



Discerning and embracing your charisms

When you have so much to give

A huge part of carrying the cross of infertility is feeling like we have so much love in our hearts with nowhere for it to go. It can feel like a loss of who we were meant to be, and without a child to love and nurture, it can even feel like we are losing the chance to have the beautiful positive effect on the world that we were expecting and ready to make. While nothing can replace motherhood, we must remember that not having children, or not growing our family as much as we had hoped, does not mean we have nothing to offer the world and no impact to make. Quite the contrary. The Holy Spirit offers all of us gifts, and endows each of us with our own special charisms intended to be used to build up those around us. We are not without mission. We are not without purpose.

What is a charism?

The Holy Spirit gives the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord to all people ([CCC 1831](#)). They are given to help us personally grow in virtue. We all have access to all of those gifts. Charisms, on the other hand, are given to us by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of growing and supporting the Body of Christ. No one is given all of the charisms, but all of us are given one or more. (1 Cor 4: 8-11).

Six steps to recognizing and journeying with the Holy Spirit

★ 1) Prayerfully study

Spend time learning about charisms. Sit with and pray through the scripture and Catechism references, and explore different articles and assessment tools. Jot down any insights that stand out to you. Consider inviting a friend to take this journey with you!

- Scripture verses:
 - 1 Corinthians 12: 1-31
 - Romans 12: 6-8
 - Ephesians 4: 11-12
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
 - [§ 799-801](#)
- Example article:
www.denvercatholic.org/your-charisms-are-for-me-and-mine-are-for-you

★ 2) Pray to the Holy Spirit

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the gifts He has given you and to help you to discover how best to use them for the good of the Church and those around you.

★ 3) Recognize where God is already working through you

A sign of having a particular charism is that fruit is born of it. If you have the gift of teaching, people will learn. If you have the gift of healing, people will be healed when you pray over them. If you have the gift of encouragement, people will feel strengthened and encouraged after speaking to you. Take some time to write down examples of when you noticed God working through you to help others, examples when you felt joy, peace and excitement in serving, and when you felt that you were able to make a positive difference and enjoyed doing so. Note the occasion, what you did, and the fruit of your actions.

★ 4) Listen to others

Ask your friends, family and colleagues what charisms they see manifested in your life. Ask for examples. Add their insights to the list you began in step 3 above: note the occasion, what you did, and the fruit of your actions. If you have a spiritual director, take the opportunity to discuss this with them. Consider taking a “Spiritual Gifts” workshop or using an online “Charisms Inventory” to aid you in your discernment. Example assessment tools:

- www.dioc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Spiritual-Gifts-Invent-ory-Assessment-Diocese-of-Cleveland-ICSC.pdf
- www.newmanonline.org/theologyontap-gifts-test
- www.spiritualgiftsinventory.com/

★ 5) Look for opportunities to practice

Pray that the Holy Spirit would provide opportunities for you to put your potential charisms to practice. Brainstorm some potential opportunities and keep your eye out for others. If your reflections and insight from family and friends lead you to believe you may have a charism for encouragement, write down three people you know who need encouragement and an idea of how you could reach out to each of them. If you believe you have the charism of teaching, is there an opportunity at your parish where you could practice leading a faith formation class? Or to volunteer as a tutor at the library?

★ 6) Reflect

As you put your potential charisms into practice, jot down your reflections of the fruit of each of these activities. Was the person you prayed for healed in any way? Did the students you taught learn and did they enjoy your class? Did friends mention how encouraged they felt by your support? Take notes on what was and wasn't fruitful about these attempts so you can direct future attempts to what is bearing the most fruit and having the most positive impact on others. It's ok if some things don't work out - it's all part of the discernment process! Keep praying and seeking out spiritual counsel and mentorship. God has gifted you with a particular charism so that you may be His hands and feet in the world around you - don't miss out on beautiful opportunities that he has waiting for you!

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Example

Using the suggestions from previous pages as inspiration, take some time in prayer to work on discerning your charism(s) below. Feel free to invite a friend to join you on this journey!

<p>1. Prayerfully study</p> <p>Verses I'm studying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 > Romans 12:6-8 > Ephesians 4:11-12 > § 799-801 CCC <p>Articles read:</p> <p>"Your Charisms are For Me and Mine for you" by Mark Giszczak</p>	<p>Reflections/what stood out to me/realizations I've come to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Everyone is given a charism by the Holy Spirit. > Charisms are meant for building up those around me. > I wonder if I have the charisms of teaching, exhorting and service?
<p>2. Pray to the Holy Spirit</p> <p><i>Holy Spirit, I know you have given me a charism to serve Your people. Please help me to discover the charism you have given me and give me the courage to use it well.</i></p>	<p>Insights I've come to through prayer:</p> <p><i>I have a purpose and a calling that already exists. I feel hopeful and excited.</i></p>
<p>3. Recognize where God is already working through me</p> <p>Areas I've served/ministered to others and how I felt/how others were affected:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classroom religious ed - parents say they really appreciate and enjoy coming to my classes with their children. I like organizing the classes but don't enjoy the large groups. 2. Listening to and encouraging friends ie. Samantha and Kathleen - I really enjoy supporting others. They seem to have a more positive outlook after we speak and often tell me how much they appreciate our time together. 3. Writing for my parish website - parishioners have told me they are inspired by my writing. 4. Leading small groups - people have told me I'm good at getting people together and they've really enjoyed and grown from these groups. I enjoy hosting the small groups and connecting with people and finding ways to help their faith grow. 	

<p>4. Listen to others</p> <p>People I will ask for insight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > My husband > My boss or coworker > My friend Kathleen 	<p>Insight that they shared with me:</p> <p><i>My boss says I have the gift of administration and compliments me about it often at work. My husband notices how happy I am with my admin and teaching work and when I write. Kathleen sees me as very encouraging and gifted at writing.</i></p>
<p>5. Look for opportunities to practice and 6. Reflections on opportunities taken</p> <p>Opportunity #1: <i>Administration - I could offer to help organize the upcoming volunteer drive at church.</i></p> <p>Reflection: <i>The Volunteer Coordinator at church was thrilled with my ideas and really appreciated how I organized the survey and the responses. I enjoyed working on it too, and several ministries are already in contact with their new volunteers. Many people have passed along their compliments on the effectiveness this year.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Opportunity #2: <i>Writing - I could consider starting a blog or submitting a piece for publication elsewhere?</i></p> <p>Reflection: <i>I found a Catholic organization that was looking for volunteer writers and they accepted my piece! I'm excited to explore writing more often.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Opportunity #3: <i>Encouragement - I want to reach out to my cousin via text or phone call who just suffered a major injury. I could also maybe host a seasonal women's faith gathering since I like encouraging/leading others in small groups.</i></p> <p>Reflection <i>My cousin said he really appreciated me reaching out. I haven't hosted the women's event yet, but my friends said they are really excited about the idea and look forward to it.</i></p>	

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Your turn

Using the suggestions from previous pages as inspiration, take some time in prayer to work on discerning your charism(s) below. Feel free to invite a friend to join you on this journey!

<p>1. Prayerfully study Verses I'm studying:</p> <p>Articles read:</p>	<p>Reflections/what stood out to me/realizations I've come to:</p>
<p>2. Pray to the Holy Spirit</p>	<p>Insights I've come to through prayer:</p>
<p>3. Recognize where God is already working through me</p> <p>Areas I've served/ministered to others and how I felt/how others were affected:</p>	

<p>4. Listen to others People I will ask for insight:</p>	<p>Insight that they shared with me:</p>
<p>5. Look for opportunities to practice and 6. Reflections on opportunities taken</p> <p>Opportunity #1:</p> <p>Reflection:</p> <p>Opportunity #2</p> <p>Reflection:</p> <p>Opportunity #3:</p> <p>Reflection</p>	