



For whatever reason, **the gift of tongues has become one of the most controversial gifts of the Holy Spirit.** So, before you dismiss this post because of something you may have previously heard or experienced relating to the gift of tongues, I encourage you to read on. **Through this article, I wish to share how I've come to understand the blessing this gift is to the Church, and how in my own life, it has helped me grow in faith and proven to be useful for me in ministry situations.**

I remember the moment I received the gift of praying in tongues clearly.

It was about 12 years ago. **A group of us were spending time in prayer while preparing for a retreat, when one of the ministry team members placed his hand on my shoulder and began to intercede for me. In a low voice, I too was also praising and praying to God.** All of a sudden, I found myself praying with greater intensity, in words and sounds I could not understand, and as best as I can describe, my prayer was being articulated from deep within my heart. It was a powerful moment as I felt captured by the Holy Spirit. **Over the years, I have learned to better understand and develop this gift,** using it in my own personal prayer times, as well as in ministry situations when praying for other people. What's always struck me is how, in each scenario, **the Holy Spirit's action in drawing people closer to God (myself included) through the use of the gift of tongues was undeniable.**

The gift of tongues is a recognized charism of the Holy Spirit and it manifests in different ways. The most common way is a gift of prayer that is useful to praise God and foster one's own relationship with Him through utterances that we don't understand. It has been described as the experience of letting the Holy Spirit pray through us in sounds or words that do not appear to form a part of any human language. Another way the gift is seen, though it is rare, is a charism by which a person speaks in a language he doesn't know, but someone else understands what he is saying. Most famously, we see this form of the gift at Pentecost, when the Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, were

heard by the multitudes around them as speaking in their own native languages (Acts 2).

A major hurdle in trying to attain an authentic understanding of the gift of tongues is that the Church hasn't explicitly defined it.

However, this is not to say that the Church has ignored it either. **The gift of tongues is listed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as one of the charisms intended for the common good of the Church (CCC 2003). The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has also stated that tongues could also be seen as a gift that is useful for one's personal relationship with God**, without necessarily having a communal benefit. Not to mention the numerous Scriptural references to the gift in the book of Acts and in the letters of St. Paul.

In my own experience, **I have seen how praying in tongues has deepened my own prayer life and has also edified those around me** (just as I, in turn, have been edified by their exercise of this gift). While I can pray in tongues, I do not have the form of tongues that's explained above, which empowers someone to speak a divinely-inspired public message in a language unknown to the speaker. However, I have heard from others, whom I know and trust, who have used this form of the gift in ministry situations. In one instance, a man was praying for a Vietnamese woman at a hospital and she was dumbstruck to hear a Caucasian man, with no knowledge of Vietnamese, pray for her in perfectly fluent Vietnamese. In another case, a man was praying in tongues at a parish prayer group, when a new attendee burst into tears of joy. Unbeknownst to this man, he had been speaking in tongues, and this young girl, who had just moved to the country and was feeling very homesick, kept hearing words of comfort and encouragement in her native Spanish.

Yet, despite all the Scriptural and magisterial teaching on charisms, and specifically on the gift of tongues, there are many who blatantly oppose it, dismissing it as a product of Protestantism. This assertion is made especially in light of the growing charismatic movement in the Catholic Church. However, such an objection lacks a firm foundation because the gift of tongues is not a 'product' of Protestantism, but is a gift bestowed on us by the Holy Spirit.

From the very beginnings of the Church, we have seen how the gift of tongues has played an important role in its growth.

There is a lot of debate about how tongues was used over the centuries by saints and evangelists in prayer gatherings and mission work, with many scholars presenting strong arguments for how the gift of tongues has continued to exist in the Church in varied forms. In any case, its presence in our day and age is indubitable, particularly visible in prayer groups and individuals connected to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement. It's true that there are some who misuse the gift or hyper-emotionalize it, but their mistakes should not overshadow the fruits of using the gift properly (nor blind people to the fact that it is a legitimate gift of the Holy Spirit in the first place). The fruits of the charismatic movement have spread throughout the world and have brought in a new vigor for holiness and evangelization among the faithful.

To be clear, one does not need the gift of tongues to praise God, nor is its presence/absence any indication of an individual's holiness. God blesses each of us with charisms of the Holy Spirit as He pleases, so that each of us, in our own way, can contribute to building the Body of Christ. Nevertheless, **if you are interested in receiving the gift of tongues, all you have to do is ask God for it either in your own personal prayer time, or alternatively, seek out a prayer group near you and ask them to pray for you to receive the gift.** Praising and worshiping God through the exercise of the gift of tongues has certainly contributed to the fire and zeal I have for Christ and His Church. Think about it: If God wants to give you a gift, are you really going to decline a gift from God? We should not condemn what the Church has not, nor what we do not fully understand, but with humility and faith, we ought to approach God and ask Him for the gifts and blessings that He lovingly and graciously pours out on us, His children.