

## “Year of Jubilee 2017”

by Walter Matthews, Executive Director, National Service Committee

In preparation for the 50th Anniversary Jubilee celebration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in February, 1967, the 5-Year Committee of the National Leadership Groups of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the U.S. has issued a Year of Jubilee Statement that begins with an invitation to rejoice in the tradition of jubilees and in expectation that it may well be an “extraordinary time of grace,” a “year of the Lord’s favor.” The Statement has five parts: Jubilee, a Short History, Fruits of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, What We Have Learned, and Going Forward. What follows is a shortened and somewhat edited version of the Statement. The full Statement is available here: [www.nsc-chariscenter.org/statement-on-year-of-jubilee-2017](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/statement-on-year-of-jubilee-2017).

### Jubilee

Part One begins with a quick review of the origins of jubilees both in the Old Testament and in the Church. The key Biblical texts are from Leviticus 25, Isaiah 61 and Luke 4. When our Lord stood in the Synagogue in Nazareth and quoted Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” and ended with “This text is being fulfilled today” he brought together in his person the emphases of social justice and personal and communal conversion and forgiveness contained in the Old Testament texts. “He personifies the Jubilee,” as one author put it. Authentic jubilee spirituality cannot be found apart from the person of Jesus Christ. Nor can it be found apart from life in the Spirit begun in Baptism and renewed in “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” The recovery of Pentecost is an experience of jubilee: of freedom from the bondage of sins into the marvelous light of being sons and daughters of a loving Father; of empowerment to live in the power of the Spirit and in turn to proclaim Jesus to others, “to show mercy” (Pope Francis) by our lives and actions.

### A Short History

After the Weekend at The Ark and The Dove Retreat Center in 1967 the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit spread rapidly and worldwide. Without structure, the current of grace was first shared by American missionaries working in foreign countries, and then by the natural back-and-forth among immigrant people. In the late 1960’s, Puerto Rico and Colombia became centers from which this current of grace washed all of Latin America. Today there are millions of people there who have experienced baptism in the Spirit. Not long after, the current of grace reached the shores of Africa; and the Catholic countries of Asia and the Philippines; and Europe. In the 1970’s, the Renewal grew fast and wide. Thousands of people attended large conferences across the country. From the fast growth of the experience, organizations, national committees, renewal centers and houses of prayer were formed. Later in the 1990s, various ethnic groups began to form their own leadership committees. Aware that the experience of baptism in the Spirit was growing throughout the entire Church, efforts were made in the ‘70s to network on an international basis. With the assistance of Cardinal Leon Suenens of Belgium, a charismatic gathering was held in Rome in 1975 including a celebration in St. Peter’s Basilica where Pope Paul VI called the Charismatic Renewal a “chance for the

Church.” By 1976, an international office for the Renewal was set up in Brussels which later moved to Rome and was renamed the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS).

The current of grace does not exist only in the Catholic Church. Many ecumenical charismatic prayer services have been held over the years, along with actions and prayer for unity. Besides Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the ecumenical covenant communities, other Catholics experience and promote baptism in the Spirit.

### **Fruits of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

Of many fruits we highlight four: change of life, relationships, communities and mission.

From the beginning, lives began to change and love began to grow. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a call to receive the Father’s love and for individuals to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus and to become disciples. With this infusion of grace, individuals began to be transformed and with that the motivation and the ability to love has increased.

The second fruit followed: people who had been touched by this grace began to gather in prayer groups, communities, and associations to share their lives and experience. Prayer, praise and worship together became a hallmark and a fruit of renewal.

A third fruit was the formation of communities of love and support. Baptism in the Spirit has produced opportunities to grow in a love that embraces unity with diversity. One important element of this fruit has been an ecumenical impulse.

Finally, baptism in the Holy Spirit has brought with it a missionary impulse. The Holy Spirit has poured out charisms in abundance to build the Church and to evangelize the world

### **What We Have Learned**

In the Statement, we list seven important things we have learned and need to remember and apply. Here are three of them:

- Catholic Charismatic Renewal needs to understand itself as both a “current of grace” and “an ecclesial movement”: Be open to both special outpourings of grace (revival graces), and step-by-step building with the Lord led by the Holy Spirit. The whole movement is a “charism” for the Church.
- We need an “experience” of baptism in the Spirit, but also a “lifestyle” in the Spirit: Pope Francis has confirmed that baptism in the Spirit is meant for the whole Church. We seek to be a reminder in the Church of the “full role” of the Holy Spirit (union with God; transformation for holiness; ministry empowered by the charisms; building community). Our relationship with the Holy Spirit should influence every part of our lives.

- We need the full, mature, and discerned use of the charisms (spiritual gifts): Some of our groups show little use of the charisms, and in other places, the gifts do not come under enough community discernment. We need to understand how charisms are to be part of our daily life and parish life.

## Going Forward

As we eagerly await the “surprises of the Spirit” that will unfold in our first Jubilee Year and beyond, here are four areas in which we need to make every effort to cooperate with the Spirit in moving forward. None is new; all require our attention and prayer.

First, pray and work for unity—unity in all our relationships, especially those in the Renewal, and unity in the Body of Christ.

Second, the Renewal in the U.S. is experiencing the challenge of passing on the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit to the next generations. However, there is hope. We are becoming aware of a number of pockets of young adults, evangelized and baptized in the Holy Spirit who are connecting through various outreaches and through social media.

Third, we must accept that the Renewal is already demonstrating new forms of being together and that this trend will continue. Our task is to continue to “share with all, in the Church, the grace of Baptism in the Holy Spirit” (2014) regardless of forms and structures.

Finally, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is oriented outward to the New Evangelization. It is not possible to evangelize effectively without the power of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis has directed us in the Renewal in this way: “I expect from you an evangelization with the Word of God which proclaims that Jesus is alive and loves all men (2014).” Let us give thanks to the Lord for this great outpouring of the Holy Spirit and “let us implore from God the grace of a new Pentecost for the Church in America.” (Pope Benedict XVI St. Patrick Cathedral 2008). If we do, we will see in the next fifty years an even greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit.