

The Charismatic Gifts (2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C)

1 Corinthians 12:4-11—The Variety of Spiritual Gifts

⁴ Now there are *varieties of gifts*, but *the same Spirit*; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. ⁷ *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.* ⁸ To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of *wisdom*, and to another the utterance of *knowledge* according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another *faith* by the same Spirit, to another gifts of *healing* by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of *miracles*, to another *prophecy*, to another *the ability to distinguish between spirits*, to another *various kinds of tongues*, to another the *interpretation of tongues*. ¹¹ All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Cor 12:4-11)

1. Spiritual “Gifts” (Greek *charismata*):

- a. Wisdom = understanding hidden mysteries (cf. 1 Cor 2:6-13)
- b. Knowledge = understanding basic truths (cf. 1 Cor 8:4-7)
- c. Faith = efficacious trust in God (cf. 1 Cor 13:2)
- d. Gifts of healing = power to cure sickness (cf. 1 Cor 12:28, 30)
- e. Working of miracles = power to perform mighty works (cf. 2 Cor 12:12)
- f. Prophecy = speaking the word of God (cf. 1 Cor 14:1-6)
- g. Discernment of spirits = evaluating whether something is true or false, from God or not (cf. 1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:19-22)
- h. Various kinds of tongues = foreign languages (*xenologia*) (cf. 1 Cor 14:10-11) or ecstatic speech (*glossolalia*) (cf. 1 Cor 14:14)
- i. Interpretation of tongues = power to translate tongues (cf. 1 Cor 14:26)

The Living Tradition

St. Augustine: In the first days the Holy Spirit fell upon the believers, and *they spoke in tongues that they hadn't learned*, as the Spirit gave them to speak. These signs were appropriate for the time. For it was necessary that the Holy Spirit be signified thus *in all tongues*, because the gospel of God was going to traverse *all tongues throughout the earth*. That was the sign that was given, and it passed. (Augustine, *Homilies on 1 John* 6.10.)¹

St. Thomas Aquinas: [W]hen the Apostle mentions here [in 1 Cor 14] about speaking in a tongue, he means *an unknown language not interpreted* (Latin *lingua ignota, et non explanata*); *as when one might speak German to a Frenchman without an interpreter*, he is speaking in a tongue. Hence, all speech not understood not explained, no matter what it

¹ In Saint Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* (Works of Saint Augustine I/14; trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P.; Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2008), 97.

is, is properly called speaking in a tongue. (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* no. 814)²

Catechism: 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. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church (CCC 2003)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. According to St. Paul, the charismatic gifts reveal both the unity and diversity within the Church as the body of Christ. Where do you find both unity and diversity in the Church today?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. Gerald Bray, ed. *1-2 Corinthians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI; Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 1999).
3. George T. Montague, SM, *First Corinthians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).

² In St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, 310.