

a sermon from EPHESIANS 4:11-12:

WHERE ARE YOU SERVING IN THE CHURCH?

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I. A PRAYER

Let us pray: “HOLY SPIRIT, Divine Consoler, I adore You as my true GOD, with GOD The Father and GOD The Son. I adore You and unite myself to the adoration You receive from the angels and saints. I give You my heart and I offer my ardent thanksgiving for all the Grace which You never cease to bestow on me!”¹ AMEN.

II. A PROPOSITION

Our Lord JESUS CHRIST calls each Christian to be an active and living part of His Body on earth, each Christian equipped with Divine Gifts from The HOLY SPIRIT, that we may offer up to GOD the gifts which He has given each of us within faithful service in The Church!

III. A SCRIPTURE - EPHESIANS 4:11-12 - EACH CHRISTIAN A PLACE IN THE CHURCH

11 And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of The Body of CHRIST.²

IV. INTRODUCTION

Brothers and sisters, where are you serving in The Church? Scripture tells us that certain men are gifted with special Spiritual gifts given by GOD. The purpose of those gifts are to be a blessing to others in The Church on earth. It is so that The Church may carry out her mission ordained by CHRIST to shine the light of The Gospel wherever darkness holds the bodies, minds and souls of men captive.

We shall see from Saint Paul’s passage of EPHESIANS 4:11-12 that every Christian has a place ordained for him by GOD in The Church, and that He equips each of us to serve in that role. In This Scripture we may hope to see these things: Spiritual gifts enable men for specific service within The Church. The men who have been given such Spiritual gifts are themselves CHRIST’s gifts to serve The Church; And CHRIST determines providentially the place of service of each such person in His Church.

¹ Catholic Family Prayer Book, Prayer For The Seven Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, stanza 1, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, p 136.

² KJV, EPHESIANS 4:11-12.

But does not every saint of GOD – every man and woman who is saved by the Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST – ask, “What and where is my place and purpose in The Church?” And though every heart asks this question, many decline to hear the answer and take their place as servants within The Church. So here we will look at these four job descriptions (apostles; prophets; evangelists and pastors and teachers) and three reasons for the gifts needed (the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry and the edifying of The Body of CHRIST) list for us by Saint Paul in EPHESIANS 4:11-12. This, that we may gain some insight into finding our place of service within the Body of CHRIST on earth!

V. SOME CHRISTIANS SERVE THE CHURCH AS APOSTLES

To some GOD has given the gift of being an Apostle. What is an Apostle? An Apostle is "a disciple of CHRIST commissioned to preach the Gospel. Twelve persons were selected by CHRIST for this purpose...; In the primitive ages of the Church, other ministers were called Apostles...; [also] persons sent to carry alms from one Church to another...; this title was also given to persons who first planted the Christian faith..."³

What does an Apostle do? The office Apostle began as "a special office at the beginning of the Church. The Apostles had no successors." Their unique mission was the establishment of the early Church as CHRIST commanded them.⁴ CHRIST Himself gave to His Church the gift of some men as Apostles. The Apostles were called by CHRIST and empowered with certain Spiritual gifts that made them fit to found The Church. "An apostle had his commission direct from CHRIST...; he possessed supernatural gifts...; it was necessary for him to have seen the Lord...; his diocese was the whole world..."⁵

So Apostles were the 12 men called by CHRIST upon whom The Lord first placed the calling of preaching the Gospel and calling men to repent before GOD. Three of these men - the Apostles Peter, James and John, were privileged to see the actual

³ 3, Webster's 1828 Dictionary, entry for "APOSTLE," noun, p APO-APO to APO-APP.

⁴ 4, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, EPHESIANS 4:11, p 1310-1311.

⁵ 5, Pulpit Commentary, GALATIANS EPHESIANS, EPHESIANS 4:1-32, Ver.11, p 148-149.

transfiguration of The Lord. These 3 Apostles in particular went on to become leaders in the early Church. Saint Peter writes of this miraculous event in II PETER 1:16, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." ⁶

O HOLY SPIRIT,

"...Grant me the *gift of holy fear*,
so that it may act on me
as a check to prevent me
from falling back into my past sins,
for which I beg pardon!" ⁷

VI. SOME CHRISTIANS SERVE THE CHURCH AS PROHPETS

To some GOD has given the gift of being a prophets. What is a prophet? He is "one that foretells future events...; In Scripture, [this is] a person illuminated, inspired or instructed by GOD to announce future events, as Moses, Elijah, David [and] Isaiah." ⁸ What does a prophet do? "A prophet was a spokesman for GOD.... [In Scripture,] this term refers to someone who has been given a direct revelation, which he is to pass on to men... This office was temporarily in the Church, for there were no more prophets in the technical sense after the completion of The New Testament." ⁹

CHRIST gave to His Church the gift of some men as prophets. Prophets were men "having supernatural knowledge of GOD's will present and future." They were "indispensable before The New Testament was given as The Church's infallible guide to the will of GOD, but not apparently necessary after the will of GOD was fully recorded" and the formation of The Holy Bible was completed. ¹⁰

The prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament proclaims the mission that the prophet was called by GOD to carry. EZEKIEL 2:4-5 says, "For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord

⁶ 2, KJV, II PETER 1:16.

⁷ Catholic Family Prayer Book, Prayer For The Seven Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, stanza 2, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, p 136.

GOD. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are a rebellious house, yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.”¹¹

O HOLY SPIRIT,

“Grant me the *gift of piety*,
so that I may serve You
for the future with increased fervor,
follow with more promptness Your holy inspirations,
and observe Your Divine precepts with greater fidelity!”¹²

VII. SOME CHRISTIANS SERVE THE CHURCH AS EVANGELISTS

To some GOD has given the gift of being evangelists. What is an evangelist? An evangelist is "a writer of the history, or doctrines, precepts, actions, life and death of our blessed Savior, JESUS CHRIST; as the 'four evangelists,' Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. [He is] a preacher or publisher of the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, licensed to preach, but not having charge of a particular Church."¹³ Evangelists are those who "proclaim glad tidings of The Saviour JESUS CHRIST and] ...preach the Gospel."¹⁴

What does an evangelist do? Evangelists carry forth The Good News of CHRIST to this lost world. They are "not attached to a particular congregation, but who... [preach] the glad tidings [of The Gospel], and otherwise building up the Church, but without the full power of apostles."¹⁵ Saint Paul tells us the work of such men of GOD in II TIMOTHY 4:5, for they are commanded to "...watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, [and] make full proof of thy ministry."¹⁶

⁸ 3, Webster's 1828 Dictionary, entry for "PROPHET," noun, #1, 2, p PRO-PRO.

⁹ 4, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, EPHESIANS 4:11, p 1311.

¹⁰ 5, Pulpit Commentary, GALATIANS EPHESIANS, EPHESIANS 4:1-32, Verse 11, p 149.

¹¹ 2, KJV, EZEKIEL 2:4-5.

¹² Catholic Family Prayer Book, Prayer For The Seven Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, stanza 3, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, p 136.

¹³ 3, Webster's 1828 Dictionary, entry for "EVANGELIST," noun, #1, 2, p EVA-EVA.

¹⁴ 4, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, EPHESIANS 4:11, p 1311.

¹⁵ 5, Pulpit Commentary, GALATIANS EPHESIANS, EPHESIANS 4:1-32, Verse 11, p 149.

¹⁶ 2, KJV, II TIMOTHY 4:5.

O HOLY SPIRIT,

“Give me the *gift of knowledge*,
so that I may know the things of GOD,
and enlightened by Your holy teaching,
may walk, without deviation,
in the path of eternal salvation!”¹⁷

VIII. SOME CHRISTIANS SERVE THE CHURCH AS PASTORS AND TEACHERS

To some GOD has given the gift of being a pastor. A pastor is "a shepherd; one that has the care of flocks and herds. [He is] a minister of the Gospel who has the charge of a Church and congregation, whose duty is to watch over the people of his charge, and instruct them in the sacred doctrines of the Christian religion."¹⁸

What does a pastor do? Note that pastor and teacher are coupled together in the Church. "Those who are the shepherds of the flock are also to be teachers. The true pastor should... [explain] The Word [of GOD to his flock]." ¹⁹ CHRIST gives the Church men anointed by The Holy Spirit to serve the dual role of Pastors-Teachers. These men are to be "pastors, ...[watching over] the flock, trying to lead all in right ways [of GOD]." ²⁰

The prophet Jeremiah reveals what pastors are to do in JEREMIAH 3:15, “And I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” ²¹ To those whom GOD has given the gift of being a pastor, He has given the gift of being a teacher. How is a pastor also a teacher? He is "one who teaches or instructs. A pastor is also “an instructor; a preceptor; a tutor - ...whose business or occupation is to instruct others [in The Word of GOD]. [He] ...instructs others in [the Christian] religion; [He is] a preacher; a minister of the Gospel... who preaches without regular ordination." ²²

¹⁷ Catholic Family Prayer Book, Prayer For The Seven Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, stanza 4, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, p 136.

¹⁸ 3, Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, entry for “PASTOR,” noun, #1, 2, p PAS-PAT.

¹⁹ 4, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, EPHESIANS 4:11, p 1311.

²⁰ 5, Pulpit Commentary, GALATIANS EPHESIANS, EPHESIANS 4:1-32, Verse 11, p 149.

²¹ 2, KJV, JEREMIAH 3:15.

What does this pastor-teacher teach? CHRIST gave these men the guidance and insight to be "teachers [of GOD's Word to] ...communicate Divine knowledge." ²³ The Psalmist tells us what such men are to teach in PSALM 51:12-13, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." ²⁴

O HOLY SPIRIT,

"Give me the *gift of fortitude*,
so that I may overcome courageously
all the assaults of the devil,
and all the dangers of this world
which threaten the salvation of my soul!" ²⁵

IX. SOME SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE GIVEN FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS

First, it is the business of all Christians in The Church to be involved in "the perfecting of the saints." Specifically, "leaders [in The Body of CHRIST on earth] are for the purpose of perfecting... [and] equipping believers to carry on the work" of The Lord in the Church. ²⁶ And so believers are to be instructed in Christian holiness. For GOD's saints on earth are to become perfect as CHRIST is perfect. Only as perfected saints of The Saviour can we truly follow our Lord in faith, and only then can we be made ready to do "the work of the ministry" in His Church. ²⁷

O HOLY SPIRIT,

"Give me the *gift of counsel*,
so that I may choose what is more conducive
to my spiritual advancement,
and may discover [and overcome]
the wiles and snares of the tempter!" ²⁸

²² 3, Webster's 1828 Dictionary, entry for "TEACHER," noun, #1, 2, 3, 4, p TAX-TEA.

²³ 5, Pulpit Commentary, GALATIANS EPHESIANS, EPHESIANS 4:1-32, Verse 11, p 149.

²⁴ 2, KJV, PSALM 51:12-13.

²⁵ Catholic Family Prayer Book, Prayer For The Seven Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, stanza 5, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, p 136.

²⁶ 4, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, EPHESIANS 4:12, p 1311.

²⁷ 6, Bible Knowledge Commentary - New Testament Edition, EPHESIANS 4:12, p 635.

²⁸ Catholic Family Prayer Book, Prayer For The Seven Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, stanza 6, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, p 136-137.

X. SOME SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE GIVEN FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

Second, we may well ask how this "perfecting of the saints" to be employed by the Church? The answer is that it is "to equip other believers for the ministry, so as to give them stability doctrinally and practically, and thus lead them to mutual edification."

²⁹ But if those ordained in the ministry of the Church do not "train up workers," the Church will neither grow nor reach the lost effectively with The Gospel. ³⁰ So it is for doing the work of the ministry of The Church that CHRIST perfects us in His Image.

O HOLY SPIRIT,

"Give me the *gift of understanding*,
so that I may apprehend The Divine Mysteries,
and by contemplation of heavenly things
detach my thoughts and affections
from the vain things of this passing world!" ³¹

XI. SOME SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE GIVEN FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE SAINTS

Third, "all the saints are gifted spiritually" in some way; each of us as believers in CHRIST have been blessed with certain spiritual gifts so that we may take our Divinely ordained place in The Church to do His work. For "all [the] saints - and not just a few leaders - should be involved in the ministry" of The Church. For GOD's goal is to "build up... [and] edifying of the Body of CHRIST," which is in fact every Christian within the Church. ³² A weak Church with a weak and unedified body will not effectively reach out into this lost world with The Gospel. So every believer in CHRIST is in some way equipped by GOD in order to help build up our Lord's Church.

O HOLY SPIRIT,

"Give me the *gift of wisdom*,
so that I may rightly direct all my actions,
referring them to GOD as my last end;
so that, having loved and served Him in this life,
I may have the happiness of possessing Him
eternally in the next!" ³³

²⁹ 6, Bible Knowledge Commentary - New Testament Edition, EPHESIANS 4:12-16, p 635.

³⁰ 4, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, EPHESIANS 4:12, p 1311.

³¹ Catholic Family Prayer Book, Prayer For The Seven Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, stanza 7, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, p 137.

³² 25. 6, Bible Knowledge Commentary - New Testament Edition, EPHESIANS 4:12, p 635.

³³ Catholic Family Prayer Book, Prayer For The Seven Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, stanza 8,

XII. THE QUESTION AT HAND: WHERE ARE YOU SERVING IN THE CHURCH?

Let's look again at EPHESIANS 4:11, which says "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." ³⁴ How are you gifted by GOD with a Spiritual gift? Have you placed that gift before CHRIST to seek where in The Church He would have you serve? Perhaps you have the gifts necessary to be an evangelist for CHRIST. Are you serving as an evangelist in The Church? Perhaps GOD has given you the heart of a pastor. Are you serving in any pastoral roles in The Church? Or has GOD given you the ability to teach. Are you serving as a teacher in The Church?

Consider again EPHESIANS 4:12, which declares "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of CHRIST." ³⁵ Holy Scripture assures us that every Christian believer have a Divinely ordained place to serve in The Church. Are you involved in the perfecting of the saints in The Church? Do you have an active hand in the work of the ministry in The Church? Are you contributing to the edifying or building up of The Church?

XIII. IN CONCLUSION – SEEK YOUR PLACE OF SERVICE IN THE CHURCH

Friends, do not leave this humble appeal without coming before The Lord JESUS CHRIST to seek what His place for you, there to serve in The Church! For we all have some portion of Spiritual gifts needed by The Church! And we all are called to do the work of The Church in some way! For CHRIST did not suffer, die, arise from the dead and ascend into Heaven so that we as Christians on earth might sit passively by while other men suffer needlessly from sin in this life and loose their immortal souls to hell in the next! As soldiers of The Cross, our Lord calls us to the battle for the lives and souls of lost men! Friends, what is GOD calling YOU to do in His Church today?

Saint Alphonsus Liguori, p 137.

³⁴ 2, KJV, EPHESIANS 4:11.

³⁵ 2, KJV, EPHESIANS 4:12.

As we have seen, The Word of GOD reveals to us by the hand of Saint Paul in EPHESIANS 4:11-12, “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of The Body of CHRIST,” which is The holy Church.³⁶ Therefore our Lord JESUS CHRIST calls each Christian to be an active and living part of His Body on earth, each Christian equipped with Divine Gifts from The HOLY SPIRIT, that we may offer up to GOD the gifts which He has given each of us within faithful service in The Church! May it ever be so with us! In The Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

³⁶ KJV, EPHESIANS 4:11-12.

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