

Gifts of the Holy Spirit -- The Gift of Apostle
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Twice St. Paul says the Lord has given the gift of Apostle to the Church. In First Corinthians 12: 28 and in Ephesians 4: 11 this gift is listed. In Ephesians he explains that along with four other gifts in the Church, the gift of apostle equips and prepares the believers to minister and build up the Body of Christ – the Church!

Those first called by Jesus have been called “The Twelve”, “Disciples” and eventually “Apostles”. In his epistles St. Paul introduces himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The same is true of St. Peter in the introduction of his epistles. Each of these men identified themselves as having been called by Jesus for a special function in leadership for the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles others are listed among this group of men as Apostles of Jesus Christ. Initially the Apostles were the first on the mission field, going in response to the Great Commission making disciples of people in as many nations they could evangelize. They were the builders of the Body of Christ, establishing Divine Order in the Church, followed by prophets to encourage and strengthen the Body; evangelists who equipped new Christians on how to share their faith with others; pastors who shepherded the new believers; and, teachers who instructed the people on the Word of God (Ephesians 4:11).

We are told in Acts 2: 42-43 that the Apostles had a specific doctrine they taught in the church and many signs and wonders occurred during their ministry. The doctrine was all about Jesus Christ who prior to His crucifixion told them they would do the same things He had done and in faithfulness to Him they would do even greater things (John 14:12). Through the ministry of these men people came to a saving relationship with Jesus, miracles occurred, and people were empowered by the Holy Spirit. This empowerment was expected to be the normative for all believers and occurred through the laying on of hands by the Apostles. Today this empowerment is expected to occur in the catholic Sacrament of Confirmation as described in Acts 8:17 when the Bishop in succession to the Apostles confirms those baptized in the Faith. Pentecostals and charismatics call it “the Baptism in the Holy Spirit”. Experientially this “baptism” is not always realized at Confirmation due to inadequate preparation of the confirmand, or failure on the part of the Bishop not realizing what he is imparting. I heard the Reverend Terry Fullum anger a group of bishops in Africa when he accused them of putting “empty hands on empty heads”.

The first Apostles literally gave their lives for the Gospel. Tradition holds that Peter was crucified upside down. James who is identified as the “leader” of the Church in Jerusalem was thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple where Satan had taken Jesus in one of the temptations, and when he survived the fall, his enemies beat him to death with a fuller’s club. James, son of Zebedee, was beheaded, as was Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot, and also Paul during the reign of Nero in Rome. Matthew was killed with a sword in Ethiopia. Bartholomew, also known as Nathaniel, was flayed to death by a

whip in Armenia. Andrew was crucified on an X cross. Thomas was killed in India by a spear. Jude was killed with arrows. John is the only one who died of old age in Turkey.

The early Church continued the line of leadership by one Apostle laying hands on a man to be his successor and consecrating him for the Church. This practice continued through the centuries to this day and is called "Apostolic Succession". Bishops in The Charismatic Episcopal Church are consecrated in this same lineage, tracing our particular line back to Saint Peter, presumed to have been the first Bishop of Rome. He was the spokesman of the other men during the time of Jesus' three years of ministry, and is assumed by the Church as the first among the Apostles. Our line is referred to as the Rebiba succession named for the particular Bishop from whom most Roman Catholic Bishops trace their lineage also. His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, was in the same lineage as we. The lineage from Sipione Cardinal Rebiba (Consecrated March 16, 1541) to the present day is important to be noted because it was after the time of the Rebiba Succession that the Church in England separated from the Roman Catholic Church. My lineage is posted at <http://www.inet-usa.net/barnabas>. Other Bishops in The International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church can trace their lineage using what I have posted on my web page.

The Apostle is to be the protector of the Church, teaching proper doctrine and defending the Faith when heresy attempts to tear the Church apart. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case, especially in recent years in some denominations that claim Apostolic Succession. Apostles have both spiritual and temporal authority, and must be a man dependent upon the Holy Spirit to guide him in his care for the faithful.

I was teaching in Uganda in 1998 to a group of men who were interested in our Communion. Most of them came from Protestant denominations and knew nothing about Apostolic Succession. They were familiar with the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19-20) when Jesus told the Apostles prior to His Ascension they were to (1) Make Disciples, (2) Baptize, (3) and Teach what He had taught them. The Holy Spirit revealed to me that Protestants adhere to these three things as the Great Commission, but Jesus also said one other thing; (4) that He would always be with His Church. The Holy Spirit pointed out to me that the Bishop in Apostolic Succession is an icon of Jesus, fulfilling His promise to always be with His Church. The dictionary defines an icon as "a sign or likeness that stands for an object by signifying or representing it either concretely or by analogy, a symbol; a name, face, picture, edifice or even a person readily recognized as having some well-known significance or embodying certain qualities: one thing, an image or depiction, that represents something else of greater significance through literal or figurative meaning."

The Bishop in Apostolic Succession is a visible sign of the authority and headship of Jesus over the Church, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the people of God.