



A LETTER ▶ FROM RALPH MARTIN

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The glory of God
is a living man;
and the life of man
consists in
beholding God.

//St. Irenaeus

Dear Fellow Soldiers for Christ, JOIN THE RESISTANCE!

The enemy is constantly probing our defenses and testing them. He's constantly trying to move us out of position, get us off balance, and inflict wounds. As soldiers of Christ, one of our main tasks is to hold our ground and resist the efforts of the enemy.

Paul refers to it as to “stand,” as in “stand our ground”:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can **take your stand** against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand your ground**, and after you have done everything, to **stand. Stand firm** then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. **In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.** Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. (Eph 6:10-18; emphasis mine)

The above verse contains four exhortations to stand—to hold our ground. We do this by exercising faith—meaning both complete trust in the goodness, power, and wisdom of God, and clear knowledge of what has been revealed to us by the Lord in Sacred Scripture, Tradition expressed today in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We need to know both our Lord and what He has revealed.

This knowledge gives us the equipment we need to “extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one.”

The most powerful forces at work in the world today are not political parties and all the levers of power working against the faith. The most powerful forces at work in the world today are the forces behind the political parties and levers of power, the forces that are using them, the principalities and the powers described by Paul. Unfortunately, so many people today are letting themselves be used, and some may even have sold their soul to gain power, pleasure, or position!

As Scripture says, we must put ourselves only under the Lord's authority:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (Jas 4:7)

If we've given ourselves in any way to rebellion, disobedience, or breaking the commandments, we have grieved the Holy Spirit and blinded ourselves to the light of conscience. The only solution that puts us in a position to be saved is to repent and submit ourselves to God and his authority. This allows us not only to be led, rescued, and healed, but also will allow us to experience his love and power.

We are only in a position to resist when we are under the authority of God. How can we practically do this?

How to Resist?

We resist with our mind, will, and emotions. That's what it means to love the Lord with our whole mind, will, and strength.

When a temptation comes into our mind or emotions, we need to utilize the warning function of the Holy Spirit and immediately:

1 » Identify it as a wicked thought, suggestion, or unclean movement of our sensual nature with our mind/understanding.

2 » Reject it wholeheartedly with our will.

3 » Turn away from the emotions leading us into sin.

4 » Cultivate positive emotions of love for God and neighbor.

It can help to remember the solemn promise of the apostle that the Lord will never let us be tempted or tested beyond our strength but along with the test will give us a way out of it or the grace to endure it (1 Cor 10:13).

There is an oppressive cloud hanging over the world these days—partly due to Covid, partly due to the uncertainty, confusion, and division now so apparent in our culture and even in the Church. We can't let this evil fog of despair and discouragement seep into our souls. When we notice it clamoring at the door of our soul, we need to slam the door. Identify it as wicked and energetically reject it. St. Ignatius of Loyola tells us that discouragement, and especially despair, are **NEVER** from the Lord and must **ALWAYS BE RESISTED**.

My wife dreamed the other night that someone she loved was holding a gun to his head, about to commit suicide because he was so discouraged, depressed, and in despair. In the dream,



Ralph recently spoke to students at Hillsdale College on *Living as Catholics in Challenging Times*.

my wife cried out: “Killing yourself won't make you feel better but will only consign you to an eternity of dark despair!” The Church teaches that suicide is a gravely wrong action that if freely enough chosen can separate us from God forever—which indeed is eternal despair and darkness. We can't judge the culpability of a particular soul, but we all need to know that suicide is a grave wrong and should always be vigorously resisted.

Whether it be wicked anger, hatred, and unforgiveness; temptations against chastity; giving in to lying; or becoming a captive to money and greed, or even jealousy—we should beg the Lord for the grace of recognizing these things when they rear their ugly heads and the grace of vigorously and promptly rejecting them.

Let's all JOIN THE RESISTANCE and help each other RESIST.

One great help in resisting is giving ourselves more fully to God so that we may be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Many of you availed yourselves of our four-week Pentecost Mission, where we taught and prayed about the gift of the Holy Spirit. You can find the Pentecost Mission videos on our YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/renewalministriesrm).

You also can read content from the first two presentations, given by Pete

Burak and myself, in this newsletter. Additional content will be included in the September newsletter.

Our *As By A New Pentecost* DVD series, available through the reply card included with this newsletter or as a free resource on our YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/renewalministriesrm), also is a powerful resource for sharing the call to conversion and the gift of the Spirit with friends, family, or fellow parishioners.

The Holy Spirit is being poured out all over the world, and one essential aspect of our mission is to facilitate this as best as we can. We recently received a letter from the bishop of Hoima, Uganda, telling us about what blessing it was for some of his priests and him to do a retreat focused on receiving the Holy Spirit that was conducted by people we have worked closely with for many years in Uganda:

I am writing to express my deepest gratitude to you and your collaborators for the financial and spiritual support which enabled my brother priests and I to have such a wonderful week of prayer and spiritual renewal. . . . It was a powerful experience for all of us: we were well nourished both spiritually and bodily, encouraged, empowered and set out to be more effective witnesses of Christ in our day-to-day life in word and deed. . . . I would like to have all our priests of Hoima Diocese participate in the Life in the Spirit Seminar in future if possible. It is such a powerful experience that opens one's heart and mind to welcome Christ in one's life and empowers one to proclaim him. I pray that the Lord opens the door for us to actualize that desire.

Because of your faithful support we can make this happen for the priests in this diocese!

Thanks to your generosity, we also have been able to provide funds to help a long-time friend and collaborator in



Kenya bless his village by constructing a health care dispensary. You can learn more about his wonderful outreach on this page. 

And we just recently passed a significant milestone. When Covid started, we had about 7,000 YouTube subscribers. That is when all our travel got cancelled, and we turned our attention to presenting the best “word” we could through YouTube videos. I’m excited to share that one of our videos, on Fr. Michael Scanlan’s prophesy, now has passed 300,000 views, and we have more than 50,000 subscribers from all over the world. What the devil perhaps intended for ill, God has definitely used for good in allowing us to expand our ministry. Thanks be to God, and thank you. I also want to give a special thank you to those of you making recurring monthly donations, which provide such an important base for all we do. If you’re interested in considering this option, go to www.renewalministries.net/donate, and choose the “Recurring Donation” option.

Until next month, or until the next video, RESIST!

Ralph Martin
Ralph



PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ For courage to speak the truth of God’s Word and the grace to hear the ways in which He wants us to share it.
- ▶ For the young people in our families and Church to seek the Lord with all their heart, mind, and soul. May they return to the faith if they have left it, and be strengthened in faith if they already possess it.
- ▶ For the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members, especially as they face the challenges of illness and economic uncertainty.

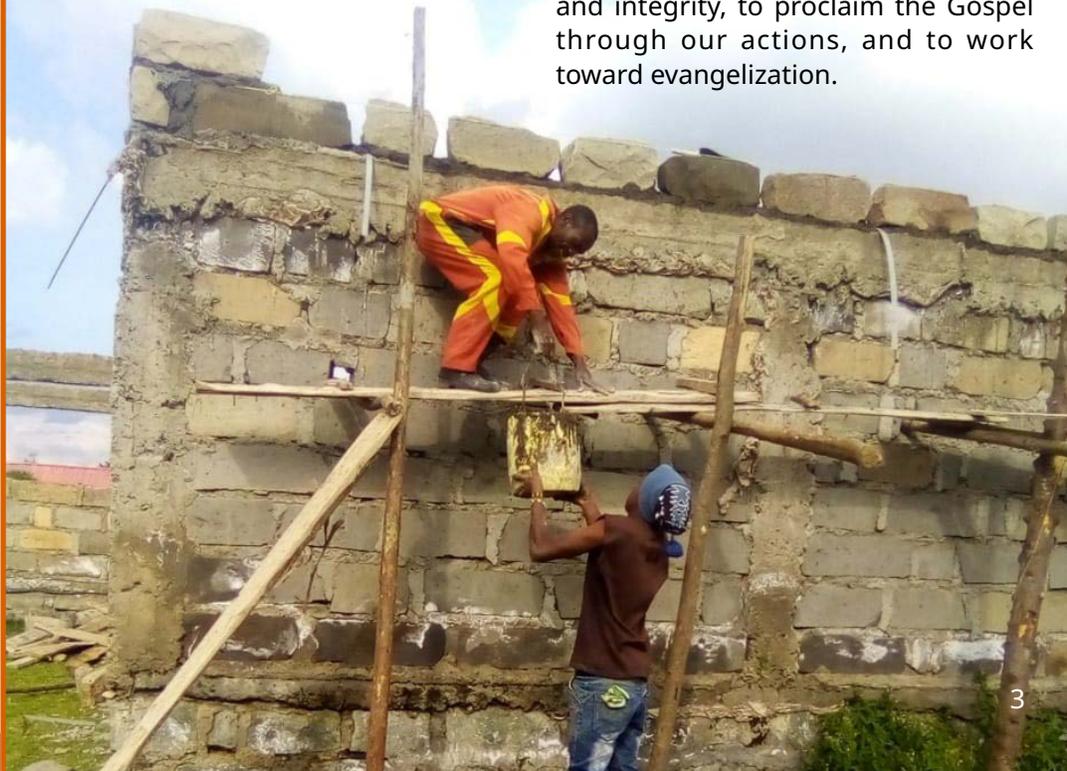
SPREADING THE GOSPEL in KENYA

Renewal Ministries’ long-time friend and supporter George Ndegwa has a number of outreach efforts currently underway in Kenya, thanks in part to the generosity of our supporters. He recently wrote to us with updates of his endeavors. Below are some of the highlights:

- We contributed to the construction of a church inside the prison. In the empty rooms, we intend to help put up shelves for the library so inmates have access to Bibles at all times. Another room will be used for counseling by visiting and residential counselors.
- We are working with families and neighbors of an inmate who is going to be released soon, to try to help him have a home and employment after his release.
- We are slowly constructing a health facility in our village as funds are available. It is a great evangelization project that consists of a capable team of committed Christians. The county government of Nyandarua has agreed to employ staff for the clinic. This clinic will be a great help to pregnant women, elderly parents, etc., who currently have to travel very far to get medical assistance. We also hope that someday this might be a place where medical missionaries can serve.



- We plan to sink a borehole that will supply water to the health facility and the local village, which includes about 1500 homes with about 6000 people.
- Local village artisans who are working on the health facility are earning a livelihood, which is a great blessing to their families.
- In all of these efforts, we are striving to set an example of Christian honesty and integrity, to proclaim the Gospel through our actions, and to work toward evangelization.





HOLY SPIRIT: THE GAME CHANGER

The following article is condensed from a talk Pete Burak gave during the Renewal Ministries' Pentecost Mission, available on our YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/renewalministriesrm).

When the apostles receive the Holy Spirit, they cooperate, and what had already begun in them during their walk with Jesus is lit aflame. They are launched out of the Upper Room, and the world has never been the same. Peter—who just like us, walks on water and then sinks, and then walks on water again—steps out of the Upper Room, and publicly declares something on faith and morals with conviction and authority. He lays out for the world what this moment means. No longer is there a lack of clarity, conviction, or fear. These men and women now know exactly who they are and what it means to fulfill the Great Commission, and they begin to do it.

They are marked by the four characteristics of the post-Pentecost existence for the Church:

- + VISION
- + BOLDNESS
- + CONVICTION
- + POWER

All the recent popes have asked us to pray for a New Pentecost so that all of us as individuals and as a Church can be invigorated with the power of the Holy Spirit and be energized for mission. We are not all called to fulfill this mission in the same way. That's part of the beauty of the body of Christ—we all have a role to play in the evangelization and discipleship of everyone. We're each called to fulfill this Great Commission.

Are these four characteristics present in our lives?

1. VISION. The disciples are given new vision to see and understand what's happening both in the world and in the person right in front of them. They can identify when the Holy Spirit has orchestrated a heart ready to hear the Gospel.

Peter identifies the signs of the times when he steps out of the Upper Room and says, "We're not drunk! This has been foretold" (Acts 2:15-16). He discusses Joel 2 and explains what's happening. This has marked the leadership of the Church ever since. Great saints and disciples filled with the Holy Spirit can see what God is doing in their time and communicate it.

The second part, perhaps even more important for you and I, is to see how God is at work in every room, conversation, and environment. Evangelization—the making of disciples—is not coming into a situation and trying to create something that isn't happening. A disciple's posture is,

"God is already working in every place I go. It's my job to come into cooperation with what Jesus is already doing through his Spirit."

See the difference? We often think, "At Thanksgiving, Uncle Bob is going to say something, and everyone will want me to answer him, and I don't know if I have the power, the right words, or the right timing." But the Holy Spirit prepares the heart of the listener and gives us the words to speak, as well as discernment about when not to speak, etc. The Holy Spirit gives us power to step into the evangelistic moment, and the ability to judge whether it is an evangelistic moment.

Read through this lens, the Acts of the Apostles is men and women just trying to cooperate with the Spirit. When the Lord has orchestrated a tender heart, they see it as such and deliver a message with conviction that leads to fruitful missionary activity and new conversion. They ask,

"How do I cooperate with what God is already doing?"

I don't like the adage, "Get out of the way and let the Holy Spirit work." No—get in the way. Where is the Holy Spirit flowing? Jump into that stream. Of course, some of these conversations can go on for years, and patience and discernment are necessary. Also, sometimes the word you think you should speak is very modest and doesn't produce immediate results. Sometimes you also may discern that the best course of action is not to speak a word, but to pray and fast. Whichever direction the Holy Spirit leads us, we want to respond in obedience and do our part—however big or small—that we are called to do.

2. BOLDNESS. Proclaim the full Gospel, not just the parts we like. When we see the Lord doing something, we should declare who Jesus is, what He does, and why.

When Stephen stands before the Sanhedrin, "they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him" (Acts 7:54). In the face of certain death, the Holy Spirit elevates Stephen's gaze. He tells these men, who put Jesus to death, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). That's bold. It's some-

thing only the Spirit could generate in the heart of a believer.

In high school, I served at a boys' camp, and there was a ninth-grade boy from a rough background ("Mike"), who made it clear he didn't want to be there. During worship one night, I was feeling very free and delighted in the presence of the Lord, when this still, small voice said, "Tell Mike I love him."

I responded, "No. We're having a good time right now. Let's not ruin it." But the Spirit persisted, "I need you to go tell Mike how much I love him."

It's that classic gap between private faith and public proclamation. As Catholics, we come to that edge all the time. We love Jesus just to the point when we have to tell someone about Him, and then we back up and read another book or go through an evangelization course so we'll be ready.

I prayed, "Lord, if this is what You want me to do, You have to give me something I don't have right now. Come, Holy Spirit."

Suddenly, a fire and energy poured into me. I wasn't generating it; it was being done unto me. I walked over to him and said, "Mike, I don't know what's going on in your life, or where you're at right now, but I need you to know Jesus loves you. The Holy Spirit told me to tell you that no matter what you've done, He loves you, He sees you, and He knows you."

He began weeping. I didn't know what to do, so I just repeated, "Jesus loves you." Thankfully, the counselors came over and prayed with him. Two days later, he gave his testimony before the whole camp, declaring that he'd repented of his sins and wanted to live completely for Jesus. This conversion came about because a power source and boldness I didn't have were given to me when I asked for them. Praise the Lord.

3. CONVICTION. The testimony that should burn on our hearts as Christians is this: "He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life" (1 Jn 5:12). This is the core of the

Christian message. There is no ambiguity in this.

Recently, I was on an airplane, and I got reassigned to a new row. A young woman sat next to me, and she also had gotten assigned to a new row. When something like that happens, I now find myself asking:

"I wonder what the Spirit has in store for this?"

We started talking, and she seemed very flustered and concerned. It turned out she was on her way to be with her mother, who was only alive because a Catholic priest had found her after a massive heart attack. She made this comment: "I'm not a particularly religious or believing person, but maybe I'll have to give it another shot after a priest saved my mom's life."

She asked what I did for work. I shared who I am, and then she shared her story. I have never had the privilege and the burden of receiving a story like hers, with so much suffering, abuse, relationships, and spiritual attack. She poured out her heart. I had no idea what to do, so I went to the restroom, held out my hands, and prayed, "Jesus, what are You doing? What should I do here?" I felt like Jesus wanted me to introduce this young woman to the Blessed Mother. I went back to the seat, pulled out a rosary, and asked if she knew what it was. She said yes, and added that she had wanted to be a nun when she was growing up.

I explained what the rosary was, and she got tears in her eyes and put it around her neck. I said, "That's not just a good luck charm. That's a weapon." I looked her in the eye and added, "Jesus loves you. He sees you, and He knows you." I read her the passage that says with Him there is life, but without Him there is no life, and I asked if she wanted to give her life to the Lord. She didn't know. I said, "That's OK, but read this passage some more. Do you have a Bible?" She said yes, and we parted ways. I've prayed for her every day since then. I don't know what the Lord has in store for her, but I know she heard the full Gospel shared with conviction. There was hope for a dif-

ferent life—not just hope that she will feel better here, but hope in an eternal destiny.

4. POWER. After Pentecost, the apostles have power they did not previously have to confirm what they were proclaiming. Their proclamation of the Gospel was often accompanied by gifts of the Spirit and manifestations of the Spirit in signs and wonders. When the Lord gave the apostles boldness to proclaim the Gospel with conviction, they expected supernatural activity—big signs and wonders, like a lame man walking, or subtle, quiet signs and wonders, like somebody actually believing. Do you realize how supernatural it is when someone actually decides that Jesus is the Lord of their life? When we proclaim the Gospel, when we have those moments when the Lord gives us eyes to see, and boldness to proclaim it, and conviction that it's necessary, we need to expect that power for change comes with that message. Genuine faith in Jesus is a movement of God. It's a product of supernatural activity in someone's heart. We need to celebrate that, we need to be looking for that, and we need to expect that.

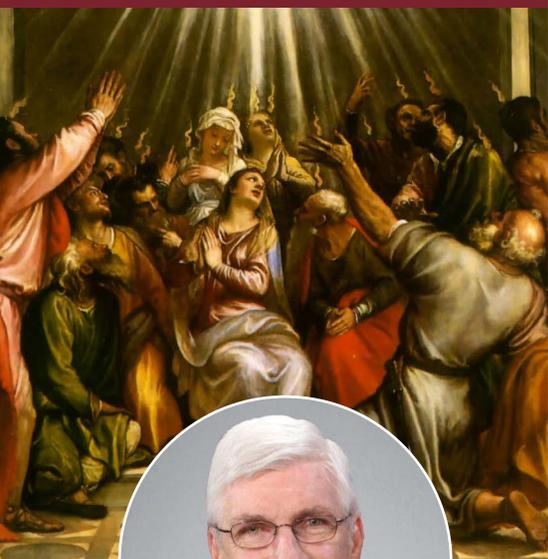
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Vision, boldness, conviction, power. We see these characteristics in the apostles after Pentecost. Those of us who have stepped into baptism of the Holy Spirit, and who are cooperating with the power of the Holy Spirit, need these four things as well. Without them, we will not engage in mission. Pope Paul VI said, "There is no making of disciples, there is no evangelization without the Holy Spirit." The Spirit leads us, empowers us, and pushes us along. The Spirit convinces and convicts hearts. The Spirit brings about fruit. We get to have the joy of walking in the Spirit and participating in that with Him.

The world desperately needs us to share the joy and the life that we have in Jesus Christ, and we cannot do it without the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's pray for that power.



BAPTISM *in* THE SPIRIT



The following article is condensed from a talk Ralph Martin gave during the Renewal Ministries' Pentecost Mission, available on our YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/renewalministriesrm).

Every pope since St. John XXIII has fervently called for a new Pentecost. In 1962, he asked the entire Church to pray that the Lord would renew his wonders in our day “as by a new Pentecost.” He wanted the power of God to rejuvenate, enliven, and empower the Church—and connect us more vigorously with God.

Pope Paul VI asked,

“What is the primary and ultimate need of our beloved and holy Church? This need is the Spirit. The Church needs her eternal Pentecost. She needs fire in her heart, words on her lips, a glance that is prophetic.”

Pope John Paul II said,

“This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission which cannot be left to a group of specialists but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the people of God.”

When Pope Benedict XVI visited New York City, he said something very strong—but in such a gentle voice, people didn’t get the power of what he was saying:

“Let us implore from God the grace of a new Pentecost for the Church in America. May tongues of fire, combined with burning love of God and neighbor, with zeal for the spread of Christ’s kingdom, descend on all present.”

Pope Francis encouraged those present at the fiftieth anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Rome to “share the grace of being baptized in the Spirit with the whole Church.” Later, he asked priests’ conference attendees to pray for him to receive more of the Holy Spirit.

For us, too, there is more of the Holy Spirit. There’s more for the new time we’re facing in the Church; there’s more for what we’re facing in our own lives. The apostles had already received the Holy Spirit, but when they faced persecution, they prayed for more of the Holy Spirit to help them (see Acts 4). We also are entering a time of persecution, and we also need more.

John the Baptist speaks of Jesus as the one who will baptize in the Holy Spirit. He calls people to show the fruit of repentance:

Even now, the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 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 Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. (Mt 3:10-12)

When Jesus was presented at the temple, Simeon said He would be the cause for the rise and fall of many, that He would reveal the secrets of hearts and be a sign of contradiction (Lk 2:28-35). John the Baptist echoes that here: When Jesus comes close, there’s a choice to be made. We need to surrender ourselves and be baptized in the Holy Spirit, or there’s a grave danger of distancing ourselves from the Lord, of not surrendering wholeheartedly, and the risk of judgment.

Before his Ascension, Jesus said,

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. (Lk 24:48-49)

This is significant. They’ve had the best teaching, spiritual direction, and Bible study that anyone has ever had. And yet Jesus knows they don’t have what they need for it all to come together and ignite a fire in their hearts.

Correct doctrine, orthodoxy, and proper and reverent celebration of the liturgy are all essential—but not enough. Jesus refers to “power from on high”—an energy, a power, a person living within us. Jesus said the Holy Spirit is going to come, and He’s going to allow the Father and Jesus to dwell in you, speak to you, remind you of things, guide you, and give you power to be a witness.

There is a visibility to Pentecost—things you can see, hear, and observe. When bystanders said they must be drunk, Peter said they weren’t. He told them about Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection and how He now sits at the right hand of the Father, pouring out the Holy Spirit. Peter’s pointing to something visible, something that’s happened, something that’s changed. They’re speaking in tongues, praising God, glorifying God, and proclaiming the truth.

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

Why did they respond that extraordinary way? Because Peter was preaching with the power of the Holy Spirit and the anointing of God. Peter was speaking boldly, courageously, directly, authoritatively, and there was an anointing on his preaching that pierced their hearts. May that be more and more the case today as the fire of the Holy Spirit falls on us and we become more bold in our proclamation, more anointed in our obedience to the Lord.

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord will call to Himself.” (Acts 2:38-39)

This is the definitive papal interpretation of Pentecost. People often have said that what happened on Pentecost was special, but that it was just to get the Church started, and we don’t really need that today. Other theologians have said, “Pentecost was very important, but that’s for the leaders and saints, not for ordinary people.” That’s not true. God created the human race to be one with Him, and the only way we can be one with Him is to repent and believe for the forgiveness of our sins, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit.

Peter pleads with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation” (Acts 2:40). This certainly continues to be true today. The world is becoming a place where demons are in control—a place of bondage, brainwashing, and oppression. We need to save ourselves by fully embracing Jesus Christ—every word He speaks—and by falling at his feet and saying, “Jesus, You are Lord.” We can’t say those words with understanding, sincerity, fervor, and conviction, unless the Holy Spirit illumines to us who Jesus really is and moves us to surrender to Him (1 Cor 12:3). May we all do so.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says one way Pentecost is perpetuated is through the Sacrament of Confirmation. Sadly, for many young people today, Confirmation is merely the last

thing they must do before they can stop going to Church. Grace is given in the sacrament, but unless there is a receptivity to the sacrament, it won’t necessarily bear fruit. Too often, Confirmation is not perpetuating Pentecost in the lives of those receiving it.

When the apostles learned that the Holy Spirit had “not yet fallen upon any of” a new group of believers, they prayed with them to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-16). Obviously, they had the Holy Spirit if they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but something more was supposed to happen. The Lord then called Peter to go into the household of a Gentile to speak about Jesus, revealing that He came for everybody (Acts 10). While Peter was speaking to Cornelius about what happened to Jesus and how He died and rose from the dead for us,

The Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the Word. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out upon the Gentiles, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter responded, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit even as we have? And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts 10:44-48)

There’s a recognition that what happened to Cornelius and his household was the same thing that happened to the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Almost universally, a gift of the Holy Spirit is glorifying God: praise; jubilation; rejoicing; and the joy that comes

from knowing the Lord, the forgiveness of sins, and God’s love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would remind us of what Jesus said—and we need that. Often, when we’re in a situation, the Word of God will be recalled to our mind, and we’ll understand something about the situation we’re in. We need the Holy Spirit to remind us of what Jesus has said, which means that we know the Word of God to some extent, so the Holy Spirit has something to remind us of.

I remember the word of the Lord, how he said John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If then God gave them the same gift he gave to us when we came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to be able to hinder God? When they heard this, they stopped objecting and glorified God saying, “God has then given life-giving repentance to the Gentiles.” (Acts 11:16-18)

There’s so much here. Peter says, “If God gave them the same gift he gave to us when we came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Did the disciples first come to believe in Jesus when they received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost? Yes and no. Before, they sort of believed in Jesus, but not enough to stay at the cross or to not fear the Jews. They didn’t yet have the depth of conviction to proclaim Him—but Jesus told them not to even try until they received the Holy Spirit. When they received the Holy Spirit, they understood who Jesus was. They understood that all power and authority had been given to them, and they were being sent out on a mission. There are a lot of Catholics today who sort of believe in Jesus. Maybe they even believe correct doctrine about Jesus, but it hasn’t been ignited in their heart to give them a desire to praise, glorify, or witness to Him.

The disciples rejoiced that, “God has then granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles too” (Acts 11:18). Repen-

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tance is life-giving. Refusal to repent—holding on to our sins, disordered attachments, and unbelief—deadens the soul and risks eternal death. There’s a joy that comes from acknowledging the truth about our lives and asking for forgiveness.

In Acts 19, Paul asks an unusual question of a group of disciples: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” The disciples respond, “We never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” They had been “baptized by the baptism of John the Baptist.” Paul tells them John wanted his disciples to believe in Jesus—he was preparing the way for Jesus. When they heard the truth spoken in love and the power of the Holy Spirit, they were baptized in the name of Jesus, and when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Why did this Pentecost-like experience stop happening as new converts came into the Church? After the Church became legally accepted, evangelization became very different—more institutional, bureaucratic, and conventional. Many people entered the Church for reasons other than personal conversion. In missionary territories and in the lives of the saints, there’s often been a greater manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

It’s important to stir up the gifts of the Spirit. Jesus said, “If you deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father in heaven” (Mt 10:33). That’s in the context of persecution. We’re again entering a time where there’s pressure to not identify ourselves as Christians, to not defend the truth about marriage and family life, to not say Jesus is the only way to the Father. There’s a lot of pressure for us to be silent about or even deny who Jesus is, what it means to follow Him, and how the whole human race is called to faith in Jesus and repentance. We need to be strengthened so we don’t deny Christ. We need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to be faithful witnesses to Him even in a time of persecution.

When believers were threatened with persecution, they prayed for boldness (Acts 4:29-30). We need to fan into a flame the graces we received at baptism and confirmation. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, sometimes there also is a new sending of the Spirit that the Lord wants to give us when a new mission or phase of life opens up. Let’s consider whether the Lord has more for us as we’re facing the new situation in the world and the Church today.

Let’s ask the Lord to send us more of his Holy Spirit—who Pope Benedict XVI calls “the ultimate thirst of man”:

“He alone is the fresh water without which there is no life. He is God’s gift. He is God sharing Himself with man. He is the only gift worthy of God. That is why Christian prayer does not beg for just anything; rather, it begs for the gift of God, that is, God Himself. It begs for Him.”

This doesn’t mean we all have to join a movement. Cardinal Suenens said the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a witness in the Church to what belongs to the whole Church. Like Peter said on Pentecost: this is for you, it’s for your children, it’s for everybody who God is drawing to Himself. It happened for me on the last day of a Cursillo retreat I made when I was a senior at Notre Dame. I’d never heard of baptism in the Spirit, but as I opened my heart to the Lord, repented, and surrendered, the fire of God’s love came into my soul. Other people have experienced this on Ignatian retreats, and there are various movements of renewal now that are helping people.

I’m not asking you to join a movement. I’m asking you to join The Mover—to join the Holy Spirit and ask for Him to be released into your soul.



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