



CATHERINE *of* SIENA INSTITUTE

Frequently Asked Questions On Charisms

What is a charism (spiritual gift)?

"Charism" is the Greek word used in the New Testament for "favor" or "gratuitous gift." Charisms, or spiritual gifts, are special abilities given to all Christians by the Holy Spirit to give them power both to represent Christ and to be a channel of God's goodness for people. Whether extraordinary or ordinary, all charisms ought to be exercised in the service of God (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2003).

Are all baptized Christians given charisms?

Yes. According to Catholic teaching, it is the faith of the Church that you possess one or more of the charisms (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 951).

What is the difference between the traditional seven "gifts of the Holy Spirit," "fruits of the Holy Spirit," and charisms?

There are gifts of the Holy Spirit that we are given to keep and gifts we are given to give away. The traditional "seven gifts of the Holy Spirit" and the "fruits" of the Spirit are gifts given to us to keep. They are part of our inner transformation as Christians and provide the inner "Christlikeness" necessary for the effective use of our charisms (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1830–1832). Charisms, on the other hand, are given to us to give away, and are one of the ways God continues to enter the world through our assent and cooperation. They always benefit other people.

How many charisms exist?

There are three primary lists of gifts in the New Testament (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4), and St. Thomas Aquinas lists about 14 charisms in his Summa. We have no reason to believe that these lists are meant to be exhaustive. The Catholic Spiritual Gifts Inventory covers 24 of the most common charisms, including most of those in St. Paul's letters and St. Thomas's writings.

How do charisms differ from natural talents?

Charisms differ from natural talents in several important ways. Charisms are not "in-born" but are given by the Holy Spirit through Baptism and Confirmation. They supernaturally

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empower us, enabling effectiveness beyond human ability. Unlike talents, which can be used for good or evil, charisms are always for the good of others. Charisms, whether seemingly extraordinary (like healing) or ordinary (like administration), are used alongside our talents to serve God and neighbor.

Why should I discern my charisms?

Discerning your charisms helps you find your purpose, clarify decisions, avoid burnout, and excel in work and family life. It frees you from comparison with others and reveals experiences of God working in your life. Charisms empower you to play your essential role in the Church's mission of evangelization.

How does individual discernment of charisms affect the parish or the larger Christian community?

Discerning charisms communally enables parishes to thrive by building ministries around people's real spiritual gifts rather than simply filling needs. It helps prevent burnout and allows the Church to flourish by following the Holy Spirit's guidance in mission and service.

Content from Catherine of Siena Institute. siena.org/called-gifted

