

1 Corinthians 12.3-13

In this passage we encounter, by way of a list, the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to people of faith. Wisdom is about knowing the mystery of God's plan, what is happening; the word of knowledge is about tradition and giving direction to a congregation; faith refers to trust, the trust of a congregation and is about leadership, the gift of healing in this instance is about reconciliation and the healing of communities, miracles refers not so much to divine intervention, but to God's intention for the created world. Prophecy refers to preaching effectively. The Prophet is the one who speaks for God, of the things of God, to build and nurture faith and enable Christian service. Discernment of spirits is about avoiding the spirits of superstition and fear present in the religion of animism, that is worshipping the spirits of mountains and trees, and the religion of astrology, that used the stars to foretell the future. The gift of tongues can be seen as a way of private prayer, or the gift of other languages given on the day of Pentecost. It is also about communication, making sense of faith in God in a new context, with a new interpretation.

Gifts of the Spirit are not simply personal experiences, but the action of the Holy Spirit to build up the faith community in unity, in diversity. We need men and women in the Church today who can show wisdom, who can teach the Gospel with knowledge and insight, who are absolutely trustworthy, who can lead with compassion, who can be agents of reconciliation, who can discern good from evil, who can communicate and make sense of the Gospel in our secular age.

These gifts are not for the recipients themselves, for the promotion of the ego, or to pursue a personal agenda, however worthy. Not at all. They are about service: serving the people of the faith community with a love that is truly sacrificial, building up and nurturing Christ's pilgrim people, and all for the glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Prayers to Remember

Veni, Creator Spiritus

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire, and lighten with celestial fire; thou the anointing Spirit art, who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.

Thy blessed unction from above, is comfort, life, and fire of love; enable with perpetual light, the dullness of our mortal sight.

Teach us to know the Father, Son, and thee, of both, to be but one; that through the ages all along, this may be our endless song:

Praise to thine eternal merit, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Receive the Holy Spirit



The Church was born in despair and desolation at the foot of the Cross of her Lord, all hope seemingly lost, the future buried and sealed. Yet the Love of God that burst forth from the Tomb on Easter morning, is now sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, God who is with us to eternity. The life-giving Spirit flows as water from an inexhaustible fountain, 'Let anyone who thirsts come to me,' says Jesus. Through the waters of Baptism, we share in that gracious gift from a gracious God. The miracle of Pentecost that the scriptures relate to us today, was that people from many different language groups from around the Eastern Roman Empire heard the Apostles speaking and praising God in their own language. What might that gift look like today, in a world that has lost its way, and is deeply broken by sin and hatred? How can we too live in a way that the Good News of the death and resurrection of Christ can be truly heard? There is no simple answer, but it begins by faithfully receiving all that God wishes for his people. If you don't know this traditional prayer, now is a good time to learn it, and use it regularly: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in us the fire of your love.

O Sing unto the Lord

One of the most loved hymns for Pentecost 'Come down, O love divine' is a good example of an occasion where a superb tune has led to the words becoming well known. The Italian text, beginning 'Discendi, amor santo', was published in Italy in 1851 and was translated by Richard Littledale for his collection, *The People's Hymnal* (1867), but remained unnoticed until it came to the attention of Ralph Vaughan Williams, the musical editor of the 1906 *English Hymnal*. Vaughan Williams had a particular passion for English folk tunes, often travelling around the country to rural pubs and notating the tunes the locals would sing to him. The tune *Down Ampney* was written for these words, the tune being named after the village of Vaughan Williams' birth in Gloucestershire. It would be impossible to imagine the words without the tune, fitting the alternating short and long lines perfectly. Yet the words are full of spiritual insight, praying for the Holy Spirit to effect a transformation of the old self into the new, freed from earthly passions, loving, humble, and yearning for God.