



61st Year

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THE UNITY OF THE GIFTS

The Church is the body of Christ and we, the members of the body. And we partake as members: 1) with the power of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Trinity, and 2) with the gift of the charisms of the Holy Spirit. The way of our participation is sacramental. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we are anointed with the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit and we participate in the sanctifying mysteries (sacraments) with the chief one being the communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The relationship, communication, cooperation occurs through the gifts of the Comforter. But it is a relationship “in Christ” a “new”, distinct, spiritual relationship.

We become a living organism, a communion of Saints, the grace of the Comforter unifies and enlivens which “gathers together the whole institution of the Church” (Troparion of Pentecost). So for this reason also, the Apostle tells us that: “having gifts” (Rom. 12:6) according to the grace which was given to us and analogous to the measure of our faith, that we cultivate them for the benefit of the other members of the Church, not for showing off.

Reference and manner of using the gifts

The Apostle Paul enumerates the gifts and notes their purpose: prophecy, ministry, teaching, comforting, simplicity, responsibility of works, charity, love, innocence, brotherly love, compassion, activity, spiritual warmth, hope, joy, patience, prayer, supporting one another, hospitality, forgiveness. However discretion is also needed in how they will be used.

The gifts of prophecy and of teaching

One of the most important gifts is the gift of prophecy with its double meaning: as foreknowing the future things, but also as knowledge of the mysteries. First, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit events are foretold which will occur, in order to forewarn and preserve in readiness, the members of the Church. In this the gift of teaching cooperates, which interprets and imparts the divine meanings. Patristic theology is a result of the enlightenment of these two gifts.

The gifts of ministry, comforting, of brotherly love, hospitality, of brotherly love, and of turning away from every wickedness.

These are the gifts which facilitate, comfort, exhort, console and help believers between each other. Ministry in various needs which present themselves, should be done with a spirit of humility according to the saying of Christ: "I am among you for your own spiritual service". The undertaking of responsible ministries should be done with interest and care (in striving).

Comforting is an exhortative gift in virtue (according to Saint Nikodemos). It urges the exercising and cultivation of the godly virtues which adorn the soul spiritually. Every type of charity, material and spiritual, should be done with appetite and eagerness, without murmuring, "without sadness but with gaiety and joy" (John Chrysostom), so that the spirit of the goodness and kindness of Christ is imparted.

Brotherly love expresses the support and loving care of the soul for one's neighbor. As we are friends of Christ through communion with Him, we ought to be also friends "in Christ" between us, so that our association in spirit is stronger. Let us have hospitable feelings, so that with the chief gift of love for one's neighbor, we incarnate the living love of the Godman in our relationship with the other believers. Let it be unhypocritical, so that it has the fragrance Christ but also gives power so that we avoid every wicked action and thought. Let us completely hate: "strongly hating" (John Damascene) and completely estrange ourselves from sin, "abhorring that which is evil" (Rom. 12:9), with all the power of our heart (Nikodemos the Haghiorite). So that we follow with dedication and attachment what is good, which is God.

The gifts of patients, of hope and of prayer

The gift of patience shows in afflictions, because we hope that the Lord will not abandon us. So for this reason with joy we face afflictions. Basil the Great says that hope is a fellow dweller with joy. While prayer grants us to preserve in our soul the warmth of the Spirit of God which nourishes our every god-pleasing action. We do not get frustrated, we constantly hope in the power and love of God and surpass all the obstacles in our spiritual journey.

The gift of revengelessness

As a crowning of all gifts the apostle, in today's reading, projects the lack of wickedness, guilelessness, forgiveness. It is the fruit of love in Christ and the difference of the believer from other people. It is the mirror of Christian virtues, the projector of the love of God to men. "Be blessing those who persecute you, be blessing them and do not be cursing them (Rom. 12:14), writes the apostle. Whoever of us, in other words, feels that we are mature members of the Body of the Church of Christ, have within us the distillation of the divine virtues of the Holy Spirit, which is forgiveness to those who want our harm. Forgiveness without exception, without distinctions. Not that we are forgiving one, in other words, and cursing another one.

This virtue opens to us the door of the peace of God. We become peaceful "in soul and in body", because henceforth in us dwells the God of peace. The greatest proof that we believe and are living the true and living God. And who, I wonder, does not desire the rare, for our time, good of personal and social peace.