

Aleteia

SPIRITUALITY

How knowing your charism can radically change your life

Philip Kosloski - published on 06/08/19

The Holy Spirit gives all baptized Christians particular graces for their benefit and the greater good of all.

In the Catholic Church, there exists a belief in particular “charisms of the Holy Spirit.” These are different from the “gifts” or “fruits” of the Holy Spirit, and are primarily given for the benefit of the entire Church.

The [St. Catherine of Siena Institute](#) best describes what exactly “charisms” are and how they are beneficial.

“Charism” is the Greek word used in the New Testament for “favor” or “gratuitous gift.” Charisms, or spiritual gifts, are special abilities given to all Christians by the Holy Spirit to give them power both to represent Christ and to be a channel of God’s goodness for people. Whether extraordinary or ordinary, all charisms ought to be exercised in the service of God.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also explains charisms by describing them as “a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms” (CCC 800).

St. Paul in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 lists multiple charisms that are given to Christians. For example, in Romans 12 St. Paul explains how each person receives particular charisms that help build-up the body of Christ.

For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:4-8).

Here is a short list of some of the charisms: teaching, administration, discernment, knowledge, wisdom, craftsmanship, writing, music, and missionary. These charisms are not always immediately evident and at times differ from a person's natural talents.

Discernment is key to discover a person's charism(s) and requires both internal and external validation. For example, a charism is often found when a person experiences interior peace when engaged in an activity related to the charism. Also, the Holy Spirit usually works through other people to validate a person's charism, encouraging them to pursue it, even when that person does not know they are actively trying to discover their charism.

One of the most helpful tools to discern your particular charism is through the "Called and Gifted" workshop offered by the St. Catherine of Siena Institute. This can be conducted individually, or through a study group at a parish. However, it is never truly done divorced from the guidance of others, as a one-on-one interview with a charism guide is included in the discernment process.

However a person discerns their charism, it can be one of the most life-changing events. Confident in the gifts God has given them, a person who knows their charism is ready and equipped to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and serve their particular mission in the body of Christ.

Charisms recognize the uniqueness of each individual and how we are all different and can assist in our own way in the evangelization of the world. St. Paul puts it eloquently in his letter to the Corinthians.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts ... All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Corinthians 12:29-30; 11).

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