



First United Methodist Church of Hanford

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.



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Holy Spirit, gifts, and diversity. 1 Corinthians 12: 3-13

The Apostle Paul, according to scholars, wrote four letters to the members of Corinth, but only two of them entered the formation of the New Testament as we can read today in our Bibles. The letters of the Apostle Paul are pastoral letters, of guidance to the faith and the Christian experience, they are letters of education and admonition, because they aim to help Christian people live in the environment in which they work and live as families, as professionals, as workers and as a Christian community.

Last Sunday we celebrate the church's anniversary, for the Christian Church has its birth on the day of Pentecost when Jesus said: But you will receive power as the Holy Spirit descends upon you, and you will be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). And our community is located in the "ends of the earth" as well as so many other Christian communities throughout the world. And the guidance, warnings, teachings, and counsel contained in this biblical passage of 1 Corinthians 12.3b-13 are equally beneficial, useful, normative, and beneficial to our experience as Christian people and the Christian community, here and now!

From this biblical passage, we can extract three themes for our reflection: Holy Spirit, gifts, and diversity.

It is not possible to celebrate Pentecost without reflecting on the meaning of the Holy Spirit among us. The Trinity is always a mystery to us and we have difficulty understanding the three manifestations of God! However, it is risky to intend to separate each of the divine manifestations contained in the Trinity. God is Father, God is Son, and God is holy spirit! Yes, but what do I get from the Holy Ghost? From him we can receive clarity, wisdom, and justice. And it also helps us get rid of mistakes we may have about life's issues. I remember Paul's testimony here in 1 Corinthians 2:12: "And we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that comes from God, so that we may know what God has given us freely."

I do not intend to extend myself to this subject of the Holy Spirit because we still have the theme of gifts and diversity ahead. But it is recorded to us that we cannot imprison the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, in our concepts and in our understanding. It always goes far beyond our thinking. Let us remember that on Pentecost the Holy Spirit blows not only in our community, in our Church, but also in other churches, in other movements, in other religious experiences and cultural environments.

When it comes to gifts, then we enter a quieter and more complicated terrain for our reflection. After all, everything we are and what we have comes from God. Or not? But we will easily realize that this subject also has its complications there. After all, the gifts we receive from the Spirit of God should not promote our glorification, our vanity, our supremacy over others. However, today there is a true cult of vanity and the use of skills to achieve wealth, prestige, reputation... When the Apostle Paul speaks of gifts he signals that they are diverse, and also that alongside gifts are the services to be practiced in the community, in the family, in society. Finally, gifts and services make sense when they promote Christ, as Teacher and Savior, and when they reveal the love of God that is made concrete in solidarity, help, help.

Finally, let us face the theme of diversity that is also contained in this apostle's teaching from his experience in Corinth, a multi-ethnic city with different cultural manifestations brought from other places. For many people diversity is a controversial theme because they would like everything to be the same for everyone. However, the experience of peoples is heterogeneous, diverse; distinct... it is enough to extend our gaze to the cultures of the peoples from which we are descended or else of the region where we are born! The principle of fraternity is the respect and acceptance of the different ways of a people living and relating to the issues of daily life, nature, interpersonal relationships, worldview...

The Apostle Paul directs our gaze to the main concept of community, of church, which we cultivate among ourselves: the human body! Think of their bodies. Just as my body has several different members, all helping me to live, so is diversity in common life...

As a Christian community, we can promote and encourage the diversity of gifts, talents, skills and vocations among us! After all, it is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, who challenges us, who gives us, who graces us, who gives us what we are and what we have! May the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, remain present in the lives of all of us in this community, encouraging communion, service, diakonia and witness in a broken society. Amen.

Pastor Pablo Rovere

1 Corinthians 12:3-13 New International Version (NIV)

³Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,^[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.^[b] ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. ¹²Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by^[c] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.