

CHARISMS AND EVANGELIZATION - II

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Lifestyle charisms

Support and intensify the use of other gifts.

- **Celibacy** empowers a Christian to be most fulfilled and spiritually fruitful by remaining unmarried and celibate for the sake of Christ.
 - Allows people to be itinerant preachers, or devote themselves unencumbered to evangelization
- **Faith** empowers a Christian to be an effective agent of God's purposes through an unusual trust in the love, power, and provision of God and a remarkable freedom to act on this trust.
 - Ex. Mother Angelica with nothing but vision & faith founded a worldwide television network to spread the Gospel.
- **Missionary** empowers a Christian to be a channel of God's goodness to others by effectively and joyfully using their charisms in a second culture.

Ex. St. Francis Xavier:

"By all accounts, [St. Francis Xavier] was a man who preached the Gospel with tireless energy, and with great power and effectiveness. Estimates of the number of converts that he personally baptized vary, but some of them are in the six-digit range." (*Set All Afire* by Louis de Wohl)

"Many, many people hereabouts are not becoming Christians for one reason only: there is nobody to make them Christians. Again and again I have thought of going around the universities of Europe, especially Paris, and crying out to the scholars: 'What a tragedy: how many souls are being shut out of heaven, thanks to you!' This thought would certainly stir most of them to listen actively to what God is saying to them. They would forget their own desires and give themselves over entirely to God's will and his choice. They would cry out with all their heart: 'Lord, here am I! Send me. Send me anywhere you like -- even to India!'" (St. Francis Xavier, *Letter to Ignatius of Loyola*)

- Julie Foran and Denise Audet will speak Friday morning about their lay missionary experiences.

- **Voluntary Poverty** empowers a Christian to be a channel of God's loving presence by living a life of cheerful, voluntary simplicity or poverty in order to identify with Jesus and the poor.

Ex. On mission to the Isle del Moro, Francis Xavier wrote the following to St. Ignatius:

"The dangers to which I am exposed and pains I take for the interest of God alone, are the inexhaustible springs of spiritual joys; insomuch, that these islands, bare of all worldly necessities, are the places in the world for a man to lose his sight with the excess of weeping; but they are tears of joy. I remember not ever to have tasted such interior delights; and these consolations of the soul are so pure, so exquisite, and so constant, that they take from me all sense of my corporal sufferings." (*Butler's Lives of the Saints*)

Healing/Sign/Power charisms

- **Healing** empowers a Christian to be a channel of God's love through whom God cures illness and restores health when healing is unlikely to occur quickly or to happen at all.

- Ex. Fr. Ralph DiOrio. www.rdohealingministry.org

"The Holy Spirit gives to some a special charism of healing so as to make manifest the power of the grace of the risen Lord. But even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of all illnesses. Thus St. Paul must learn from the Lord that 'my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness,' and that the sufferings to be endured can mean that 'in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body, that is, the Church.'" (CCC 1508)

- **Intercessory Prayer** empowers the intense prayer of a Christian for others to be the means by which God's love and deliverance reaches those in need.

- **Miracles** empowers a Christian to manifest signs of God's Kingdom in the world.

Ex. Padre Pio

- **Deliverance** empower a Christian to be a channel of God's saving power to free others from demonic influences.

NOTE: Proper discernment and working under rightful authority is necessary: See book *Unbound*.

Power Evangelism

"For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction." (1 Thess 1:5)

"By power evangelism I mean a presentation of the Gospel that is rational but that also transcends the rational. The explanation of the Gospel comes with a demonstration of God's power through signs and wonders. Power evangelism is a spontaneous, spirit-inspired, empowered presentation of the Gospel. Power evangelism is evangelism that is preceded and undergirded by supernatural demonstrations of God's presence."

(John Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 35)

"When the Gospel is authentically proclaimed, we should often expect to see confirming signs and wonders (cf. Acts 4:29-30) to give convicting power to the word, which will serve to accomplish God's will including that deepest of all his desires the conversion of the human heart." (Constitutions & Rules of the Companions of the Cross, C24)

Advantages of Power Evangelism

- 1) People experience the presence and power of God and His personal love for them.
- 2) Resistance to the Gospel is overcome and people are more receptive to Christ's claims.
- 3) People attracted by overt manifestations of God alive & working want the same for themselves.

Ex. Fr. Scott on mission in Africa, cab driver healed, invites another to the rally, who is also healed.

Pitfalls of Power Evangelism

- 1) *Rash desire and presumption*

"Extraordinary gifts are not to be rashly desired, nor is it from them that the fruits of apostolic labours are to be presumptuously expected." (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, 12)

- 2) *Name-it-and-claim-it* (e.g. Word of Faith Movement)

- Ex. "I don't get what I'm asking for; I must not have enough faith." "Faith is a power that even God must obey!"
- God is sovereign. His will is perfect. We don't tell God what to do, but invite Him to accomplish it through us.
- Usually we don't know God's will with absolute certainty, and can pray "If it is your will..."
- When the Apostles/Jesus spoke a word of command, they had certain knowledge of God's will in the situation:

"...Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!'" (John 11:43)

"Then Peter said, '...in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth stand up and walk.'" (Acts 3:6)

- 3) *Over-emphasis on physical healing or material blessing* (e.g. Prosperity Gospel)

Ex. Some preachers equate poverty and suffering solely with lack of faith/God's blessing.

God may allow suffering to destroy vices that prosperity/health never would.

"Blessed are the poor... those who mourn... when they persecute you..." (Matt 5:1-12)

"We accept good things from God, should we not accept trials?" (Job ???)

- 4) *Over-emotionalism*

- Manipulating people's emotions by stirring the up to mere fleshly enthusiasm.
- Using the power of suggestion to evoke 'manifestations' or other phenomena. (David Middlemiss, "Enthusiastic Phenomena and Hypnotic Techniques", *Interpreting Charismatic Experience*, pp. 241-252)

- 5) *"If I don't see 'manifestations' then the Holy Spirit isn't at work!"*

- Most of the Holy Spirit's action in our lives is interior, unseen and even unfelt. Don't be a consolation-junkie!

6) *Equating charisms with sanctity*

- Charisms can operate without charity – St. Thomas Aquinas
- God can work through you/charism – when you are not in state of grace (Ex. Praying in tongues before Baptism)
- Counterfeit charisms – looks like a charism, but the power is not from God, but from an evil spirit.

Charisms of *Understanding*

- **Knowledge** empowers a Christian to be a channel of God’s truth through diligent study and intellectual activity that enables us to better understand God, ourselves, and the universe.
 - Ex. St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, all Doctors of the Church
- **Wisdom** empowers a Christian to be a channel of God’s goodness through remarkable insight that enables him/her to come up with creative solutions to specific problems and make good decisions.
- **Discernment of Spirits** empowers a Christian to be an effective channel of God’s wisdom by accurately perceiving a divine or demonic presence in certain people, places, or things.

Creative charisms

Evangelization of culture, Ex. Michael O’Brien in his artwork and writing.

- **Craftsmanship** empowers a Christian to be an effective channel of God’s goodness to others through artistic or creative work that beautifies and/or orders the physical world.
- **Music** empowers a Christian to be a channel of God’s creative goodness to others through writing or performing music for the delight of others and the praise of God.
 - Ex. John Michael Talbot, Langelly Vineyard Church.
- **Writing** empowers a Christian to be a channel of God’s creativity by using words to create works of truth or beauty that reflect the fullness of human experience and bring glory to God.

Ex. Tolkien: “There is nothing overtly Christian about *The Lord of the Rings*, and yet a deeply Christian worldview permeates the story. I have long heard of readers being converted to Christianity just by reading Tolkien’s masterpiece, although the name of Christ is never mentioned. The hope, goodness, and spiritual depth of the faith are communicated indirectly by a piece of fiction and yet can touch the imaginations and spirits of some readers with a power that a straightforward essay or sermon could never achieve.” (Sherry Weddell, *The Catholic Spiritual Gifts Inventory*, p. 54)

I. Use the Gifts!

A. Exhortation to use them

“Today, I would like to cry out to all of you ... and to all Christians: Be open and docile to the gifts of the Spirit! Accept gracefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow on us! Do not forget that every charism is given for the common good, that is, for the benefit of the whole Church.” (Pope John Paul II, *Meeting with Ecclesial Movements*, Pentecost 1998, 5)

“From the reception of these charisms even the most ordinary ones, there arises for each of the faithful the right and duty of exercising them in the Church and in the world for the good of men and the development of the Church, of exercising them in the freedom of the Holy Spirit who 'breathes where he wills' (Jn 3:8)...” (Vatican II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 3)

B. Authenticates the Gospel

- Churches grow where the charisms are used. They are dying where they are not used.

“Many church leaders are still trying to find the reasons for such rapid growth among Pentecostal and charismatic churches around the world. When asked this question, most Pentecostal leaders would answer simply, ‘the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the accompanying manifestations of charismatic gifts.’ Many researchers tend to overlook this answer as being too simplistic, looking rather for more sophisticated sociological or economic causes. At some point, the churches may be forced to face the truth of these Pentecostal claims. Pentecostals seem to grow in most places

because of aggressive evangelism accompanied by such ‘signs and wonders’ as healing, speaking in tongues, casting out of demons, and prophesying. In his book *Power Evangelism*, John Wimber points to ‘power encounters’ as the most significant points of dramatic breakthrough into non-Christian cultures. (Vinson Synan, “Which Churches are growing and why?” *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, p. 119)

C. Your charisms are a means for others to encounter God

- If someone hears a prophesy, is healed, or is moved by an inspired work of art, etc., he encounters God personally.

Ex. Fr. Scott at Renewal Ministries Gathering - Image of golden shears. The Lord was using me to prune, to discipline, and to make hard decisions. God was exercising His Fatherhood through his ministry.

II. How to Use the Charisms

A. Discovering Your Charisms

1) We can exercise charisms without knowing what they are, but it is very helpful to discern them.

- You can more readily recognize the promptings of the Spirit, and cooperate more fully.
- The gifts that God has given you are the ways that God will work through you most powerfully.
- You understand your role in the Body of Christ more clearly – where you fit in.
- Can avoid the frustration of pursuing apostolates which are not a good match for your particular charisms.
- Serving in apostolates which utilize our charisms leads to more joy, lasting fruit & reduces danger of burnout.
- Ex. Fr. Scott as Pastor vs. Teacher

2) You have spiritual gifts... Discover them!

- This is possible through prayer, discernment, experimentation, and in the context of Christian community.
- We recommend **The Catherine of Siena Institute** resources for lay apostolate and discerning charisms: *The Catholic Spiritual Inventory, Called and Gifted Workshop, Discerning Charisms Workbook*, etc.
PO Box 26440, Colorado Springs, CO 80936 Ph: (719) 219-0056 Web: www.siena.org Email: info@siena.org
- Deals with important questions, such as how to distinguish between a charism and a natural talent.

B. Growing in the gifts

- **Learn about the charisms:** Books on particular charisms, read lives of saints who had your charisms.
- **Use them:** More we use the gifts more adept we become at them, more God can work through us powerfully.
- **Don't abuse them:** “You can't take the charism of administration that you use to run a parish and put it to work running a drug cartel. A charism is a sort of channel that will only carry the pure water of the Holy Spirit and can't be turned into a sewer pipe at the whim of its steward. Unless we are seeking to follow Jesus, our charisms will wither away.” (Sherry Weddell, *Charisms vs. Natural Gifts*, <http://www.siena.org/library/sssum98/charisms.html>)

C. Exercise your gifts in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and His promptings.

1) **Situation:** Use the gifts when and how the Holy Spirit leads you to.

2) **Motive:** “in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms” (CCC 800)
humility – “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)

Beware of **false motives:** pride, need for attention, desire for something to happen, need to control.

III. Discerning the Authenticity of Charisms

“Their office is not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good.”
(CCC 801, cf. Lumen Gentium 12, cf. 1 Thess 5:12,19-21)

A. Objective Criteria for Discernment (Based on Pope John Paul II, *General Audience*, June 24, 1992, 6)

1) *Agreement with the Church's faith in Jesus Christ* (cf. 1 Cor 12:3). [Scripture & Tradition]

A gift of the Holy Spirit cannot be contrary to the faith which the same Spirit inspires in the whole Church. “This is how”, St John writes, “you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God” (1 Jn 4:2).

2) *The presence of the "fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace" (Gal 5:22)*

Every gift of the Spirit fosters growth in love, both in the person himself and in the community, and thus it produces joy and peace.

If a charism causes trouble and confusion, this means either that it is not genuine or that it has not been used in the right way. As St Paul says: "He is not the God of disorder but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33).

Without love, even the most extraordinary charisms are not at all useful (cf. 1 Cor 13:1-3; see also Mt 7:22-23).

[NOTE: An authentic prophecy, if not received due to resistance to truth of God's word, may lead to division.]

3) *Conformity with the Church's authority and acceptance of its directives.*

After laying down very strict rules for using charisms in the Church of Corinth, St Paul says: "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or a spiritual person, he should recognize that what I am writing to you is a commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor 14:37). The authentic charismatic is recognized by his sincere docility to the Pastors of the Church. A charism cannot cause rebellion or a rupture of unity.

- The hierarchy is given the grace of state (flowing from their priestly and episcopal ordination) to regulate and discern and guide the use of the charisms.

[NOTE for priests: "While trying the spirits if they be of God, they [priests] must discover with faith, recognize with joy, and foster with diligence the many and varied charismatic gifts of the laity..." (Vatican II, *Decree on Life and Ministry of Priests*, 9)]

4) *Serves the common good.*

The use of charisms in the community is subject to a simple rule: "Everything should be done for building up" (1 Cor 14:26), i.e. charisms are accepted to the extent that they make a constructive contribution to the life of the community, a life of union with God and of fraternal communion. St Paul insists firmly on this rule (1 Cor 14:4-5, 12, 18-19, 26-32).

B. Personal Discernment: Questions to ask yourself (esp. for prophecy, discernment of spirits)

- 1) Is it in line with the Word of God (Scripture and Tradition)?
- 2) Are there signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit (peace, courage/active energy, clarity)?
- 3) Is it merely the product of my flesh (memories, desires, active imagination, etc.)?
- 4) Is it going to build up the body or tear it down?
Conviction coming from God always has hope, a call towards God.
Accusation just puts you down and leads to discouragement.
- 5) Does it harmonize with what God is doing in the assembly?
- 6) Might it be a word just for you? (Ask the Lord)

Conclusion

"Come, Holy Spirit, and make ever more fruitful the charisms you have bestowed on us. Give new strength and missionary zeal to these sons and daughters of yours who have gathered here. Open their hearts; renew their Christian commitment to the world. Make them courageous messengers of the Gospel, witnesses to the risen Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Saviour of man. Strengthen their love and their fidelity to the Church." (Pope John Paul II, *Meeting with Ecclesial Movements*, Pentecost 1998, 9)