**Discernment of Gifts Overview**

As the parish works on sustaining Stewardship as a way of life, it will be important to help those in the parish understand, recognize and name the Gifts they have received from God. Through

Discernment of Gifts, all the people of the faith community can discover more deeply the Gifts they have received so that they in turn can offer them in love and service to their families, their church and their communities.

In order to know how to discern Spiritual Gifts, one needs to understand the distinction between a Talent and a Spiritual Gift. Once understood, Discernment of true Spiritual Gifts can take place.

***Talent:*** A Talent is the ability to do something very well. It is a God-given gift that one receives for his or her own use and benefit. It brings great joy and fulfillment in one’s personal life or job. Perhaps someone has gone to school or workshops to become very good at it. An example would be a highly respected carpenter. He may be one of the best carpenters around. His work is exquisite. People come from all over the area to purchase his products. He loves creating masterpieces, but at the end of the work day he may not want to look at another piece of wood. He may not want to go to the parish and build bookcases for Father. He becomes crabby and deflated. The reason he is not willing to do carpentry at the parish or for the community is because this is not his Spiritual Gift. He was not spiritually gifted with this *Creative Gift* to build up the Body of Christ. It is a personal gift for oneself, not a communal gift.

***Spiritual Gift:*** A Spiritual Gift or Charism is a special *Baptismal Gift* given to Christians by the Holy Spirit to empower them to act as God’s channels of love and redeeming presence to build up the Body of Christ, the Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the Holy Spirit “comes to meet us and kindles the faith in us. By virtue of our baptism…the Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us, intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son” (No. 683).

Each baptized Christian has at least one Spiritual Gift, a special grace-gift meant to be used for God’s people. In the Catechism we learn, “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 world” (No. 799). “Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them, and by all 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” (No. 800).

*Discernment of Gifts*

An example of a Spiritual Gift would be one that has the Gift of *Hospitality*. This person is always smiling, happy, inviting, giving and loving. She exudes Christ. Even if she is greeting or welcoming people all day, she still remains upbeat and energized. At the end of the day she is extremely tired, but if you asked her to do the same thing tomorrow, she would jump at the chance. A person can however, have a Talent that is also his or her Spiritual Gift. If one cannot get enough of what he or she is good at and all the honor and glory go back to God, then that person needs to research this as his or her Spiritual Gift. If others are empowered when one uses his or her Spiritual Gift and God can be seen as working through that person, then the Talent and Spiritual Gift are probably the same.

**Getting Started**

***Foundational Components***

**What is Discernment of Gifts?** Prayerful discernment is asking God to show the way to those who ask him. One does not depend solely on his or her own interpretation or knowledge. After days, months or even years, God’s plan for one’s life continues to unfold. It is good to know that there is a process one can follow to help with the journey. There are certain components of the Discernment of Gifts process that are the foundation of any approach to helping people discover and name their Gifts.

**Step One: Personal Reflection**

Prayerful and personal reflection is the first step. It is only through a relationship with Jesus, a relationship that one seeks to deepen over time that our acts of love will flow from the love of God through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Through the humility of acknowledging God as the source of our giftedness, we come to realize our Gifts are meant to be used and shared with others. They are not primarily for us but rather, are meant to be given to those we serve. This step is the most important in discerning one’s Gift or Gifts.

One can begin by praying, reflecting and looking at the patterns in his or her life. Focusing on what is enjoyed and what zaps life are clear clues to one’s giftedness. Carefully listen to God’s voice; He speaks to the heart. Psalm 37:4 says, “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” This takes time. Don’t rush it. Persevere in prayer. Don’t give up. To help facilitate this, a sample reflection has been included in this manual. See Example 7.1, page 11.

**Step Two: External Confirmation**

When one hears from others that they have felt lifted up and inspired by a person’s words or actions, feel closer to God, or can see God working, this feedback is extremely important to help one affirm his or her Gift or Gifts. All people are needed for the Body of Christ to do God’s work. Ministry is all of God’s people working together to bring about the kingdom. It is important to remember that this comes only after one has taken time in personal prayer and reflection.

**Step Three: Practice**

In this last process one actually works the Gift. One can see how it fits and feels. One can ask himself or herself: “How did I feel when I used my Gift for others? Did I thank God for my Gift? Am I energized and excited when I can participate in ministries that use my Gifts? Is it an all around positive and uplifting experience?

***Biblical References***

From the time of the early Christians, understanding the Gifts received at baptism has been central to the Christian identity. Below are some Biblical References to help a Stewardship Committee connect Scripture with this aspect of the Stewardship process.

**Biblical References to Spiritual Gifts**

*Spiritual Gifts* 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28-30

*Gifts that differ* Rom 12:6-8, Eph 4:11-12, 16

*One body, many parts* 1 Cor 12:12-31

*Using our Gifts* 1 Pt 4:10

*“Do not neglect the Gift you have…….”* 1 Tm 4:11-16

*Not lacking in any Spiritual Gift* 1 Cor 1:7

**Consider taking a Spiritual Gifts Inventory**

<http://buildingchurch.net/g2s-i.htm>

Source: Catholic Diocese of Cleveland