

**A Grace of Pentecostal Refreshment for All**  
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As we make our way to the Renewal's 50th Anniversary Jubilee in 2017, let us pause to reflect on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal's identity as a movement that fosters baptism in the Holy Spirit as grace for the Church.

"From the beginning of the charismatic renewal, baptism in the Spirit has been experienced as a sovereign gift of God, not dependent on any human merit or activity" (BHS p. 14). It is a life transforming grace not limited to those in the Renewal.

"The soul of Renewal—Baptism in the Holy Spirit—is a grace of Pentecostal refreshment offered to all Christians," as Cardinal Leon Suenens wrote in 1996.

Those who were the first responders to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the "Duquesne Weekend" quickly understood that this grace was to be understood in the context of the profound renewal of Catholic life that was the heart and goal of Vatican II. They had an intense impulse to communicate this grace more widely in the Catholic Church and a clear conviction that this grace was for the renewal of the whole Church" (BHS p. 62). The ICCRS document states that, "The Catholic Charismatic Renewal too arose as an unexpected grace, a surprise of the Spirit, unplanned and without formulated goals and programs. The Renewal does not have any identifiable founder figure, although the many communities that arose within it do have founders or foundresses....The organization of the movement was subsequent to its inception" (BHS p. 14).

It is in this sense that we understand what Cardinal Suenens also wrote that "to interpret the Renewal as a 'movement' among other movements is to misunderstand its nature; it is a movement of the Spirit offered to the entire Church and destined to rejuvenate every part of the Church's life."

First, there is the reality of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit so asked for in the prayer of the Church for the Second Vatican Council—"for a renewal of the Church in our day as by a new Pentecost"—and this in the century dedicated by Pope Leo XIII to the Holy Spirit!

Second, there is the movement wherein the outpouring of the Spirit is present, not as a superfluous extra but as itself a grace. As the U.S. Bishops wrote in 1997, "We believe that 'the renewed outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost in our times'... is particularly present in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and in the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit" (Grace for the New Springtime). The Renewal, however, "is not a single entity with a unified organizational structure but rather a stream of movements and groups united by a common experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, including prayer groups, covenant communities, schools of evangelization, healing ministries and a wide variety of other groups and ministries, some ecumenical and some solely Catholic" (BHS, p. 91).

This diversity is both a tremendous blessing and a challenge for the Renewal and for the Church. For the Church the Renewal is a source of over 150 million transformed lives. It is also a question of who speaks for this diverse reality. The diversity has allowed the Renewal to touch so many realities and persons and to grow exponentially here and throughout the world. However, it also causes us to work harder at both our identity and our unity. Why? For the sake of the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit poured out not for the few but for all.

If we deny the reality of the Renewal as a movement, i.e. an “ecclesial movement” rooted in the Catholic Church (while not denying our ecumenical origins nor the prophetic dimension of our ecumenical calling) we will not work together to strengthen the Renewal’s identity and unity. Sadly, we can lose our identity as a movement and cease to exist, or to exist but no longer be effective. We can lose our fire.

### **Five steps to strengthening the Renewal’s identity as a movement fostering baptism in the Holy Spirit as a grace for the Church:**

#### **First**

Let us reaffirm, with Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, that our central proclamation is that “Jesus is Lord” and that “our vocation is to affirm through the Spirit the actual present-day lordship of Jesus in the Church...This rediscovery of Jesus as Lord, which is experiential and not just intellectual, is...one of the most significant theological and spiritual contributions that baptism in the Spirit brings to the charismatic renewal and charismatic renewal brings to the Catholic Church” (Sober Intoxication of the Spirit, Part Two, pp. 36, 124).

#### **Second**

Let us recognize the roots of the present day outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For our Catholic roots, there is the crucial role of Blessed Elena Guerra who in her contact with Pope Leo XIII encouraged devotion to the Holy Spirit. For our Pentecostal and ecumenical roots, there is the outpouring of the Spirit at Azusa Street in 1906 and the role of an interdenominational prayer group that prayed with the three Duquesne professors who led the students on the Duquesne Weekend in 1967. If we ignore one or the other of our roots we do so at our peril!

#### **Third**

Let us read and study the ICCRS document as it both defines and clarifies “baptism in the Holy Spirit” as “a life-transforming experience of the love of God the Father poured into one’s heart by the Holy Spirit received through surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ (BHS p.13). It is this “experience of an objective reality” (BHS p. 67) of the love of God that we foster and, with it, the full role of the Holy Spirit including the gifting and releasing of charisms for evangelization and service. As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said in 2008, “We can...rightly say that one of the positive elements and aspects of the Community of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is precisely their emphasis on the charisms or gifts of the Holy Spirit and their merit lies in having recalled their topicality in the Church.” We are called forth (sent!) to build communities that witness to renewed Catholic life.

#### **Fourth**

Let us be, in the words of Pope Francis before his election, “missionary disciples in communion” formed by the Holy Spirit to spread the culture of Pentecost in the church and in society—to be active agents of the New Evangelization.

#### **Fifth**

Let us be, in the words of Pope Francis on Pentecost, open to the “Spirit...[who] brings the diversity of charism and gifts;... the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which does not mean uniformity, but which leads everything back to harmony.... When we are the ones who want to build unity in accordance with our human plans, we end up creating uniformity, standardization. But if instead we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit, then richness, variety and diversity never become a source of conflict, because he impels us to experience variety within the communion of the Church.”

. . . As we make our way to the Renewal's Jubilee in 2017, we are in the year 2015, the Year of Unity, let us reflect more deeply and talk about the Renewal's identity as a movement given to the Church (to all) to foster the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit as transforming and empowering grace for the New Evangelization.