

CRISIS AT CORINTH: AN IN DEPTH STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS- SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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For the next few weeks, we will be discussing the spiritual gifts as presented by Saint Paul in the First letter to the Corinthians. "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone" (Bible, 2005). However, not everyone is open to receive these gifts or any gifts from God. The greatest gift we receive is the gift of the Spirit..."you will receive the power when the holy spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses..." (Bible, 2005). Through the Holy Spirit God grants us the graces we most need to use the gifts He has entrusted to us according to His Holy will. "To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit (Bible, 2005). God has a plan for each one of us, a design of love for each of our lives. We are always free to choose to help Him fulfill His designs, for He wants (not needs) our cooperation. He never asks for more than we can handle (if He gives us gifts how does that relate to our day to day living?) and like a loving Father He equips us with the proper tools, gifts and examples to one day reach His Heavenly kingdom. Saint Paul explains,

"To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression 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 mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these..." (Bible, 2005).

Blessed John Paul II wrote, "the Holy Spirit, being consubstantial with the Father and the Son in divinity, is love and uncreated gift from which derives as from its source (*fons vivus*) all giving of gifts vis-a-vis creatures (created gift): the gift of existence to all things through creation; the gift of grace to human beings through the whole economy of salvation. As the Apostle Paul writes: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (DV, 10). St. Paul teaches us that we are all one body in Christ, "for in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (Bible, 2005). No one possesses greater gifts than the other, for God gives to each what he/she most needs. By using our individual gifts and putting forth maximum effort in what God has called us to do we can proclaim God's love and mercy to the world. For example, if the gift of song is given to a person, that person must strive to sing the best he/she can for love of God. Singing in this way, will draw others and arouse a desire in them to possess the same motivation, dedication and love with which to use their particular gifts. The best way to discover our individual gifts is through prayer, specifically prayer to the Holy Spirit. Prayer draws us closer to God, motivates us, and inspires to be better people, to help others, do great things for love of God.

"The fullness of the Spirit of God is accompanied by many different gifts, the treasures of salvation, destined in a particular way for the poor and suffering, for all those who open their hearts to these gifts-sometimes through the painful experience of their own existence-but first of all through that interior availability which comes from faith" (DV, 16). This gift, faith also means believing that we can do what needs to be done, using the unique gifts and talents granted to each one of us for His greater glory, "because without me you can do nothing" (Bible, 2005). With Him, we can do anything! The Lord chooses us, each one of us, in His time and He asks for our cooperation in fulfilling His design of love. "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Bible, 2005). Often times the greatest mission of all is to witness the love of



Christ in our lives by being kind and peaceful with all those who we meet and in every circumstance. "...And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing..." (Bible, 2005). It takes courage to know that someone else is more important than the fear of what another might say or think. Every person is a child of God, "see what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God," and every child of God is more important than fear...God is more important than fear! (Bible, 2005). Do not be afraid to be God's instruments of love but rather abandon yourself in His love...and then share that love with others.



How would one acquire the knowhow of what God is asking? How does one know what to do? Where to begin? Prayer, one begins with prayer. Contemplating Him in prayer, prayer before Him in Adoration, prayer alone in the car, in your room; is keeping our souls in communion with Him at all times. Father André Louf, O.C.S.O., tells us "prayer enables us to better understand the Father's will, it also helps us to penetrate deeper into reality. To a heart steeped in prayer everything becomes transparent." In the quietness, stillness of prayer one can begin to feel His presence, to hear His voice, to know what He is asking... Then begins the gentle dialogue of a Father and child, a Father who desires only what is best for the child and a child looking simply to please his Father....

Blessed John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter: *Redemptor Homini*, teaches us that "the nature of love is to express itself, to give if itself" (RH.). Yet, one is to give more than human love, but rather the love of God that dwells within. One should think of the other first and how to serve them, "as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (Bible, 2005). Everything one does, in all ways that one serves, etc..., should be done for, in and through God - simply out of love for Him. "Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ..." (Bible, 2005).

Love is the greatest gift of all. St. Paul teaches us, "if I have faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing" (Bible, 2005). Where to begin? Prayer, one begins with prayer. Contemplating Him in prayer, prayer before Him in Adoration, prayer alone in the car, in your room; is keeping our souls in communion with Him at all times. Father André Louf, O.C.S.O., tells us "prayer enables us to better understand the Father's will, it also helps us to penetrate deeper into reality. To a heart steeped in prayer everything becomes transparent." In the quietness, stillness of prayer one can begin to feel His presence, to hear His voice, to know what He is asking... Then begins the gentle dialogue of a Father and child, a Father who desires only what is best for the child and a child looking simply to please his Father....

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The Blessed Mother shows us the path of love, allowing us to clearly see what our journey consists of, allowing us to see where we can rest or not rest, where we can hold on or not hold on, and allowing us to see everything but most importantly the love of God. We are called to contemplate His love and then share that love with others for the good of all.

The Blessed Mother shared a special communion of heart with Her beloved Son, her life - in every instance - pointed toward Christ. Her preaching was her life, she lived the life of the Gospel, she witnessed the love of Her Son. She calls us to do the same - amidst the trials, tribulations, distractions and disillusionments of everyday life... She calls us to witness the love of Her Son in everything we do, with those we meet, etc..., possibly most important in one's family. Often it is easier to be nice to those we see occasionally than with the

people we share our daily lives with...

After Her Son's death, Mary's role is, possibly most important, she lived, simply lived and by her example showed the Apostles how to live, how to trust...during such a crucial moment of salvation history. She served the Apostles, she helped them, guided them...served them who fulfilled the establishment of the Church that Christ began; she was at their disposal, at their service but above all sustained them in prayer.

May God bless you.

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