

The Second Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year C)

<i>First Reading</i>	Isaiah 62:1-5
<i>Response</i>	Declare his glory among the nations
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10
<i>Second Reading</i>	1 Corinthians 12:4-11
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
<i>Gospel</i>	John 2:1-11

One of the interesting things about Ordinary Time in the liturgical year is that every year — whether it's year A, year B, or year C — when it comes to the second reading, the Church always begins the liturgical year with several weeks of readings from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. As you might recall from other videos, the first letter to the Corinthians is one of the most topical of all Paul's letters. It's also very pastoral, where he deals with a number of questions and problems that were arising in the early Church at Corinth.

And I think that perhaps because of its pastoral, practical, topical character, it's a very fitting way for the Church to begin her journey through the letters of Paul in the second reading for each year of Ordinary Time. So in this case for year C, the Church once again revisits the letter of Paul — the first letter of Paul — to the Church at Corinth, or 1 Corinthians. But it picks up now in chapter 12 with Paul's famous discussion of the charismatic gifts that are at work in the Church. So let's look at that text together. It's 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, and this is what Paul says:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 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. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.¹

Alright, so this famous text... people will refer to it as a description of the charismatic gifts. And the reason they call them charismatic gifts is because that's the Greek word behind that English translation of "gifts" or "spiritual gifts". The Greek word is *charismata*. So what these are is a variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit that He bestows on the individual members of the Church for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ, for the purpose of the common good of the Church.

And this is a fascinating catalog that Paul is giving here as he's speaking to the Church at Corinth, who are — the Corinthians, by the way, were very interested in these charismatic gifts, very interested in these particular spiritual gifts. So he, in this sense...in this passage Paul lists them. He doesn't really define them, but he kind of lists them in order to give a portrait of just how diverse the various spiritual gifts are within the Body of Christ, but also in order to emphasize that although there is this diversity, there is also a unity — they all come from the same Spirit. They all come from the one Holy Spirit of God who animates and vivifies the one Body of Christ — that is, the Church. So it's a beautiful text that witnesses to both unity in the Church and to a diversity of gifts.

Now with that said, there are too many gifts here for us to go through them all in detail. However, I thought it might be helpful to kind of walk you through, at least give you a basic definition of each one. Now these can be defined in a number of ways, but what I've done in the notes here is given you basically a chart defining each one in a simple way, in a straightforward way, a basic way. But in particular, by drawing your attention to other passages in St. Paul where he refers to these gifts, especially in his two letters to the Corinthians, and then he'll give you a little more insight into what those gifts mean.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

So in other words, each of the gifts that Paul mentions here, he's going to speak about in other contexts in his letters. So if you go and look at those other passages in his letters, it'll give you a little bit better sense about what each of the gifts is about and what it means. And as we'll see, one of the gifts in particular, which is the gift of tongues, is going to continue to be hotly debated as to its exact meaning over the course of the history of the Church.

So let's just walk through them all together here briefly for just a minute. So first gift, number one: wisdom — *sophia* in Greek. So that Greek word, *sophia* for wisdom, we get philosophy from. So you'll often hear philosophy defined as the “love of wisdom”, and that's correct. But *philos* in Greek literally means “a friend” as well. So a philosopher is someone who has a friendship with wisdom, an intimate relationship with wisdom.

And Paul will use this term elsewhere, like in 1 Corinthians 2, to describe someone who has the ability to understand the hidden mysteries of God. A person who has wisdom, a wise one, is someone who can penetrate the deeper mysteries of the Christian faith.

The second spiritual gift Paul mentions is knowledge. Now knowledge is a little bit different. You'll see elsewhere in Paul, like in 1 Corinthians 8, he'll use the word knowledge to refer to the gift of being able to understand basic truths, to be able to grasp truths of the faith — not the deep, profound mystery, but just the basic articles of faith like we find in the Creed, to believe and to know that Christ suffered, that He died, that He rose again, and so on and so forth. This is knowledge, knowledge of the truth.

So wisdom tends to emphasize an understanding of mystery, knowledge focuses on an understanding of the truth. Those are not opposed to one another, they're just slightly different in their emphasis.

The third gift that Paul mentions here is one of his favorite words ever, and that is *pistis*, or faith — which can also be translated as “trust” or even as “fidelity”. And faith for Paul is the gift of an efficacious belief and trust in God. Efficacious meaning that a person doesn't just give intellectual assent to some truth or to God,

but actually lives their life according to that truth and walks in trust and in faithfulness — fidelity to the teachings of God and to the revelation of God. You'll see Paul discuss this elsewhere like in 1 Corinthians 13, when he'll single out faith, hope, and love as the three greatest virtues of them all, but out of those three, love is the greatest.

So what we see here (and this is important) is Paul recognizing that faith isn't just an act of the human will in acceptance of God's truth, but it's actually a gift of the Spirit. So it's a both/and here. Faith is both our response to God's revelation, but it's also a gift of grace that the Holy Spirit bestows on the Church. Very important, very important. So that's the third gift.

The fourth charismatic gift that Paul mentions here are gifts of healing... gifts of healing. And this is obviously a supernatural power, in particular to cure people who have sickness or who are diseased. So Paul will talk about this elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 12, and we'll also see it modeled in his own life, in for example, the Acts of the Apostles, where Paul will heal those who are sick, and he has the gift of healing — even to the extent that sometimes they'll take a napkin or a cloth, touch it to Paul's body and then bring it to the sick, touch it to them, and they'll be healed. This is not something Paul is able to do of his own power, but it's a gift of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ — the miracle of healing or the gift of healing.

But the next spiritual gift is the same category but a little bit broader, and Paul calls this the working of miracles... or mighty deeds is another way you can translate that. And you'll see Paul refer to this in 2 Corinthians 12 and again practice it himself. So in the Acts of the Apostles, you'll see that the apostles not only have the power to heal the sick, they have the power to raise the dead. This would be a working of a wonder, performing of a miracle.

And again, where do they get this from? Well, first of all, it's modeled on Christ, who goes around not just healing the sick but even raising the dead, like Lazarus — a performer of miracles, a worker of wonders is how Josephus describes Jesus of Nazareth. And then His disciples are going to manifest the same powers through the gift of the Holy Spirit that they receive, especially at Pentecost.

Alright, that's the...what's that? One, two, three, four, five. Okay, now the sixth gift — I shouldn't number these, because I always make mistakes if there are numbers involved — is the gift of prophecy. Now what does this refer to? Well, when we use the word prophecy, we tend to use it primarily with reference to the ability to predict the future. So we say someone is a prophet, they can foretell what's going to happen.

Now, that is an aspect of prophecy in the biblical worldview. You'll see that, for example, the prophet Isaiah will speak about future things that are going to take place, like the coming of the new heavens and the new earth in Isaiah 64-66. That hasn't happened yet; it's a future reality that he predicts.

But, in a broader sense, prophecy — and Paul will use it this way — simply means speaking the Word of God. He'll use it elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 14, for example, to talk about people who will get up in the liturgical assembly, and they will speak the Word of God. This can either be through reading the Scripture aloud — this was actually considered an act of prophecy. When you would read Scripture aloud, you were prophesying, because by definition, you were speaking the Word of God.

But it can also refer to what we might call more private prophecy or private revelation, where a person, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is able to speak some word from God to a particular situation — as opposed to public revelation that we find in the Scriptures.

It's interesting... there are some passages which even seem to suggest that prophecy can be used to describe singing psalms in a liturgical setting, because those are (once again) the Word of God. So a very important gift here of the Holy Spirit that again is being used to build up the Body of Christ. The speaking of the Word of God edifies those who hear it and builds up unity within the Body.

The next spiritual gift — whatever number it is, because I already forgot — is... it's interesting. It's translated into different ways. You'll see the RSV says:

...to distinguish between spirits...

The more traditional translation is “the discernment of spirits”. And anyone out there who is familiar with the works of Ignatius of Loyola and his *Spiritual Exercises* will be familiar with that term, because Ignatius has a whole section in the *Spiritual Exercises* on the discernment of spirits. And he’ll use the term there to describe the ability to distinguish between movements of the Spirit, between when certain thoughts or impulses are from God — the Good Spirit, he calls it — or when they’re from the devil, or the evil spirit, as he calls it. And there Ignatius is simply reflecting this passage from 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul talks about the ability to distinguish between spirits.

And elsewhere Paul will use the same terminology — or not the same exact expression, but similar terms — in his writings, like in 1 Corinthians 14, when he’ll talk about... for example, he’ll say:

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. (1 Corinthians 14:29)

Or in 1 Thessalonians 5, he’ll say:

... but test everything; hold fast what is good...

So here, what Paul is referring to is the spiritual gift of insight, the ability to recognize whether a word that is spoken or a thought that is had or an impulse that is felt is from God or from the enemy... because it’s not always completely evident whether that’s the case. Paul himself will say elsewhere that the angel...that satan can appear as an angel of light. So there can be spiritual deception that takes place, either within ourselves or within the liturgical assembly or because of various individual teachers, and so one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the ability to discern — to distinguish between good and evil spirits or between true and false teachings. That’s called the discernment of spirits.

And the next two gifts actually are related to one another. Here Paul talks about the gift of various kinds of tongues and then a related gift, which is the gift of the

interpretation of tongues. So what is Paul referring to here? Well, in this case we get into a little bit of a debate about exactly what Paul means here.

There are two different ways to interpret the gift of tongues that Paul is referring to here. One of them is what is called *xenologia...xenologia*. This comes from the Greek word meaning “foreign speech”. So according to this view, Paul is talking about the gift of the Holy Spirit being given to people to be able to speak in foreign languages — like Greek or Latin or Hebrew or Aramaic or Syriac or Coptic or whatever it might be. That’s called *xenologia*. Like xenophobia is the fear of strangers or the fear of foreigners, *xenologia* is the ability to speak in a foreign language.

The other interpretation that will often be argued is that Paul is referring to *glossolalia*. A glossary is a book that basically teaches you how to say something or what something means in a particular language. *Glosso* means tongue in Greek. So *glossolalia* means speaking in tongues. And it tends to be used to refer to an ecstatic form of speech that is supernatural and that does not correspond to any known human language.

Now these two interpretations actually both come from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians — not the passage we’re reading in today but a passage a little bit later in the book which is 1 Corinthians 14. And I just want to show you the passage real quickly so you can get an idea of what these two gifts of the Spirit might mean. So for example, in some passages in Paul, he appears to be talking about a foreign language when he talks about speaking in tongues. Listen to an example for 1 Corinthians 14:10-11. Paul says:

There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning; but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. So with yourselves; since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. (1 Corinthians 14:10-12)

So here, Paul seems to be referring to the spiritual gift of being able to understand foreign languages, so that we can speak to one another and transcend the

boundaries of language that are part of the human condition. So here Paul seems to be speaking in “different languages”. But then just a couple verses later in 1 Corinthians 14:14, he seems to be describing a kind of ecstatic speech that no one can understand when he says this. I’ll back up to verse 13:

Therefore, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. (1 Corinthians 14:13-14)

Okay, so here in that verse and in some other verses later on in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul seems to be describing some kind of supernatural language that is super rational. In other words, he says “My spirit is praying; I’m speaking in tongues. But my mind is at rest” or:

...my mind is unfruitful.

So these two different emphases that we’ll see in Paul have led to two different strains of interpretation in the early Church, whether speaking in tongues is referring to the supernatural gift of foreign languages or to the supernatural gift of some kind of super rational speech — like in 1 Corinthians 13, for example, when Paul will say:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels... (1 Corinthians 13:1a)

Some people will say, well, angels don’t have bodies; they don’t have tongues. They don’t have ordinary languages like we do, so he must be referring to some supernatural form of communication that the angels themselves use. Okay, anyway... we don’t have time to settle that debate; that’s not the point. But for our purposes here, I would just turn to the living tradition of the Church and the teaching of the *Catechism* just to give a few final pieces of insight.

So if we look at two major figures — St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine (we should have put St. Augustine first because he’s earlier)— these two great doctors of the Church, both of them when they came to the passage of our reading for today, the charismatic gifts, both of them argued that in this context, Paul is

referring to the supernatural gift of the ability to speak in other languages, or what we might call *xenologia*. So for example, listen to St. Augustine. This is what he says in his *Homilies on 1 John*:

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*...

...meaning all languages...

...because the gospel of God was going to traverse *all tongues throughout the earth*. That was the sign that was given, and it passed.²

So notice, Augustine interprets 1 Corinthians 12 in light of Acts 2. He sees Paul's reference to the gift — the charismatic gift — of various kinds of tongues (suggest a multitude, a variety) as a reference to...as an allusion to Pentecost, when the apostles were able to speak to people from all these different countries throughout the world who gathered for Pentecost. And each of those groups heard them in their own tongue, or in their own language. So that's Augustine's interpretation.

And Augustine goes a little bit further, because he suggests that that gift (that spiritual gift) of speaking in other languages was something that was confined to the initial stage of evangelization in the Church, when She was going out to all the nations. Augustine says that "it passed", so he thinks of that as a gift that was given for a time, but that it continued no longer.

Now there's a debate about that in the Church too, and I don't want to get into it into too much detail here, but just want to familiarize you with what Augustine is saying. There will be another stream of tradition that argues that wherever the Gospel is being preached for the same time, the gift of tongues (in the sense of the ability to speak in different languages) will be given to missionaries — anyone who is going out and bringing the Gospel to new lands.

² Augustine, *Homilies on 1 John* 6.10

Okay, later on in the Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, says this:

[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 is, is properly called speaking in a tongue.³

So here, Thomas thinks the primary meaning of Paul's reference to speaking in a variety of tongues is the ability to speak in other languages, other human languages — he uses German and French as an example. However, it is interesting that he broadens it out a little bit and says any speech that's either not understood or not explained is called speaking in a tongue. So because he's writing this commentary on 1 Corinthians, Thomas recognizes that there are these other passages in 1 Corinthians 14 that seem to suggest that Paul is talking about some kind of super-rational, ecstatic speech that can't be understood like ordinary human languages... and so he leaves a little room for that.

In any case, you might think, well, what are we to make of all this? Well, this is one of those situations where the Church has given...has not given us any definitive interpretation to exactly what Paul means by speaking in tongues. However, it is worth noting (by way of conclusion) that the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* actually does refer to this passage in 1 Corinthians 14, in paragraph 2003. And what it highlights is that whatever these charisms are precisely, they are given in particular for building up the Body of Christ, for the service of the common good of the Church. Listen to these words, this is the Church's teaching:

There are furthermore *special graces*, also called charisms after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning “favor,” “gratuitous gift,” “benefit.”

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* no. 814

Pause there. So these are like extra gifts of the Holy Spirit — extra favors. They're gratuitous. It's not something we earn. They are a gratuitous gift of the Spirit. The *Catechism* continues:

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)

So two points from that flow that are worth making. First, the *Catechism* officially recognizes the miraculous nature of speaking in tongues. It's some kind of extraordinary gift, one way or the other, however you interpret it. It's like miracles; it's a miraculous gift. Not all the charisms are miraculous and as extraordinary and visible in that sense as tongues or miracles, but all of them — whether it's faith or wisdom, prophecy or knowledge — all of them are ultimately ordered toward both sanctifying grace and the building up of the Body of Christ.

So they're not for show; they're not for display. They're not for people to kind of demonstrate their own personal holiness. They are given by the Holy Spirit to the Church in order to build up the Body of Christ, to engage in evangelization, to preach the Gospel and to be witnesses to the one Body of Christ that's animated by the one Spirit who gives a variety of gifts but all of which flow from the same Spirit.