

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C
Fr. Chad S. Green
Holy Family Catholic Church
Kirkland, Washington
3 February 2019

Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19
Psalm 71
1 Corinthians 12:31-3:13
(Luke 4:18) Luke 4:21-30

Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Each Gift Must Be Expressed with Love

This week is the third of three consecutive weeks of learning about the gifts of the Holy Spirit from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians.¹ Over these three weeks, there are three lessons that Saint Paul offered to the Corinthians to help them learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Three lessons that remain important for us today as we mature in our own discipleship.

Two Sundays ago, the first lesson: each of us has been given spiritual gifts by God for the benefit of the community.² Last week, the second lesson: each gift is necessary for the whole community to thrive.³ Finally, today, the third lesson: a gift is only valuable and useful to the community, when it's expressed with Love.⁴

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A brief review of the previous two Sundays. I preached about the importance of humility in our spiritual gifts, which means trusting that, because of our relationship with God, each of us has been given spiritual gifts.⁵ Therefore, we don't need to envy other people's spiritual gifts or try to manufacture our own spiritual gifts. Because God has already given each of us spiritual gifts that are necessary and important for us to share with the world.

And just like, ideally, we want all the parts of our bodies to work as they were designed (that is, we prefer our foot to be a foot, not a hand; and we prefer our ear to be an ear, not an eye or nose).⁶ So it is with God and each of us. He gave each of us particular gifts to share with one another. And the times when we're not, God wants to heal us – for our own benefit – and, even more, for the benefit of the whole Body of Christ.

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This week we conclude our three weeks of reflecting on and learning about our spiritual gifts by focusing on Saint Paul's third lesson: *a gift is only valuable and useful to the community, when it's expressed with Love*. But first, a corollary for today's lesson: *one of the prime targets for the evil one to attack us is in the very place that we have been gifted*.

For example, someone with the gift of generosity could be pushed by the evil one into being greedy. How? Perhaps, in this person's desire to be giving, the evil one could distort his gift and push him into fearing that he won't have enough to give. Consequently, he might hoard things and be perceived as greedy when he is being called to give freely. Not having something to give would be a "failure," so he holds things back in order to always have something in reserve.

Another example, someone with the gift of leadership could be pushed by the evil one into being a tyrant. How? Perhaps, in this person's desire to lead, the evil one could distort her gift and push her into only focusing on the common end goal for the group. Consequently, she might be perceived as using people in order to achieve the common goal. Her focus on the end result might lead her to only contact people when she "needs" them to do something.

In each case, the gift is still there. God has not taken away the gift from either of those people. But the gift has been distorted by the evil one. These are just two examples of how the gift – which is meant for the good of the community and the glory of God – can become "a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal."⁷ The instrument is still there and still being played, but if it's being played badly and out of tune, it's no longer a beautiful gift to the world. In order for our gifts to be what God intended them to be, we must be healed by the Holy Spirit so that we can express our gifts in Love.

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We all have different spiritual gifts, but the evil one is going to attack us all in the same place. That is, in our heart. The heart is the evil one's prime target because he knows that if our gifts lack Love, then they are good for nothing.⁸ He can't take away our gift, but he can attack it and distort it, and diminish its goodness and benefit for the community.

Thanks be to God, the Good News is we have the best Defense possible. We have access to Powers much greater than the evil one's attacks. First, each of us have already been redeemed by Jesus Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross.⁹ Second, by our Baptism and Confirmation, we have been equipped to live out that redemption with the protection of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

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As I've preached about the past two weeks, one of the best responses we can make to being gifted by God is to actively discern our spiritual gifts and put them into action and service to the Body of Christ. Firstly, by spending time in prayer each day. Regularly talking with God about what inspires me and moves my heart is the most important way that each one of us can live out our redemption.

Another way is to come to some of the recent ministries that we've been offering here at Holy Family that are meant to help us become more aware of the Holy Spirit's involvement in our life. Not only to better discern our spiritual gifts, but even more, to help us live them out in a redeemed way.

Two weeks ago, 150 people came to the Called & Gifted Workshop to actively discern their spiritual gifts.¹¹ Coming up, on February 22-23, we will welcome Dr. Mary Healy to teach us about spiritual healing and gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹²

Today, I'd like to share a little bit about how the John Paul II Healing Center, the ministry that will be here at Holy Family on April 5-6.¹³ This ministry has been an immense help for me in my own personal healing and living out of my spiritual gifts – especially in discerning priesthood – and continues to help me now as a priest.

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About ten years ago, in the middle of my seminary years, I hit a road block. There was a four-year period where I felt stuck and couldn't make the final steps toward Ordination. I even withdrew from seminary (twice!) to spend more time in discernment. When I went back to seminary for the third (and final!) time, I went to a four-week seminarian retreat at the John Paul II Healing Center in Tallahassee, Florida. I don't have enough time in the last few minutes of this homily to go over all the graces of those four weeks, but I will briefly share the primary grace of how God helped me begin to more fully express my gift of priesthood in His Love.

In my first week there, through their prayer ministry, I was able to see very clearly into my own heart, and how I had built defenses around it to protect it from the evil one's attacks. You see, we have to first let God Love us before we can love others and more fully express our gifts in His Love.¹⁴ The problem, however, is when we build a barrier around our heart. Yes, it protects the heart, but it also constricts the flow of God's Love through the heart, thus restricting us from fully expressing our gifts in God's Love.

During some very powerful prayer experiences in the second week, I could feel the effect of God's healing on my heart begin to happen – both spiritually and physically. And I mean that I could physically feel a softening and swelling in my heart continuously for the entire week!

For the first time, I knew with certitude that I was going to be a priest! After years of frustration, the gifts that God had given me around my vocation to priesthood were finally

beginning to be released so that they could be lived in a more redeemed way, that is, expressed in His Love.

There isn't just one thing that made me choose to become a priest. There were several moments along the way in which God led me to becoming a priest. The ministry of the John Paul II Healing Center was certainly one of those important experiences that God brought into my life at just the right time. Their ministry is one of the reasons why I'm a priest today – and why I'm hoping to be a better and more loving priest tomorrow, and the next day, and always.

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Perhaps you've been feeling stuck in your own discernment. Or have been looking for the next step to take in your spiritual life. Maybe right this moment you're feeling motivated to live out your vocation and express your spiritual gifts with more of God's Love.

I encourage you to pray about coming to the Two Day Equipping event on April 5-6. Be open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit is inviting you to come; giving you hints to come; opening doors for you to come. The Holy Spirit always does so in gentle, yet persistent ways.

Registration is now open online, and there is a discount if you register by next Sunday, February 10th. If you do come, I don't know what the Holy Spirit will reveal to you or help you with those two days. But I do know that we are more the Body of Christ when we are together,¹⁵ and it will be a better experience for all of us – with you there!

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

³ 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.'"

⁴ See 1 Corinthians 13:1-2: "If I...do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have [any gift]...but do not have love, I am nothing."

⁵ See Fr. Walter Ciszek, “Chapter 18: Humility” from *He Leadeth Me*, 175: Humility is the “constant realization of the relationship between each individual and God.”

⁶ See 1 Corinthians 12:14-21

⁷ 1 Corinthians 13:1

⁸ 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 1741: “By his glorious Cross Christ has won salvation for all men. He redeemed them from the sin that held them in bondage. ... The Holy Spirit has been given to us...”

CCC 1934: “Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude...”

¹⁰ See *CCC* 1269: “Just as Baptism is the source of responsibilities and duties, the baptized person also enjoys rights within the Church: to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church.”

Also see *CCC* 1285: “For ‘by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit.’”

Also see *CCC* 1296: “This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial.”

¹¹ See <https://siena.org/called-gifted>

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>

¹⁴ 1 John 4:19: “We love because he first loved us.”

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:27: “...you are Christ’s body...”