

THE GIFTS OF GOD

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For the next few weeks, we will be engaging in a brief reflection or word study, if you will, on the gifts of God...there are many gifts of God although many will be mentioned we will only concentrate on a few. We will be focusing on how it is applied in the Bible, what and who it refers to and how this could and should influence our lives as Christians. There are many gifts we receive from God, however 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. In the Book of Acts, we can reflect on the gifts of mission, preaching, baptism, rituals, rites, prayer, working and ministering together, life in community, conversion yet the greatest gift of all is the courage to witness to the Love of God. The Apostles not only told the world, they showed the world the loving Savior who died for the salvation of man. They lived according to Jesus' teachings with one another and will all those who they encountered. They renounced anything in their lives that was opposed to Love - including what they loved most they had seen a greater Love, a Love that transformed their lives, their way of thinking, their way of being... Who sat with the Apostles, nurturing them through prayer, showing them, by her example, to wait on the Lord, to wait for the Holy Spirit, to trust in His words, teachings, to know that He is faithful...



A young man named Saul sought the death of Christians, on his way to Damascus the Lord came to him and he was transformed. His heart was touched by Love. "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me. Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit" (Bible, 2005). Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit...filled and moved by Love. He also received many graces and gifts, he received what he needed to proclaim this same Love to the world. "He began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Bible, 2005). St. Paul had the courage to preach what he believed, he was not intimidated by what others thought or of those who would criticize this radical change in him - he knew he had received an immense gift from God and he knew he had to use it for His great glory. St. Paul understood that along with the gift there was a responsibility - the responsibility of sharing with others the Good News. The radical transformation of his heart, that Love that filled his heart prompted him not to imposed his new found enlightenment - but rather simply share it with others. For he knew better that anyone else, that mere words did not always penetrate the hardness of man's heart, he knew he needed to have faith, fulfill his responsibility and leave the rest in God's hands. God had now entrusted him with a mission, given him the necessary graces and he, despite all opposition, would fulfill his mission.

We all need courage to witness to Love. God gave each one of us the gift of faith, faith to believe in Him and His works. "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?" (Bible, 2005). 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. "...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). Brothers and Sisters, it take courage to know that someone else is more important than fearing 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.

Life in common, what does it mean to live in community? What might be considered a community? Is it just one's immediate family? Is it the nearby area where one lives? Is it the people of God, the Church? Is it the world? One could venture to say it is all of the above. To live in community is in fact to live for a common good - the common good of all. "The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common...there was no needy person among them..." (Bible, 2005).

The Apostles lived for God and its expression was in how they lived among themselves. They prayed together

and for each other, they witnessed the love of God to each other and by their example many came to know that very same love of God. As one heart and mind, they strove for the good of the other - each putting others before themselves, each one believing that the needs of the other were more important than their own. Should one not strive in one's own family to put the other before oneself?

Today's world constantly says the exact opposite - man in fact the need to care for oneself, to please oneself...but that is not God's teaching, that is not His example... To fully find oneself one must freely give of himself, not keep the best of him within, not to please himself - but give of himself freely and totally. "...even if I am poured out as a libation upon the sacrificial service for your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with all of you" (2005).

How would one acquire the know 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 of 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).

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 disillusion 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, the Petrine principle, 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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