

May 2009

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Fellow Pilgrims:

When we read I Corinthians 12: 1-11, we see a listing of spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts or charismata are a manifestation of the Holy Spirit enabling us to minister to the needs of Christ's body—the Church. There are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God

Do you believe that spiritual gifts have nothing to do with you? Were they only a part of the early church or for earthly saints today? Think again. Each one of us is given one or more spiritual gifts at baptism. This gift is evidence of the Holy Spirit working in our life. All spiritual gifts build up the Christian community. Not everyone has the same gift nor does anyone have all the gifts. Our gifts can change over time based on the needs of the Christian community.

What are these gifts? In I Cor 12: 1-11, the spiritual gifts are: wisdom, knowledge, faith (not a saving faith which all Christians have, but to meet a specific need), healings, miracles, prophecy, discernment of Spirits, and tongues along with their interpretation. In Romans 12: 6-8, we find these gifts: prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, and showing mercy. In Ephesians 4: 11-12, we find the spiritual gifts of being apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

I Cor 12: 27-31 reminds us that individually we do not have all the spiritual gifts by saying that not all are apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, tongues, or interpretation. Yet it seems we can all help and administer.

Supporting and sustaining these gifts is love. I Corinthians 13 says that without love, we are nothing. Love is patient, kind, doesn't envy or boast, isn't proud, doesn't delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres. Do not the three great commandments (Love God, Love your neighbor, and love one another as Christ loves us) show the priority of love?

We each need to claim our baptism and spiritual gifts, which are the Holy Spirit in action. How can you use your Spiritual gifts effectively? Remember all Spiritual gifts and abilities come from God. Understand that not everyone has the same gifts. Know who you are and what you do best. Dedicate your gifts to God's service and not your personal success. Be willing to utilize your gifts wholeheartedly, not holding anything back from God's service.

Or as Peter says (I Peter 4: 10): Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. When we do this, we see the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5: 22-23): love, joy, peace or wholeness,

patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We should not see the fruits of a sinful nature that lacks the indwelling Holy Spirit: sexual immorality, impurity & debauchery, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, and envy.

Take a look at John 2: 1-11 (the Wedding Feast at Cana). We see Christ's first miracle. Which fruits are in evidence at Cana? A visual reminder of Cana is adding some water to the communion wine.

What fruits do you see in your life? Pray to discern and use your spiritual gifts. The time is now and the need is great. If not you, who? If not now, when? If not here, where? Remember this prayer: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created and You shall renew the face of the earth. Help me discern my spiritual gifts and give me the will to exercise them. Amen"

In Christ's love,
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