

CHAPTER 12



St. Paul begins 1 Corinthians 12 by teaching that no one who is led by the Holy Spirit can say that Jesus is cursed by God, and likewise no one can proclaim that Jesus is Lord unless he or she is led to do so by the Holy Spirit (12:3). This same God will never cause confusion or division through the spiritual gifts that He gives.

He then provides a brief list of the individual gifts that are given by the Holy Spirit: the word of wisdom; the word of knowledge; faith; healings; miracles; prophecy; discerning spirits; different kinds of tongues; and interpreting tongues.

St. Paul concludes this list by teaching the Corinthians that these gifts should not provoke jealousy or division among the Christians. The gifts are given to each person individually as the Holy Spirit chooses (12:11), and they are given for the benefit of the group of Christians rather than the personal profit of the individual.

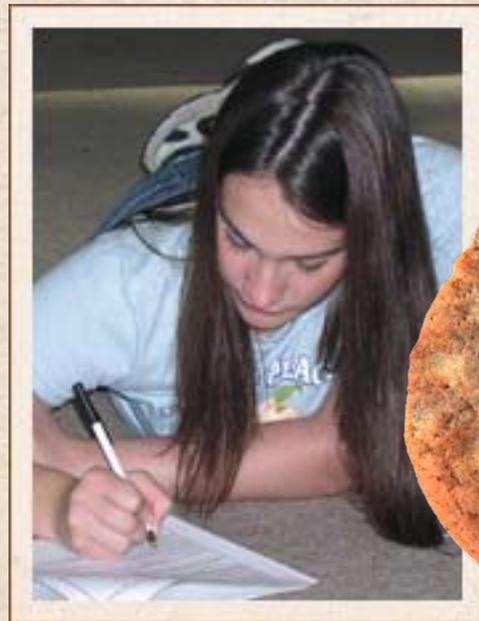
The apostle emphasizes the spiritual unity of the entire group of Christians by returning to a metaphor that he used earlier in 1 Corinthians (6:11-20 and 10:1-22): the Church is the body of Christ.

To illustrate this point, St. Paul writes an allegory involving a physical body. This demonstrates the significance of full spiritual unity for the individual: the Holy Spirit Who sanctifies us in baptism (12:13), Who impels to proclaim that Christ is Lord, also provides us with gifts so that we can perform a special role in the body, just as physical organs and appendages perform vital bodily functions. It may seem that some parts of the human body are less honorable, but we give even more attention to how we care for and clothe those parts of the body than we do to seemingly more essential parts (like our hands); in fact, we use such body parts as our hands and eyes to tend to these “unpresentable” parts of the body (12:23-24).

Therefore, all members of the body suffer or rejoice along with any individual member of the body (2:26).

St. Paul moves on to a practical application: as a physical body has different parts that are united in care for the entire body, so the Church has different offices that are united in caring for the body of Christ (12:27-28). These offices are: apostles; prophets; teachers; then those with gifts of miracles, healings, helps, administrations, and tongues.

What does St. Paul mean in verse thirty-one that Christians should earnestly desire the best gifts? He means that Christians should pray that God will equip and use them in the ways that will be of the most benefit to others.



TODAY'S SPECIAL: WHAT IS YOUR CALLING?

Have you ever wondered, “What is my purpose in life? Is there something specific that I should do with my life?” Christians understand our life’s purpose in terms of our “calling,” which refers to God summoning you to a task in life.

Fr. Thomas Hopko says you must first understand two things about God’s calling for you. First, everyone has the same calling: “purity of conscience and life.” Secondly, everyone has his or her unique calling. You are called by God to be transformed within a specific set of circumstances in the world.

There are several things of which you should be aware when attempting to discern an area to which God may be calling you. First, you should be patient. Second, you should not make the decision alone. Third, you must learn to be content in your current life situation. Finally, attempting to discern God’s calling must be made within your relationship with God. You can only accurately know what God wants from you if you regularly and faithfully pray to Him, receive Holy Communion, read Holy Scripture, and confess your sins. If you focus on yourself rather than Him, you will not see clearly how God is calling you to grow in your relationship with Him and others.

