

The Gift of the Holy Spirit in the Church Today

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“How can we not give thanks to God for the wonders the Spirit has never ceased to accomplish in these two millenniums of Christian life? Indeed, the event of grace at Pentecost has continued to bear its marvelous fruits, everywhere instilling apostolic zeal, a desire for contemplation, the commitment to live and serve God and our brothers and sisters with complete dedication.”

(St. John Paul II, Pentecost, May 31, 1998)

Tables of Contents

I. The Holy Spirit and His Work	2
The Gift of the Holy Spirit	2
The Spirit it Love	2
The Work of the Holy Spirit: Unification	3
The Work of the Holy Spirit: Sanctification and Conversion	3
The Work of the Holy Spirit: Obedience	4
Pentecost	4
The Spirit Makes Us New	5
The Church, Mary and the Holy Spirit	6
The Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit	6
II. The Holy Spirit and the Church Today	7
The Charismatic Renewal	7
Baptism in the Holy Spirit	8
The Experience of Baptism in the Spirit	10
III. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit	13
Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts	14
The Gifts of Tongues	15
The Gift of Prophecy	17
Some Concluding Thoughts on Gifts of the Spirit	17
IV. Internal Healing, Emotions, and More	19
The Parable of the Sower	21
Conclusion	21

I. The Holy Spirit and His Work



The Gift of the Holy Spirit

In the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that “what is first in intention is last in execution.” In other words, when we seek to carry out a goal, the end result - the goal - is our original intention, the ‘thing’ we are striving for. However, because it is the final end, it is the last thing to actually happen, the last thing to be achieved. For example, if our goal is to win a basketball championship, many things will have to be done first to make this happen. The championship itself is the *last* thing we would accomplish - even though it was the initial and *first* thing to which all of our efforts were directed. And so it is with God. We see that one of the final and supreme gifts of God to humanity was the gift of the Holy Spirit, poured upon us in abundance. This gift was prophesied in the Old Testament, that one day, the Spirit of God would be poured out upon all mankind (Joel 2:28), that his Spirit within us would give us hearts of flesh, replacing our hearts of stone (Ez 36:26), that God would place his Law on our hearts - writing it there by his Spirit, not as the writing on the stone tablets of the Commandments (Ez 36:27). This promised event took place on the glorious day of Pentecost. It was the long awaited for day, in which God would finally be able to dwell in the most intimate way within us.

We can rightfully ask why the Lord desired the giving of his Spirit as his ultimate and final gift. There are a few ways to understand, and they are all very simple. Love is presence. Love desires to be with his beloved. As well, love desires unity. This is why, in the greatest of loves - spousal love - “the two become one flesh.” Spousal love in such a way that only being *with* the other person, in their presence, is not ‘enough’ for them. There is a desire to be united in a more intimate and full way. God, from whom all Love comes, is the same. He loves us, and he desires to be with us and united with us in the fullest of ways. This is why He becomes man, one of us, living our life, suffering our sorrows - not ‘from above’, but truly with us, as a man. However, it is not enough for Him...so He gives us the gift of the Eucharist, in which we are united as “one flesh” with Him. But still more He desires. He desires to pour his very Spirit within us, so that our spirit and soul can be one with him. He desires unity in all ways, at every level of our being and existence.

It is the pouring of his Spirit within us that makes us Christian. It is this gift that transforms us - not simply ‘from without’ - but from within us. We are made new men and new women. This what happens at baptism. We are not simply cleansed of original sin. But we are changed ontologically, at the very depth of our being. We die to the ‘old man’ or ‘old woman’ in us, and we rise a new, a new creation in Christ. This is why St. Paul can say, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church. Without the soul, the body is dead. The Church, then, by her nature is filled and animated and given life by the Holy Spirit and his gifts. To be a Christian and part of the Church means to be filled with the same life of the Spirit.

The Spirit is Love

The Catechism states that, “God's very being is love. By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he

has destined us to share in that exchange” (CCC 221). The Holy Spirit is the very exchange of Love between the Father and the Son. It is this love that God pours into us, it is this love in which he desires for us to participate, and it is the love that he desires us to share with others.

How do we share in that love of God to which he invites us? It is first important to understand that we will only participate in this life of the Spirit, the life of God, to the extent that we open ourselves to his presence and act on his word. We must ‘give him room’ within our hearts. Very often, we can be like the keeper of the inn when Mary and Joseph came to town, looking for a place to stay: “there is no room here.” Unfortunately, sin in our lives can block the work and presence of the Spirit within us. We can say, “no, you may not enter here.” This is why Mary, who is the Spouse of the Spirit, gives us the most perfect example of openness to the Spirit. At the Annunciation, she was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, and allowed him to come into her in the fullest way, with no conditions or limitations. His presence and union with her was so full and so complete that it conceived God-made-Man. To the extent that we are like Mary, as we open ourselves to the presence and ‘overshadowing’ of the Holy Spirit, we too ‘conceive’ Jesus within us, we will make him present here in the world - just as Mary did.

The Work of the Holy Spirit: Unification

One of the great and most important work of the Holy Spirit is to bring about unity - our unity with God and with one another. The word *diabolic* means ‘to divide’ or ‘tear apart.’ The work of Satan is to destroy unity - our unity with God and with one another. This is what fundamentally happens with sin. This is why Pentecost is the reversal of the Tower of Babel, in which humanity, because of sin, became divided - in particular through language. Pentecost, in which all the people hear the Apostles speaking in their own language, unites the many peoples of the world into one Church under Christ. The Holy Spirit brings about the unity of the Church and reverses the effects of sin.

The Work of the Holy Spirit: Sanctification and Conversion

The other primary work of the Holy Spirit is to sanctify us, to make us holy - to make us Saints. All his work is directed to forgive, heal, and restore the wounds and effects of sin in our lives. How does the Holy Spirit bring about this sanctification? To understand this, we need to first understand what sin did to *our* spirit, to *our* soul. One of the many and grave consequences of sin was the damage to our intellect and will. First, our intellect, meant to know and receive truth, is now damaged. It is blind, confused, wounded in its ability to see and recognize the truth. We see this in our daily lives. How often have we felt confused, been deceived? How many times have we been ‘sure’ of something, only later to find out we were wrong? How many times did we think we understand something, but then come to see we were mistaken? Was not this the very first sin of Adam and Eve - by eating of the tree of good and evil to determine good and evil by their own intelligence? How weak we are! But the Lord does not desire to leave us in this state! He did not intend this from the beginning, and in his mercy, he desires to give us Truth. He himself *is* Truth: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” It is him we need. This is why He sends us his Spirit - he desires to heal our wounded spirit (specifically our intellect), with the Spirit of Truth. This is why, as we all often know by experience, that wisdom grows as we grow closer to the Lord. This is why we have the example of so many saints who were illiterate or uneducated and who are now named “Doctor of the Church.” God pours his Intellect into our broken one, healing and restoring it with his abundant wisdom.

This is why Jesus says in John 16 that when the Spirit comes he will “convict the world according to sin” (v.8). The first fruit of the Spirit and its effect on the intellect is the grace of *illumination* and *conversion*. His Light shines itself into the areas of darkness within us and convicts us. The Holy Spirit is sent to the hearts of men in order to reveal sin for what is

really is, for we cannot fix sin until we know it – a doctor can only heal an illness he can identify and a mechanic can only fix a broken car if he knows what is actually broken. The Holy Spirit carries out his “convincing concerning sin” in the human conscience, which enables us to know His truth and His commands. Man’s conscience allows him to call good and evil by their correct names. By this act, he assents to *God’s* definition of good and evil, righting the wrong committed in the Garden, where man took it upon himself to decide what was good and evil. When we choose to follow the voice of God in his conscience, we assent to the truth that *only God alone can determine truth*. When we do this, we allow man to be man and God to be God, and our intellect becomes healed. Very simply, the first gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of **conversion**, and this conversion takes place first in our minds.

The Work of the Holy Spirit: Obedience

However, this is not quite enough because our wills are also wounded from sin. Our wills, which originally desired only what was truly good, now desire what is evil. This is called concupiscence. Therefore, the second work of the Holy Spirit is to strengthen our weak will so it can choose the good again, even in the midst of temptation. Without this strength, we succumb to the weakness of our flesh, whose desires often dominate our weakened spirit. Think about the last time you overate - your mind told you to stop eating, but the desire of your flesh told you to keep going. Even though you knew it wasn’t good for you, you ate more anyway. This is one simple example among many - daily we battle this tension between the desires of the flesh and that of the spirit. The Holy Spirit within us strengthens us in this battle and helps the spirit to win out and choose the true good. In other words and very simply, the Holy Spirit leads us to obedience. He gives us the power to obey, where before we did not. This is the perpetual problem of the Old Testament - despite their best efforts God’s people cannot remain obedient to him. The law was external to them. The Holy Spirit comes to make the Law internal. He writes it on our hearts, he changes our very desires so that we want to obey - because He heals our wounded wills from within. Obedience is a work and fruit of the Spirit: "You shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1: 8).

As we become more docile to the Holy Spirit, our obedience becomes more perfect. St. Faustina describes the levels of obedience like this in her *Diary*: “There are three degrees in the accomplishment of God’s will: in the first, the soul carries out all rules and statutes pertaining to external observance; in the second degree, the soul accepts interior inspiration and carries them out faithfully; in the third degree, the soul, abandoned to the will of God, allows Him to dispose of it freely, and God does with it as, He pleases, and it is a docile tool in His hands” (*Diary*, no.444). In other words, the first level of obedience is simply following the Commandments. However, a soul becomes more perfect when they are able to hear the voice of God in all moments. You can imagine a basketball player who is able to follow the rules of the game. But this is different than a player who knows the game so well that they are able to adjust to every circumstance thrown at them, applying those rules to every possible moment. How much more effective will they be? When we become attentive to the Holy Spirit, he can use us in all moments to accomplish his work, because we are not simply concerned about following the basic rules, but about doing whatever is needed at any moment.

Pentecost

Do we not see this spirit of total transformation in the Apostles at Pentecost? They go from being fearful, from running away when Jesus was being arrested and crucified, from denial and betrayal, from hiding in the Upper Room, from disbelief and lack of faith, to fearless, bold preachers who convert thousands. Gone are the timid men from before. In the next chapters after Pentecost, we read of the Apostles being arrested and jailed for speaking about Jesus, getting miraculously freed, and then returning to the same spot the next day to preach again to the people! They are flogged for preaching in the name of Jesus and they rejoice. They are tried and told not to speak about Jesus anymore and they

refuse. These are not the same men! This is the transformation that the Holy Spirit desires to affect in us. The presence of the Spirit in us *must* change us. In fact, it is impossible that He will not. The grace of Pentecost is a grace ever present and available to the Church and to each one of us.

However, how often do we ask for this grace, beg for the grace of Pentecost? It is offered to us first in all the **Sacraments**. This is the primary way in which God ‘dispenses’ the gift of his Spirit upon the Church (CCC 1076). The Spirit is poured out in a special way in the Sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church (CCC 1288). It is also offered to us daily, as we have this grace present with us always. Jesus told St. Angela Foligno, “Make yourself a capacity and I will make myself a torrent.”

The Spirit Makes Us New

As we see in the event of Pentecost, the Apostles are drastically changed by this coming of the Holy Spirit. We read over and over again throughout the New Testament that we are truly new creatures in Christ. To begin, God promised this new life in the Spirit long before the coming of Christ:

“And I will give them another heart and a new spirit I will put within them. From their bodies I will remove the hearts of stone, and give them hearts of flesh, so that they walk according to my statutes, taking care to keep my ordinances. Thus they will be my people, and I will be their God.” (Ez 11:19-20)

And then he fulfilled his promise in his Son Jesus Christ:

“So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Cor 5:17)

“Yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal 2:20)

“We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.” (Rom 6:4)

“Put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth.” (Eph 4:22-24)

I think it is easy sometimes for Christians to forget that our lives should be truly changed and different because of Jesus. Sometimes, especially for those of us who have grown up in the Church, we can forget that we are not supposed to be like the rest of the world. For many different reasons, we do not live in this newness, but often live as if Christ was really not in us. This is something we must truly take to prayer. Do we take seriously the new life Christ offers us - a life that is radically different than life without him? This is what the Holy Spirit is supposed to do - and will do - if we let him. Pentecost demonstrates this. The Apostles are not the same men before and after Pentecost. They are radically transformed by the presence of the Spirit. This is the transformation that is offered to (and necessary for) every Christian.

The Church, Mary and the Holy Spirit

It is impossible to speak of the Holy Spirit and not speak of Our Lady, for she is Spouse of the Spirit. The full and complete union between the Holy Spirit and Our Lady begot the Second Person of the Trinity made Made - Jesus Christ. When we speak of a heart open to the Holy Spirit and his gifts, Mary did this in the fullest and most complete way possible. St. Luke tells us that she was “full of grace” and conceived Jesus through the “overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.” Just as the Spirit hovered over the waters in the beginning to bring about the first creation of the world (Genesis 1:2), so too did the Spirit ‘hover’ or ‘overshadow’ Mary to bring about the new Creation of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:35). She is the Spouse of the Spirit, and completely united to him. This is why Mary’s presence at Pentecost in the midst of the Apostles is not one of mere coincidence - she is present because she ushers in the gift of the Spirit upon the Church, as she has already received it in its fullness. Mary is “*Personam Ecclesiae gerit*: she represents in her special role, the Church herself.”¹ The Spirit indwells and unites with Mary in a comparable way that He unites and indwells in the Church.

To be truly Marian is to be open to the Holy Spirit as she was. This is why St. Louis de Montfort writes, “When the Holy Spirit...finds Mary in a soul, he hastens there and enters fully into it... One of the main reasons why the Holy Spirit does not work striking wonders in souls is that he fails to find in them a sufficiently close union with his faithful and inseparable spouse.”² He continues on, “When Mary has taken root in a soul she produces in it wonders of grace which only she can produce.” Very simply, Our Lady and the Holy Spirit are inseparable. Her presence in our lives draws the Holy Spirit to us, just as she drew the presence of the Holy Spirit to the Church at Pentecost.

This is what the Church needs ever more in this time period that Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI often called the “crisis of the presence of God.” We need Our Lady and the Holy Spirit more in our lives, in order to bring the presence of Christ into the world. Mother Adela explains, “Yes, we must dispose ourselves, with all this Marian availability and receptivity, to allow the Holy Spirit to overshadow the Tent of our hearts, the Tent of the Heart of the Church. Thus, the Spirit can bring about a particular grace of enfleshment of the Child – a new powerful presence of God’s love, God’s face, God’s heart, to be manifested to a world thirsty for love, for true love: the love of God.”³

The Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit

What happens to our hearts and lives when we open them to the Holy Spirit in a total and complete way? As we mentioned, the first and primary fruits of the Spirit are conversion and obedience. As well, God fills us with his gifts that He had in perfection: wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fear of the Lord, piety, fortitude. When this happens, not only are we transformed, but we are filled with joy, peace, generosity, charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity (cf. Gal 5:22-23). These are called the fruits of the Holy Spirit. They are the *result* of living according to the Holy Spirit. Just as fruit on a tree comes when the tree is healthy and well cared for, so too these fruits come when our souls are healthy and united with God. We cannot ‘fake’ the fruits. As much as we would like to find these things sometimes in a life lived according to our own ways, we know that we cannot find them except in God. We may be able to put an act for some time, but just like a fruit that has worms on the inside, as soon as we bite it, we know the truth. The fruits are God’s gift to us when we live according to his ways. And because they cannot be faked, when we see these fruits in another, it is often a sure sign of their right relationship with God: “By their fruits you shall know them” (Matt 7:16).

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology II: Spouse of the Word*, p.36

² St. Louis de Montfort, *Treatise on True Devotion to Mary*, no.36

³ Mother Adela Galindo, Foundress SCTJM, “The Word Became Flesh in Mary’s Womb by the Power of the Holy Spirit.”

II. The Holy Spirit and the Church Today



The Charismatic Renewal

One of the particular gifts of this period in history has been the gift of the Charismatic Renewal, in which the Person of the Holy Spirit came to the forefront of the Church in a significant way and began pouring special graces upon the Church in this moment of history. Let us take a look at how this came about and effects it had in the Church.

One might say that the charismatic renewal began when John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council in 1961 and prayed that new Pentecost might fall upon the Church. At the end of the Council in 1966, a group of professors began gathering to pray at Duquesne University. Noticing a lack of dynamism in their own spiritual lives, they began to pray for the grace of Pentecost to fall upon them, so that they might have the spiritual vigor that they saw in the early Church. In one of these prayer meetings, they experienced the baptism of the Spirit. Later, they gave a retreat to the students, and those present received the same gift. The Charismatic Renewal was born. From there, it spread to Michigan, Notre Dame, and all across the country and the world. Just like from one room - the Cenacle (the Upper Room) - the Church began to grow, so too with the gift of the Renewal.⁴

The Charismatic Renewal has been described as an actualization of Pentecost in the Church today. It has no founder or foundress, just like the Church at Pentecost. It is a gift of God himself. "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." (Celebration of First Vespers of Pentecost, Homily of John Paul II, Saturday, May 29, 2004).

As well, it is important to note that the Charismatic Renewal was (and is) not intended to replace any current charisms or spiritualities, but instead to infuse and uplift them all with the power of the Spirit. It is a gift for our times, in this moment of the history of the Church to revitalize her with the grace of a renewed Pentecost. The Lord gave this gift to the Church in order to make her more aware of the Holy Spirit's presence, gifts, and work in the life of every Christian and the Church as a whole. He did this in order to bring about a 'new Pentecost', so he could revitalize her just He did 2000 years ago. The gifts that the Renewal brought were not confined to those in the Renewal. The movement of the Charismatic Renewal was for the Church as a whole, to bring the Church to a deeper awareness of the life of the Holy Spirit. And the gifts that the Holy Spirit offers are for every Christian - not simply those who are part of the Renewal in a formal way. You could say that St. Mother Teresa's order - the Missionaries of Charity - were given to the Church to help serve the poor themselves *and* to raise the Church's awareness of her duty to serve the poor as a whole Church. One does not need to be a Missionary of Charity to serve the poor. But the Missionaries have inspired many within the

⁴ Mother Adela Galindo, Foundress SCTJM, *Identity of the Charismatic Renewal in the Church*, http://www.piercedhearts.org/mother_adela/talks_adobe/identity_charismatic_renewal.pdf

Church to serve the poor around them more. The same can be said of the Renewal Movement - it gave to the Church a deeper realization of what the Holy Spirit can do and desires to do within every person.

Mother Adela, Foundress SCTJM, explains that an authentic experience of this new Pentecost that the Holy Spirit brings is that is always with Our Lady and Peter - just like the first Pentecost. She explains: "For Pentecost to be, there were two indispensable principles, which can in no way be renounced: to be with the Blessed Virgin Mary and to be with Peter. 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."⁵ This fundamental principle is the same for the whole of the Christian life. It can sometimes be easy for many today to 'invent' their own version of Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit. We live in a world of 'Christian relativism' in which many Christians believe very different things about who God is and how he asks us to live. The gift of the Church is that she gives us the Truth about Jesus and how He desires us to live through her living Magisterium. Anything that seems to be 'inspired' by God, but that goes against the teaching of the Church, is not inspired by the Spirit of God. This is an authentic tool of discernment for all gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit.

To conclude this section, we leave with the words of multiple Holy Fathers in regard to the gift of the Renewal during this time period:

John Paul II was "convinced that this movement is a very important component of the entire renewal of the Church" (Dec. 11, 1979, speaking to a group of international Renewal leaders). As well, he spoke of the Renewal as "a grace which has come precisely to sanctify the Church and to renew in her the taste for prayer through the rediscovery, with the Holy Spirit, of the sense of gratuitousness, of joyful praise, of confidence in intercession; and this becomes a new source of evangelization" (Jan. 22, 1987). Finally, "The Charismatic Renewal is an eloquent manifestation of this vitality today, a bold statement of what 'the Spirit is saying to the churches' (Rev. 2,7)" (May 15, 1987 at the Sixth International Assembly of the Charismatic Renewal).

Paul VI said, "It (the Charismatic Renewal) ought to rejuvenate the world, give it back a spirituality, a soul, and religious thought; it ought to reopen its closed lips to prayer and open its mouth to song, to joy, to hymns, and to witnessing...because in today's world, we either live our faith with devotion, with depth, with energy and with joy or we will lose it... 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." (May 19, 1975, Address at International Charismatic Renewal Conference in Rome).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Before Jesus began his public ministry, we encounter the figure of John the Baptist. Many people thought that John might be the Messiah. However, John makes it very clear that he is not the Messiah, and that his baptism of repentance was very different than the baptism the Messiah would bring. John said, "I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the

⁵ Mother Adela Galindo, Foundress SCTJM, *Identity of the Charismatic Renewal in the Church*, http://www.piercedhearts.org/mother_adela/talks_adobe/identity_charismatic_renewal.pdf

holy Spirit and fire.” We read these same words in all four Gospels, and then from Jesus himself who makes the same distinction right before he ascends into heaven: “...for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5).

We know that the coming of the holy Spirit upon a person certainly happens in baptism (when the Spirit is given for the first time). However, we also see in the Acts of the Apostles, that there is also a distinct outpouring of the Spirit given beyond baptism: “...[They] prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:6-17) We also see this outpouring most powerfully in the event of Pentecost itself, when God pours out his Spirit upon his Church in a powerfully and life-transforming way - this is the baptism in the Spirit that Jesus promised his Apostles right before he ascended into heaven (Acts 1:5). This further pouring of the Spirit is celebrated today in the Sacrament of Confirmation, which is “an increase and deepening of baptismal grace” (CCC 1303).

However, Fr. Salvador Carrillo Alday notes, “It is also noteworthy that in the Catholic Church the expression ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ has never been used in a common or ordinary way to designate either the sacrament of baptism or of confirmation. Moreover, the recent liturgical documents on these sacraments do not make use of this title. Therefore, the expression ‘baptism in the Spirit’ is not necessarily tied to one sacrament or the other.”⁶ Therefore, we come to understand that the experience of baptism in the Spirit is something that is also something distinct and different than (though related to) what one receives in the Sacraments.

With the beginning of the Charismatic Renewal in the 1960’s many people began to experience this Baptism in the Spirit, in which the Holy Spirit seemed to be poured upon people in a new way, awakening the faith in them in a new and different way. It seemed that many people began experiencing a certain grace of Pentecost, in which they came away radically transformed and different than before this outpouring of the Spirit. Fr. Alday describes this event in this way: “The name ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ condenses and synthesizes for them a double experience: the inner renewal (conversion or metanoia) that has taken place within them and the new outpouring of the Gift of the Holy Spirit that has set in motion their spiritual energies and has uncovered new horizons and higher dimensions for their life.”⁷ In other words, there is conversion and a renewed ‘spiritual energy’ to live the faith more dynamically - both tell-tale signs of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives. We think here of Pentecost where the Apostles were transformed to live the faith in a bold courageous way that they had not been able to do before and where 3000 were converted and baptized in one day.

To understand what this Baptism in the Spirit is, we can look at a question that St. Thomas Aquinas asked. He asked, how is it possible that people can receive the Sacraments of Initiation (baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist) and not be living a dynamic Christian life? In other words, how can we receive the Holy Spirit and all the graces given to us in the Sacraments and still live as if little has changed in us? This question of St. Thomas is ever more pertinent today, in which we see so many Catholic Christians who live lethargically and with mediocrity, instead of with a bold coherency and lively faith. St. Thomas answered that this happens when those who have received the sacraments lack faith, lack knowledge of the faith, are living in sin, or are trapped in fear. When this happens, one could say that the Spirit and the sacramental graces lie dormant in them. They are present, but as a seed in the winter, which lies beneath the earth - it has potential to grow but is not growing or producing fruit. This happens especially when a Sacrament is received in mortal sin - the sacrament is valid; however, the graces from the Sacrament are not operative in the soul. In this case, the person needs a second sending of the Holy Spirit to awaken or release that grace they received in the Sacraments.

⁶ *New Covenant*, April 1974

⁷ *Ibid.*

This 'resending' of the Spirit is the Baptism in the Spirit. (It is important to note that if a person is in mortal sin, they also need the Sacrament of Reconciliation).

Furthermore, it is fitting that this special grace is being poured upon the Church in this moment in history. God's graces are not sent in a vacuum. They are sent at particular moments in history, when they are needed the most. We live in an era, in which many are being baptized and confirmed. However, this seed of faith planted in them through the sacraments is often not being nourished, fed, watered or given sun by their families or the culture. We live in a time in which there is more present to kill or destroy the seed than there is to help it grow. Therefore, for many people in the Church today, the graces of the Sacraments lie dormant within them. The gift of God in this moment of history was to send a special outpouring of the Spirit upon the Church, to stir up within her these graces, and allow her people to flourish and grow. Franciscan priest and the papal household preacher, Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa writes, "But it seems that God was concerned about this situation even before the Church was, and raised up here and there in the Church movements aimed at renewing Christian initiation in adults. The Charismatic Renewal is one of these movements and in it the principle grace is, without doubt, linked to the Baptism of the Spirit and to what comes before it... The gift of God is finally 'untied' and the Spirit is allowed to flow like a fragrance in the Christian life. In addition to the renewal of the grace of baptism, the Baptism in the Spirit is also a confirmation of one's own baptism, a deliberate 'yes' to it, to its fruit and its commitments."⁸

Therefore, we repeat the prayer of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on Pentecost in 2008: "Today I would like to extend the invitation to all: let us rediscover, dear brothers and sisters, the beauty of being baptized in the Holy Spirit; let us recover awareness of our Baptism and our Confirmation, ever timely sources of grace" (May 11, 2008).

The Experience of Baptism in the Spirit

What is generally and commonly necessary to receive this gift? Fr. Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J. gives 5 *common* (though not absolutely necessary or exclusive) 'requirements'⁹:

- **Knowledge** of the gift and confidence that God wants to give it to us.
- **Seeking** and desiring to receive the gift of fullness of life in the Holy Spirit.
- **Praying** regularly with others who have received the gift.
- **Repentance** sorrow for sin and a desire to live a life more in conformity to the Gospel.
- Having a **community prayer** group to pray with and having them pray for you to receive this gift.

Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR, specifies 3 common, non-sacramental exterior elements in how is brought about: brotherly love, laying on of hands, prayer.¹⁰ Very simply, the gift of baptism in the Spirit is usually found when brothers and sisters in Christ gather together in prayer, asking together for the presence of the Holy Spirit, and lay hands upon one another (non-sacramentally) asking for this grace. This is the experience of the beginning of the Charismatic Renewal, when several students gathered together to pray and ask the Lord for an outpouring of his Spirit and his gifts.

For those who receive this gift, what do they usually experience? In general, we find the experiences of those baptized in the Spirit to be similar: there is a new desire for prayer, especially the prayer of the Scriptures and the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist; there is a deeper understanding and *experience* of God's love for us - it is not simply 'head' knowledge, but knowledge of the heart; there is greater power and strength over sin in our lives, and chains of sin are

⁸ Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Archdiocese of Miami, <http://www.miamiccr.com/baptism-in-the-holy-spirit.html>

⁹ Fr. Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J, *A New Introduction to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*, p.11-12

¹⁰ Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, <http://www.miamiccr.com/baptism-in-the-holy-spirit.html>

often broken; there is often healing - physical, spiritual, emotional, mental; there is a desire to speak about and share one's experience and about the love of God; there is a greater freedom and delight to live boldly the Christian life.

In his first meeting with the international council for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 1979, John Paul II explained this revitalization of the faith in these words: "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 this movement is everywhere" (December 11, 1979).

Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR, uses fire to explain the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And on Pentecost, tongues of fire come to rest upon the heads of the Apostles. Fr. Dave explains that fire commonly does 3 things: illuminates, purifies, and protects.¹¹

First, **fire illuminates**. Those who are baptized in the Spirit have an illumination and understand more fully who God is and who they are. They feel God personally, and understand him, not as simply an intellectual truth, but as a personal God, as Father. Many people explain that they feel God's love for them and experience it as never before. They understand that Jesus has died for them personally - not simply for humanity as a whole. It awakens the spiritual life in us, giving us a zeal we did not have before. Scripture becomes alive - we experience reading it as truly the Word of God, speaking to us powerfully and faithfully. It often brings forth a deep spiritual hunger for prayer, praise, the Scriptures, and especially the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation. This zeal and love also propels us to want to share the gifts we have received. The life of the Spirit within gives us a sense of mission and evangelization whose presence is the hallmark of any living faith, and whose absence is a sign a mediocre or dormant faith.

This understanding and experience of God's love and peace often leads to another gift - resting in the Spirit. This is when a person 'let's go' at this experience of God's love that is so profound that it leads them to physically fall backwards (with someone to catch them) and 'rest' in this overwhelming presence of God and his Spirit. When someone experiences the grace of resting in the Spirit, they are not unconscious or unable to control themselves. They are perfectly aware and able to move or get up whenever they desire. However, the presence and peace of God is so pervasive, they simply desire to rest in it, to be still and let God's love fill them and be with them. The physical 'falling back' that allows a person to physically 'rest' is a bodily action that reflects a necessary inner disposition of heart - that of trust, a certain vulnerability before the Lord, and surrender. Body and soul are united in a single disposition of heart that allows the Lord to enter into us in a special and more intimate way. This is also why the experience of resting is also always a choice - it is never an experience that is against a person's will. In general, the Lord never acts by force or compulsion. We are always radically free to accept or deny his advances of love and grace. He presents, invites, but never compels. Why? Because love, by its nature, must be free. No one can ever be forced to give or receive love, because then it would *de facto*, cease to be love.

Fire also purifies. We remember that the Spirit was sent to "convict the world according to sin." The illumination of the Spirit also includes an illumination of our own souls - our strengths and weaknesses, our virtues and vices. Many people who are baptized in the Spirit experience the gift of deep repentance and sorrow for sin. But the Holy Spirit not only reveals these areas, he also seeks to actively purify us. When we allow ourselves to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we see that his presence helps us to overcome sins before which we felt helpless. It should also lead us to a "greater consciousness of the need for interior healing; this should lead us to encounter the wounds of our sins and

¹¹ Fr. Dave Pivonka, *The Wild Goose Video Series*, Episode 3 (<https://thewildgooseisloose.com/>)

the roots of our conduct and behavior.”¹² We are given new grace and strength and grace to let the power of the Spirit triumph over the power of sin, death, and destruction. Love truly is more powerful than death. “The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death. For what the law, weakened by the flesh, was powerless to do, this God has done” (Rom 8:2-3). Sometimes, we try to be good, to fight sin, by our own efforts. But we have all come to the point where we realize the limits of our efforts - as much as we strive and try, “I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate” (Rom 7:15). Yes, love is greater than death - but we do not have that love or that power on our own. It is only given to us as a gift. If we do not open ourselves to or ask for that gift, that power cannot overcome the evil in us. With the Spirit, however, we experience a power over sin, a power over the past, over struggles and temptations that we did not have before.

Finally, fire protects. The shepherd protects his sheep with fire. When people experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit, there is also a sense of a greater understanding of the Lord’s protection - from sin, from harmful situations, and must more. We see God’s providence closing doors he does not want us to enter, and opening doors that lead to greater life. We begin to experience him more as a loving and protective Father, willing to stand up for us and defend us at all costs.

A final note for this section. Though sometimes a baptism in the Spirit may be experienced as an extraordinary event, it is not always so, which is perfectly OK. As well, and more importantly, the daily living after this experience is changed, but not extraordinary. Life, responsibilities and duties carry on as before. But with the life God no longer dormant within us, they are lived with new vigor, and a new purpose. Each day, when lived in communion with God, carries with it something new and beautiful, an opportunity for grace, growth, holiness and encounters that the last day did not have. This does not mean we will not be tired, tried, and experience heartache, struggle, temptation and suffering. But we will experience it differently - with greater hope, peace, and trust.

¹² Mother Adela Galindo, Foundress SCTJM, *Identity of the Charismatic Renewal in the Church*, http://www.piercedhearts.org/mother_adela/talks_adobe/identity_charismatic_renewal.pdf

III. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit



Before we begin speaking about types and kinds of gifts that God gives to his people, it is right to speak about the nature of God, who is a gift giver. Sometimes we forget the basic truth that the Lord is infinitely and abundantly generous, and ardently desires to pour gifts on his beloved children. He is like a rich Father is exceedingly generous - he wants to give away his treasures to those he loves. In fact, he is saddened when we either do not ask for these gifts or actively refuse them. We can imagine a suiter standing at the doorstep of his beloved with a beautiful gift, but she will not open the door for him. I can imagine that this is a little taste of how God must feel with us sometimes. The Holy Spirit - who is God Himself - is his greatest gift, and Scripture tells us that "He does not ration his gift of the Spirit" (John 3:34). Therefore, God delights in us when we beg for these gifts which he so ardently desires to give.

When speaking of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, most people are familiar with are traditional known as the **seven sanctifying gifts of the Holy Spirit** - wisdom, knowledge, piety, counsel, understanding, fear of the Lord, and fortitude. The Catechism says that "these (gifts) are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit" (CCC 1830). "These gifts, according to Aquinas, are "habits," "instincts," or "dispositions" provided by God as supernatural helps to man in the process of his "perfection." They enable man to transcend the limitations of human reason and human nature and participate in the very life of God, as Christ promised (John 14:23). Aquinas insisted that they are necessary for man's salvation, which he cannot achieve on his own. They serve to "perfect" the four cardinal or moral virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) and the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity)."¹³

We can understand these gifts through the use of an analogy.¹⁴ Imagine a sailboat - the sails are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, while the wind is the Holy Spirit himself. Though the sails are always present on the boat, without the wind blowing within them, the boat does not move, the sails are not put to use. The best sailing of the boat is when the wind is strong, filling the sails and driving the boat forward. The same is true in our own lives. When the Holy Spirit is lacking in our lives, we are like that sailboat sitting out on a calm sea, but not moving anywhere. The gifts help make us docile to the Holy Spirit - and we need this docility in order for him to move in our lives. If we resist him, it is like a boat without sails - the wind may blow, but without these dispositions, our boat does not move.

Furthermore, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are concrete and practical - they are not simply one more list we need to memorize for us to get confirmed. The gifts are for the concrete situations in our daily lives. When we are attentive to him, he guides and directs us specifically and practically. For example, the gift of wisdom and counsel allows us to prayerfully examine concrete situations and circumstances in our lives and others and determine the course of action that will lead to God's will and our holiness.

¹³ Frank Blisard, "The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit," <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-seven-gifts-of-the-holy-spirit>

¹⁴ Fr. Dave Pivonka, *The Wild Goose* video series, Episode 5, (<https://thewildgooseisloose.com/>)

Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts

As well as these traditional seven gifts, the Lord also gives to the Church both **hierarchical** and **charismatic** gifts: “The Church is directed and guided by the Holy Spirit, who lavishes diverse hierarchical and charismatic gifts on all the baptized” (*Christifideles Laici*, 21). These gifts are not so much for person receiving them (although they are for him or her too), but they are primarily directed for the good of the Church. The Catechism explains: “Charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world” (CCC 799). In other words, if a person has the gift of healing, this gift is not simply given for the healing for him or her personally - it is given to one person so they in turn can serve the Church by bringing Christ’s healing power to many. They could be compared with the fruit on a tree - the tree does eat its own fruit, but produces the fruit for others to eat. Just the same, these gifts are ‘fruit’ for others, not so much for the ‘tree’ from which they came. Whereas the seven Gifts are oriented more toward our personal holiness, the charismatic and hierarchical gifts are oriented toward the Church as a whole, to benefit her people by increasing faith, bringing healing, and sanctifying her members. St. Peter tells us, “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).

The **hierarchical** gifts are given to the hierarchy - bishops, priests, and deacons - in order to be faithful to their mission to lead the Church and to guard, teach and preserve the truths of the Church that have been handed on to us from Christ. They are primarily the gifts of teaching, sanctifying, and governing. For example, the gift of infallibility is a hierarchical gift, which is a protection of the Holy Spirit, given to the Successor of Peter, to make preserve the Truth of Christ in his Church.

The **charismatic** gifts can be given to anyone within the Church. Since the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church and is present within the soul of each Christian, the Spirit bestows gifts on her members in abundance. St. Paul gives a beautiful and thorough explanation about the nature of these gifts in 1 Corinthians, and the passage as a whole is worth quoting here:

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.” (1 Cor 12:4-11)

And in Romans, St. Paul says similarly:

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” (12:6-8)

St. Paul goes on to explain in 1 Corinthians 12 that each person within the body has their own part to play - heart, hands, feet, eyes, etc. Each one individually contributes to the body in a unique way, and for the body to be healthy, each part need to play theirs faithfully, rather than wishing he was something else. The same is true for the gifts of the Spirit - they

are given differently to each person, according to the will of God and how he desires each person to play a role in building up the Church. The Catechism explains, "Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well" (CCC 800). Each gift is a gift for the Church, to build her up and make her holy. Therefore, we should *ask* for the gifts to be poured upon the Church in abundance - and upon us personally. Maybe we feel that God doesn't want to use us personally, that they are only reserved for others. This is not true! We all have gifts - we simply need to exercise them. Sometimes we do not expect God to work miraculously - we lack faith, and we think extraordinary works of God are a thing of the past. Nothing could be further than the truth. Unfortunately, we can be like the towns where Jesus left unable to work many miracles because of their lack of faith. Jesus wants us to walk and live like him - and he even promised that we, his disciples would do greater works than him (John 14:12).

Putting together various Scripture on the gifts of the Spirit, a typical list of the gifts is as follows: tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, healing, administration, mighty deeds or miracles, words of knowledge and wisdom, discernment of spirits, and faith. We will now take some time to talk specifically about some of these gifts, in particular ones that there can be some confusion with today.

The Gifts of Tongues

First, we see the gift of tongues in a variety of places within Scripture being manifested. In fact, this particular gift is mentioned 57 times in the New Testament. Here are just a few examples:

"These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages." (Mark 16:17-19)

On Pentecost: "And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim." (Acts 2:4)

"And when Paul laid [his] hands on them, the holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied." (Acts 19:6)

"For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to human beings but to God... he utters mysteries in spirit." (1 Cor 14:2)

The entirety of 1 Corinthians 14 deals with the gift of tongues and St. Paul's instructions on their use and order within the Christian community. It is a given that many people speak in tongues, and St. Paul is giving instructions so that this gift may be used in the proper way and in good order. From his instructions here and from the Tradition of the Church, we can come to understand this gift more.

First, it is important to understand that this gift is one of the 'lowest' gifts of the Spirit. Sometimes, there is a lot of emphasis put on the gift of tongues today because we do not see it as often in the Church. Because it is often unfamiliar to the Christian community today, people are more apt to give it attention. It is clear, however, that in St. Paul's time that this was a common and ordinary gift among the Christians in the early Church. From chapters 12 through 14 in 1 Corinthians, St. Paul is speaking about all these gifts. It is in the middle of his instructions of the gifts that we find his famous treatise on Love in chapter 13. This treatise on love is aptly placed, as St. Paul is explaining that among all the gifts we should strive for, Love is the one that is most important; as well, if we do not have the gift of Love, then all the other gifts are meaningless and lose their value. The Holy Spirit is Love. Therefore, to truly have the gifts of the Holy

Spirit, we must first live in love. When we are filled with authentic love and living according to its truths, then we will also exercise the other gifts in their right order. Therefore, when St. Paul is speaking about the gift of tongues, he is reminding the Church to strive for the most important gifts - not necessarily the ones that seem extraordinary or exciting (although all gifts are to be desired and sought for). Tongues is one of these lower (but still good and welcome!) gifts that one can and should ask for.

To understand the gift of tongues and St. Paul's instructions concerning them, it would be important to make a distinction between what could be called 'private prayer tongues' and 'public prayer tongues.' Tongues used in private prayer can be understood more deeply by the verse from Romans 8:26: "In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings." So often, we simply do not know how to pray or what to pray for. The prayer of tongues is allowing the Spirit to speak through us, with his 'inexpressible groaning' - He knows what we need, what needs to be prayed for, when so often we do not. In fact, I would say that there is a deep freedom in praying this way - especially when praying for other people. When people come to ask for prayer, and tongues are used to pray for them, it is freeing to pray this way. When I pray for people, I do not personally know what each person needs most. But God does. Praying in tongues allows us to simply ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for each person with his 'inexpressible groanings' for what each person truly needs - not what we imagine he or she needs. This is a humble way of praying for people - knowing that our prayers are so inadequate. But the Spirit's are not. I would prefer to let him pray through me in this way. This is precisely what St. Paul says: "For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to human beings but to God... he utters mysteries in spirit" (1 Cor 14:2). The gift of tongues allows the Spirit to speak through us in a powerful way.

Furthermore, private tongues can be a means of spiritual growth for the one that speaks them: "Whoever speaks in a tongue builds himself up" (1 Cor 14:4). It seems that through experience, this gift of private prayer tongues is open to all those that ask for the gift and open themselves to receive it. As well, it does not need to be followed by interpretation. Bishop Sam Jacobs of Houma, Louisiana relates his experience of receiving the gift of tongues. He explains that he had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, but had not received the gift of tongues. He expected that Lord would simply 'zap' him some day with this gift, and he recounts the following experience: "I said to the Lord, 'If tonight, Lord, you want to give me to gift of tongues, I am open to it.' And clearly in my heart, I heard, 'I am waiting for you.' And I said, 'What do you mean, you are waiting for me? Aren't you supposed to 'zap' me?' He says, 'No. I want you to release your control to me. Let me have full authority over you.'" The Bishop said back to him, "'Ok, how about I do it when I go into my bedroom tonight.' The Lord responded, 'Are you afraid to be made a fool for me tonight in front of all these people?' I responded, 'yes.' The Lord responded, 'Well, I want you to be made a fool of. I want you to open your mouth and just babble. Don't worry about what it sounds like. Just release it.'" Bishop Jones recounts, "So I started babbling. And very shortly I could tell the difference between my babbling and the gift of prayer. And it was very very clear to me that God was waiting for me to release my control so that he can show me his love."¹⁵

From St. Paul, we can also see that there are tongues that are meant for the community itself - you could say these are more 'public' in nature. When these tongues are interpreted (by someone who has the gift of interpretation of tongues) they become prophecy. This gift of tongues for the benefit of the community and the gift of interpretation of tongues is a more limited gift, not given to all, but only some. This gift of tongues for the building up of the community through prophecy is primarily what St. Paul is addressing in 1 Corinthians 14.

¹⁵ *The Wild Goose* video series, Segment 5 (min 18:35-20:10), <https://thewildgooseisloose.com/segment/gifts-of-the-holy-spirit>

The Gift of Prophecy

This leads us naturally to the gift of prophecy, which St. Paul says is greater than the gift of tongues, because it is meant for the building up of the community as a body, rather than simply an individual gift for the person. St. Paul writes, "For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged" (1 Cor 14:31). Often the gift of prophecy is confused to be seen as a prediction of future events. The prophet Amos does write, "Indeed, the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7), and therefore, God does speak to his prophet sometimes about the future (we can think of Our Lady's prophecies during her apparitions in Fatima in 1917 as an example). However, the vast majority of prophecy does not concern prediction of future events.

A prophet is simply one who speaks the Word of God. In fact, as a Christian we are called to live as prophets within the world, just as Jesus did. We prophesy faithfully when we speak God's word - whether through our verbal words or our silent actions. When we witness the life of Christ faithfully in word and deed, we too are living this vocation of prophecy. The gift of the Holy Spirit properly called prophecy is an extension of the gift given to all Christians by nature of their baptism. The charismatic gift of prophecy allows a person to sense what the Lord wants to speak to his people at a given moment. For example, at a prayer gathering, a person with this gift may sense that the Lord is calling the group to a greater discipline, a stronger prayer life; or maybe the Lord desires to speak words of consolation; or maybe a particular Scripture passage is his gift in that moment. Words of prophecy can guide and direct on graces to receive or ask for from God; on actions to undertake; on disposition or attitudes to cultivate or root out; or events to prepare for.¹⁶

The gift of prophecy may also be given for the sake of an individual - a person with the gift may be praying with a person and receive a sense or a word from the Lord concerning that person that He desires to be shared with him or her. Very simply, the gift of prophecy is the Lord desiring to speak to his people in a living and dynamic way. This is why the gift of prophecy often involves the Word of God in Scripture. Often, those who have the gift of prophecy sense that the Lord is bringing to our attention a particular Scripture in a given moment. This is given to us to give us clarity, wisdom, guidance, hope, and consolation in particular moments.

Some Concluding Thoughts on Gifts of the Spirit

It is worth quoting St. Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians here, which give us some final words and guidance on the gifts:

"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil. May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it" (1 Thes 5:20-24).

In terms of the gifts we must not fall into either of 2 extremes. The first is that of despising the work and gifts of the Spirit: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances." We can do this for many reasons. Maybe we had a bad experience with someone in the past that claimed to be Christian or 'charismatic.' Maybe we have a mistaken notion that the miracles and wonders of the past are over - God does not work that way now. Maybe we think that God only does extraordinary things for other people - not me. Maybe we don't believe in the goodness of God who wants to pour out his gifts upon each one of his children. Maybe we don't want to be a 'fool' for Christ - maybe we prefer 'playing it safe', being 'normal'. Maybe a life of sin prevents us from really opening ourselves to God's love and grace. It is worth

¹⁶ Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Archdiocese of Miami, <http://www.miamiccr.com/the-gifts-of-the-holy-spirit.html>

examining our hearts to see what is blocking the work of God in us. Why is our life not more full of and led by the Spirit? Why is not more dynamic? To grow, we must be willing to ask God and ourselves these questions and let him answer!

The other extreme is not having good discernment about the gifts of the Spirit. St. Paul also tells us to “test everything, and retain what is good.” While the purpose is not to give another course on discernment of Spirits, some basic principles can help. First, we know the gifts of God by their fruits: “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit” (Matt 7:18). The fruits of something give us good indication of something’s origin. As well, all gifts of God will be faithful to the commandments and the teachings of the Church. And God’s Spirit always leads to peace and joy.

Life lived in the Spirit can be exciting. We can imagine living our lives in the routine of duty or living each day as if it is a new day in which we are attentive to the voice of God and what he desires of us today. This does not mean life will not involve routine or duty - it always will and should. Jesus lived as a carpenter for 30 years of his life before the ‘excitement’ of public ministry. But when we are attentive to the Spirit daily, in every moment, asking the Lord what he wants from us, the daily routine which we are immersed becomes ever new, ever different. No day is the same, no moment the same, because God is ever new and so is his grace. St. Faustina writes in her Diary, “O life so dull and monotonous, how many treasures you contain! When I look at everything with the eyes of faith, no two hours are alike, and the dullness and monotony disappear. The grace which is given me in this hour will not be repeated in the next. It may be given me again, but it will not be the same grace. Time goes on, never to return again. Whatever is enclosed in it will never change; it seals with a seal for eternity” (Diary, 62). This is life in the Spirit, where we let the Lord transform each moment and each day into something beautiful, because we have allowed ourselves to become a docile tool in his hand.

But we have to give everything over to God. This is when ‘fireworks happen.’ We often want to ‘play it safe.’ But God is so creative. We often set limits on him. We look at the world around us in nature, and we are rightfully amazed at its greatness, variety, beauty, intricacy, and creativity. If the Lord can do this in material nature, imagine the creative beauty he can fashion in the human soul if we let him be creative in our own life by the power of the Spirit. We are to only look at the Saints to see what this looks like. Each Saint was attentive to the Holy Spirit at each moment and allowed themselves to be guided by him. And this allowed the Lord to do beautiful and extraordinary things in their lives. They were bold and courageous and did not always ‘play it safe’ when they were prompted by the Spirit to act. This is very different than being reckless and imprudent. Recklessness and imprudence stems from a *lack* of thought or discernment. Attentiveness to the Holy Spirit is always based on good discernment, but also deep conviction and trust to act boldly when we are convicted that the Lord desires a course of action. This is what we see in the lives of the Saints - prudent caution mixed with bold action - two seemingly paradoxical things - but brought into deep unity within Christ.

IV. Internal Healing, Emotions, and More



Often, when the Holy Spirit really touches the deep and inner recesses of our hearts, it can invoke much emotion from within us. There are so many different and varied reasons for this. Ultimately, they all come down to being touched by love in one way or the other. So often, we place walls around our hearts because we have been hurt, wounded, betrayed, or abused. We live in a culture of walls. We have learned to put on masks, to pretend that everything is alright, everything is 'fine', that we are 'strong', that things don't 'bother us,' that are invulnerable to pain. We live in a culture that often tells us that we should give our bodies away to others without feeling and emotion or attachment (like the 'hook-up' culture). But yet it is impossible. We cannot give ourselves away in such an intimate manner - physically or emotionally - and then pretend it does not hurt when we are discarded without thought like an object. We are not objects. We people meant to be loved unconditionally and forever. Love, by its nature, is eternal. But many of our hearts have been wounded by so much utilitarianism, conditional 'love', and so much more. So we put up walls around our hearts, and we stuff it all away where no one can reach it - guilt, shame, regret, hardness, and more.

But then the Lord begins to get through the cracks in our walls. We open the door a little bit, and he comes inside. And this has a profound effect on us - often emotional. Profuse tears are often shed when we are touched by the soft and tender caress of the Lord. I find this is all the more true in the beginnings of someone's conversion, or when they are experiencing this for the first time - even if they have been a Catholic their whole lives. As we have spoken of already, maybe this is the first time someone has felt this deeply personal encounter with the Lord and his love.

What do we do with these emotions? In answering this question, balance is the key. We must try to avoid what we might terms the 'extremes.' First, it is legitimate and good to experience emotions. It is not weakness to cry. Emotions are a healthy part of human life. They are God given. Especially if a person has been repressing emotions for a long time, the experience of them may be even more profound. Sometimes they may feel uncontrollable - especially if a person has deep interior wounds that have not been healed. Again, so often, we learn to push these away, to not deal with them. And when they finally get unearthed, they can come out like a volcano. One question I encourage people to ask is, "why was I crying?" We should take this to prayer with us after the experience itself. Because if the Lord was doing a work of healing in our hearts in a given moment, that work of healing is only just beginning. No wounds heal overnight - in fact, the greater the injury, the more time it takes to heal. Therefore, in order to continue the healing the Lord may have begun in a given moment, we need to continually go back to the Divine Physician to let him continue his work. This includes going back to the first experience, to see what precisely he was speaking, why precisely we were so moved - what was He doing in our hearts, and what does he want to continue to do? If we do not do this, we stymie the healing process he is seeking to begin and/or continue with us. It is also important to understand that the healing that continues through time will not always be 'emotional.' The Lord is working to heal and restore our emotions, to put them in right order, but healing itself is not always an emotional experience.

We may also be crying simply because we are overwhelmed with the presence of God, of his beauty, gentleness and love for us. This experience *should* bring us to tears. If we knew how much we were truly loved, we would cry for joy. It is said that St. John Vianney would often be reduced to tears during the Mass or times of prayer because he experienced so much the love of God. However, it is also important that we do not simply forget about this moment, thinking, 'that was nice', and then go on with our lives as usual. We must ask, "Why did God give me that experience of his love? Why did He give me that gift?" It is certain that it is not just for the sake of the moment itself. For example, maybe He gives us this gift so we are able to taste the beauty of his love, so that we can recognize more clearly that we have been inclined to consistently go after other things in our life that are not very beautiful; that we have been searching for temporal beauty and fleeting joy that does not last, and this has led us into sin. Maybe the Lord is giving us this experience of the greatness of his love, joy and peace because He desires us to understand that this is the only love that satisfies, that it is only He who can bring us lasting peace. He is calling us, with this gift, to conversion, to stop 'chasing the wind' and to follow him more closely, trusting Him to give us everything we need and desire. The mistake we can make after a beautiful encounter and experience with the Lord is not to reflect on it more and take it to prayer, and to let the Lord continue the work he began in our hearts. Every gift implies a task, and our task is to not let the gift be in vain or go to waste in us, but to allow it to take root and bear fruit.

This leads us to the second erroneous extreme that we can sometime fall into - emotionalism. In the first error, we can fall into the trap of repressing our emotions, of trying not to feel them, etc. However, the other error is putting too much emphasis on emotions, and thinking that if we are not feeling them, then God must not be doing anything in our lives or hearts. This is also wholly untrue. Sometimes, in moments of prayer, when other people around us are experiencing God in their emotions, and we are not, we can feel 'left out', or that God is not doing anything in us. Sometimes, it *is* possible that maybe our hearts have remained closed, and this is why we are not experiencing God's presence in a tangible way. However, *often* God is not seeking to work in this way in our hearts. In fact, the vast majority of the time, God is not going to give us some intense experience. His workings in our hearts are usually peaceful, simple and without fireworks. In fact, much of our spiritual life will be filled with dryness, and lack of sentiments or feelings. This is good! Part of the purification of our hearts is learning to love God for his sake - not simply what he can give to us. In the beginning of our spiritual lives we often 'feel' more, but the Lord gradually takes this away from us order to purify our hearts. This is especially important as we live in a culture that is often very fixated on emotions and sentiments, and makes decisions according to them, rather than reason. We have to learn to purify our emotions and submit them to reason and good conscience.

So how do we know if we are allowing God to work in our hearts if we cannot, in fact, 'feel' him? Very simply, we know the Lord is working in our lives if we are experiencing conversion. We can imagine a person who has an intense experience with the Lord but walks away and changes nothing in his or her life. As well, we can imagine a person whose experience was not very 'intense' or 'emotional', but who hears what the Lord is speaking through the Scripture or another person and changes his or her life to conform to the Truth given by the Lord. This person is the one who is truly walking in communion with God. True conversion is the measure of any true experience with the Lord. Very simply, love prompts us to change ourselves so that we stop hurting the one we love. Sin hurts others - it hurts and offends God and it hurts those around us. If we love, we desire to cease hurting, and to love and build up instead. This is conversion, and this is the measure of our love for God. St. John puts it clearly: "The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him: whoever claims to abide in him ought to live [just] as he lived" (1 John 2:3-6). Conversion and a continual deeper fidelity to God and his Commandments are the sure sign of God's action within us.

The Parable of the Sower

A final thought on the work of God in our hearts brings us to the parable of the sower found in 3 of the 4 Gospels. In this parable, the sower (Jesus) throws the seed on different types of soil - hard ground, rocky, soil filled with thorns and weeds, and good soil. The seed thrives in accord with the soil it falls into. This parable provides a great key to understanding the spiritual life, and it is worth mentioning here. First, Jesus is the giver of all grace. We cannot create grace. He gives it, and he gives it freely to all. And he is constantly throwing that seed, giving that grace. However, what makes the seed actually grow? It is the state of our hearts. Sometimes we may be tempted to think that Jesus is not working our lives, giving us graces, etc. This is never the case. The Sower is always throwing seed. However, what the *soil* does with that seed is what determines whether fruit will come forth.

Some hearts are hard like the soil and never receives the seed. In these cases, the devil simply swoops down and steals it. There is never any growth that takes place in the person because their hearts were never open to it. How often are we like this, rejecting God's grace immediately? We may do this for many reasons - our hearts are closed to him, or maybe the grace doesn't come in a package we want or expect. So we close our hearts to God's action in our lives because it doesn't conform to our preconceived notions. Or maybe we have been hurt and wounded so we close ourselves off to the God and his love. Or maybe we are so prideful, that we reject God's love because we think we do not need him.

Other times though, the seed does take root. We receive God's grace with joy. We *want* to grow, we *want* the Lord in our lives. And the seed does begin to grow. We can think of many people (and ourselves) in those times in which the Lord does a beautiful work in their hearts, and initially there is change in their lives. However, in the case of the rocky and thorny soils, something stymies that growth. Sometimes, it is lack of root and depth - when things get difficult and trials come, we wither away. Sometimes it is the thorns and rocks of sin - they eventually choke the life of grace off within us. In these instances, it is important to recognize that God was working, but we did not have well-prepared soil in which to receive him. This is our great task. Sometimes we think when we have had a beautiful moment with the Lord, we are now 'all set.' We can coast along with Jesus and all will be well. Just the opposite is true. When the Lord gives us the beautiful seed of his grace and it begins to grow within us, we must give all our effort to working the soil of our hearts to become clear of all the things that could choke that life off within us. If we do not, then that life will flourish for a time, but wilt and wither in the end. We must become that good soil, that bears 100-fold of fruit for many others to eat.

To Conclude

As we conclude, we come back to the nature of gifts. Many people say that the whole theology of St. John Paul II can be described in one phrase - "the theology of the gift." I believe this is true. God is a gift giver, and we are created to both receive his gifts and offer back gifts to him in return. More than any other phrase, St. John Paul II quoted this one from the Second Vatican Council: "Man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself" (*Gaudium et Spes* 24). God desires to pour upon his gifts on us. We are free always to receive or reject them. He pours his gifts upon us so that we can work with him in the salvation of souls. "This is God's great plan, that we work together to save souls. One person alone cannot do this. We need each other and each other's spiritual gifts."¹⁷ The great work of the Holy Spirit is to impel us outward to give away the gift we have received to others. The world is greatly in need of God's presence, his Love. And we are the ones who are to bring Him. Just like Our Lady, upon receiving Jesus in her womb, took him to visit Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist, we too are called to go 'in haste' with Jesus in us to visit the world. The Holy Spirit

¹⁷ Clairann Nicklin, *Christ in our Midst*, p. 19

impels us to this mission. “In fact, *it is only after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost that the apostles depart to all the ends of the earth in order to begin the great work of the Church’s evangelization...* Through the Holy Spirit the Gospel penetrates to the heart of the world. We must pray unceasingly for the miracle of Pentecost to be manifested, empowering us, inspiring us, to respond to the great task place in the Church of this third millennium: the New Evangelization! We need the wind of the Spirit to blow, moving the boat of the Church, as we are to respond to the call to go out into the deep.”¹⁸

May we open our hearts to Him, and allow him to pour His Spirit into us, so that He can be present to us and present in the world more fully. May we live in a dynamic and living faith, animated by his love and fire and zeal, and so help him transform the world. May we live life in his Spirit.

¹⁸ Mother Adela Galindo, Foundress SCTJM, “Go Out Into the Deep in the Power of the Spirit”, http://www.piercedhearts.org/mother_adela/talks_adobe/go_out_into_the_deep_with_the_power_of_HS_NE_Peoria_2011.pdf