

1 Corinthians 12

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the gift of preaching instruction given him by the same Spirit; and another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit ... All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses.

Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.

Nor is the body to be identified with any one of its many parts. If the foot were to say, 'I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the body', would that mean that it stopped being part of the body? If the ear were to say, 'I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body', would that mean that it was not a part of the body? If your whole body was just one eye, how would you hear anything? If it was just one ear, how would you smell anything?

Instead of that, God put all the separate parts into the body on purpose. If all the parts were the same, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you', nor can the head say to the feet, 'I do not need you' ... God has arranged the body so that more dignity is given to the parts which are without it, and so that there may not be disagreements inside the body, but that

each part may be equally concerned for all the others. If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honour, all parts enjoy it.

Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it. In the Church, God has given the first place to apostles, the second to prophets, the third to teachers; after them, miracles, and after them the gift of healing; helpers, good leaders, those with many languages. Are all of them apostles, or all of them prophets, or all of them teachers? Do they all have the gift of miracles? ...

If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.

Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or the gift of languages, it will not continue forever; and knowledge—for this, too, the time will come when it must fail ... In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Use the passage above to answer the following opinions ...

Opinion A

"I'd like to help on the Parish confirmation programme but I don't think that some of the people on it are really interested in religion. I'm not being snobbish but those people from the estate aren't exactly the most trustworthy people in the world ..."

Opinion B

"I'd like to help, but it's really not my problem ..."

Opinion C

"My talents aren't really of any use to God ..."

Opinion D

"As a Catholic, I've taken great care to understand my faith; I'm also careful to live a good life. What I can't stand is people who say they're Catholics but who live bad lives ..."

Opinion E

"I'm as good as the next person ... but if anyone upsets me, then I'm afraid there's no forgiveness ..."

Opinion F

"Famine here, floods there, disasters everywhere – I can't keep up with these charity appeals. Why can't these people sort their own messes out? **We** took care of ourselves ..."

- 2** The Church to whom Paul was writing was experiencing troubles. Some believers paid more attention to the 'showier' gifts – prophecy, speaking in many languages, miracles, and so on – than to the more 'humble' gifts.

In fifty words sum up Saint Paul's advice to the Church of Corinth.

(In your fifty words mention what Saint Paul thought to be the most important thing.)