

Charisms FAQ

What are Charisms?

Charisms are special graces given by God to all Christians. These special gifts of the Holy Spirit, whether extraordinary or wonderfully humble, are given to us for the benefit of others. Charisms are spiritual gifts that are meant to be given away. Working out of our charism is a joyful, energizing experience because we encounter the deep happiness of being an instrument of God as we help people to encounter our Lord. At that moment we see others as precious children of God and enjoy the profound goodness of our creation.

Regarding charisms, the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that, “Charisms are special gifts of the Holy Spirit which are bestowed on individuals for the good of others, the needs of the world and in particular for the building up of the church.” (Compendium 160)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that charism is the Greek word (χάρισμα) used by St. Paul which refers to a special grace given by God which means, ““favor,” “gratuitous gift,” “benefit.” “...charisms are oriented towards sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church.” (CCC 2003)

“Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the Church.” (CCC 799)

Do I have a Charism?

As a member of the faithful who was given a new life at Baptism, yes you do.

Archbishop Leo preached in his 2023 Stewardship Sunday homily, “How blessed we are to have been given a new life in Baptism. At that most sacred and unforgettable moment in our lives, we were born again and became children of our Heavenly Father, disciples of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit and members of Holy Mother Church. Mother Mary too was given to us to be our spiritual mother. Out of the superabundance love for us, we received the gifts of faith, hope and love, the theological virtues, as powers, capabilities to be united to God. As if that wasn’t enough, we were also given the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit to perfect our faith, hope and love and which were, in turn, also strengthened and ignited in us even more so, with the sacrament of Confirmation. And then, we mustn’t forget the fruits of the Holy Spirit which the Catechism teaches us (1832) are “*perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory...*”

But let me take it a step further, if you will. Do we realize that there is a whole other category of spiritual, invisible gifts that were lavishly poured into our lives by God? We call these **charisms** and they are intimately linked to the universal call to holiness and service. You see, these different gifts, distributed by the Spirit of the Risen Lord Jesus, are not so much for our own sanctification (the three theological virtues and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are meant for this) as for service to others – to build up the Body of Christ, his Kingdom on earth...

In fact, Vatican II 's Constitution on the Church teaches: *“Allotting His gifts to everyone according as he will, the Holy Spirit distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank...These charismatic gifts, whether they be the most outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church”* (LG,12).”

The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church further teaches that, as members of the communion of the saints, “indicates first of all the common sharing of all the members of the Church in holy things (*sancta*): the faith, the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, the charisms, and other spiritual gifts.” (Compendium 194)

The Church is called the Temple of the Holy Spirit, “...because the Holy Spirit resides in the body which is the Church, in her Head and in her members. He also builds up the Church in charity by the Word of God, the sacraments, the virtues, and *charisms*. (Compendium 159)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church further explains that there exists a “**Communion of charisms**. Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit “distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank” for the building up of the Church. Now, “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”” (CCC 951)

Why does God give the faithful charisms?

Archbishop Leo in his 2023 Stewardship Sunday homily said, “...these different gifts [charisms], distributed by the Spirit of the Risen Lord Jesus, are not so much for our own sanctification (the three theological virtues and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are meant for this) as for service to others – to build up the Body of Christ, his Kingdom on earth. There is no exhaustive list of charisms, even if St. Paul mentions a few in his letters. However, they are real, numerous and tailored-made for the service we are called to accomplish in Jesus’ Name.”

“...Charisms come to us as an extra feature of giftedness, God-given empowerments to accomplish a God-given mission. Ministering out of a charism, be it in our parish communities and other modes of communal Christian living, always energizes us, fills our daily living with joy, freedom and meaning. As we discern our own charisms and put them at the service of the

wider community, it helps us to understand and celebrate the charisms and giftedness of others as well.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church further explains, “Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of all men, and to the needs of the world. (799) and that “Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all the members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.” (800)

What is an example of a charism?

As Archbishop Leo wrote in his stewardship Sunday homily, “There is no exhaustive list of charisms, even if St. Paul mentions a few in his letters. However, they are real, numerous and tailored-made for the service we are called to accomplish in Jesus’ Name...They range from the gift of tongues to prophecy, from Christian marriage to healing and miracles, from hospitality and service to discernment and administration, to name just a few.”

How can I learn more about my charism?

Archbishop Francis Leo preached in his Stewardship Sunday homily that, “...we are all invited to discern the presence of *charisms* in our lives since they are truly powerful, life-giving and special abilities given to all the baptized precisely to empower us so as to be credible witnesses and efficacious conduits of God's grace for our sisters and brothers. These graces [charisms] are given to us to be given away, to be exercised in the service of the Mystical Body, the Church. It is, however, the duty of the ordained members of the Body of Christ to coordinate them. In fact, our Blessed Lord bestowed unto the Apostles and their successors the charism of headship or leadership, which is meant to unify and encourage these particular gifts so that they come to maturity and work together in harmony for God’s greater glory and the salvation of souls.”

Further to this, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “It is in this sense that discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church’s shepherds. “Their office [is] indeed not to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good, “so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together “for the common good” (801)

Where can I learn more about charisms?

Here are some additional resources:

1. Archbishop Francis Leo's 2023 Stewardship Sunday homily can be found here, in the Stewardship Sunday tab: www.archtoronto.org/stewardship
2. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) recently held a webinar on charisms in their Call of the Catechist series entitled, "Discerning Charisms" with Sherry Weddell, the co-founder of the Catherine of Siena Institute. To watch the webinar, click here (then scroll down): <https://bit.ly/43JigSw>
3. The Catherine of Siena institute has a downloadable brochure on Charisms here: <https://bit.ly/45LLLnE>
4. Here is the outline of a talk on Charisms given by Anthony Schratz, Director of Ernescliff College in Toronto: <https://bit.ly/3KWDDci>

If you have any questions, please contact Quentin Schesnuik, Associate Director of Parish Vitality and Stewardship, at quentins@archtoronto.org