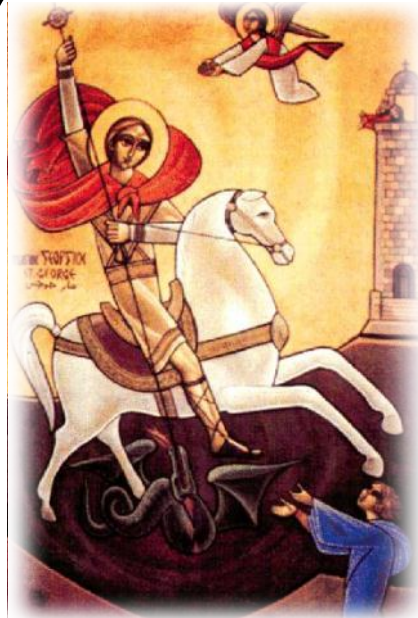


St George Newsletter

JUNE 2012



But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you
John 15:26

God the Dispenser of Talents, Gifts or Both Bishop Youssef Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Out of all the creatures that God has created, man is the most favored by Him. God has created man in His own image and bestowed on him various natural abilities, skills and talents. These talents were to be used for the benefit and enjoyment of mankind. There are many narrations in both the New and Old Testaments of how people had used their talents. God, having given Adam the linguistic talent, allowed him to enjoy using it by letting him name all the animals in the Garden. Noah, under the instructions of God, put into effect the architectural talent in building the Arch. David the psalmist used his musical talent and sang the psalms that he had composed and that were inspired by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul, in the New Testament, was skilled in weaving tents. He used his talent to provide for himself and those who were with him by selling the tents that he used to weave. Talents are therefore, natural, free capabilities essential for mankind in order to enrich and diversify his life.

However, God, in His absolute love for mankind, even after Adam had sinned against Him, had a better plan for him. The Creator wanted to take the created a step further, from the circumstantial to the non circumstantial, from the limited to the unlimited and from the earthly to the heavenly. This was manifested in the bestowal of what is even better than natural talents; the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

After the Lord Jesus Christ had bought us back to the Father through His death on the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension, He sent the promised Holy Spirit and all the gifts and power that this Holy Spirit could grant. Immediately the first difference between natural talents and the gifts of the Holy Spirit becomes clear. While the former is innate, natural, and perhaps environmentally and hereditarily affected, the latter is not subject to earthly considerations but is totally spiritual in nature and essence; and while free, yet has to be earned. In essence, the gifts of the Holy Spirit supersede natural talents in quality and function.

The Holy Spirit distributes to each one of us at least one, if not more, than one gift. Romans 12, 1 Corinthian 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4 give a summary of those gifts. The purpose of the gifts granted by the



Holy Spirit is mainly the edification of the body of Christ. This edification implies supporting one another, with words and deeds to the measure that pleases the heart of God and kindles the work and fruit of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of the believers. That is why the essence of those gifts resides in their mutual indispensability and interdependence to the extent that if any of these two conditions are violated, the result is grieving to the Granter.

It is not for us to know how the gifts are distributed, nor is it for us to decide upon the number of gifts God is to bestow on each member in the body of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has confirmed that in His conversation with Nicodemus who came to him in quest for more than what he already knew in terms of the Law “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). That is why no one is in a position to boast once they find out about the gifts granted to them

“that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29).

How do we discern our gifts? God, Who, in His goodness, revealed Himself in His son Jesus Christ, will for sure reveal what He has lavishly procured for us through the redemptive act of the Cross “how shall He not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). Therefore, it is our duty to research within us until we become familiar with those gifts. If we fail to discern them, our job is to look diligently for them. We should firstly go back to the One Who is in charge, God Himself, resort to prayers, partake of the Holy Mysteries, consult with spiritual fathers, just to mention some of the ways and means of bringing us closer to our destination in terms of what plan God has for us.

The Holy Bible differentiates between the gifts and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Though distinct from each other, yet once again interrelated and interdependent in the sense that misusing and abusing the first will result in loss of the second and vice versa. Abusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, occurs when believers draw cold in their love for God or one another, become hard of hearing, sluggish; the end result of which will be withdrawal and grieving of the Holy Spirit, and consequently withering of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is one with nine manifestations (Galatians 5:22,23). It is mainly Love and its end product. Without love none of the products is existent.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit need, as a prerequisite, wisdom and faithfulness. Unlike talents, gifts of the Holy Spirit necessitate the existence of certain conditions for the purpose of obtaining them. The basic condition is to be born in the body of Christ through Baptism, confirmation, learning and practicing of the teachings of the church, diligent study of the Word of God and partaking of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are freely given to those who earnestly seek them. They cannot be taken for granted, nor is there a life long guarantee on them. It is only through active internal work in our hearts to keep ourselves in a state of perpetual repentance and sanctification that we become worthy of those gifts.

Glory be to God forever amen

St George Services

Sunday

Early Liturgy	6:30-8:30am
English Liturgy	8:00-11:00am
Arabic Liturgy	8:30-11:30am
Sunday School	11:00-12:30pm
Servants Meeting	12:50-1:30pm

Tuesday

Liturgy	5:00-7:00am
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Wednesday

Liturgy	9:00-11:30pm
Prayer Meeting	7:00-8:00pm

Friday

Liturgy	9:00-11:30pm
Teens Meeting	7:30-9:00pm
Youth Meeting	8:30-10:00pm

* Ladies Meeting on the first Friday of every month at 7pm

Saturday

English Liturgy	8:00-10:30am
Vespers	7:00-8:30pm
English Vespers	7:00-8:00pm
Midnight Praises	8:30-10:30pm

(Confession: Wed, Fri and Sat nights by appointment)

St George Accounts

General Account

(Receipts issued from this account **are not** tax deductible)

Account Name: St George
Coptic Orthodox Church
BSB: 062199

Account Number: 0090 3651

Building Fund Account

(Receipts issued from this account **are** tax deductible)

Account Name: St George
School Building Fund
BSB: 062199

Account Number: 1008 7359

May our Lord accept your donations bless your lives and everything you do.

