

Grace For The New Springtime

A Statement from the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops on the Charismatic Renewal

Foreword

As part of the preparation for the Great Jubilee Year 2000, Pope John Paul II has asked the Church to focus on the role and charisms of the Holy Spirit. Our Ad Hoc Committee for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal felt it was appropriate to issue a statement of affirmation, support and encouragement to those who have experienced the release of gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit -- known as baptism in the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1: 4)

Specifically on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States, we desire to affirm the positive impact this move of the Spirit has had in the lives of millions of people and through them the life of the Church.

Because we believe that God in His great love for His people continues to fulfill His promise to pour out His Spirit anew, we have entitled this statement -- "Grace for the New Springtime." We are reminded of the words of Peter on Pentecost in reference to the vision he had of the future impact this anointing and empowerment by the Holy Spirit would have: "It was to you and your children that the promise was made and to all those still far off whom the Lord our God calls." (Acts 2:39)

As We Prepare for the Third Millennium

On the occasion of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal's thirtieth anniversary, as well as the one hundredth anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Divinum Illud*, we, the U.S. Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, want to affirm again all those Catholics involved in this movement of the Holy Spirit in our day. We, likewise, "encourage them in their efforts to renew the life of the Church." (A Pastoral Statement on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, 1984, NCCB USCC)

As we prepare for the Third Millennium, as called for by Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente (As the Third Millennium Draws Near)*, we believe the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is particularly called and gifted by God to be with the Church as it prepares for the Great Jubilee and for the challenges it faces as we enter the new millennium.

In its thirty years of existence, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has brought personal spiritual renewal to the lives of millions of priests, deacons, religious, and lay Catholics. It has called countless alienated Catholics to reconciliation with the Lord and with the

Church. It has deepened a love for Jesus and the Church among young people as well as so many others, including the unchurched.

Thus, for us, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is one of the signs of hope our Holy Father is referring to as "present in the last part of this century" when he speaks of "a greater attention to the voice of the Spirit through the acceptance of charisms and the promotion of the laity." (Tertio Millennio Adveniente, 46)

We believe that "the renewed outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost in our times" (cf. Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium, NCCB USCC) is particularly present in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and in the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Catholic Charismatic Renewal

As early as 1969, we affirmed the good fruits of the Renewal. Our Holy Father and other Bishops' Conferences have testified to these abundant fruits. In 1984 we wrote:

"Insofar as the Renewal makes its own what is central to the enduring reality of the Gospel, it cannot be dismissed as peripheral to the life of the Church... It witnesses to elements of the Good News which are central, not optional: the covenant love of the Father, the Lordship of Jesus, the power of the Spirit, sacramental and community life, prayer, charisms, and the necessity of evangelization."

"The Catholic Charismatic Renewal is, as Pope John Paul II said in 1979, "A sign of the Spirit's action... (and) a very important component in the total renewal of the Church."

Impact of the Renewal on the Broader Church

The impact of the Charismatic Renewal on the broader Church has been significant. The Renewal has nourished the call of all to holiness as a gift from the Spirit and helped the Church come to a greater awareness and expectancy of the Holy Spirit and the charismatic gifts of the Spirit. The Charismatic Renewal has led the people of God in a revival of the ministry of healing, encouraging them -- laity and clergy alike -- to pray for the sick with faith and expectancy.

It has renewed the appreciation for the role of praise in individual and communal prayer and enriched the Church with many gifted musicians, music ministries, and song writers. The Renewal has taught a commitment to the Pope, the Bishops, and to orthodox teaching. Vocations to priesthood, diaconate, and religious life have been fostered. It has called forth the gifts of the laity who are today serving in a variety of ecclesial lay ministries; e.g., in the liturgy, religious education, and youth ministry, and ministries for the transformation of the world.

Catholic Charismatic Renewal Today

Among the areas in which the Renewal continues to make an impact today are its response to the Holy Father's call to "new evangelization," the increased awareness of Mary's role in the Church and in individual lives, and in ecumenism.

New Evangelization

The Renewal is at its best when, from its internal prayerful reflection, it looks outward to the lives of the many, both church and unchurched, who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. "Charismatic empowerment in community has supplied the Church in this country and throughout the world with a host of committed and effective evangelists bringing the gospel to persons and places otherwise without hope of hearing the good news." (Fanning the Flame, p. 13)

The witness of lives lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and of fervent Catholics telling others about Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit have always been and continue to be a constitutive part of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and a fruit of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is empowerment of individuals and of the Church for its mission in the world: the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and of His power to transform society.

Mary

Authentic Marian devotion and imitation is a welcome and growing dimension of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States. Mary, Mother of the Church, who was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit "when the fullness of time had come" (Gal 4:4), will "lead the men and women of the new millennium toward the One who is 'the true light that enlightens every man' (Jn. 1:9)." (Tertio, 59) It is thus with great anticipation that we find within the Renewal this joyful awareness of the relationship of Mary and the Holy Spirit.

Ecumenism

In this moment in history the Lord has also called us all to a deepened awareness of the brokenness of the Body of Christ. In 1995 the Holy Father issued his twelfth Encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint (That All May Be One)*, in which he states clearly that the Catholic Church is committed "irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord, who teaches people to interpret carefully the 'signs of the times'." (#3)

We believe that the Holy Spirit has been poured out in our day to bring about unity of the Body of Christ for which our Lord prayed (Jn 17:2 1). Thus, efforts in authentic ecumenism -- e.g., the Congresses of the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization held in New Orleans (1987), Indianapolis (1990), and Orlando (1995), are some of the great

fruits of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. As we stated in 1984, "we see in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal an ecumenical force in which we rejoice."

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

In the Sacraments of Initiation we experience the action of the Triune God. As regards the Third Person of the Trinity, in Baptism we become temples of the Holy Spirit; in Eucharist we share in the Body and Blood of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit; in Confirmation we are empowered with the gifts and charisms of the Spirit to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. In this statement, we want not only to affirm the good fruit of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal but also the grace which is at the heart of this Renewal, namely, baptism in the Holy Spirit, or the fuller release of the Holy Spirit, as some would prefer.

As experienced in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal baptism in the Holy Spirit makes Jesus Christ known and loved as Lord and Savior, establishes or reestablishes an immediacy of relationship with all those persons of the Trinity, and through inner transformation affects the whole of the Christian's life. There is new life and a new conscious awareness of God's power and presence. It is a grace experience which touches every dimension of the Church's life: worship, preaching, teaching, ministry, evangelism, prayer and spirituality, service and community. Because of this, it is our conviction that baptism in the Holy Spirit, understood as the reawakening in Christian experience of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit given in Christian initiation, and manifested in a broad range of charisms, including those closely associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, is part of the normal Christian life.

Pastoral Encouragement

We encourage the whole Church to look into and embrace baptism in the Holy Spirit "as the power of personal and communal transformation with all the graces and charisms needed for the upbuilding of the Church and for our mission in the world." (Fanning the Flame, p. 27)

We want also to encourage those in the Renewal to continue to bring an awareness of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit to the Church; to foster balanced devotion to Mary; to teach and grow in the discernment of spiritual experiences and to continue in faithful cooperation with the mission and the vision of the local Church in which they serve. By its shared life, the Renewal can be an example and fostering agent of small Christian communities in the Church. Through the Cross and the "embrace of the paschal mystery" (Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium, p. 24), the Renewal can deepen "life in the Spirit." We encourage leaders in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal to work to bring the various streams of this Renewal into cooperate unity.

Finally, aware of various pastoral concerns and needs, we want to affirm the National Service Committee and the various ethnic national service committees that have emerged in recent years; diocesan liaisons and their Association of Diocesan Liaisons; the various

networks of covenant communities, such as the Fraternity of Catholic Charismatic Communities and Fellowships; and others in providing leadership for the Renewal.

Conclusion

In 1975 Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens convinced Pope Paul VI of the value of the Renewal for the Church and continued to offer it guidance through the early theological documents called the Malines Documents. Even as recently as five years ago he offered his wisdom to the Renewal at the 1992 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference when, via videotape, he encouraged us to open ourselves fully to the power of God, stressing that today, more than ever before, the world needs the witness of people open to the Spirit. It is the Holy Father's conviction and ours that we stand on the threshold of a "new springtime for Christianity."

In *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Pope John Paul II states that this "new springtime of Christian life will be revealed by the Great Jubilee if Christians are docile to the action of the Holy Spirit" (#18), and he exhorts his "venerable brothers in the episcopate and the ecclesial communities entrusted" to us to open our "hearts to the promptings of the Spirit" (#59).

Thus, in the spirit of Cardinal Suenens and our Holy Father John Paul II, we say again, with great thanksgiving and enthusiasm, that in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and in the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit we see God's outpouring of a new Pentecost. This is a blessing for the Church and for the world as we near the celebration of our Lord's 2000th birthday and the beginning of the Third Millennium of Christianity.

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