

**Catherine of Siena Institute**  
**Canadian Bishops 2023**  
***Discerning Charisms***

### **Ellen's Story**

Ellen went through a parish evangelization retreat and then a parish Called & Gifted workshop where she discerned the charism of Mercy. One thing led to another . . .

- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- First homeless shelter in her state
- Local Catholic Worker house
- A home for homeless men, one for homeless women
- MA in addiction studies became a licensed social worker.

Witnessing Ellen's journey named a call for her whole parish community, which set out to have as big an impact on their area of the city as possible.

### **Charisms**

- Gifts for the **sake of others**
- St. Thomas Aquinas: ***gratuitous*** graces
- Empowered by God  
**Instruments of his providence**  
**For the sake of others**

### **Discerning the Gifts of Each One**

"...God with his call reaches the call of each individual, and the Spirit, who abides deep within each disciple (cf. 1 Jn. 3:24), ***gives himself to each Christian with different charisms and special signs. Each one, therefore, must be helped to embrace the gift entrusted to him as a completely unique person,*** and to hear the words which the Spirit of God personally addresses to him."

- *I Will Give You Shepherds*, 40, St. John Paul II

### **Priests Are Called to**

- Recognize
- Uncover with faith
- Acknowledge with joy
- Foster with diligence
- Appreciate
- Judge and discern
- Coordinate and put to good use
- Have "heartfelt esteem" for the charisms of all the baptized.

*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 30; Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests,9; I Will Give You Shepherds, 40, 74; Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, 32*

## Charisms

- Are for the sake of others
- Are given to us to be *given away to others*
- *Used in our “whole life”*
- *Do not confer sanctifying grace*

## Charisms

- Are supernatural in their effects
- Are **not** necessarily miraculous in their effects
- **Manifest more powerfully as we grow closer to God.**
- Empower Christians to build up the Church, be channels of healing, serve the Kingdom of God, and to be compelling witnesses of Jesus Christ.

## Charisms

- Manifest **1) when your faith becomes personal** and/or **2) when you meet the person or situation that needs the gift.**
- **Can** be assumed in the baptized even if they haven't manifested yet.
- Can be given to the non-baptized **depending upon their living relationship with God.**
- **Cannot** be assumed in the non-baptized, are recognized when they manifest.

**How many kinds of charisms are there? We don't know**

### Charisms we address:

Administration  
Celibacy  
Craftsmanship  
Encouragement  
Evangelism  
Extraordinary Faith  
Giving

Healing  
Helps  
Hospitality  
Intercessory Prayer  
Knowledge  
Leadership  
Mercy  
Missionary

Music  
Pastoring  
Prophecy  
Service  
Teaching  
Voluntary Poverty  
Wisdom  
Writing

## Charisms are Healing

- **Make different aspects of the love of Jesus Christ present** and where the love of Jesus is present, healing occurs.
- Enable us to cooperate with Christ's redemptive grace and to be used as **a channel of healing and transformation for others and for society.**
- A charism always carries with it **a call and a certain informal 'leadership' in the area of the charism.**

## Charisms Are Evangelizing in different ways:

- Remove impediments to faith in God
- Restore people's trust in God and encourage them to open their lives to God.
- Reveal Christ to others
- Lead others to Christ

## Characteristics of Personal Charisms

- *Long-term*; therefore, may be further developed
- Bears results above and beyond our *natural abilities*
- Focused *outward, for others*
- *Received* from God, not chosen

## Experience of Using a Charism

- Energizing
- Satisfying
- Joyful
- Feels like you "fit"
- Prayerful or contemplative

*One of the great remedies for cynicism and burn-out!*

## Gift Mix

- Most are given more than one charism.
- The particular combination of charisms that God has given you.
- Charisms work together.
- Each charism affects how other gifts are expressed such as *Teaching-Hospitality*.

## Charisms are not Natural Talents

- Cannot be inherited from our parents.
- Given by the Holy Spirit (Baptism/Confirmation.)
- Enable us to be an agent of God's purposes for others.
- Cannot be turned to evil.

**In the life of a Christian - Natural talents and charisms *work together*.**

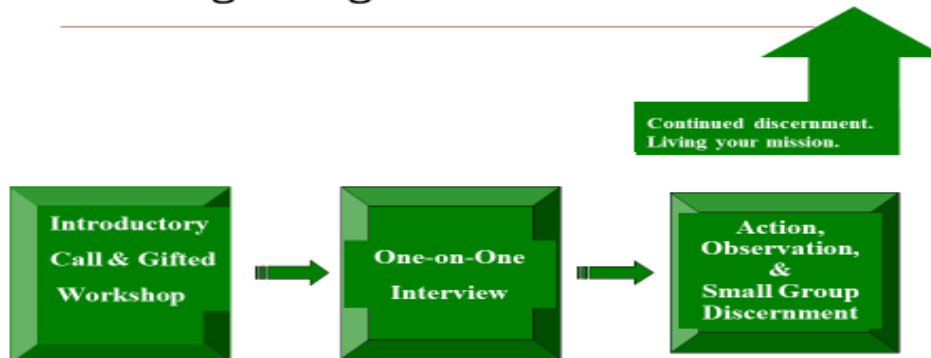
## Five Steps of Discernment

- 1) Explore the possibilities
- 2) Experiment by taking action!
- 3) Examine your experience
- 4) Evaluate your effectiveness
- 5) Expect (and look for) feedback from others
  - Direct
  - Indirect

## Three “Signs” of a Charism

- 1) Your Experience
- 2) Your Effectiveness: *What Happens Objectively*
- 3) The Feedback You Receive from Others
  - are *all consistently present over time . . . .*
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## A Good Beginning Looks Like...



## Called & Gifted Discernment Process

- Draws people, 18 – 80, from all spiritual backgrounds including ex-Catholics, returning Catholics, non-Catholics, and even some non-Christians.
- Evangelizing:
  - Emphasizes charisms emerging out of personal relationship with God and begins with an opportunity to pray a prayer of openness to God.
  - Gifts discernment interviews includes a “threshold conversation” where people talk about their journey with God.

## **Called & Gifted**

- Teaches participants how to discern, experiment with, and clarify possible charisms.
- Helps participants name and understand the significance of charisms that have already manifested in their lives.
- Often the first time lay Catholics have ever talked about their own spiritual experience with another Catholic (outside confession) and/or a small group.
- *First experience of being supported by the Catholic community as a person called and gifted by God for the sake of others.* A potential apostle, not just a volunteer.

## **Discerning Charisms**

- Helps people grow spiritually and nourishes a Catholic's sense of being personally called by a personal God who sees and loves them.
- Fosters personal responsibility for mission, facilitates the emergence of new leadership and initiatives.
- First exposure for many lay people to the Church's theology of the baptism and personal vocation.
- Creates a larger culture of discernment. Fosters discernment of personal vocation, including religious and priestly vocations.

## **The Signs of a Personal Charism**

Can Also be Confused With

- The charism of one's community (for religious)
- Our own expectations and the expectations of others
- Our extensive ministry experience
- The graces of the sacraments
- Ordinary spiritual experience

**Discernment usually takes longer for those in ministry, religious life, and priesthood.**

## **The Called & Gifted Workshop**

**Is available online In English and Spanish as well as through live workshops.**

**The Catherine of Siena Institute trains local leaders all over the world to facilitate the discernment process via Zoom.**

**For more information, visit <https://www.siena.org/called-gifted>**

**or e-mail us at [info@siena.org](mailto:info@siena.org).**