

Sermon – Sunday, August 1, 2021 – 10th Sunday after Pentecost
7But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

How many of you like receiving gifts? Most of us like gifts. Maybe some of us, when we were much younger sniffed out our well hidden Christmas or birthday gifts, maybe even carefully unwrapping them to peak inside...unable to contain our curiosity not bothered about spoiling the surprise. Well our Lord likes giving gifts as well. So we are told in this morning's epistle.

7But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

This verse jumped out at me when I was a theology student at Wycliffe College in Toronto. It hit me. Oh yes! We are each gifted...by grace – so free gift – Christ's gift...nothing to do with us really...just free gift...already there in us to enable each of us differently! Some are apostles, some evangelists, some pastors. When I realized - it came as such a relief to know I was already gifted divinely! This dissolved my inner turmoil which came from comparing myself to others. As I began my studies at Wycliffe College, understandable that I might feel a bit inadequate...me a mother of three who'd not had a real 'profession' now entering academia...surrounded by an array of talents and some much younger than I. But here was the comfort...by grace I'd had gifts bestowed on me...unique to me...to equip me! What a relief. I don't have the gifts of that other 'rising star'. I have my own gifts! And they are for the building up of the body of Christ. They work with the gifts of others. We work together!

Have you ever watched a pit crew in action at a car race? I think we would be impressed.

In less time than it takes for most of us to put our seatbelt on and adjust the mirror, the crew changes four tires, fills the gas tank, washes the windshield, gives the driver a drink, and makes vital adjustments to the car. It happens so quickly and efficiently because each crew member knows his job and does it right. Imagine all the people it takes to put on a race. What if they all wanted to drive? It would be chaos. It's the same with the crew. If everyone wanted to change tires and no one wanted to fill the gas tank, the car wouldn't have a very long ride.

Likewise, in the body of Christ we are all equipped or graced with different skills to do certain tasks (Eph. 4:7-16). Some are pastors or teachers. Some of us "change the tires" and "wash the windshield." And each job is as important as the other.

For the body of Christ to fulfill its purpose, we each concentrate on our part and do it the best we can.

This past week I've been thinking a bit about the 'gifts' with which we are graced. Death can cause us to do that. We had a death in the parish as many of you know. A young man died, a bitter pill to swallow. Very often we don't have the opportunity to say 'good bye' to the one who goes. Very often...especially in a young life, there are so many loose ends, so much unfinished business. But maybe that is the way life is...often without neat conclusions as we see in books and movies. Very often without fond farewells.

In the face of shock and loss though, it occurs to me that we can ensure our memory of that person by choosing something that captures them, their signature. I remember when Tim's mom was leaving us she said 'Whenever you see a pansy, think of me'. That was a gift direct from her. It worked. We have pansies in our garden always, we have pansy pictures...and their velvet soft petals always call her particular presence to mind. We had a

parishioner who just loved to make egg sandwiches for our card parties...During Covid she was anxious for the time when she could make them again...that was one of her unique gifts – her love of feeding others. Nicky who just passed away was an artist. His sketches of Transformers displayed his giftedness and are his signature, one way he will be remembered. His warm heartedness is another of his signatures. Each of us has our own signature, like a finger print. Each of us has been graced, given our gifts freely by our Lord Jesus Christ. They are for the building up of the body of which Christ is the head. I wonder whether naming our own gifts is more difficult for us than naming others. Maybe we could when we think of it, tell others what we appreciate as their particular gifts. As well, maybe we can think about our own unique gifts...I am sure you can think of just one and hopefully more than one. Let's make the most of these graced gifts, our signature by which we will be remembered by which we strengthen the body of Christ.. Amen. God builds His church and makes it strong