

Ministerial Gifts of the Holy Spirit

By Fr. Tom Foster S.J.

On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus tells us in John 14:12 "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father"

As we can read in the Documents on the Laity in Vatican II we take note that "It is the right and duty of the laity to use the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit 1Cor. 12:7-11 for the up-building of the Body of Christ and the Evangelization of mankind." On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me," as scripture says: "Rivers of living water will flow from within him." He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in Him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified. John 7:37-39.

One of the many spiritual renewals within the Catholic Church, is the Catholic Charismatic Renewal started in 1967 when a handful of students and university theology professors from Duquesne University got together for a retreat weekend. From this small and inconspicuous beginning, by 1997 the movement had grown to include more than 400 million Catholics worldwide (over 25 million in America). It has official organizations in 120 countries around the world. Many believe that this renewal in this our day as by a new Pentecost." The Catholic Charismatic movement is not simply a renewal of the charisms found in the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Chapter 12). As Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens said it "The Charismatic Renewal is a current of grace for our times." It centers on the renewal of individual commitment to the person of Jesus Christ. This commitment has been the center of every authentic renewal in the history of the Church. The commitment begins by the re-anointing with the presence of the Holy Spirit; what is sometimes called "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit." This occurs when individuals ask Jesus Christ, who is the one who gives the Holy Spirit, to stir up the gift of the Holy Spirit within their hearts. St. Paul admonished 2Timothy 1:6 "I remind you to stir into flame the Gift of God that you through the imposition of my hands." This is primarily a renewal of the gifts received in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The results are many. Along with the reception of the charisms, people who have experienced this renewal in the Holy Spirit talk of a new and deeper personal knowledge of Jesus. They find new power in prayer, a new love of scripture, and a new and deeper appreciation of the Church, of the liturgy, and of the sacraments.

These characteristics of the Charismatic Renewal have led both Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II to actively encourage the faithful and the clergy to become involved in the Charismatic Renewal. This approval was first dramatically demonstrated by Pope Paul VI in 1975. He, personally, invited the renewal to hold its annual conference in Rome. In a special session during that conference the Pope stated: "Nothing is more necessary to this more and more secularized world than the witness of the "spiritual renewal" that we see the Holy Spirit evoking in the most diverse regions and milieu. How then could this 'spiritual renewal' not be a 'chance' for the Church and for the world? And how, in this case, could one not take

all the means to ensure that it remains so. "Pope John Paul II, following the lead of Pope Paul VI, has also met with groups of charismatic people and, at one such encounter, said: "Remain in an attitude of constant and grateful availability for every gift that the Spirit wishes to pour into your hearts." Encouraged by the leadership of Pope Paul VI and John Paul II, the Catholic bishops of the United States, Canada, and many bishops in South America and Europe, have written pastoral statements supporting and encouraging the renewal. The bishops of the United States, in their pastoral letter to the American Church on the Charismatic Renewal, wrote the following in 1984: " ... the charismatic renewal is rooted in the witness of the gospel tradition: Jesus is Lord by the power of the Spirit to the glory of the Father. " Insofar as the Charismatic Renewal makes its own this primary reality of the Gospel, it witnesses to elements of the Good News that are central, not optional: the covenant love of the Father, the Lordship of Jesus, the power of the Spirit, sacramental and community life, prayer, charisms and the necessity of evangelization. The renewal makes its own what is central to the enduring reality of the Gospel, it cannot be dismissed as peripheral to the life of the Church. Clearly the Charismatic Renewal is in and for the Church, not alongside the Church. Because the Charismatic Renewal is at the heart of the Church, and not just for private piety it also has a role in parish renewal. We wish those in the Charismatic Renewal to know that we make our own the view of Yves Congar: "The Charismatic Renewal is a grace for the Church." We assure those in the Charismatic Renewal of the support they enjoy from the bishops of the United States, and we encourage them in their efforts to renew the life of the Church. Perhaps a few words about the charisms are in order. Vatican II echoes St. Paul in stating: "It is not only through the sacraments and Church ministries that the same Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God. He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank .. " "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit." (1 Cor. 12:7) These charismatic gifts, whether they be the most outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church." (L.G.12)

So the gifts, supernatural and ordinary, are gifts not to individuals, but to the community. These gifts are given to build up God's people, and the Holy Spirit distributes "them individually to each person as he wishes." (1 Cor. 12: 11) Hence, they do not indicate the sanctity of the individual. The gifts that are found in the Charismatic Renewal are outlined in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (Chapter 12): "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 ... to another gifts of healing ... mighty deeds (miracles) ... prophecy ... Discernment of spirits ... variety of tongues ... interpretation of tongues." (1 Cor. 12:7-10) Therefore, the list includes gifts through which God gives understanding about himself and the Christian walk; wisdom, knowledge, and discernment. Gifts through which God acts in his community; faith, healing, and miracles. And gifts through which God speaks to his people; prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. The following is a brief description of these gifts:

WORD of WISDOM: The gift by which the Holy Spirit directs a person to make the right decision or judgment and to live a true Christian life. Generally most Catholics acknowledge this gift by praying for the Light of the Spirit. Supernatural perspective to ascertain the divine means of accomplishing God's will in a given situation.

WORD of KNOWLEDGE: The gift by which the Spirit gives a person a deeper understanding of a Mystery of Faith or specific knowledge about a person or situation that could not be known, unless God revealed it. Many priests experience this gift in the sacrament of reconciliation. Supernatural revelation of the divine will and plan.

FAITH: This gift inspires a person to pray with God given confidence. Knowing that what is asked for will be granted. This should not be confused with the virtue of faith (believing Christian truths). Jesus told his disciples that “whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for him. (Mark 11 :23) Supernatural ability to believe God without doubt.

HEALING: This is one gift that Catholics accept in the lives of the saints, but find it difficult to accept in the lives of ordinary Christians. This gift speeds up the natural healing powers of the body. Jesus healed many who came to him, for example Peter’s mother-in-law. In reference to healing without human aid.

MIRACLES: This gift is different from healing that it does not depend on the laws of nature. An example of a miracle, or mighty deed, is the raising Lazarus from the dead. Supernatural to intervene and counteract earthly and evil forces.

PROPHECY: This is a gift by which God, through a person, speaks a message to an individual or to the whole Christian community. It is God making use of someone, to state what He thinks about the present situation, what His intention is for the future; or what He thinks they should know or be mindful of right now. It is not primarily nor necessarily a prediction of the future. St. Paul says, “One who prophesies does speak to human beings for their building up, encouragement, and solace. (1Cor.14:3) Divinely inspired and anointed utterance.

DISCERNMENT OF Spirits: Through this gift one senses the presence of good or evil spirits. Many experience a form of discernment when meeting people. Some people come across as loving and good; others radiate negative aspects. Primarily, this gift discerns the presence of the Holy Spirit. Supernatural power to detect the realm of spirits and their activities.

TONGUES: Catholic Charismatics believe that God gives the gift of praying in an “unknown tongue “to anyone who seeks it. The person is able to speak this new language of praise of God, even though the individual does not understand what is being said. Actually, it is the Spirit of God within the heart praying. In the Book of Romans, St. Paul says, “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. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God’s will. “ (Romans 8:26,27) This gift of tongues is mentioned 57 times in the New Testament! Supernatural utterance in languages unknown to the speaker.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES: Occasionally, a member of the assembly will speak out some message in tongues. This utterance will be accompanied by an interpretation of its contents. received in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The results are many. Along with the reception of the charisms, people who have experienced this renewal in the Holy Spirit talk of a new and deeper personal knowledge of Jesus. They find new power in prayer, a new love of scripture, and a new and deeper appreciation of the Church, of the liturgy, and of the sacraments. These characteristics of



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Commentary

In pope John Paul II's address to the Charismatic Renewal in Italy 3/14/02 celebrating their thirtieth anniversary he exhorted those gathered by saying. The Charismatic Renewal is. “Born in the Church and for the Church, in your movement one experiences the light of the Gospel in the living encounter with Jesus, the faithfulness of God in personal and community prayer, confident listening to the Word, the vital discovery of the sacraments, as well as courage in trials and hope in tribulations,” Do we have any history of these gifts being used in the early church aside from the Apostles? History is replete with the lives of the Saints being used in the gifts of the Spirit.

St. Francis of Assisi 1181-d.1226 and his monks were frequently found praying in the Spirit (Tongues) as was the custom for the friars when they sung the psalms. Charity is our purpose, through Francis' efforts to render charity to the Moslems and Christians wounded in the crusades the Franciscans were given permission to live in Jerusalem when all other traces of Christianity were banished for the next seven centuries.

St. Vincent Ferrer O.P. d.1419 a Bishop and Dominican was used mightily and it was said that he was Baptized in the Spirit just like the apostles. During his canonization process there were some 40,000 miracles accounted for with over twenty-eight instances of people being raised from the dead. In his lifetime he converted over 8,000 Moors, 25,000 Jews and a total of 200, 000 souls.

St. Anthony of Padua d.1231 a Franciscan a great preacher was able to read hearts or operated in the gift of word of knowledge/wisdom. Gift of healing, The gift of faith in raising the dead. One account so happened that Anthony's father Don Marino was falsely brought up on murder charges. Anthony started his journey from Italy and by the third step appeared in the Portuguese court proclaiming his fathers Innocence, whereupon the judge asked Father Anthony for proof. Anthony agreed and gathered the court at the grave site of the dead man and had him unearthed. He made a sign of the cross over the opened casket and the dead man arose in the coffin. Anthony queried him as to his fathers innocence. The dead man now alive gave testimony to the fathers innocence and the dead man asked to be buried to finish his time in purgatory.

St. Louis Bertrand 1526-d1581 Dominican missionary at least 13 persons raised from the dead through his intercession two during his lifetime. He traveled all over the Caribbean and was known for Prophecies, miracles, and the gift of tongues. St. Theresa of Avala also sought his council. St. Vincent Ferrer was also related to his father.

St. Martin de Porres (1579-1639) Martin de Porres was the unwanted child of a Spanish officer and a free Black Peruvian woman. He is also remembered for his love of animals. He wore the oldest, most patched garments he could find, and spent long hours in prayer. Other Dominicans sometimes found him suspended in the air many feet above the church floor, in ecstatic prayer before the large crucifix. During his lifetime he was called the “flying brother,” because of the many times he bilocated in distant places like the Philippines, Japan, or north Africa, and was seen there by Peruvian merchants who knew him. He was also gifted with healing, prophecy, and

word of knowledge. His beloved poor never allowed his memory to fade, and today he is one of the most popular saints of the Americas - The patron of social justice and interracial love.

St. Padre Pio 1887-d.1968 Through his life devotion to the Lordship of Jesus was paramount. As a Franciscan priest often times was quoted ... “I want to be only a poor friar who prays - if God sees blemishes even in the angels, can you imagine what He sees in me!” Padre Pio was a priest of heroic virtue oftentimes accompanying his prayers were miraculous healings and profound works of mercy. As a priest he was often used word of knowledge in the context of confessor. Many a soul would find their hearts rent opened when encountering this humble servant of the Cross.

The gifts of the Spirit are Baptismal graces given unrepentant and obtain their perfection in lives devoted to the love for Jesus, His Lordship, His church in the service to the people of God. We pray that the blessed Holy Spirit would in some small way enflame these words into the encouragement needed to trust in the Lord's calling to each of us. We've focused on the gifts of the Spirit noting that their development proceeds as our response to the call to holiness by a merciful Father. The option now is ours whether our will be submitted to law of charity for the cause of the Gospel. Faithful and true is He who has called us may we have the courage to answer yes, have your way Lord Jesus. Come Holy Spirit



