

Receiving God's Gift **Life in the Spirit Seminar** Session Three Monday,
May 16, 2011 7:00 PM

Well, good evening. Tonight the topic is Receiving God's Gift, and of course the gift that we are speaking of is **the gift of the Spirit**.

Now the story that Scripture gives us is one of God's plan of invitation and response. That's a way we could summarize the whole Bible. **The Bible is about God inviting and human beings, actually most of the time, not responding.** The few, the select, respond, but most let it go, let it pass.

Now we have already talked about how we know that God loves us. We know that God is love, and his plan is to join his nature to ours. That is the purpose of the Incarnation; as St. Thomas put it so simply, **God becomes human so we human beings could become divine.**

Now we are turning today to **the dynamics involved in accepting the invitation**, the offer. **Integral to this response is, of course, believing.** Now the word "believing" actually comes from a German word, "*Liebe*," which means "love." Now we often don't think that way. We think about beliefs as opinions. When we talk about belief in a biblical context, we are not talking about opinions, so it's a different use of the term. When we talk about belief, and the Greek word is *pistis*, and it really **implies a trust which is personal.** If you want to, you can think of a child walking with a parent hand-in-hand. That is the sort of trust that belief is about. Jesus himself began his ministry with the admonition, with the instruction, with the demand: believe in the good news—**believe in the good news.**

This is **in contrast to**, mind you, all the beliefs, in this case meaning convictions—that's another word; "belief" has many, many meanings—the **convictions of the Jewish religion**, and there were many. And they are not really particularly theoretical either; they are practical. They are all about what to do, how to work, how to live, how to worship, how to wash. A lot is about washing. A lot of it is about eating: what to eat, how to prepare what you eat. **It's all this very practical information about God's instructions.**

Jesus showed a relative disregard for all of this, although he never said the Law of God was not right or good or what didn't come from God. He never said that the written Torah was really not from God, but he did say that it all could be folded together and brought into **two basic stipulations: "Love God with your whole mind, heart, and soul"**—which he did not make up either; he found that in the Book of Deuteronomy—and **"Love your neighbor as yourself"**; he found that in the Book of Leviticus. But no rabbi had ever said that's the whole thing; nobody ever said that, but Jesus did. So his view is very unique.

Now when we get to the idea of **believing in the sense of *Liebe***, of loving, we are talking about **a trusting, loving surrender to someone.** If you love someone, you surrender your will to that person. If you refuse to surrender your will to that person, you

have to really wonder whether there is real love there. There might be something else, affection or concern or care, but not love in the deepest sense of the term. But what Jesus is really requiring of people is that they really have this **surrender to a heavenly Daddy**. *Abba* really means “daddy.” We always say “Father.” We are too hung-up to say “daddy”—Our Daddy, who art in heaven—no, we don’t say that, but that’s really what it means—that’s really what it means.

Now in Jesus’ death on the cross we have, I would say, an absolute assurance of God’s love for us, that **Jesus was willing to die because he surrendered his human will to the Father**. And there is only one divine will, mind you, Father, Son, Holy Spirit have one divine will, but Jesus has a human will. So **Jesus surrendered his human will to the divine will**, which is usually called the “will of the Father.” And in so doing he allowed himself to undergo the **passion and death on the cross, and this is a demonstration of God’s love**. And so when John, the beloved disciple, saw Jesus’ side pierced with the lance and **water and blood flowing out**, he saw that as **a sign of love and the beginning of the Church in terms of the sacramental life of the Church**. Then this kind of thinking has always been embedded in the Catholic view of Church and the Catholic view of worship, as opposed to other Christian churches and other Christian viewpoints that may not be sacramental.

So Jesus really did give up his life for us. He didn’t do it for God; he did it for us. **He surrendered to God for us**. And this is also something that is revealed. I mean, it’s not something people figure out. **The saving death of Jesus is something we are taught, is revealed to us**. Another meaning of belief is to accept on someone else’s word, and this **we accept on the word of God**, that in fact this death of Jesus was a saving death, and it was a death because God died for us; God in Christ died for us. So he surrendered everything so that we would have eternal life.

Now what he is really asking for those who follow him is to do the same, to be as surrendering to the Father as he was, to **give up our self-will and self-love in order to love him in return and to have the life he wants to offer us**, which incidentally exceeds anything we could want or desire or acquire on our own. Now this is really **a process of surrendering to God**. I don’t believe in anyone’s life it ever happened all in one second, although in the case of the good thief it happened pretty fast. Maybe at the moment of death maybe you can do it real fast. I don’t want to wait that long. So you have different options. You can just put all this aside until the moment of your death and then worry about it then, or you can deal with it now. My advice is deal with it now. **The earlier you open yourself to God, the fuller you can be filled with his Spirit. This process is called “repentance.”** It’s called “repentance.”

Now the word “repentance” may not ring a real good bell with you because the word itself is an odd word in the English language. It doesn’t really fill the bill we really want here, but on the other hand we have to use it because there is no other word. The word comes from a Greek word, *metanoia*. **Metanoia means new-mindedness in ancient Greek**, in biblical Greek. In Modern Greek it means something else; it’s pronounced differently and means something else. It’s pronounced *metania*, and it means to prostrate yourself. But in the biblical Greek **it really means to change your way of thinking**. So

it refers to a **renewal of our minds**. St. Paul says, “Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”

Now this process we are talking about, **repentance, is not the result of the accumulation of information**. So if you think, well, if I read a lot of the Bible and keep reading it, pretty soon I will have accumulated enough information and then I will reach this new-mindedness, this conversion. Well, not exactly. That may be the way we learn about other topics. If we read enough, we will eventually reach some sort of insight and we have it, but not with this. **This is the work of the Spirit. It begins at a deeper place than we are ordinarily aware of**. So you don't know and I don't know where you are right now or where I am right now in terms of the Spirit and how the Spirit is working. The Spirit works beneath the threshold of our awareness. And like all human processes it advances incrementally. In other words, **we grow in the sense of surrender to God**. It's not all at once; we grow in this sense. And **we never finish growing**. So even the good thief is still growing now, as all the saints are growing now, in this sense of the Lord.

Now sometimes repentance requires turning away from specific patterns of behaviors. A good place to start for the examination of oneself is the Ten Commandments and the teachings of the Church. They are guides to us for the formation of our conscience. In general we can say that all forms of injustice including dishonesty, lying, stealing, slander, sex outside of marriage, occultism are all obstacles to receiving God's gift. So one of the things is we have to get out of God's way. If we have patterns of sin in our lives that are obstructing God's grace, well, those have to go for God's light to be able to penetrate. That is something we have to willingly let happen. Again, **we cannot change ourselves by our own power, but we can let God's grace change us**.

However, beneath all the problems we have with behavior there is something else. There is a **root sin which is itself self-will**. We were not created to have self-will. We were not created to be preoccupied with self-love. **We were created to have a free will that we could give to God and we are created to have love that we could share with all of God's creation**. But one of the results of sin in the world has been to create this distortion, this **warping**, within our nature in which we all have to recognize that **we have a tendency to want to be the center of our own lives**.

And the world tells us that that's perfectly right, it should be that way, and that, in fact, of course you know what is best for yourself. That was, of course, the message of the serpent in the garden. Of course you know and of course God knows that if you eat the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, you will be equal to God and God doesn't want you to be equal to him, so that's why he gave you that rule, and it's so stupid! So just ignore God; you be God. **You make up—what's good for you is good; what's bad for you is bad; it's up to you. That's really the message of the serpent**. And that's the message I hear all the time in our modern society. I hear it on commercials. I hear it in TV shows. I hear it at the cinema. I read it in novels. That's the way people think. And the sad thing is it's false. **It's a false way and it will never lead to true happiness**. What Christ wants us to realize is that God loves us so much he will provide for our perfect happiness if we trust in him and believe in him and surrender to him. So it's really about letting God care, **letting God care for us**.

Implied in sin is the belief that we do have an ability to take care of ourselves, and this simply is not true. It is true in small ways; some people can take better care of themselves than others. Some children are more mature than others and some are more clever and some are more proficient and so on. That's all true. But when it comes to the big picture of life itself and what it's about, what it's for, entertaining its fulfillment, that we cannot do on our own. It's created with a horizon that is infinite. **Life has an infinite horizon. If it's infinite, we can't get there.**

Of course we can and should do many things to be responsible. This teaching is not about being irresponsible, although sometimes it has been interpreted that way. There is a kind of hippy Christianity, where people think, oh, I won't do anything; I'll just sit around and wait for God to take care of me. That's not exactly what is meant here. We have to avoid burdening other people with ourselves. We have to take care of ourselves and contribute something to not only our own welfare, but that of others. But **we cannot find our completion, our perfection, as human beings apart from God.**

Surrender is a choice, a decision, an act of the will, and yet it is not an act of the will of the type we ordinarily make. For example, you might say, "I want to have chocolate ice cream." Now that's an act of the will. But the kind of act of the will I am speaking of is more of **a yielding to a power greater than ourselves.** It's more a yielding. It's not a demanding and it's not an imposing and it's not a controlling because all those things come from the self-will. Part of what surrender involves is letting go of self-will and therefore letting go of controlling and letting go of demanding and **letting go of any sort of inordinate self-reliance.**

Now we have to realize that in every single person's life there will be obstacles. There just have to be. When Jesus was baptized by the Spirit, he was led into the desert to be tempted. He had to be tempted. He wouldn't have been human if he hadn't been tempted. **Temptations are actually good. They are opportunities and occasions we have to make a choice.** So don't think that temptations are terrible; **they are absolutely necessary.**

Now in growing in the Spirit of God we have to have several qualities. The first one is **honesty to admit that sometimes we have done wrong** and that could be, sometimes has been, deliberate or sometimes wasn't deliberate, but sometimes something done even innocently becomes really very bad when we refuse to admit it's wrong. So **it's possible that we were led astray unbeknownst to ourselves, but then later on we said, well, that's the way I am—well, then we are confirming what is bad. So we have to admit that.**

Now if you ever go to AA, which is a wonderful process, the *Alcoholics Anonymous* process about changing your life, they say you have to eventually sit down and make an **inventory of all the things you have done wrong.** They know that **the human soul cannot heal if it's burdened with all kinds of sins.** Now that don't use that language because the program is not theological, but it is really theological. Well, **theology and psychology sometimes mesh and this is an example of that.** Some say actually that the AA program was based on the writings of Ignatius of Loyola. I don't know if that's true,

but some say there are exact parallels, so maybe there are. Anyway this is the idea of making an inventory of what is wrong, **what you have done wrong to other people, because that all has to be healed. That has affected you.** Not only have you hurt somebody else, you have hurt yourself every time you hurt someone else. So that all has to be dealt with: inventoried, and then some sort of reckoning has to take place.

Humility is a very necessary quality because that is what counteracts self-will and self-love—humility. Humility really comes from a word meaning “earth.” We are made from the earth. *Adam* means “man” in Hebrew and *Adamma* means the “earth.” *Adam* comes from *Adamma*. Adam comes from the earth. I mentioned the first session that in biblical thinking the human person takes the role of the gods in pagan mythology. It is human beings who have free will. It is human beings who have dominion over the earth. And yet **in spite of this dominion, human beings are of the earth and need to stay on the earth.** And sometimes what happens through self-will and self-love, mostly self-love, is that **we get puffed up**, that is, full of air. **Jesus was very critical of people who were full of air. So humility is what we need. It’s a quality of responding.**

Renunciation—we need the ability and the willingness to renounce whatever is wrong in our life and to renounce it forever. We can’t say, well, I’ll renounce this now, but then later on maybe I will go back there. That’s not a good plan. So when we talk about the sacrament of Reconciliation, we talk about **the purpose of amendment—the purpose of amendment.** That means you really recognize you have to amend your life, otherwise it’s rather pointless to be reconciled. We turn away then from our own self-preoccupation and **we turn to the heart of Christ in the act of believing.** When we renounce our sins, we renounce our wrongdoing, we turn back to the heart of Christ.

We also need a resisting spirit to feelings of unworthiness. Now some people think unworthiness is humility. No, it isn’t. Unworthiness is not humility. Humility is recognizing who we are, but who we are is also beloved of the Lord. We are beloved of the Lord, so it is not from God if we feel unworthy of his graces or unworthy of his gifts. That is coming from some other place and that’s not good.

Or if we fear, **fear is not from the Lord.** And fear is often not necessarily sinful, but it can lead to sin, because it can either freeze us—freeze—**we become frozen**, paralyzed, and don’t do what we need to do—or we withdraw from what we really need because we fear other people’s disapproval. Now in fact many, many sins are committed in life because **we fear disapproval of others, starting with our parents.** We may fear their disapproval and so we do what is really wrong for ourselves in the sight of God. And it goes on and on and on, because actually **we are created to need others. Jesus’ point always was that, well, I will form a new community and you can need each other.** But when it comes to the community you were born into, “unless you are willing to hate your father and mother, you are not worthy of me.” So those are strong words, but the point is **you can’t care about what they think if it in any way violates what God is asking of you. So sometimes we are afraid of being rejected by others or maybe appearing foolish.** Often religion is portrayed as foolish in our media. But sometimes actually religious people are foolish and they do act foolish and they talk foolish—

foolishness and foolishly—they do! Not every religious person, not every person of faith, is wise. Wisdom is a gift.

But we mustn't fear being foolish and we need to be aware of the presence of doubts, doubts about God's love, especially for me. In other words, in a lot of people I have met this quite often. People say, "Oh, I believe all that about God for everybody else, but not for me." Well, that's that false humility, see, or it's a deeply wounded soul that just does not sense how God really wants to love and embrace that person. So oddly enough, **doubts and unworthiness and pride all go together because what it's doing is looking at oneself from within this little package.** But we are not a little package encased. **We are a being that is supposed to be connected to God and the communion of saints, and we are supposed to radiate and receive all this love and energy from God and return to God.**

Now in cases of serious sin sacramental Reconciliation is needed. I can mention that in this parish this Friday from 6:30 to 7:30 that we will have the sacrament of Reconciliation, and Saturday afternoon from 3:30 to 4:30 we will have the sacrament of Reconciliation, and you are invited. Don't all come at the same time!

Now we talk about the individual gifts. The gift is the Holy Spirit, but **the Holy Spirit manifests himself in a manifold way.** Traditionally the gifts of the Spirit are put in **two different categories**; I'm not so sure this is good, but this has happened. One is the gifts which are called **"sanctifying gifts" that change the inner person, that touch the inner self, that transform.** These are transformative energies. We call them the **"fruits of the Spirit."** We call them the **"gifts of the Spirit."** We call them the **"virtues,"** which are infused. But there is another kind of gift, which is **a gift for ministry or service.** They are called **"ministering gifts" or "ministering charisms."** The word "charism" really just means "gift." But in our tradition, for whatever reason, the word "charism" is almost always used for gifts of service or ministry, as opposed to gifts for sanctification. This is purely arbitrary. It doesn't really make any sense, but that's what has happened. The word "charism" really comes from *charis*, which is simply the Greek word for "grace."

Now a charism of service helps, edifies, informs, guides, warns, admonishes, uplifts, sustains a community's faith life. So it is not really for merely an individual; it is for the building up of the body of Christ. There are two chapters, two chapter 12's, one in Corinthians and one in **Romans**, that talk about the gifts. So I'll just go for a moment to Romans. So he says in verse 6: "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching"—see, it's not too hard to figure what teaching is about—teaching; "the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness." That's Romans.

Now we go to **1 Corinthians, chapter 12** also. He says, "Now there are various gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." So this is a quality here; it's for the common good. "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of

wisdom; to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another the working of miracles.” Now what’s the difference between healing and miracles? Well, healing means a gift of healing is given to the one who is healed. The gift of miracle is given to the one who does the healing or who mediates the healing, if in fact anyone does. Not all healings are mediated. “To another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another various kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. All of these are activated by one and the same Spirit who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.”

Now I think it is very important that we recognize **all the gifts are good and all the gifts are worthy**. Somewhere along the line in the history of our Church, way long even before the Reformation, the idea came about that, well, you know, the gifts of sanctification are very important, but the gifts of service, well, we don’t really need them. And that coincided, believe it or not, with the rise of religious communities. Religious communities each had their, quote, “charism.” There was the Franciscan charism, the Dominican charism, the Benedictine charism, and so on. In a sense that may have caused these other gifts to be pushed aside. They were never denied. Theologians talked about them. But they was not really talked about much beyond some esoteric, theological treatises. Well, **in recent years as part of the renew of the Church and part of going back to Scripture we are looking once again at what these gifts are and what they are for**.

I’ll start at the end—**tongues**, also called “*glossalalia*.” Tongues—it is something that is overt. In other words, tongues is audible. It’s a gift that is audible; because it’s audible it captures people’s imagination. People look at tongues and some people say, well, that’s ridiculous or not. Well, I’ll tell you my experience. When I was a young priest and I was in a rather, I would have to say, difficult assignment, which I won’t go into, there was a nun who was living there, and she said to me, “Father, would you like to go with me to a prayer meeting?” And I thought, well, can’t do any harm. So I went with her. And I met all these people who were strangers to me, and then they started their prayer meeting. One of the things that went on is they started to pray in tongues. Now I had heard of this before, but in all my years of seminary I’m sure it was never discussed—never, never. What struck me was **the wonderful feeling of harmony and peacefulness that just filled the room when they were praying in tongues**. And I thought, well, that is really nice, and right away **I knew it was the Holy Spirit**. I could just tell that that came from the Holy Spirit; that couldn’t be just these weird people doing something. I mean, I knew that was a gift from the Holy Spirit. **So I was very open to the idea**.

Then I went to—oh, they sent me actually, they sent me to a retreat in Steubenville, Ohio. It was a priests’ retreat. There were a thousand priests at this retreat. They had this big tent, and it was quite a gathering. Well, one of the deals was that every priest had a group of maybe there were ten in a group. And at 3:30 in the afternoon you were supposed to meet at such and such a place and meet this group, and this was your little prayer group or whatever, which I had no knowledge of. I had never really been in anything like this. So one of the first questions was, “Does anyone need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit?” I said, “I don’t even know what that means.” “Oh, good, sit down.” So

they prayed over me. They said, “How do you feel?” I said, “Fine.” “Do you feel any different?” I said, “No.” So then the next night that we had—it was like a benediction service only it was very long. It went on and on and on. But **at one point a thousand priests were praying in tongues**, and it was absolutely the most beautiful experience to hear this, and **I was just lifted up and all of a sudden I had the gift of tongues**. So that’s how I experienced it.

Now everyone’s different, but I do think that we **often inhibit ourselves**—again, the **fear of feeling foolish or being foolish**. There is a priest in our diocese; his name is Father Tony Taschetta; he said, “You really can’t receive the gifts of the Spirit unless you are willing to be a fool for Christ’s sake.” I’ll just offer that as his little wisdom. But then I thought: I know it is beautiful. The gift of tongues is a wonderful thing, but why, what is it about? And I came to realize at some point that the tongues was a beautiful gift because when you are singing in tongues or praying in tongues you can’t think ordinary thoughts because ordinary thoughts are made up of words. I don’t know if you are the kind of person that sometimes you have a lot of thoughts going at once and just a tremendous amount of words really going through your mind. But **with tongues there are no words**. Well, that’s exactly what the saints mean by contemplation. It means **you get beyond words. This is the gift of contemplation**. And I have found that to be so. Not only that, but as St. Paul says in Romans 8, very often we don’t even know what to pray for or how to pray, whether it’s for ourselves or somebody else. He said, **“The Spirit will pray in us.”** I wouldn’t say that we have to use the gift of tongues for the Spirit to pray in us, but I would say **the gift of tongues in us lets the Spirit pray in us, enables the Spirit to pray in us, gives the Spirit freedom to pray in us, so that actually God’s knowledge of what someone needs is now being asked for**.

Now what we have to talk about right this moment is the fact that for whatever reason, and I have never been able to figure out why this is, but for whatever reason, **for God’s will to be done God wants people to ask for it**. I’ve never quite understood why this was. I used to think, well, God knows what’s needed, so why doesn’t God just give it? No, God wants us to ask for it. And **sometimes he will even give a word of knowledge to someone to pray for something specific for someone so he can grant it**. Why does it work this way? I do not know. But I do know it does, and I do know that it helps us see that we are a family, that we are a body, and we really are responsible for each other in this spiritual sense. **We need to pray for each other. And some people are chosen as intercessors** and God asks them to specifically pray for others. And **when we use the gift of tongues we can pray for whatever it is God wants for that person**. We are doing the praying. We are asking whatever it is. We don’t even have to know whatever it is we are asking for, but God knows. That’s one gift.

Another is **interpretation of tongues**. Now there are times **when someone hearing tongues actually thinks he or she knows what is being said**. That’s called the “interpretation of tongues.” I have an acquaintance, a priest in the city of Chicago, Dick Simon, Richard Simon, a very brilliant guy; he is a scholar, a Greek scholar, and he used to work for years with the Puerto Ricans. So of course he is very charismatic and he always started prayer groups. So he was with this Puerto Rican prayer group and a friend of his who was a student at the University of Baghdad studying ancient Chaldean

languages came visiting, and he walked into the church where they were having this prayer meeting and they were praying in tongues. This professor said to him, “Dick, how did these people ever learn Chaldean?” He said, “Oh, that’s not Chaldean; they are just praying in tongues.” But he heard Chaldean. And that happens. So you hear something; that’s the interpretation of tongues—another gift.

Prophecy—**prophecy means speaking for God.** I don’t believe the Church can be truly authentically Church without prophecy. One of the reasons why the Church in Europe has evaporated, Protestant and Catholic—both, is that they realized that during the time of the Third Reich people really did not speak up for God. Oh, they were devout and they went about their prayers and their rituals and they went to church and they sang their hymns and they received their sacraments—they did not prophecy. And then in the 60’s, late 50’s, early 60’s, they went through this soul searching and they realized that they were all hypocrites and **if you don’t speak for God, you really are a hypocrite—not every one individual, but someone in the community has to speak**, and that takes courage. Prophecy is this gift. Now **sometimes God really wants to inform people of things, not necessarily what you are interested in knowing, mind you, but what God wants you to know**—that’s the gift of prophecy.

Word of knowledge—now the **word of knowledge is a gift whereby you simply understand that God wants you to do something, or you understand something about someone.** I don’t know whether this is often considered rare, but I think there are ways in which this is not as rare as we might imagine, where we do all of a sudden know something; **we intuit something.** That’s a gift of knowledge.

Discernment—discernment, the gift of discernment—I am mentioning a few of these. **Discernment is particularly a gift in which we determine what God is really wanting from us through a process.** Usually discernment requires more than one person. So 1 John says, “Test every spirit.” That’s about discernment. In other words, don’t think that just because someone said, “Oh, God said this,” that therefore God said that. Now we have to discern: Is that really from God? So **the community needs discernment to discern whether the gifts that are being manifested are from God because there are other spirits**; there are other spirits in the world, deceiving spirits, undermining spirits, and so that has to be discerned. That’s what discernment is about. So we either perceive God’s will or the presence of contrary spirits. There are some people who have a tremendous gift here. They know if there is evil around; they can walk in a room and know.

Hospitality—hospitality is a gift of the Spirit. **It is a mark of the true Church.** Somehow it didn’t get into the catechism, but it is; it’s a mark of the true Church. Read the Bible; it always was.

Also **encouragement**, as St. Paul mentions encouragement.

Teaching

Administration—administration itself is a gift. One of the problems we have had in our Church is that people who are administrators don't have the charism, or people who are teachers don't have the charism to teach. It's unfortunate. It's not necessarily their fault, but it's a sad situation.

Now there are gifts that are not mentioned at all in the Bible, which I shall mention now, a couple of them, and they are manifest today, for example, **resting in the Spirit**. That's not mentioned in the Bible. But you could see it at prayer meetings. Now we will have a healing Mass this coming week, Friday night, and you will see people who simply—it looks like they are fainting, but they are not fainting; they are resting in the Spirit. And **it's a rejuvenating experience. It sometimes brings physical healing with it, but it almost always brings psychological and mental peace**. So that's a gift of the Spirit.

Gift of tears. Many of the saints talk about the gift of tears, although it's not mentioned in the Bible as far as I know. But tears, **it's both sadness and joy, but it's a release of emotion that is very healing**.

There is also the gift of **laughter**, which I am a little bit skeptical about. But I knew a very, very straight arrow monsignor from Philadelphia, of all places, and this guy, if you ever met a conservative priest, this was a conservative priest. Well, he got the gift of laughter, which I think was kind of funny considering that he was not that type of person. And it really changed him tremendously. So maybe some people need the gift of laughter too.

No list will ever be exhaustive, but there is something to mull over.