

THE FATHER'S PROMISE : THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
Introduction to the Charismatic Conference in Peoria, Ill
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"...He commanded them not to depart...but to wait for the Promise of the Father...you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1, 4)

During the 40 days after the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the Apostles and instructed them, spoke to them about the Kingdom of God. While meeting with them, He instructed them not to depart from Jerusalem... as we read in Acts 1, and Luke 24, *but to remain there and wait for the "promise of the Father"*, of which He had spoken to them, for that promise to be fulfilled: *"you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit"*. In the last chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we read that Jesus appeared to the Apostles who were hearing the account, the testimony of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, *"He stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."... they were startled and terrified.... and he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? ...Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see... everything written about me must be fulfilled... You are witnesses of these things. And (behold) I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Then, he blessed them, he parted from them and was taken up to heaven." (Luke 24, 36-51)* Luke brings his Gospel to close with the account of the Ascension and he also begins the story of beginnings of the Church (the book of Acts) with a recounting of the Ascension... with the instruction of Jesus to the Apostles: *"wait for the Promise of the Father... for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the power from on high... let nothing trouble you!"*



When the Church goes through difficult times, times of fear, persecution, shadows, when error and confusion surround her, and her freedom to preach the Gospel, the fullness of truth, seems to be impeded or opposed, Jesus tells us the same thing He said to the Apostles: *"why are you troubled? remain in the city, in the Jerusalem of this difficult time, and wait in the cenacle of the Heart of the Christ, (in the cenacle of intense and unceasing prayer, in communion with Peter, under the maternal intercession and mediation of the Blessed Mother), for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the power of the Spirit to come upon you. Wait for the promise of the Father to be fulfilled: the gift of the Spirit, who is, in Jesus' own words:*

- *"will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).*
- *the Advocate: "who will be sent to be with you always" (Jn 14, 16)*
- *the teacher: "he will be sent by the Father, in my name, he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you... the Spirit of truth" (Jn 16:17)*
- *the guide: "that will guide you into all truth" (Jn 16, 13)*
- *the one that will testify to Jesus, bears witness to Jesus*
- *will convince us of sin (Jn 16, 8)*
- *will dwell in us, remains in us and with us (Jn 14, 17)*
- *will make us a new creation: (Jn 3, 5)*
- *will be the giver of life (John 6:63)*
- *will empower us to bear witness (Acts 1, 8) and to make disciples of all nations*

In all the battles of our lives, in all the battles of humanity, in all the battles of the Church, in the task of evangelization and proclamation of the Kingdom entrusted to the Church in every generation, in every historic moment, even against great opposition and many forces threatening the Church and us, Jesus says:

Do not be afraid... "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? I will not leave you orphans! And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always.." (Jn 14, 16-18)... "wait for the Promise of the Father...you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1, 4)

Therefore, in all the difficult times and dark moments of history, the Church must remain in the cenacle, devoted in prayer, in communion with Peter, under the Maternal Heart of Mary, and waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the power from on high to be sent by the Father, because the Father, always fulfills his promises.

In the battles of our times, we have received a new gift of the Holy Spirit, a new Pentecost

Bl. John Paul II's evaluation at the beginning of the Third Millennium before the diplomatic body of the Holy See, very simply revealed to us the shadows of this present moment: *"as we reflect on this past century, it is necessary to consider in this respect: this century will pass through history as the century that has seen the greatest advancements in science and technology, but also as the century in which human life has been scorned in the most brutal way: cruel wars, totalitarianism, legalization of abortion and euthanasia, dissemination of the cultural values of consumerism and a hedonistic ideology at all cost. A century of great moral crisis, due to its abandonment of ethical values."* Man has disrupted the equilibrium of creation and has forgotten that he is responsible for his brethren...has fallen into the temptation of using and abusing the gifts the Creator has placed in his hands. *"In the beginning of this millennium, let us save man who in this era, has gravely fallen into the most dangerous temptation of the heart of man, believing he can become master of nature and of history."*

Our Holy Father Emeritus, Benedict XVI, in his apostolic letter promoting the new evangelization told us that "there has been a troubling loss of the sense of the sacred, which has even called into question foundations once deemed unshakeable such as faith in a provident creator God, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the one Saviour, and a common understanding of basic human experiences: i.e., birth, death, life in a family, and reference to a natural moral law." In view of this historical reality, fruit of man's misuse of freedom and also fruit of a diabolical action, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI called to mind: *"History, in fact, is not in the hands of impending darkness, of chance or of human options. Before the unleashing of evil powers, before the vehement outburst of Satan, before so many blows and evils, the Lord is lifted up, as supreme Lord and arbiter of the hardships of history". As John Paul taught us: the limit to evil, is Divine Mercy. The limit to evil is always the "gift" of God's Spirit, who comes to assist, to guide, to teach, to defend, to empower us... to live with conviction as children of the Father, as people of the Kingdom, as holy and royal nation, and to embark in the mission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. "His mercy reaches from generation to generation" (Lk 2:50)*

The Charismatic Renewal: a sign of the times, the "gift of the Spirit" given in our historic moment

Each generation needs to know how to identify both the signs of light and of darkness being manifested in their time, just as Bl. John Paul told us in his letter opening the new millennium, ***Tertio Millennio Adveniente, n. 17** "We should seek all that gives testimony, not only to what man does, but also to the interventions of God in the midst of human hardships. To read the signs of the times, as the Second Vatican Council teaches is to identify the significant indications, clear and evident of the presence and action of the Spirit of God in history. As we read in the Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 4: 'to the Church belongs the permanent responsibility to scrutinize thoroughly the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel, so that each generation can respond to the perennial questions of mankind.'"*

Therefore, each generation has the responsibility to discover the movements of the Holy Spirit so it can: 1) *Build the reign of God in the course of history.* 2) *Counteract the forces of darkness that close in on humanity's horizons* 3) *Reach the hearts of the men and women of that historic period and to reveal to them the saving love of Christ.* 4) *Strengthen the Church with men and women who are willing to be luminous witnesses in the midst of the world's darkness.*

The Church at the beginning of the Third Millennium should call to mind the manifestations of the Spirit in her generation to understand what her particular mission is at this moment in history. *“Through a return to memory we acquire a more vivid consciousness of our true identity,”* told us John Paul II in his last book, *“Memory and Identity”*.

The Renewal in the Holy Spirit came forth at a time in which paths were being laid out for the renewal of the Church, and it was desired, ordained and inaugurated by the Vatican Council II. On the 25th of January, 1959, His Holiness John XXIII announced his desire to convoke an Ecumenical Council, and he did so formally on the 25th of December, 1961 with this prayer: *“Divine Spirit, renew your wonders in this year as if it were a new Pentecost and concede that your Church, praying perseveringly and insistently with a single heart and mind together with Mary the Mother of Jesus, and guided by Peter, may promote the reign of your Divine Savior, the reign of justice, love and peace.”*

In this prayer, the Pope wanted to manifest the three Indispensable principles

There were two indispensable principles for the grace of Pentecost to be received: to be with the Blessed Virgin Mary and to be in prayer and total receptivity like Her, and to be with Peter, the Head of the Church, the Rock upon which the Church is built. In other words, the Marian principle and the Petrine principle must both be present, for they are the two fundamental pillars of the life of the Church and the action of the Holy Spirit. To live this charism in the Heart of the Church and at its service requires one to have a Marian openness to receive the Spirit, the humility of being in prayer with the Mother of the Church, and the humility of being in obedience to the Head of the Church.

The Charismatic Renewal began as a direct intervention of the Holy Spirit within a group of people. It was not a humanly planned event, but rather it occurred in an unexpected and spontaneous way. It came about during a climate of expectation in the Church; a council has just finished, and this council had asked for the spiritual renewal of the whole Church! It all began with a small flame in Pittsburgh. Thanks to the uncontrollable force of the Spirit, *this flame spread itself like wildfire, invading the five continents of the earth.* This fire was kindled with uncontrollable ardor, and in just a few years, the Renewal, which began in a small room like the first Cenacle, has now spread throughout the entire world. All that is of God is born small because it is the force of the Holy Spirit that causes it to spread. The only thing necessary is to be present in the Cenacle, devoted to prayer, in communion with Peter and under the maternal intercession and presence of Our Lady.... and then, *inflamed by the fire of the Spirit, to become living witness of the Gospel and the life of the Kingdom of God. To communicate with zeal, the power of the Spirit, the power of the fire that was received.*

IDENTITY OF THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

I will give you definitions that have been voiced by recent Supreme Pontiffs on different occasions.

1. A gift of the Holy Spirit

The Charismatic Renewal – in its essence, experience and characteristics – has been defined by the Church as a gift of the Spirit for our historic moment. *It is a charism of actualization of the grace of Pentecost.* What is a charism of the Holy Spirit? *It is a free, supernatural gift in a historic moment that is given for the common good, for the edification of the Body of Christ.* In the particular case of the Charismatic Renewal, the gift of the Holy Spirit did not begin with a person, but with a group, thus making actual the experience of Pentecost. *“Thanks to the Charismatic Movement, a multitude of Christians, men and women, young people and adults have rediscovered Pentecost as a living reality in their daily lives.”* (First Vespers of Pentecost, Homily of John Paul II, Saturday, May 29, 2004).

2. A Religious, Spiritual Event

Now, if it is a gift that manifests itself in a historic event, then it is also an occurrence. Therefore, it has also been defined as *“a spiritual event,”* a fruit of the Holy Spirit that takes place in a historic moment. *It is an event that is the fruit of the prayers of John XXIII, the prayers of the Council Fathers, and the frequent*

addresses of Paul VI that invoked the gift of the Holy Spirit for the Church. In their ardent cooperation with the Holy Spirit, these Pastors interceded and supplicated that the grace and event of Pentecost may repeat itself again with a "new force."

3. One of the Graces of the Second Vatican Council (C. Ratzinger)

Many theologians said that the Church entered a "wintertime" after the Council. It was even said that it seemed as if, after the great flowering of the Council, a deep frost penetrated the springtime and fatigue replaced the new dynamism. It seemed as if the dynamism was everywhere except in the Church. On the other hand, many others – including entire nations and political systems – wanted to see a world without God. Some others asked themselves, "Where is God? Does not the Church, after having desired renewal so much, now find itself immersed in a storm?" But then there was suddenly something that was not planned by anyone. In this time, the Holy Spirit – if we can say it this way – asked to speak out again. By this action of the Holy Spirit, faith was renewed in young men and women, and they experienced the living God.

The Holy Spirit inspired the Church, through the Council, to implore and desire renewal, and He himself sent the graces necessary to bring it about. The Charismatic Renewal has been understood by the recent Popes as one of the graces of the Holy Spirit so ardently asked for in the Council, conceded to the Church in a moment of great difficulty. This definition should always be understood: *one of the graces, together with many others, of the perennial action of the Holy Spirit in the Church.*

The Charismatic Renewal has not invented or added something new to what has already existed in the heart and the history of the Church. The history of the Church is a 2000 year history of the action of the Holy Spirit. *Everything is rooted in the perpetual Pentecost in which the Church lives.* All the gifts that He brings to fruition in the Church need to be embraced with gratitude (LG 12), and in reality our prayer must always be that the Holy Spirit infuse His power in the Church, increasing her charisms (holiness, before all else) in order to make it more fruitful.

The Charismatic Renewal revitalizes what already exists. For this reason *it is a gift of profound spiritual renewal which can be found within all states of life and in all areas.* It is a fire that is disposed to enflame all people and to ignite the entire Church. This gift, this experience of the Holy Spirit called the Charismatic Renewal, is a living actualization of the truth already contained in the heart and womb of the Church: Pentecost! It is a living experience of the event of Pentecost!

4. Actualization of the interior effects and the exterior signs of Pentecost

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Church after the Council directed our gaze toward the Cenacle. In order to understand profoundly this renewal in the Holy Spirit desired by God in our days, it is necessary to *look upon the experience the Apostles had on Pentecost Sunday and to weigh each one of the elements or signs that constitute the unending richness of the Spirit's effusion.*

The extraordinary effusion of the Spirit upon those present at the Cenacle was manifested with certain external signs that direct our attention to and unveil, as much as it is possible, the internal experience of the Spirit in the Apostles. The signs are real, and their purpose is to direct us to the mystery, to interior actions that they signify.

Events of Pentecost:

Personal conversion, openness to the charisms, formation of a community, and the power to evangelize.

Signs of Pentecost:

Wind: The Holy Spirit is not seen but His actions are real. He blows when He wants and how He wants, and the only thing necessary for the accomplishment of His work is our docility. The wind of the Holy Spirit is perceived by the effects that He produces.

Noise: The Holy Spirit evokes praise, clamor, exclamations, tongues, and songs.

Fire: The Holy Spirit is a sanctifying fire that consumes the old man and purifies him. It causes him to burn with charity, and it moves him to be a witness of His power to the entire world. The fire of the Holy Spirit leads to holiness and mission.

Shaking of the Earth: The Holy Spirit shakes us. He moves even the most intimate areas of the human heart, removing the roots of sin and tearing away the fear that suspends and paralyzes us.

Formation of community: He causes those who receive Him to gather as the family of God, in communities of love, prayer, and service.

At Pentecost we see the expressive dimension of the faith; we see the gestures that reveal what the heart lives. Our Faith is given a face and gestures. In his first meeting with the International Council for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 1979, John Paul II expressed similar sentiments, saying, "Thank you. It was an expression of faith. Indeed, the singing, the words and the gestures. It is... how does one say it? *I can say that it is a revolution of this living expression of the faith. We say that the faith is a matter of the intelligence, and at times also of the heart, but this expressive dimension has been absent. This dimension of the faith was diminished, indeed inhibited, scarcely there. Now we can say that through this movement is everywhere*" (December 11, 1979).

Speaking to the participants of the VI International Leaders' Conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal on May 15, 1987, Pope John Paul II said, "*This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church.... The vigor and fruitfulness of the Renewal certainly attest to the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church... the Charismatic **Renewal a bold statement of 'what the Spirit is saying to the churches'** (Rev.2:7) as we approach the close of the Second Millennium*" (L'Osservatore Romano, 15 May, 1987). "*I am convinced that this movement is a sign of His action (of the Spirit). The world is much in need of this action of the Holy Spirit, and it needs many instruments for this action.* (audience of Pope John Paul II with the ICCRO Council, Rome, December 11, 1979)

John Paul II, in a meeting with new ecclesial movements and communities, said that they are "*the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium*" (May 30, 1998, Vigil of Pentecost during the Year of the Holy Spirit).

At a dark moment the Holy Spirit has sent forth His rays of light; during a dangerous hour He has sent His comfort and His strength; during a moment of harsh cold He has sent His fire. Because of this, in the same International Conference in 1975, Paul VI said to the leaders of the Renewal, "*It will be very fortuitous for our times, for the faithful, that there should be a generation...who shouts out to the world the glory and the greatness of the God of Pentecost...This grace needs to be experienced in its fullness...We live in the Church in a privileged moment of the Holy Spirit...The Church and the world need more than ever that 'the miracle of Pentecost' should continue in history.*"

*The identity and mission of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Peoria, as you present in the webpage: **Is to stir into flame the grace of Pentecost within and beyond the Church, to evangelize, to broaden and deepen the understanding that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the Christian inheritance of all, and to strengthen the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the Church.***

Charismatic Renewal....be who you are... and fulfill the task that the Father has entrusted to us, by sending us the promised gift: the Holy Spirit.

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