

Charisms in the Life of the Church

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The Lord's command to love impels all believers to love one another in the Church and in the world. The Baptized faithful share in the mission of Jesus Christ which is defined by the law of love. The Spirit of God is the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission. The Holy Spirit imparts special graces, or charisms, for the benefit of the whole Body of the Church. Each member of the Church is gifted with these charisms, whether they be extraordinary, rooted in natural talents, or imparted for ministerial office. The charisms are exceedingly effective in meeting the needs within the Church (ad intra) and in empowering her mission to the world (ad extra). Included among the evident signs of hope today is the greater attentiveness of the Church to the voice of the Spirit through the charisms. The Church seeks a renewed appreciation of the Spirit as the principal agent of mission, of evangelization, as the one who builds the Kingdom of God within the course of history and prepares the world for full salvation in Jesus Christ.

The Law of Love

A story is told about the community of St. John the Evangelist, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 13:23). Occasionally John would address the community gathered to celebrate the Lord's supper. As he moved slowly to the front of the assembly with the aid of his walking staff—he was old by this time—an air of anticipation would fill the room. "What will he say?", the people would ask. John had of course walked, talked, and lived with the Lord Jesus. But John always said only, "Children, love one another." Eventually some of the young men in the community tired of the repetition. They confronted him, asking, "Teacher, you always tell us to love one another. Why don't you say something new? Don't you have any other message, a divine insight, an inspired thought?" A saddened St. John answered, "But that is what the Lord Jesus told us to do ... to love one another."

Jesus Christ established the law of love. *"I give you a new commandment: Love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other. This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35).* This law of love strongly defines the mission (apostolate) of the Church of Jesus Christ. The members of the Church must love one another in the Church, as a sign for the world. "Indeed, the law of love, which is the Lord's greatest commandment, impels all the faithful to promote God's glory through the spread of His kingdom and to obtain for all men that eternal life which consists in

knowing the only true God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 17:3)."¹

Mission of Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus was baptized in the Jordan and filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 4). The Spirit subsequently led Jesus into the desert where he fasted and prayed in preparation for his mission. Taking advantage of Jesus' weakened physical state, the devil tempted him; however, the devil failed to derail Christ's mission. Jesus emerged from the desert in the power of the Spirit, onward to Galilee where he began his earthly ministry. In the synagogue (Luke 4:16), as was his custom, he rose and proclaimed the scriptures. St. Luke seems to call out to the reader, "Look! Jesus is beginning his ministry: Listen to what he chooses to say:"

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord" (Is 61:1-2).

This is the mission of the Redeemer and, hence, our mission as well. Jesus Christ frees, liberates, and releases! He frees us from sin and death. He lifts the veil of blindness from our eyes. He calls us out of darkness into his wonderful light. Jesus announces a year of favor from the Lord, that is, the day of our salvation! He does not only announce the Good News however; Jesus Christ is

¹"Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," Art. 3, Rev. Walter M. Abbot, S.J., gen. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, The America Press, USA, 1966, p. 492; hereafter DAL.

the Good News—Emmanuel, God with us!

The Baptized and Confirmed members of the Church are each fully equipped to carry out the mission of Christ—the mission of the Church. The Baptized share in the three-fold office of Christ: priest, prophet, and king.² As *priest* we offer our lives to God, to Christ in the Church, and to our fellow humans; we consecrate our lives and the world to God. As *prophet* we preach the gospel of peace (cf. Eph. 6:15) to the world. We point out to the world God's evident action in the world. We are salt and light in the world (cf. Mt 5:13,14); we add the 'flavor' (cf. Col 4:5-6) of the Lord to this life and help men and women to see the way to the Father, through Christ Jesus who himself is the Light of All Nations³ (cf. Jn 8:12). "The Church offers humanity the Gospel, that prophetic message which responds to the needs and aspirations of the human heart and always remains 'Good News'. The Church cannot fail to proclaim that Jesus came to reveal the face of God and to merit salvation for all humanity by his cross and resurrection."⁴ As *king* we serve as Christ served; we care for the world as he cared for the world. We participate as stewards who help to "set the captives free" through our actions of justice and love. We help to usher in the kingdom of God.

The Church and the Holy Spirit

Jesus Christ established the Church to carry out his mission. He founded the Church on the Apostles and gives it life through his Holy Spirit (Eph 2:20-22). "The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission."⁵ The Church is inseparable from this one Spirit of Life, the fountain of living water (Jn 7:37-39) who continually sanctifies, unifies, vivifies, and counsels the Church. "The Spirit guides the Church into the fullness of truth (cf. Jn 16:13) and gives her a unity of fellowship and service. He furnishes and directs her with various gifts, both hierarchical and charismatic, and adorns her with the fruits of His grace (cf. Eph 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:4; Gal. 5:22). By the power of the gospel He makes the Church grow, perpetually renews her, and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse."⁶ The Church has both institutional and charismatic elements, an interrelationship between the human and the divine, the visible (seen) and the spiritual (unseen), the Apostolic

foundation and the animation by the Spirit (*ruah-Elohim*), the hierarchical structure and the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Promise of the Father

Jesus Christ empowers the Church to carry out his mission. Before ascending to the Father, Jesus told his disciples, "See, I send down upon you the promise of my Father. Remain here in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). In Acts 1:8, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes even to the ends of the earth." He spoke of the Holy Spirit of whom He had said, "But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes he will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation: sin, because they do not believe in me; righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; condemnation, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you" (Jn 16:4b-15).

According to the Lord's promise, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit suddenly descended on the Lord's disciples in power ... like a strong, driving wind. "Tongues as of fire appeared which parted and came to rest on each of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:3-4). Charisms were manifested in the Church for the first time: "They began to express themselves in foreign tongues" (Acts 2:11) "and make bold proclamations as the Spirit prompted them" (Acts 2:4). The Church spoke for the first time in the fullness of the power of the Spirit of Truth about the person of Jesus Christ, about his divinity, about the Church he founded, and about the meaning of his life, death, and resurrection. The charisms of preaching and evangelization were manifested: Peter addressed the crowd and all present experienced the charism of interpretation as each heard Peter speaking in their own language (Acts 2:5-41). Through the action of the Holy Spirit in these gifts, three thousand were converted and the Church was born. These charisms belong to the ordinary life of the Church, the life of the People of God,⁷ both then and today. Pope John Paul II has written that "In our day too, the Spirit is the

²DAL, Art. 2, p. 491.

³"Christ is the light of all nations" is the opening proclamation of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, "*Lumen Gentium*" (or "Light of all Nations"), Art. 1, Rev. Walter M. Abbot, S.J., gen. ed., *The Documents of the Vatican II*, The America Press, USA, 1966, p. 14; hereafter *LG*.

⁴Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter "*Redemptoris Missio* (Mission of the Redeemer)," 11, Vatican Translation, St. Paul Books and Media, Boston, MA, USA, 1991, p. 21; hereafter *RM*.

⁵*RM*, 21, p. 33.

⁶*LG*, Art. 4, p. 17.

⁷*LG*, Art. 12, p. 30.

principal agent of the new evangelization" and that one of the evident *signs of hope* in our day is greater attention to the voice of the Spirit through the charisms.⁸

Who has seen The Wind?

What are the charisms? For the purpose of discussion, let us reconsider the definition offered by Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens.⁹ "*A charism is a special gift, a perceptible and freely bestowed manifestation of the Holy Spirit, a particular grace of God which is given for the benefit of the whole Body of the Church.*"¹⁰

A special gift or particular grace of God. A charism is firstly a special gift (*charis*), a particular grace of God. The essence of "grace" permeates the phrase, *Deus Pro Nobis*, God for us. God is He Who Is (Ex 3:14). "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16). And God is for us! God is a beautiful, loving, creative Being who by His very nature pours Himself forth in love, in creation, and who continually, actively, seeks to unite with His creation. He loves us with an intimate, personal, active, outreaching, and penetrating love. "*Love, then consists in this: not that we have loved God but that He has loved us and has sent His son as an offering for our sins*" (1 Jn 4:10). God actively seeks fellowship with us (Rv 3:20). He fully communicates Self in the Incarnation and grace,¹¹ as Word and Gift, as Truth and Love. The Church characterizes God's grace as *sanctifying grace* (or the gratuitous, unmerited, gift that God makes to us of His own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul at Baptism, to heal it of sin and to sanctify it), *sacramental grace* (or the gifts proper to the seven sacraments), and as *special graces, or charisms* (or gifts oriented toward sanctifying grace, intended for the common good of the Church, at the service of the love that builds up the Church).¹² These particular gifts or "promptings of grace" take a variety of forms.¹³ The charisms are special gifts of

God and they "... are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation."¹⁴ "They are in fact *a singularly rich source of grace* for the vitality of the apostolate and for the holiness of the whole Body of Christ, provided that they be gifts that come truly from the Spirit and are exercised in full conformity with the authentic promptings of the Spirit."¹⁵

A perceptible gift. Secondly, a charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit that can be perceived¹⁶ by the Christian community. Yet, the charisms are not necessarily perceived by the physical senses.¹⁷ The action of the Holy Spirit, who breathes where he will, is not always readily recognized and received¹⁸; rather, the Christian community often perceives the fruits effected by gifts imparted by the invisible, hidden Spirit of God: "Who has seen the Wind, neither you nor I. But we all know when the Wind goes by."

Freely bestowed. A charism is thirdly a freely bestowed gift or Grace of God; that is, one doesn't earn the charisms. The charisms are not bestowed as rewards for individual sanctity or holiness; rather, as gifts of God, the charisms are lavished on the people of God, the Church, as free gift, initiated by God. "All is Grace."¹⁹ Although unmerited, the charisms are indeed oriented toward individual sanctification, that is, toward the holiness restored in Baptism: as gifts to the Church, the charisms strengthen the faith, hope, and love of her individual members. For example, one might *experience* charismatic activity within the Church and in that experience be confronted with the power and reality of God (e.g., see 1 Cor 14:20-25). In the author's own life, upon experiencing for the first time the charism of praying in tongues, his world view, or better, the way he looked at the world that he could not see, was profoundly changed ... in an instant! In an analogous way, although the charisms are not signs of personal sanctity, the destructive effects of sin (cf. Jas 1:12-15) can close our mind to God, to the signs of his love, and to his saving grace in our lives.

Manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Fourthly, a charism is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:7) given for the common good. The charisms are thus inseparable from the Holy Spirit. They are manifestations of God in the mode of gift.²⁰ The charisms thus take a

⁸Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 45, Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, USA, 1994, pp. 51-52; hereafter *TMA*.

⁹Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens (1904-1996), Archbishop of Malines-Brussels (1962-1980), profoundly influenced the Second Vatican Council. He served as one of the four permanent moderators who presided over the daily council meetings and as a member of the Secretariat for Extraordinary Ecclesial Affairs (along with Cardinal Montini, the future Pope Paul VI) which later became the Coordinating Council.

¹⁰Cardinal Suenens, L.-J., *A New Pentecost?*, The Seabury Press, N. Y., USA, 1975, p. 20; hereafter ANP?.

¹¹Rev. Karl Rahner, *Theology of Pastoral Action*, Palm Publishers, Montreal, 1968, p. 33.

¹²*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2003, United States Catholic Conference, Inc., Libreria Editrice Vaticana, USA, 1994, p. 485; hereafter CCC.

¹³Pope John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation "*Christifideles Laici*" ("The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People"), 24, The Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, MA, USA, 1989, pp. 58-59; hereafter *CL*.

¹⁴*LG*, 12, p. 30.

¹⁵*CL*, 24, p. 60.

¹⁶cf. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter "*Dominum et Vivificantem* (On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World)," 25, St. Paul Books and Media, Boston, MA, USA, 1988, p. 39; hereafter *DV*.

¹⁷cf. Rev. K. McDonnell, O.S.B. and Rev. G. T. Montague, S. M., eds., *Fanning the Flame*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, USA, 1991, p. 21.

¹⁸*CL*, 24, p. 60.

¹⁹St. Augustine of Hippo.

²⁰cf. *DV*, 10, p. 19.

variety of forms, '... reflecting the absolute freedom of the Spirit who abundantly supplies them....'²¹ As gratuitous manifestations of the Holy Spirit, the charisms are clearly not "possessions". Indeed, it is the Holy Spirit, we pray, that "possesses" us. The Christian seeks to live "life in the Spirit", that is directed toward the will of God and docile to the movements of the Holy Spirit.²² It is when we live with docility before the Holy Spirit—this posture of openness is typified by Mary, spouse of the Holy Spirit (see Lk 1:26-38)—that we experience and come to recognize in our gathering, as Church, the charisms of the Holy Spirit. "The charisms ... are essentially the varied and visible manifestations of a single unique reality: The life of the Spirit overflowing the souls of Christians."²³

The Body of Christ. Finally, a charism is a Grace of God given for the benefit of the whole Body of the Church, that is, the Body of Christ. The charisms originate in the Holy Spirit and are directed toward the edification of the Church. The charisms take a variety of forms "... as a response to the varied *needs* of the Church in history."²⁴ "Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the world."²⁵ "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all the members have the same function, so too we, though many, are one Body in Christ and individually members one of another" (Rom 12:4-8). We are members of the Body of Christ. We have different functions but we are united in our one Lord, Jesus Christ. "Through Christ the whole body grows, and with the proper functioning of the members, joined firmly together by each supporting ligament, builds itself up in love" (Eph 4:15-16). Through the proper functioning of the Body we are configured to carry out the law of love within the Church and in the world. Indeed, a local Church is alive and healthy when its members exercise their charisms in ministry to one another.²⁶ The mission of Christ, which is oriented toward love, is accomplished by the proper functioning of the many members of the Body of Christ, orchestrated, enlivened, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

²¹CL, 24, p. 59.

²²Our call to docility to the Holy Spirit is noted by the Holy Father: (RM, 77, p. 97) "Since they are all members of the Church by virtue of their Baptism, all Christians share responsibility for missionary activity. (RM, 87, p. 109) "Missionary activity demands a specific spirituality... This spirituality is expressed first of all by a life of complete docility to the Spirit."

²³ANP?, p. 36.

²⁴CL, 24, p. 59.

²⁵CCC, p. 212.

²⁶"By a logic which looks to the divine source of this giving, ..., the gifts of the Spirit demand that those who have received them exercise them for the growth of the whole Church." CL, 24, p. 60.

The Pauline Letters and Charisms

"For I long to see you and share with you some spiritual gift—rather what I wish is that we may be mutually encouraged by our common faith" (Rom 1:11-12).

Chapters 12, 13, and 14 of the first Corinthian letter is an appropriate Pauline context in which to discuss charisms. St. Paul identifies and describes the "spiritual gifts" (1 Cor 12:1-11). "There are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor 12:4-7). These charisms are for the benefit of Body of Christ. "The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ" (1 Cor 12:12). The gifts are given to the Church through each member of the body. The Christian community is to be concerned for one another (1 Cor 12:25-26) and to seek the greater gifts—the greatest being love (see 1 Cor 13). In full circle then, the community of God, formed out of love by Jesus Christ, given life out of love by the Holy Spirit, is gifted to be the Body of Christ in which the law of love is carried out, both within the Church (*ad intra*) and in the world (*ad extra*).

In the epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul describes the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. The many members of the Body are unified by the Spirit and are given a diversity of graces. Along with the ministers working in roles of service for the faithful, "... we become one in faith and in knowledge of God's Son, and form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature" (Eph 4:13). Jesus Christ equips the Church, His Body, with the charisms *needed* to carry out his mission. In service to one another, each with capacity and gifts uniquely determined by God, the individual members of the Church are united by the Holy Spirit to form Christ, "hands and feet," here on earth.

The Second Vatican Council and Charisms

The fathers of the Second Vatican Council grappled with the questions of whether the charisms, especially the "extraordinary" manifestations of the Holy Spirit, are normative to the apostolates of the faithful. Although the Church has been graced throughout its history with special manifestations of the Holy Spirit (*charismata*), some held that the charisms were meant only for the primitive Church but held little relevance for the Church in our day.²⁷

²⁷see, for example, Cardinal Suenens' commentary about Cardinal Ruffini's reaction to the mention of "charisms" during the debate on the draft of *Lumen Gentium* in Cardinal Suenens, L.-J., *Memories and Hopes*, Veritas Publications, Dublin, Rep. of Ireland,

In a pivotal council speech, "The Charismatic Dimension of the Church,"²⁸ Cardinal Suenens exhorted the council fathers: The charisms are more than peripheral and unessential phenomena in the life of the Church; the charisms are vitally important for building up the Mystical Body and must be presented with clarity; the hierarchical structure of the Church must not appear as an administrative apparatus with no intimate connection with the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit which are spread throughout the life of the Church. Suenens reminded the Council Fathers that in Baptism, all Christians receive the Holy Spirit and that "The Holy Spirit shows himself in the Church in the great number and richness of his spiritual gifts, gifts which Scripture calls *pneumatika* (1 Cor. 12:1, 14:1) or charisms (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12;4,9 28, 30f; 1 Tm 4:14, 2 Tm 1:6; 1 Pt 4:10)." In detail, Suenens called to mind the living place of charisms in the Church: in extraordinary and marvelous ways, for example, ecstatic tongues and healing; in more common ways, for example, in wise speech, knowledge, faith, teaching, administration, discernment of spirits, and prophecy; and in obvious ministerial positions such as the charisms of theologians, catechists, evangelists, social workers. "Do we not know and see in our daily experience that the action of the Holy Spirit has not died out in the Church?"²⁹ In a later book, Cardinal Suenens provided a history of the charismatic experience of the Church and recalled that throughout the life of the Church, the charisms were to be found wherever faith was lived intensely.³⁰

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

An evident movement of the Holy Spirit in our day is reflected in the writings of the Second Vatican Council on the charismatic dimension of the Church. Pope John Paul II has recently called for a reawakened understanding and faithfulness to the spirit of openness called for by the council with regard to the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the variety of charisms, roles, and ministries he inspires for the good of the People of God.³¹ A fresh, comprehensive ecclesiology was stated in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. *Lumen Gentium* provides a context for, and description of, the role of the charisms in the Church. "...the teaching is essentially 'pneumatological': it is permeated by the truth about the Holy Spirit, as the soul of the Church."³²

The Church. The first chapter of *Lumen Gentium*

describes the mystery of the Church as "... a divine reality inserted into history which cannot be fully captured by human thought or language"³³: The Church is a sheepfold, the flock of God; She is a tract of land to be cultivated, the field of God; She is a building, the edifice of God, built of living stones; She is our Mother, the heavenly Jerusalem; the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ of which the Head of the body is Christ the Lord. All members of the body are to be molded into Christ's image. "In order that we may be unceasingly renewed in Him (cf. Eph. 4:23), He has shared with us His Spirit who, existing as one and the same being in the head and in the members, vivifies, unifies, and moves the whole body."³⁴

The People of God. Following this description of the Church, chapter II provides an expanded description of the Church as the "new People of God." The People of God are those who believe in Christ, who are reborn in Christ (cf. 1 Pt 1:23), who are born not of the flesh but of the Spirit (cf. Jn 3:5-6), and are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, a people God claims for His own (1 Pt. 2:9-10). Through participation in the sacraments, notably Baptism in which we are incorporated in the Church, Confirmation in which we are endowed by the Holy Spirit with special strength, and "the Eucharistic Sacrifice being the fount and apex of the whole Christian life,"³⁵ the community and ministry of the People of God is brought into operation. The holy People of God shares in Christ's prophetic office; the Church is a living witness to Christ and the body of the faithful, as a whole cannot err in matters of belief thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith which characterizes the people of God and is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth.³⁶

Charismatic gifts. It is in this profound context, the dogmatic statement by the Church on the mystery of her own identity, meaning, sacramental life, and prophetic and teaching offices, that the Constitution states:³⁷

"It is not only through the sacraments and Church ministries that the same Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the People of God and enriches it with virtues. Allotting His gifts 'to everyone according as he will' (1 Cor 12:11), he distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks or offices advantageous for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: 'The manifestations of the Spirit are given to everyone for profit' (1 Cor 12:7). These charismatic gifts, whether they be the

1992, p. 140.

²⁸Cardinal Suenens, L. J., "The Charismatic Dimension of the Church," in *Council Speeches of Vatican II*, Kung, H., Congar, Y., O.P., O'Hanlon, D., S.J., eds. Deus Books, Paulist Press, N.Y., U.S.A., 1964, pp. 29-34.

²⁹*ibid.*

³⁰ANP?, pp. 37-39.

³¹TMA, 45, pp. 50-51.

³²DV, 26, pp. 40-41.

³³See Footnote 1 of LG in Rev. Walter M. Abbot, S.J., gen. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, The America Press, USA, 1966, p. 14.

³⁴LG, Art. 7, p. 21.

³⁵LG, Art. 11, p. 28.

³⁶LG, Art. 12, pp. 29-30.

³⁷*ibid.*

most outstanding or the most widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church."

The Holy Spirit distributes special graces, charismatic gifts, to the faithful of every rank for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church. Through these charismatic gifts too, the Spirit of God sanctifies, leads, and enriches the church with virtues. The council fathers provided, in this same context, pastoral guidance on the charisms. They cautioned: that abuses in seeking the extraordinary gifts can occur; that personal expectations can be in error; and that the judgement concerning the proper use of the gifts is correctly under the authority of the pastors. "Still, extraordinary gifts are not to be rashly sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labor to be presumptuously expected from them. In any case, judgment as to their genuineness and proper use belongs to those who preside over the Church, and to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good (cf. 1 Th 5:12, 19-21)."³⁸

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity

The "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" identifies the apostolate, or mission, of the Church as all activity of the Mystical Body of Christ directed toward spreading God's kingdom, so that all humankind might share in Christ's saving redemption, and so that the whole world might in actual fact be brought into relationship with Christ.

"For the exercise of this apostolate, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the People of God through the ministry and the sacraments gives to the faithful special gifts as well (cf. 1 Cor 12:7), 'allotting to everyone according as He will' (1 Cor 12:11). Thus may the individual, 'according to the gift each has received, administer it to one another' and become 'good stewards of the manifold grace of God' (1 Pet 4:10) and build up thereby the whole body in charity (cf. Eph 4:16). From the reception of these charisms or gifts, including those which are less dramatic, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and for the upbuilding of the Church. In so doing, believers need to enjoy the freedom of the Holy Spirit who 'breathes where he will' (Jn 3:8). At the same time, they must act in communion with their brothers in Christ, especially with their pastors. The latter must make a judgement about the true nature and proper use of these gifts, not in order to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold

³⁸ *ibid.*

*fast to what is good (cf. 1 Th 5:12, 19, 21)."*³⁹

Note that while intense conciliar debate surrounded the pastoral theology of *charismata*, ultimately it was clearly propounded that the Baptized faithful have the "right and duty" to exercise the charisms for the upbuilding of the Church and for the good of mankind. "Indeed, everyone should painstakingly ready himself personally for the apostolate, especially as an adult. For the advance of age brings with it better self-knowledge, thus enabling each person to evaluate more accurately the talents with which God has enriched his soul and to exercise more effectively those charismatic gifts which the Holy Spirit has bestowed on him for the good of his brothers."⁴⁰

Charismata

*"We who have been reborn through the sacrament of Baptism experience intense joy when we feel within us the first stirrings of the Holy Spirit. We begin to have an insight into the mysteries of faith, we are able to prophesy and to speak with wisdom. We become steadfast in hope and receive the gift of healing. Demons are made subject to our authority. These gifts enter us like a gentle rain, and once having done so, little by little, they bring forth fruit in abundance."*⁴¹

In the not too distant past, instructional writings on the spiritual life might have classified charisms as "extraordinary mystical phenomena,"⁴² in a category with private revelations (e.g., visions [cf. Acts 18:9-11]) and stigmatization. However, charisms, as evident in Scripture and in the writings of the Second Vatican Council, belong to the *ordinary* life of the Church and are normative to the life of the Christian person. Specific examples of charisms, both "extraordinary" (*clarissima*⁴³) and "simple" (*simplicia*) and widely diffused, are considered below; however, it is important to note the deficiency inherent in human definitions of *charisms*. The charisms are manifest, creative, love-forging, explosive, divinely bestowed power (*dynamis*). The charisms

³⁹ DAL, Art. 3, pp. 487-521.

⁴⁰ DAL, Art. 30, p. 519.

⁴¹ Excerpt from a discourse on the psalms (cf. Psalm 64) by Saint Hilary, chosen as the second reading in the Office of Readings on Saturday of the twenty-fifth week in ordinary time. *The Liturgy of the Hours, According to the Roman Rite, IV*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 1975, p. 311.

⁴² Cf. The Very Reverend Adolphe Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life, A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, Translated by Fr. Herman Branderis, Society of St. John the Evangelist, Desclee & Co., Toumai, Belgium, 1923, pp. 700-718.

⁴³ The distinction here between the outstanding charisms, in Latin *clarissima*, and the commonplace charisms, *simpliciora*, *simplicia*, is noted by Rev. E. D. O'Connor, C.S.C. in *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, U.S.A., p. 285

evidently overlap,⁴⁴ complement, catalyze, and even seemingly compete⁴⁵ with, one another. The dynamic, creative breath of God (*ruah-Elohim*) blows where He wills. The Spirit indeed brings order out of chaos, but is hardly bound by the dimensions of human thought. "The wind blows where it will. You hear the sound it makes but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone begotten of the Spirit" (Jn 3:8).

Clarissima

St. Paul lists certain spiritual gifts in the first Corinthian letter:⁴⁶ "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. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 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 distributing them individually to each person as he wishes" (1 Cor 12:4-11).

Wisdom in Discourse

"The Spirit scrutinizes all matters, even the deep things of God" (1 Cor 3:10). The charism of wisdom in discourse is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in which God impresses his wisdom, oriented toward Truth (cf. Jn 16:12-15), in the Body of Christ through individual members of the Church community. God's shared wisdom effects conversion and growth in holiness. St. Peter attributed this charism to St. Paul when he wrote "Paul, our beloved brother wrote you this in the spirit of wisdom that is his ..." (2 Pt 3:15-16). The Doctors of the Church⁴⁷ notably exercised this charism. The charism of wisdom is manifestly operative in bishops, priests, deacons, preachers, catechists, exegetes, and other teachers through whom the Spirit of God communicates truth through ministries of the Word. The Holy Spirit

empowers the Baptized to testify to Christ, in the Church and in the world, in peaceful times and in times of persecution (cf. Acts 8:35; Mk 13:11-12 Acts 4:8-12).

Expression of Knowledge

The power to express knowledge is made manifest by a "word of knowledge" in which the Holy Spirit impresses specific understanding or information which either *reveals* his activity or *directs* ministry. The charism is experienced as a divinely inspired sense, intuition, or thought. The Spirit equips the Baptized with the knowledge *needed* for a particular ministerial situation.

Faith

The charism of faith⁴⁸ is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit giving special assurance capable of working wonders—the faith that moves mountains (cf. Lk 17:5-6; 1 Cor 13:2). The Spirit enables the Baptized to recognize God's will, to act according to divine direction, and to sustain confidence that God's Will will attain fruition, even through tremendous obstacles and against formidable odds. It has been said that this gift is the *fertile soil* of many charisms. The courage to share a word of knowledge, the confident assurance needed to intercede and to minister healing prayer, and the expectation of miraculous power are often rooted in a charism of faith.

Gifts of healing

"... He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free ..." (Lk 4:18-19). This proclamation has far-reaching consequences concerning the healing ministry of Christ, and hence of his Church: about liberty from bondage to sin and death, and from the tethers of woundedness and injustice; about light in darkness; about hope in depression, despair, and powerlessness; about release from fear. The Lord Jesus healed throughout His ministry.⁴⁹ At that time "... he cured many of their diseases, sufferings, and evil spirits; he also granted sight to many who were blind" (Lk 7:21). Indeed, this is how John the Baptist was to know that Jesus was the "One who is to come": "... the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them" (Lk 7:22-23).

Jesus prepared the apostles to minister his healing.

⁴⁴For example, the distinction between the word of knowledge and the discernment of spirits can be subtle with regard to revelation concerning sin or an operative evil spirit.

⁴⁵In this regard, the first Corinthian letter gives evidence that ill-pastored *charismata* has potential to divide the Christian community (cf. 1 Cor 14).

⁴⁶Did St. Paul mean to delineate the charisms, definitively and comprehensively, in this letter? Given the pastoral nature of the epistle, it is likely that the apostle provided teaching on *specific* charisms pertinent to the life of the Corinthian community. Indeed, St. Paul discussed other charisms in letters to the Church in Rome.

⁴⁷For example, men and women like Sts. Ambrose, Augustine, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Catherine of Siena, and Teresa of Jesus

⁴⁸The charism of faith is formally distinct from, although oriented toward, the theological virtue of Faith, of the Faith, Hope, and Love triad (cf. 1 Cor 13:13, Rom 5:1-5, Gal 5:1:6, and 1 Th 1:3), which is poured into the hearts of all the faithful through the action of the Holy Spirit in the Sanctifying Grace of Baptism.

⁴⁹The healing ministry of Jesus Christ is recorded especially in the Gospel of Luke (cf. Lk 4:31-41; 5:12-26; 6:6-11; 6:17-19; 7:1-17; 7:36-49; 8:26-31; 8:40-56; 8:37-43; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 17:11-18; 18:35-43).

He gave to them power and authority over all demons and diseases (cf. Lk 9:1-2). He instructed the seventy-two disciples: "Whatever town you enter and they welcome you ... cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.'" (Lk 10:8-9). God's healing power in our life is a sign of His love and power in our lives, a sign of His Kingdom. The Church ministers Christ's love (*ad intra* and *ad extra*).

Healing is conferred principally in the sacramental graces of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and the Anointing of the Sick. "Is there anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (Jas 5:13-15). In our day we can readily participate in communal celebrations of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Anointing of the Sick. The Lord is made manifest in the prayers and community present in the gathered Body of Christ.

In addition to the healing grace proper to the sacraments, the Holy Spirit actively empowers the Church with charisms of healing, or manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power over disease and illness—including spiritual, psychological, and physical illness. The New Testament provides many examples of this ministry in the Church through the action of the Holy Spirit manifest in the gifts of healing. Recall, for example, how the people of Jerusalem laid the sick on mats in the street in hope that even the shadow of Peter would fall on one or another of them. Large numbers of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also brought those who were sick and those disturbed with unclean spirits, and they were cured (Acts 5:12-15).

The Church today is also blessed also with notable ministries of healing prayer in the form of intercessory prayer groups and teams that are committed ministering healing prayer; these are instruments of profound healing in the Church. By healing the "leaven" (the Church), the Lord very effectively also heals "the batch" (the world around us). Indeed, the Church herself is a sacrament of healing in the world.

Miraculous Powers

Before ascending to the Father, as the Lord Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature and to Baptize all who believe. He said: "*Signs like these will accompany those who have professed their faith: In my name they will drive out demons [e.g., Acts 28:1-10], they will speak new languages [e.g., Acts 2:4]. They will pick up serpents with their hands [e.g., Acts 28:1-10], and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will*

recover" (Mk 16:17-18). The Lordship of Jesus Christ (Phil 2:11) is confirmed through the charismatic gift of miraculous powers. Scripture (Acts 3:1-10) records that Sts. Peter and John once walked past the Beautiful Gate where a man crippled from birth begged alms. Peter said, "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, rise and walk." The cripple leaped up, walked around, and then jumped, and then praised God. When the people saw him, they too praised God because they recognized the beggar and knew that God had miraculously transformed his life. A second and rather astonishing example of the charism of miracles is found in chapter nine of The Acts of the Apostles: Tabitha—the disciple who "... was completely occupied with good deeds and almsgiving" (Acts 9:36)—had fallen ill and died. Peter prayed that she be raised to life: "'Tabitha, rise up.' She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. This became known all over Joppa, and many came to believe in the Lord" (Acts 9:40,42). Just as Jesus Christ raised people to life during His earthly ministry (cf. Jn 11:41-44 and Lk 7:11-17) so he continues to raise his people to life in him through the ministry of his Church today.

Prophecy

The charism of prophecy is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in which God communicates to his people, through his people, in human language, written, spoken, sung, or signed. The gift of prophecy is exceedingly effective for building up the Body of Christ (1 Cor 14:1-5).⁵⁰ The Baptized are urged to set their "... hearts on spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy" (1 Cor 14:1). Prophecy is generally experienced as a simple, brief message of encouragement, direction, confirmation, inspiration, or consolation voiced by one of the members; for example, "Have courage." Or, "My people, I love you." Or, "My people, I am with you." God speaks to the whole body of the assembly. In rare instances a prophetic utterance is intended for a specific person. Prophecy can be expressed through Scripture. Prophecy very rarely involves foretelling (*e.g.*, Acts 21:7-14); rather, most often prophecy is a "telling forth" of what Jesus Christ communicates through the Spirit of Truth (cf. Jn 16:12-15) to a specific people, gathered in a particular place, at a particular time.

St. Paul exhorted the primitive Church to "... not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good" (1 Th 5:19-21). In his autobiographical reflection *Memories and Hopes*,⁵¹

⁵⁰The ministry of Pope John Paul II, both in the Church and in the world, gives powerful witness to the efficacy of the prophetic role of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

⁵¹Cardinal Suenens, L.-J., *Memories and Hopes*, Veritas Publications, Dublin, Rep. of Ireland, p. 374.

Cardinal Suenens answered the question: "Prophecies are a frequent occurrence at Renewal meetings; does this disturb you in any way?" Cardinal Suenens' response reveals a balanced blend of receptivity to the supernatural gift of prophecy and pastoral wisdom and prudence: "Yes indeed, if the attitude behind them is 'God has said this to me ...,' 'Listen to me, my children ...'; or if they claim to predict future events. Vatican II speaks of all Christians as 'a prophetic people'—that is to say, as carriers of the word of God. We must beware of the apocalyptic manner, but there is nothing strange in sharing with others a word which we have received in prayer and which has struck us—if this is a spiritual sharing, and nothing more. There is no private line to the Holy Spirit."

Discernment of Spirits

The charism of discernment of spirits is the empowerment to distinguish one spirit from another. In one of its facets, discernment of spirits is a gift of the Holy Spirit to "read hearts." St. John Vianney, the patron saint of Diocesan priests, was notably gifted in this manner. It is said that people would stand in lines for three days in order to confess their sins with him as minister. He had an extraordinary ability to "read souls" and to grasp the root of the penitent's sin and to formulate a penitential response that would effect transformation in Christ. The story of St. John Vianney⁵² speaks to the effectiveness of this charism in building up the Church and the world.

The Baptized are called to conform their lives to God and to be transformed (Eph 4:17-24), as individuals and as Church, into His way and likeness (cf. Eph 4:13). The Holy Spirit directs the faithful by His many gifts in growth in holiness. At decision points along this journey, the Spirit of Jesus empowers the pilgrim to "discern the spirits," to distinguish between the good and the bad, and to hold on to the good (cf. Th 5:19-22; Rom 12:9).⁵³

Discernment is required in regard to the charisms themselves (1 Th 5:21); this gift of discernment is proper to the office of the pastors of the Church.⁵⁴

Tongues

The charism of tongues is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in which one is empowered to pray or to speak

in what appears to be unintelligible sounds.⁵⁵ The gift of tongues is often experienced as a "gentle rain" of praise, spoken or sung, to the Lord. Tongues has been described as a simple "... form of contemplative prayer. Specific words with precise intellectual content are set aside to allow for a deeper union of one's heart with the Lord. Spoken words may also have the same effect, but a certain freedom comes with the gift of tongues and allows for new possibilities of communication with God."⁵⁶ Most often this gift is exercised in the context of private prayer and in corporate praise and worship. In some cases a message spoken in tongues may be interpreted, and indeed should be (1 Cor 14:6-19).

Interpretation of tongues

The interpretation of tongues is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in which one is gifted to interpret a message, spoken or sung in tongues, which is intended for the whole people gathered. The interpretation of tongues has potential to edify the people of God with the efficacy of prophetic utterance. Therefore, one who is gifted with speaking in tongues should pray for the gift of interpreting tongues (cf. 1 Cor 14:13) because, while speaking in tongues edifies the individual speaker, the interpretation of tongues edifies the whole Body of the Church.

Charisms of Office and Ministry

In addition to the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 1 Cor 12:8-11, St. Paul mentions other charisms in his letters to the Church in Corinth, Ephesus, and in Rome. These charisms too are *extraordinary* in that they are manifestations of the Holy Spirit specifically given to the Christian people so that the Body may be strengthened to grow in love. Members are gifted to feed the poor (1 Cor 13:3), to prepare for martyrdom (1 Cor 13:3), and to serve as instruments of revelation and instruction (1 Cor 14:6). The Church experiences ministerial gifts proper to various offices (*e.g.*, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, Eph 4:11-12) within the church: teaching, exhorting, ruling (authority or strength, Rom 12:3-8) and assistance and administration (1 Cor 12:27-31). The Spirit empowers the Church to spread the Gospel by evangelization (Acts 2:14-41) and through works of mercy (Rom 12:3-8).

⁵²*E.g.*, see Fr. Bartholomew O'Brien, *The Cure' of Ars*, TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., Rockford IL, USA, 1987.

⁵³Here the term discernment of spirits connotes the discipline of attaining understanding of God's directive action in our life. Another connotation of the phrase discernment of spirits concerns recognition of malevolent spirits. Priests have the faculties to confront evil spirits if necessary. Today it is the exclusively the role of particular priests or lay people, assigned by the local bishop, to address, adjure, challenge, or exorcise evil spirits.

⁵⁴*LG*, Art. 12, p. 30; *DAC*, Art. 3, pp.493; and *CL*, 24, pp. 60-61.

⁵⁵Glossolalia (*gloss*-tongue; *laleo*-to speak) is a technical (non-biblical) term that is used to refer to speaking in unintelligible sounds (pseudo-language). For discussion (biblical evidence, examination by social science, and theological critique) on the gift of tongues as glossolalia inspired by the Holy Spirit see Rev. M. Cornwell, C.P., *The Gift of Tongues Today*, Dove Publications, Pecos, NM, USA, 1975.

⁵⁶Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Pastoral Statement, "Come, Holy Spirit—A Pastoral Statement on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal," Archdiocese of Chicago, Feast of Pentecost, 1988, p. 3.

Simplicia

The Paraclete mysteriously directs all of human life to usher in the Kingdom of God. The People of God, united uniquely to Christ, and vivified by the his Spirit, are a special leaven, salt, and light by which God effects this Salvation. The Church is daily empowered to carry out this perpetual mission with the "simple" and "most-widely diffused" charisms of the Holy Spirit. These charisms are often rooted in, and grow from the God-given *natural talents* of the Baptized faithful. The simple gifts are most effective for building up the Body of Christ because they are common⁵⁷ (ubiquitous), continuously operative in the Church and in the world. The ordinary gifts too are extraordinary the extent that it is the Holy Spirit multiplies and directs the natural talents of the faithful for the benefit of the Church and the mission of the Christ.

The New Evangelization

"God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel. I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples."⁵⁸

The Good News of the Kingdom of God is spread by witness to Christ, in word and in deed, in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 4:32-35). It is evident from Scripture that charismatic manifestations of the Spirit were normative to the communal, liturgical, and missionary life of the primitive Church. In the course of her history, the Western Church evolved a disciplined, rational, and prudent spiritual life. Often the mystical or supernatural elements of the spiritual life were relegated to the religious, to the monasteries and convents. Further, a formidable hierarchical structure developed which reflected the deep rootedness of the Church in the True Faith of Christ. Reflecting her Creator and Head, the Church too is "beauty ever ancient, ever new."⁵⁹ She is continually renewed in a docility to the Holy Spirit sustained by a perpetual openness to the transforming

⁵⁷ It is interesting to draw an analogy between the "common" priesthood of the Baptized faithful and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained priests (e.g., cf. *LG*, Art. 10, pp. 26-27, or more recently, John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I Will Give You Shepherds), St. Paul Books & Media, Boston, MA, USA, 1992, p. 37). The ordained priest ministers the Word and Sacraments, principally within the Church (*ad intra*). The Church is immeasurably built up through this ministry. The common priesthood of the lay faithful is exceedingly effective in proclaiming the Gospel to the world (*ad extra*) by virtue of the lay person's life in the world, by virtue of the lay vocation.

⁵⁸ *RM*, 3, p. 12.

⁵⁹ St. Augustine.

Word and Breath of God, operative in the day to day life of the whole People of God.

The Body of Christ today is experiencing and recognizing the direction of the Holy Spirit in new and wondrous ways, including the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the charisms. The Church is called to recognize, draw forth, foster, and receive the charisms because they are exceedingly effective for building the Body of Christ and for executing the mission of evangelization (*ad gentes*).

In His Apostolic Letter on the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II called for a new appreciation of the charisms. "The primary tasks of the preparation for the Jubilee thus include *a renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Spirit*, who acts within the Church both in the Sacraments, especially *Confirmation*, and in the variety of charisms, roles and ministries which he inspires for the good of the Church: "There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries distributes his different gifts for the welfare of the Church (cf. 1 Cor 12:1-11). Among these gifts stands out the grace given to the Apostles. To their authority, the Spirit himself subjected even those who were endowed with charisms (cf. 1 Cor 14). Giving the body unity through himself and through his power and through the internal cohesion of its members, this same spirit produces and urges love among the believers. In our day too, the Spirit is *the principal agent of the new evangelization*. Hence it will be important to gain a renewed appreciation of the Spirit as the one who builds the Kingdom of God within the course of history and prepares its full manifestation in Jesus Christ, stirring people's hearts and quickening in our world the seeds of the full salvation which will come at the end of time."⁶⁰

The rapid advancement of the world, while evoking prudence, brings joy to the Church. She is confident that God configures the People of God, and ultimately the world, into His kingdom, his City of Joy, the City of God. It is with anticipation that we look to the freshness and creativity of the Spirit to lead us in new and wondrous directions on the path of Christ, gifted to live with hope and confident faith and with love in this new world. Alleluia. Alleluia! Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father, in the unity of the Bond of Love, the Holy Spirit of God.

⁶⁰ *TMA*, 45, pp. 50-51.