-23, we will welcome Dr. Mary Healy to teach us about spiritual gifts.⁸ Then, on April 5-6, we will welcome Bart Schuchts from the John Paul II Healing Center to give us teaching and training to help us be better equipped to live out the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we received in Baptism and Confirmation.⁹

+++

This week we continue to reflect on and learn about our spiritual gifts by focusing on Saint Paul's second lesson: *each gift is necessary for the whole community to thrive.*

Saint Paul uses a metaphor of the body to help us understand *why* each spiritual gift is so important from God's perspective. First, he points out the absurdity of different parts of the body being envious of or quibbling with one another. I don't want my foot to try to be a hand. Nor do I want my ear to try to be an eye or a nose. I want all the parts of my body to operate as God made them. And when one of them doesn't, it causes me to struggle and even suffer – and I will try to find a doctor or a cure or some way to fix it.

So it is with Jesus Christ and us. When we were Baptized, we became a part of His Body.¹⁰ *We are the Body of Christ.*¹¹ And after our Baptism, we continue to become more and more conformed to the Body of Christ by receiving the Eucharist.¹²

And since Jesus Christ has welcomed us into His Body, He doesn't want us trying to be something we are not. It hurts Him when we do that. It hurts all of us – the whole Body of Christ – when we do that. So, Jesus, the Divine Physician, does what He can to repair us.¹³ To restore us to what we are made to be. To repair any ways that we are ailing.

That happens for each of us especially in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick. Where we are healed in body and soul so that we can be restored to communion and participation with the Body of Christ.

+++

But there's a paradox about the Body of Christ that Saint Paul also reveals, which is that "the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary."¹⁴ That these "hidden" parts of the body – maybe we could call them internal organs, arteries, blood cells – are hard at work within our bodies without us typically even being aware of it.

The same goes for us as part of the Body of Christ. As important as the visible things we do for one another – how much more vital and powerful are the hidden spiritual things that we do for one another?

The power of prayer is a spiritual gift that any of us can give to another.¹⁵ It's a gift that might be less visible, tangible, measurable – but it is "all the more necessary." Prayer for one another is the life force that keeps the Body of Christ – keeps all of us – going. It's in the secret of our hearts that God does His most powerful work on us – and from that place we have a powerful impact on the world.¹⁶ An impact that we may never fully understand, realize, or know

about in this world – but which Jesus is calling us, inviting us, equipping us to do – and we respond in humility to His invitation.¹⁷

This, once again, points to how critical it is for each of us to cultivate that hidden spiritual life in each of our hearts. Asking the Lord to help us pray as we ought.¹⁸ Spending time regularly discerning our spiritual gifts. And then putting them into action in both *visible* and *hidden* ways.

+++

Next Week, we'll continue to learn from Saint Paul how we are called to discern, develop, and activate the spiritual gifts God has given us.

¹ The readings for the three Sundays are divided as follows:

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C: 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

² See 1 Corinthians 12:18: “But as it is, God placed the parts (i.e., gifts), each one of them, in the body as he intended.”

³ See 1 Corinthians 12:7: “To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.”

⁴ See 1 Corinthians 12:19-21: “If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I do not need you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I do not need you.’”

⁵ See Second Reading for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C: 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

⁶ Fr. Walter Ciszek, “Chapter 18: Humility” from *He Leadeth Me*, 175.

Also see *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 2559*: “...*humility* is the foundation of prayer...”

Also see *Glossary from the Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

“HUMILITY: The virtue by which a Christian acknowledges that God is the author of all good. Humility avoids inordinate ambition or pride, and provides the foundation for turning to God in prayer (2559).”

Also see *Catholic Dictionary*:

“HUMILITY: The moral virtue that keeps a person from reaching beyond himself. It is the virtue that restrains the unruly desire for personal greatness and leads people to an orderly love of themselves based on a true appreciation of their position with respect to God and their neighbors. Religious humility recognizes one's total dependence on God; moral humility recognizes one's creaturely equality with others. Yet humility is not only opposed to pride; it is also opposed to immoderate self-abjection, which would fail to recognize God's gifts and use them according to his will.”

⁷ See <https://siena.org/called-gifted>

⁸ See <https://www.shms.edu/content/dr-mary-healy>

⁹ See <https://jpiihealingcenter.org/team-members/bart-schuchts/>

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

¹⁰ See 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...”

Also see CCC 798: “The Holy Spirit is ‘the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body.’ He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity: by God's Word ‘which is able to build you up’; by Baptism, through which he forms Christ's Body; by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ's members; by ‘the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts’; by the virtues, which make us act

according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called ‘charisms’), by which he makes the faithful ‘fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church.’”

¹¹ See 1 Corinthians 12:27: “Now you are Christ's body...”

¹² CCC 1392: “What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ, a flesh ‘given life and giving life through the Holy Spirit,’ preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism. This growth in Christian life needs the nourishment of Eucharistic Communion, the bread for our pilgrimage until the moment of death, when it will be given to us as viaticum.”

Also See Pope Urban IV: “Eating wounded us, and eating healed us. Thus the Saviour says, My Flesh is real food. This bread is taken but truly not consumed, because it is not transformed into the eater. Rather, if it is worthily received, the recipient is conformed to it.”

¹³ See CCC 1509: “[The Church] believes in the life-giving presence of Christ, the physician of souls and bodies. This presence is particularly active through the sacraments, and in an altogether special way through the Eucharist, the bread that gives eternal life and that St. Paul suggests is connected with bodily health.”

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:22

¹⁵ See CCC 2725: “Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part.”

Also see CCC 2728: “...prayer is a free and unmerited gift...”

¹⁶ See Psalm 51:6 (RSV): “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.”

¹⁷ See Luke 18:1: “Then [Jesus] told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.”

Also, from Saint Paul:

Romans 12:12: “...persevere in prayer.”

Ephesians 6:18: “With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit.”

Colossians 4:2: “Persevere in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving...”

1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Pray without ceasing.”

¹⁸ See Luke 11:1: “[Jesus] was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray...’”

Also see Romans 8:26: “In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.”