

# LIVING BULWARK

The online magazine of The Sword of the Spirit  
sources of strength and renewal for Christian life and mission in today's world

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Jesus Christ is Lord

***"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord"* – Philippians 2:10**

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Living Bulwark is committed to fostering renewal of the whole Christian people: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. We especially want to give witness to the charismatic, ecumenical, evangelistic, and community dimensions of that renewal. Living Bulwark seeks to equip Christians to grow in holiness, to apply Christian teaching to their lives, and to respond with faith and generosity to the working of the Holy Spirit in our day.

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## I Will Pour Out My Spirit Generously

***'I have poured out my Spirit abundantly, and I will continue to pour it out. I will pour out my Spirit generously, lavishly, continuously, until even the hardened hearts are softened and the wasteland becomes fertile. This I promise, that I shall pour out my Spirit continuously until I bring about, through my Spirit, that renewal that I intend.'***

### **In this issue**

Christians throughout the world will gather together over the next few weeks to celebrate the victory of the Lord Jesus over sin, Satan, and death. Jesus willingly laid down his life for us so that we might be reconciled with the Father in heaven and be united in peace with one another as God's people and members of Christ's body on earth. Christ shed his blood on the cross to atone for our sins and he rose victorious over the grave to give us new abundant life so that we might grow together in faith, hope, and love through the gift and working of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

The Lord Jesus has won victory for us through his cross and resurrection. And the fruition of Christ's victory is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all who believe in the Lord Jesus and who take up their cross daily to follow in obedience to his will for their lives. We follow Jesus the Lamb of God wherever he goes and we fight for his name and glory so that many others may find life, truth, and freedom in the Lord Jesus.

Let us strive to follow and serve him faithfully through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and who works through us for the glory of the Father.

### **50th anniversary of charismatic renewal**

This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Charismatic Renewal - a movement that has swept through the Catholic Church and many Christian churches and communities around the world. Countless millions of people have been baptized in the

Holy Spirit and have experienced the gifts and graces of the Spirit at work in their lives. God intends to pour out his Spirit more and more to unite, strengthen, and empower his people for mission today.

The Lord intends to fulfill the great work he began through the pentecostal and charismatic renewal movements of the past century. He intends to pour out his Spirit in abundance on every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth who will accept his gracious offer of abundant life in and through his Son Jesus Christ.

In preparation for the Jubilee, 160 leaders of charismatic renewal groups and communities from 47 countries gathered for a prophetic consultation in the Holy Land in 2013. Their aim was to listen together to the Lord for his word in preparation for the Jubilee of the 50th anniversary of the charismatic renewal. On the last day of their pilgrimage, they gathered in the Upper Room (the Cenacle) in Jerusalem where the apostles and disciples of Jesus had gathered together in prayer on the day of Pentecost (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2). At the conclusion of the meeting in the Upper Room, Bruce Yocum delivered the following prophecy:

*'I have poured out my Spirit abundantly, and I will continue to pour it out. I will pour out my Spirit generously, lavishly, continuously, until even the hardened hearts are softened and the wasteland becomes fertile. This I promise, that I shall pour out my Spirit continuously until I bring about, through my Spirit, that renewal that I intend.'*

### **Life in the Spirit seminars**

For those of us who have experienced the great blessing of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, let us not keep this gift "hidden under a bushel basket" or behind closed doors in our homes and churches. Let us allow the Lord to use us to bring this great gift and blessing to the whole Christian people and to our neighbors who do not know Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us redouble our zeal and effort to witness the Gospel and to invite as many people as we can to the Life in the Spirit Seminars so they can personally encounter the Risen Lord Jesus in their lives and be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and be renewed in their faith and dedication to follow him. The Lord Jesus Christ has more, so much more for each of us and for his church, the body of Christ, and for all who will come to him with expectant faith and openness to the gifts and working of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

May this Issue inspire you to be a bold witness and ambassador for Jesus Christ. Let us pray for a new fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit to equip us with "power from on high" so we can more effectively live the Gospel and witness the power of the Spirit in our own lives, families, and communities. Let us step out in faith and invite people to the Life in the Spirit seminars so they can grow in expectant faith and be baptized in the Holy Spirit. The Lord wants to strengthen and equip us to use all the means he gives us - through Life in the Spirit seminars, bible study groups, charismatic prayer groups and covenant communities - to help people grow more deeply in discipleship, holiness, and effective mission through the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Don Schwager  
editor

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## Jesus Is Lord

by Carlos Mantica

The title “Lord” is Jesus’ title par excellence. The New Testament gives him this title six hundred times. The Greek word is *Kyrios*, which expresses, as no other word does, the reality of Jesus Christ as the Lord over all. *Kyrios* means “absolute master or owner” – the one who has full rights and does what he wants with the things that belong to him. We Christians belong to Jesus Christ, and he can do with us as he pleases.

*Kyrios* means lord over and against a slave: someone who can exercise absolute control and demand total obedience. That is why he says, “No one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). If you serve two, none of them is your real master or lord. Calling him Lord means to reckon ourselves as his own possession - slaves who obey and follow the master.

*Kyrios* was the title given to the Roman emperor, that is, to the highest authority the world knew of. In the case of Jesus, it is the title of him who says to us, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Finally, *Kyrios* is the name that the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, uses to translate the name of Yahweh. Jesus is, therefore, one with the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, of is over all things visible



and invisible.

### **A lived-out truth**

All of this has been for us a well-known truth, but not always a lived-out truth. I know for myself that my life is still far from reflecting the full lordship of Jesus Christ in all areas of my life.

But the fact is that, between this absolute reality, independent of our will, that Jesus is the Lord of all that exists, whether we like it or not. The personal reality is that if he is Lord of my life, then my entire life needs to be placed at his service. This is the fundamental way in which we relate to him as our Lord. And this is something I would like to deal with as part of this first stone.

If we are honest, when we review our personal relationship to him we will probably discover that Christ has been for us mainly or only the Savior. That is, he is the Christ who loves me, the Christ who saves me, the Christ who heals me, the Christ who protects me, the Christ who does errands for me.

And this kind of relationship to Jesus the Savior is, ultimately, a relationship in which Christ works for me. Christ is at my service – which is exactly the opposite of Christ as my Lord.

We all know that there are many Christians for whom Christ is only that – their Savior, their good-luck amulet, their helper, their comfort, their private secretary, their family doctor... and the Lord is so good that he allows himself to be used as such.

### **The devil's temptation**

In C. S. Lewis' book, *The Screwtape Letters*, there is a tremendous paragraph in which the devil who is training his nephew to become an effective tempter says to him:

We teach them not to notice the different senses of the possessive pronoun – the finely graded differences that run from “my boots” through “my dog,” “my servant,” “my wife,” “my father,” “my master,” and “my country,” to “my God.” They can be taught to reduce all these senses to that of “my boots,” the “my” of ownership.

It is the same pronoun, and yet it expresses quite opposite realities. And many of us have fallen into the trap.

I have no doubt that these people love Jesus. They also love their children, and there are even some who love their car. But the truth is that, when we examine their relationship to their Lord, what we find is that Christ is essentially someone they ask for things, someone they use, someone they resort to. He is someone who is there essentially to serve them. Jesus is not their Lord, but only their Savior.

Even though our lives are not entirely at his service, there is something that has changed radically inside ourselves – the way we relate to him. There is a radical change in our attitudes, and maybe this is what he expects of you right now. For example, I am not in the City of God because I like to, or because I always like it, or because our gatherings are very joyous, or for the love I receive from my brethren, or for the growth I experience, but because Jesus is the Lord.

I do not accept his mission or his ways because I think they are always the most effective. To be honest, I often think things could go better some other way. But I do it because Jesus is the Lord.

I am not willing to fight for his cause because I think that I will live to see the victory, but because Jesus is the Lord.

We try to sow, not because we are sure we will see the fruit, or because people will be thankful or full of wonder, but because Jesus is the Lord.

In my prayer life, I do not come close to him because I think I am worthy, or because I feel good next to him, for in fact I often come to him with impurity; but because Jesus is the Lord. And then I praise him with all my strength, because he is worthy, and the power, the glory and the praise are his now and forevermore.

In fact, there is a radical difference in our way of relating to him, when we do it from the perspective that Jesus is the Lord, than the way we used to relate to him when we only regarded him as the Savior.

### **The full Gospel**

But there is also another radical difference, which is the way we now speak his Word. We now preach the full gospel. We no longer go around softening, minimizing or sugar-frosting his message, in order to make it more palatable to people, more digestible to sensitive stomachs. Instead, we proclaim his Word.

We no longer plead with people to accept him. We do not compromise his message with things like, “Look, ma’am, the Lord is going to heal you and will give you a fast-track entrance to heaven. Your husband will become tame, and your children will get out of drugs and idleness. You’re going to feel real great, you’ll get over depression, and everybody will put up with your moods. And if this part of the Gospel is a little heavy for you, we can remove it, or make a better deal. But please, accept Christ!”

Instead of that we proclaim the glory, the power and the love of a King, at whose mere name demons tremble. He is the Lord of history, with all power over kingdoms and empires. He is the creator of heaven and earth, the one who has overcome the world.

It was only from this perspective that I was finally able to understand what fear of God means, which I did not understand before. As many of you probable have, I have often made the Lord sit on the dock, when things did not come out the way I wanted. Many other times I held him accountable because the world was not the way I wished. Many other times I wanted to make deals with him – I would offer him things in exchange for his favors. Or else I would issue an invoice for my good actions, like Job.

And, like Job, one day I felt that he replied to me “out of the whirlwind”:

Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements – surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:1-7)

I was nothing but a tiny worm questioning the sun... until one day I met him as my Lord. And that day I discovered something that has been very important to me, which is simply that Jesus does not owe me anything. I might have worked much or little for him; I may be a good person to some extent; I might or might not have done important things – no matter what, Jesus owes me nothing. He is the Lord, he is my Lord. And

this Lord says to us:

Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at table'? Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink'? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.' (Luke 17:7-10)

The Lord owes me nothing, and being aware of this increases my respect and fear toward my God. I know that my life rests only on his mercy, and that he can dispose at his total right and freedom on any area of my life, because he owes me nothing.

### **Fully in God's hands**

The beautiful part of this is that this does not lead me to anguish, but to peace, because I know I am fully in his hands. I rest fully in his mercy and his love, and I am protected by his omnipotence.

This relationship has totally simplified my life. Now I need no reasons, no arguments, no incentives. In order for me to do something, it is enough to know that he wants me to. I do not need to know, or to figure out, or to decide anything. He has already decided, and he is my Lord. And everything is quite simple this way.

Maybe we need to do some review of our relationship with him if we still practice the type of prayer I call the "vending machine prayer," because it is like one of those machines where we put a coin on the upper part (in this case it would be a prayer) to see what object we get below. Some of our prayers have in fact a magical intent, because the specific nature of magic consists of wanting to place a supernatural force at our service, through the use of rituals or words that force it to obey us.

I don't want to embarrass anyone. Up to this date, my life has not been fully subjected to the lordship of Jesus in all its areas. There are still many, many things that need to change. But I do find inside myself a radical change in my relationship to him. I no longer care whether something pleases me, or satisfies me, or fills me with horror. All I am concerned for is his will, which is the only important thing.

This is, then, our first stone, on which the rest of the stones are laid. If the first stone is not well laid in its right place, the others will never be secure.

*> See other Living Bulwark [articles](#) by [Carlos Mantica](#)*

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This article is adapted from the book, *From Egghead to Birdhood (hatch or rot as a Christian)*, (c) copyright 2001 Carlos Mantica.

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## The Empowered Christian Life

by J.I. Packer

*"It is clear from the New Testament that the power of God is meant to accompany the Gospel, and to find expression through its messengers and in the lives of those to whom the message comes."*

Each December, *Time* magazine produces a set of light-hearted comments on the previous year. At the end of 1987, the editors were isolating the most overworked word of the year, the one most ready for retirement. The word they chose was "power," as in "power lunch," or "power tie," or "power shopping." I confess that my mind ran to various uses of the word "power" in Christian circles that seemed similarly overwrought, and I rather agreed that there was a strong case for retiring the word.

But then I thought again. Though the word "power" is over-used in society-and, I believe, often frivolously and unhelpfully used among Christians-it is nevertheless a significant New Testament word. Where would I be if I imposed a self-denying ordinance and declined to use it any longer? Where would the church be if we all acted that way?

### The Spirit In Action



During the past century, Christians have been very concerned about power. Have they been wrong to be concerned about it? Not altogether. In the middle and late 1800s, there was great concern to find "the path of power." The path of power meant one's ability to perform set tasks and overcome temptations. Was it wrong to seek the power of God for greater self-control and a richer practice of righteousness? Of course not.

At the same time concern focused on being able, through the power of God, to impact others for God through preaching and witness. A great deal was said about the difference between Christians whose witness "had power" and those whose witness did not "have power." Was it right to be concerned that one's witness should have power? Was it right to be anxious lest one's witness should be powerless? Of course it was right. These should be concerns of ours as well.

More recently, Christians who have been touched by that movement which is known variously as pentecostalism, charismatic renewal, and the third wave, are finding, if they can, the ability to channel supernatural demonstrations of God's power in healings of all sorts: healings of the body, inner healing of the heart, exorcisms where there appears to be Something demonic in a person's life. Again I ask myself, is it wrong that Christians are concerned about these things? Though I see various pitfalls, I cannot find it in my heart to say this is wrong. In my New Testament I read a great deal about such manifestations of the power of God—understood simply as "powers of the coming age," or, in other words, the Holy Spirit in action.

### **Miracles of New Creation**

The coming of Christ the Savior has meant the outpouring of the Spirit on the church and on the world. And the Holy Spirit comes with power. In the New Testament we see this power manifested in all the modes of which I was speaking a moment ago: the ability to perform set tasks and overcome temptation, the ability to impact others through preaching and witness, and the ability to act as a channel for God's power in miracles, healings, and the like. Let us consider each of these three modes, in reverse order.

First, in the Gospels, we encounter works of power in the physical realm, including miracles of nature and healings of all sorts. The scriptural phrase "signs and wonders" is used for them.

These are, to use C.S. Lewis's apt phrase, "miracles of the new creation," in which the power of God that created the world works again to bring something out of nothing, that is, to bring about a state of affairs for which no explanation can be given in terms of what was there before. Everyone knows you cannot get food for five thousand out of five loaves and two fishes, but food for five thousand was produced. Everyone knows you cannot bring the dead back to life, but Jesus on three occasions brought the dead back to life: Jairus's daughter, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus.

The coming of Christ the Savior has meant the outpouring of the Spirit on the church and on the world. And the Holy Spirit comes with power.

To be sure, these three 'raisings from the dead' are not the same as the greater miracle of new creation that occurred when Christ himself was raised from the dead. They were only resuscitations; in each case, the person died again a little further down the line. Jesus, however, rose from the dead never to die again. His resurrection is an even more remarkable miracle of new creation—indeed, the normative one: Christ is the first fruits, the beginning of the new creation of God, as the New Testament itself says.

Nevertheless, all these are instances in which the power that created the world out of nothing in the first place produces effects for which no apparent cause can be cited, except that God the Creator has been showing his power again.

## Words of Power

One reads on in the New Testament and finds, second, that words of power in Christian communication are very much apart of the gospel story and of the story of the new church. Luke is particularly interested in the power of God, and there are several texts in Luke that are significant here. Let's look at some of them.

In Luke 4:14 we read that, following the wilderness temptation, "Jesus returned to Galilee in the *power* of the Spirit." This text introduces not only his works of power but also the words of power that came from his lips. Then, after his resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with "power from on high" for the ministry of worldwide evangelism to which he was committing them (see Luke 24:49).

At the beginning of Acts, Luke picks up the same theme. Jesus tells his followers, 'You will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8). Then later we read, "With great *power* the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33)

## Empowered Preaching

Paul likewise has tremendous things to say about the power of God working through the Gospel and through its messengers. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the *power* of God for the salvation of everyone who believes' (Romans 1:16). At the end of the lengthy argument that makes up the book of Romans, and speaking of his own ministry, Paul says, "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done-by the *power* of signs and miracles, through the *power* of the Spirit" (Romans 15:18-19).

And again, in his first letter to the Corinthians, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel - not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its *power*. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the *power* of God" (1 Corinthians 1:17-18).

"Words of human wisdom" is a phrase Paul uses to denote swapping philosophy with the philosophers. The people in the Greek cities where he went to evangelize expected Paul to parade his own cleverness when he spoke in public. But Paul wouldn't do it. He adopted a style of presentation which at first seemed foolish to these folk who were expecting the sort of self-display they got from the other traveling teachers.

"I knew what you wanted," Paul says in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians, 'and I was resolved not to give it to you. You wanted me to show off as a philosopher, with dazzling arguments, but I wouldn't do it. And so you thought me a fool." Rather, Paul says, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's *power*, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's *power*" (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

## Transformed Lives

The New Testament speaks not only of God's power in the miraculous and in the communication of the gospel, but also, third, of God's power at work *in us*, enabling us to understand and to do what we otherwise could not.

In Ephesians 1:17-19, Paul tells the Christians what he prays that God will give them, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great *power* for us other translations say, '*in us*') who believe."

It is not just power in the *message*. It is not just power through the *messenger*. It is power *in and upon those who believe*, making their life utterly different from what it was before. It is resurrection power—a matter of God raising with Christ those who have become willing to die with Christ. Clearly Paul is expecting tremendous changes in the lives of those who now belong to Christ.

He comes back to this theme at the end of chapter three, "I pray that out of God's glorious riches he may strengthen you with *power* through his spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have *power*, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Again we see that Paul is talking about something radical, in the fullest sense of that word: something produces a total change. He is praying that through this marvelous inner transformation and enrichment the Ephesians will be utterly different from folk around them—utterly different, indeed, from what they have been so far.

These are samples of the many precious texts in the New Testament about the power of God, working through Christ and through the apostles, manifested in works of power in the physical realm, in giving power to Christian communications so that they have a significant impact, and also in enabling Christians to understand and do what otherwise they could neither understand nor do.

## Heightened Expectations

Thus, reflecting on the matter in light of the New Testament, I was compelled to correct my initial feeling that *Time* magazine had got it right about retiring the word "power." Though there are undoubtedly many ways in which power is spoken of nowadays that are hollow, and even foolish, power itself is a theme that Christians must ever hold onto. It is very clear from the New Testament that the power of God is meant to accompany the gospel, and to find expression through its messengers and in the lives of those to whom the message comes.

This conviction leads me to six theses about the manifestation of the power of God among his people today. My aim in sharing them is to make us more disposed to receive and manifest the power of God in its various forms.

At the same time, I must frankly say that I think there are unhelpful cross-currents in today's discussions of the power of God in the church of God. Thus I think that some aspects of these six theses are needed for corrective purposes. I trust they will clear the way in our minds and our hearts for right thinking and right practice in relation to the power of God, so that this power may be manifested to God's glory in your life, in my life, and in our churches.

### 1. It is right to bring the supernatural into prominence and to raise Christians' expectations with regard to it.

Our expectations with regard to seeing the power of God transforming people's lives are not, generally

speaking, as high as they should be.

It is a fact of history that when the Reformation broke on the church in the sixteenth century, there was a tremendous amount of superstition regarding the Saints working miracles. I am not denying that God may well have worked many miracles through many saints before the Reformation, as it seems he has worked miracles through his saints since the Reformation. But the reformers looked around and saw a great deal which seemed to them to be unmistakably superstitious, so they reacted against it.

Packer's Proverb, however, is that the reaction of man worketh not the righteousness of God. If you are walking backward away from something that you think is a mistake, you may be right in supposing it is a mistake, but for you to be walking backward is never right. You know what happens to people who walk backward in the physical sense. Sooner or later they stumble over some obstacle behind them which they never saw, because their mind and their eyes were fixed on what they were trying to get away from, and then they fell. We are meant to walk forward, not backward, and reaction is always a matter of walking backward.

I believe the reformers' reaction against all thought of the supernatural in the lives of God's people in this age of the Holy Spirit was, frankly, more wrong than right-as have been many subsequent attempts to rule out the present-day reality of the supernatural. It has been necessary to recover this theme in the twentieth century, and we should thank God that expectations of supernatural healing and answer to prayer have risen during this past thirty or forty years. The only thing that I would say here as a caution is that there is a danger in undervaluing the natural and the ordinary. There are people who want every problem to be solved by an immediate miracle, a display of the supernatural, a wonderful providence that will change everything. I think that is a sign of immaturity.

Again and again the Lord leads us into situations that are painful and difficult, and we pray-as Paul prayed regarding his thorn in the flesh-that the Lord will change the situation. We want a miracle! But instead the Lord chooses to strengthen us to cope with the situation, as he did with Paul, making his strength perfect in our continuing weakness.

Think of it in terms of the training of children, and you will see my point at once. If there are never any difficult situations that demand self-denial and discipline, if there are never any sustained pressures to cope with, if there are never any long-term strategies where you have to stick with something for years in order to advance, there will never be any maturity of character. The children will remain spoiled all their lives, because everything has been made too easy for them. The Lord does not allow that to happen in the life of his children.

It is extraordinary how little the New Testament says about God's interest in our success, by comparison with the enormous amount that it says about God's interest in our holiness, our maturity in Christ, our growth into the fullness of his image. When one starts thinking in positive terms about the supernatural in one's personal life, one must also remember it may very well please God to leave situations as they are, to decide not to work a miracle, in order to strengthen us his children who are involved in the situation so that we can grow from it.

## Empowered Ministry

### **2. It is right to aspire to use one's God-given gifts in powerful and useful ministry.**

It is right to want to know what gifts for ministry God has given us. It is right to want to harness them and see them used for the blessing of others as widely as possible.



But there is always a danger that the person who believes that God has given him or her a good sprinkling of gifts will be betrayed by that old enemy, self-importance. God does not value us according to the number of gifts we have, or by their spectacular quality. God does not value us primarily in terms of what we can do—even what we can do in his strength. He values us primarily in terms of what he makes us, character-wise, conforming us to Christ by his grace.

Jesus was already sounding the warning note when his disciples came back from a preaching tour all gung-ho and excited. "Lord," they cried, "even the demons are subject to us in your name

"Very good," says Jesus. "But don't rejoice that the demons are subject to you. That is not the truly important thing. Rejoice, rather, that your names are written in heaven. Rejoice in your salvation. Rejoice in what you are by the grace of God, rather than in the way God uses you. Rejoice in being his child and in entering upon your destiny of being transformed into Jesus' image."

Gifts are secondary. Sanctity is primary. Never let anything divert your mind and heart from holding fast to that truth.

## Meeting Needs

### **3. It is right to want to be a channel of divine power into other people's lives at their points of need.**

Just be careful, however, lest you become one of those people who suffers from the neurosis of needing to be needed - the state of not feeling that you are anything or anybody unless you are able to feel that others need you. That is not spiritual health. That is *lack* of spiritual health.

One of the disciplines to which the Lord calls us is the willingness, for certain periods of our life, *not* to be used in significant ministry. Here is a gifted sister, and for quite a long period it may seem that the Lord sidelines her so that her ministry is not being used. What is going on? Is this spiritual failure? It likely is not spiritual failure at all, but the Lord teaching her over again that her life does not depend on finding that people need her. The source of her joy in life must always be the knowledge of God's love for her—the knowledge that though he didn't need her, he has chosen to love her freely and gloriously so that she may have the eternal joy of fellowship with him.

In the spiritual life, what we are is always prior to what we do. If we lose touch with what we are, and with the reality of God's free mercy as the taproot of our spiritual life, the Lord may have to sideline us until we have learned this lesson again.

## Empowered Evangelism

### **4. It is right to want to see God's power manifested in a way that has a significant evangelistic effect.**

The line of thought to which I am referring here is the one which says that evangelism is not evangelism until it has a particular kind of miracle attached to it. Frankly, I think that is a gross overstatement, a real error. The danger to which it gives rise is that those who practice evangelism will devise ways and means of manipulating people and situations to make it look as if wonderful things are happening through the power of God. Dishonesty and deception at this point must prove disastrous.

Packer's Proverb: The reaction of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Nonetheless, it is not wrong to want evangelism to be done in a way that impresses and blesses people because it convinces them that all this talk about a new life in Christ through the power of God is for real. Moral and spiritual transformation by the Holy Spirit through new birth remains the supreme miracle and should be highlighted in evangelism, firsthand witness to Christ doing for lost souls what alcohol and rock music and sex and drugs could not do for them still brings about the most fruitful sort of "power encounter" between the sinner and the Savior.

### **5. It is right to want to be divinely empowered for righteousness, for moral victories, for deliverance from bad habits, and for pleasing God.**

The good news is that through the means of grace, all Christians *may* be so empowered. Through the Spirit, you and I may and must mortify the deeds of the body. Through the Spirit, you and I may and must manifest the new habits, the new Christ-like behavior patterns that 11

### **6. It is right to want to be divinely empowered for communion with God in a love that answers the knowledge of his love for us.**

Again, this empowering, if appropriately sought, will be found. The last verses of Ephesians 3 proves that. So let us pray for it for ourselves and for others.

## **The Power Path**

I spoke earlier of the "power path." Perhaps it will be clearer now what I mean when I say that *the power path is humble dependence on God to become channels of his power*. We are to be channels, first, through which the power of God flows into the depths of our own being as we open ourselves up to the Lord and his grace. Then, by God's grace, we will find that again and again we are becoming channels of his power into the lives of others.

God's power is *God's* power, and he exercises it. He does not give us power as a gift. He does not give us power as our possession. The power of God is not something handed over to us for us to use at our discretion. Our relation to the power of God should be one of becoming, by his grace, channels through which his power is exercised. Our attitude toward the power of God must never be such that we seek to possess the power for ourselves so we can use it at our discretion. If ever you hear Christians talking about using the power of God, I hope red lights flash in your mind. If, however, you hear Christians talking about finding the place where God's power can use them, nod your head. But don't seek power as your own possession or you will be off track, perhaps ruinously so.

## **Weakness and Strength**

Finally, a few words about what I call 'the power scenario.' The power scenario is that *God perfects his strength in our weakness*. And therefore, I would say, the more conscious we are of that weakness, the better.

Think again of Paul and his thorn in the flesh. We do not know, of course, exactly what the "thorn" was. But whatever it was, it was surely something painful or he wouldn't have called it a thorn, and it was surely something in his own makeup or he wouldn't have called it a thorn "in his flesh."

Paul went to the Lord Jesus in solemn seasons of prayer three times over. He went to the Lord Jesus because Jesus was the healer, and this was something that needed the healer's touch. He prayed that the thorn might depart from him, but the Lord said no. He said, "I have something better in view for you, Paul." (God always reserves the right to answer our prayers in a better way than we ask them.) "I'll tell you what I'm going to do,"

the Lord said. "I'm going to make my strength perfect in your continuing weakness so that all the things you fear the end of your ministry, the diminution of your ministry, the enfeebling of your ministry, the discredit of your ministry - will be avoided. Your ministry will go on in power and in strength as it has done, but it will also go on in weakness. You will carry that thorn in the flesh around with you as long as you live. But my strength will be made perfect in that weakness.'

This, I believe, is a pattern that is likely to be worked out again and again in your life and in mine. The Lord first of all makes us conscious of our weakness, so that our heart cries out, 'I can't handle this.' We go to the Lord, telling him, "I can't handle this. Please take it away!" And the Lord replies, "In my strength you *can* handle this, and in answer to your prayer, I will *strengthen* you to handle it." Thus in the end your testimony, like Paul's, will be, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." That, I believe, is the fullest expression of the empowered Christian life.

[This article is adapted from a presentation at the 1991 conference of Allies for Faith Renewal, on "Repentance, Holiness, and Power" by J.I. Packer. This article was first published in the January / February Issue of Faith & Renewal, Ann Arbor.]

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## Joy in the Midst of Suffering

Our New Birth Through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Fills Us with Joy and Hope  
(1 Peter 1:3–9)

by Dr. Daniel A. Keating

The following brief commentary from the First Letter of Peter, Chapter 1 is excerpted from the book, *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture: 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude*, by Dr. Daniel Keating, published by Baker Academic, 2011. While it was written from a Roman Catholic perspective, the material can be beneficial for Christians from other traditions as well. Dr. Keating explains the aim of his commentary in the introduction to 1 Peter: “The First Letter of Peter is a hidden gem, tucked away among the catholic epistles, just waiting to be discovered. Overshadowed by the longer and weightier letters of Paul, 1 Peter has often been neglected or undervalued. My aim in this commentary is to aid the reader in discovering the riches of this letter, in the hope that he or she may hear its proclamation of the gospel anew and follow the call to suffer joyfully with Christ.” – ed.

### Opening blessing and proclamation

The opening blessing of 1 Peter is one of the most inspiring passages in the New Testament. Even in English translation, the powerful language and dynamic movement of the text are striking. Just as in verse 2, Peter offers his blessing in terms of the activity of the Father (vv. 3–5), the Son (vv. 3, 7–8), and the Spirit (vv. 10–12). The blessing is at one and the same time an offering of praise to God for his works and a proclamation of



God's works. It is both a prayer and a proclamation, announcing key themes that Peter will unfold in the remainder of the letter.

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<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you <sup>5</sup> who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. <sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup> Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> as you attain the goal of [your] faith, the salvation of your souls.

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*OT references:* Exodus 20:6; 34:7; Proverbs 17:3; Sirach 2:5

*NT references:* Matthew 25:21; John 20:29; 2 Cor 1:17

**v. 3:** Peter opens with a Jewish prayer form called a *berakah* (Hebrew for “blessing”), **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, offering praise to God the Father, the source of mercy, for the benefits Christians have received.<sup>23</sup> It was precisely God's mercy that was the basis for his covenants with Moses and David.<sup>24</sup>

By speaking of God's mercy as the basis for the blessings received in Christ in the New Covenant, Peter strongly indicates continuity with the action of God in the Old Covenant.

Peter gives praise to God the Father for two specific benefits. The first is a **new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**. God the Father has given us a new birth<sup>25</sup> through the resurrection of Jesus. Why the link between our new birth and Christ's resurrection? Because the resurrection of Christ is the cause and source of our new birth into God's people and household. This is why baptism was normally celebrated in the early Church at Easter, the feast of the resurrection.

Peter speaks of a **living hope**, a theme that recurs throughout the letter (1:13, 21; 3:5, 15). This hope refers to the object of our hope, namely, the full inheritance (v. 4) that we will receive when Jesus Christ comes again (vv. 5, 7). It is a *living* hope because Jesus Christ himself is alive, and we have come to life in him. As Peter says in 2:2, we are like newborn babes, drinking pure spiritual milk, so that we “may grow into salvation”: this is our living hope.

**vv. 4–5:** The second benefit is **an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading**. The triad of adjectives powerfully conveys the security of our inheritance in Christ.<sup>26</sup> Whereas all earthly treasure is subject to decay, Peter assures us that we have an inheritance – eternal life in heaven – that cannot perish, that has no stain or defect, and that will never lose its glory. Why? Because it is **kept in heaven** for us by God himself, where no moth and rust consume (Matthew 6:20).

Peter gives further assurance that even in this life we are **safeguarded through faith by the power of God**, so we should not be afraid. It is not only our future inheritance in heaven that is secure. Even now on earth we ourselves are safeguarded through our faith in Christ, safeguarded, that is, for **a salvation that is ready to**

**be revealed.** Peter is referring here to the second coming of Christ (see v. 7). “Salvation” is the general term in 1 Peter that sums up all that we receive in Christ. In some cases it refers to our present status in Christ that comes through faith and baptism (3:21), but here it points to our future destiny that will be ours when Christ returns (see also 1:9, 10; 2:2). For Peter, our salvation is both present and future; it is something that we have already entered into through faith and baptism but that will be completed only when Christ comes again.

The **final time** refers to Christ’s return and the end of the world. “Final,” or “last,” translates the Greek *eschatos*, from which we derive eschatology, the account of the last things that will occur when Christ comes again. “Time” translates *kairos*, a word that often means God’s timely intervention according to his plan. In 1 Peter, *kairos* clearly carries this sense (see 1:11; 4:17; 5:6); it refers to God’s providential time when he will act. The “final time,” then, is that moment in human history when God will intervene decisively through the return of Christ and bring our salvation to completion.

## Reflection and application

Peter tells us further (1:23) that we have been “born anew, not from perishable seed but from imperishable seed, through the living and abiding word of God.” What does this mean? The logic is this. Every kind of seed produces something of its own kind. Grass seed produces grass. Human seed produces humans. In an analogical way, divine seed, the Word of God, produces a new birth that brings about the fruits of divine life in us. This rebirth is a remarkable thing: it is what makes us capable of being holy, of loving one another, and of enduring suffering for Christ’s sake. But we have to nourish and cultivate this seed, so that it might bear all the fruits of God’s life in us.

## Joy in the midst of suffering

**vv. 6–7:** Peter now introduces a profound paradox: the presence of inexpressible joy in the midst of suffering. He says first that **we rejoice in this** living hope, which is our salvation, present and future. Who would not rejoice? But then he tells us that **now** we must be ready to **suffer through various trials**, even if only for **a little while**. This echoes Paul’s reference to the “momentary light affliction” that is preparing us for “an eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Using a metaphor found frequently in the Old Testament (Job 23:10; Proverbs 17:3; Wisdom 3:5–7; Zech 13:9), Peter compares the testing of our **faith** to the purification of **gold by fire**. The sentence structure is difficult to follow, but the point of the comparison is perfectly clear. If gold, the most precious of earthly substances, requires purification, how much more does our faith – more precious than any earthly gold – benefit from the purifying fire of our trials. “For in fire gold is tested, and worthy men in the crucible of humiliation” (Sirach 2:5).

The term **genuineness** is difficult to capture in one English word. It really means “the genuine quality produced through testing.” The point is this: through various trials faith is made more pure, just as gold in the fire. When Jesus is revealed in his coming again, all these trials will result in **praise, glory, and honor** for those who have endured faithfully. They will hear the Lord say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

**vv. 8–9:** Peter knows that the Christians he is addressing have **not seen** Jesus with their own eyes. Nonetheless, he reminds them that despite not seeing him, they came to **love him**. And **though** they **do not see him** in the present time either, yet they continue to **believe in him**. As Jesus said to Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (John 20:29). Faith and love are not dependent on seeing the risen Lord with our eyes.

More than this, Peter says that they **rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy** in the present time. Despite serious trials, the living hope they have in Christ brings profound joy. This is not the stoic, cheerless attitude sometimes ascribed to Christians, but rather the deep joy that comes from already possessing a foretaste of our heavenly inheritance. And it is joy that has the upper hand here. Structurally, Peter surrounds the promise of suffering (vv. 6b–7) with joy on either side (vv. 6a and 8). Suffering and trial are fenced in, so to speak, by the overwhelming reality of the great joy that is ours even now in Christ.

Even though Christ is not yet seen, they **attain the goal** of their **faith**, which is the **salvation of** their souls. The verb is best rendered by the English present progressive tense: they *are attaining* the goal of their **faith**, even as they move toward that final goal. And the goal is salvation, the full inheritance that will be ours when Christ returns again. But what does Peter mean when he says “the salvation of your souls”? “Soul” here should not be understood in contrast to the body, as if only the spiritual part of us will be saved at the last day. To the contrary, “soul” represents the inner and essential life of a human being but does not exclude the body. The salvation of our souls is the salvation of our entire lives, including our resurrected bodies.

## Reflection and application

How can joy coexist with suffering? In the natural order of things, joy and happiness are equated with the *absence* of suffering. When suffering arrives, sadness and grief naturally follow. Is Peter then being incoherent when he speaks in one breath of “indescribable and glorious joy” and the suffering of “various trials”? No, not if we take into account the power of the gospel. Only through the gospel can we experience true joy in the midst of suffering. Since we have a “new birth” and a “living hope” within us, the trials of life need not quench our joy. Saint Francis of Assisi is a remarkable example of this. He experienced what he called “perfect joy” right in the middle of his most intense trials.

Peter is simply recasting here what Jesus said to his disciples: “Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven” (Luke 6:22–23). Knowing profound joy even in the midst of genuine suffering is a mark of the disciples of Jesus; it shows that we possess more than transient enthusiasm. Even though we haven’t seen the risen Jesus with our eyes, we do have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and so we can “rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.” As we experience and display this paradoxical joy in the midst of trials, we give witness to those around us that the gospel gives power to engage and overcome the sufferings of the world.

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## Notes

[23](#) The *berakah* is the standard form for Jewish blessings. For examples in both the Old Testament and New Testament, see Gen 14:20; 1 Sam 25:32; Ezra 7:27; Ps 31:21; Dan 3:28; Luke 1:68; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3.

[24](#) See Exod 20:6; 34:7; Deut 5:10; 2 Sam 7:15; Ps 89:28.

[25](#) The ESV translates this “caused us to be born again,” whereas the RSV has “we have been born anew.” The verb here, “to give new birth” (*anagennao*), is unique to 1 Peter in the Bible (occurring here and in 1:23), but it is synonymous with the phrase in John 3:3, “to be born from above,” or “to be born again.”

[26](#) In Greek, the three words display a delightful alliteration: *aphtharton*, *amianton*, *amaranton*.

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## The Number One Grace of Pentecost



## Empowered to Live in Christian Community

by Bob Tedesco

One of the first recorded results of Pentecost was the new church, the new community. Pentecost is seen as the birthday of the church, and the church is, at the beginning, a *community*. I use that word because of the way it is described in Acts: its “hallmarks” are community-like and it is not simply a worshipping congregation.

### Some “hallmarks” of the early church:

1. It was different. It would be called “the Way” by outsiders. Outsiders would comment, “See how they love one another.” They shared. (Acts 2:44-45)
2. Their contact and times together were frequent. “...day after day they met together as a group...” (Acts 2:44 Today’s English Version)
3. It had a family look to it. They called each other brothers and sisters.
4. A rarely used word (*agape*) would be needed to describe their love of the brethren.
5. A strong word (*koinonia*) would be needed to describe their relationships.
6. They shared meals together.
7. Their families were centered in the family of God.

### The Number One Grace of Pentecost

I believe that this early community was the #1 grace of Pentecost...this is your sign, this is your wonder, and this is your miracle: people loving one another in Christ and centering their lives in Him, in a common way of life.

To support this conclusion, I ask you to consider this: in 1 Corinthians 12-19, the various gifts are discussed and we have the “more excellent” way of love described in chapter 13. Various gifts are ranked and compared; prophesy is given a high place. These giftings or gifted persons are compared to being parts of a body: less noble parts, more beautiful parts, etc.



But, this whole discussion of “parts” *presupposes the body* and it insists that we upbuild the body with our gifts. Therefore, the number one grace or result of Pentecost is the body. All of the gifts and roles are in support of and for the upbuilding of the body. Gifts such as healing or prophecy should never be “stand alone” phenomena, but are a part of and an expression of the body. To wander the countryside prophesying misses the main intent of Pentecost: the body itself.

## Koinonia: Spiritually Bonded Community

Many years ago, the great Christian teacher, Bob Mumford, tack-led the topic of “koinonia”. After five or six tapes with a number of quotes from Greek scholars, he still seemed at a loss to define the word “koinonia”, which weakly translates as “fellowship” in Acts 2:42. There seems to be a spiritual bond that happens among those who are baptized in the Spirit. It seems mysterious and beyond our understanding...a bond of unity. We often notice a certain inner celebration when we are together. It can be noticed at retreats, summer camp, and Lord’s Day celebrations. Children “catch” it at retreats, and we do ourselves and our children a disservice to miss these yearly events. It seems that the more the event is focused on the Lord, the more noticeable is the inner celebration and bonding.

This inner magnetism or grace can even have a regional or international expression as we gather with other members of the Sword of the Spirit at the summer conference or international leaders’ events. Our children experience that bond at regional youth events, and, in a very real way, they understand our “vision and call” more by this experience of koinonia.

As a personal example, I have two friends, Jim and Connie, who live over 30 miles from me. We are in the [People of God Community](#) together, but we are from different locations, somewhat different geography, different families, different parishes, different social circles, and have different hobbies. Yet, when we are together something inside of me resonates, celebrates, and rejoices with them. My covenant with them acknowledges what is already there: a spiritual bonding in the Spirit: koinonia.

## Our Response

Over the years, I think, it has been a mistake of the charismatic renewal to overly focus on the gifts and to miss this koinonia unity. It is a magnetism, yet it can be ignored if we walk away. The attraction can be broken or weakened by inattention. I believe the writer of Hebrews 10:25 warned about this when he said, “... not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some.”

We should nourish, stir to life, and protect the unity (Ephesians 4:3). We should *anticipate the purposes* of the Holy Spirit and we should adjust our decisions accordingly. (See Joseph’s responses in Matthew 1:19&24, 2:14, and 2:19-23.)

We are first and foremost empowered to live in a local, worshiping, and directable people who will love God and one another in a common way of life. By doing so, we both anticipate and participate in the purposes of the Holy Spirit.

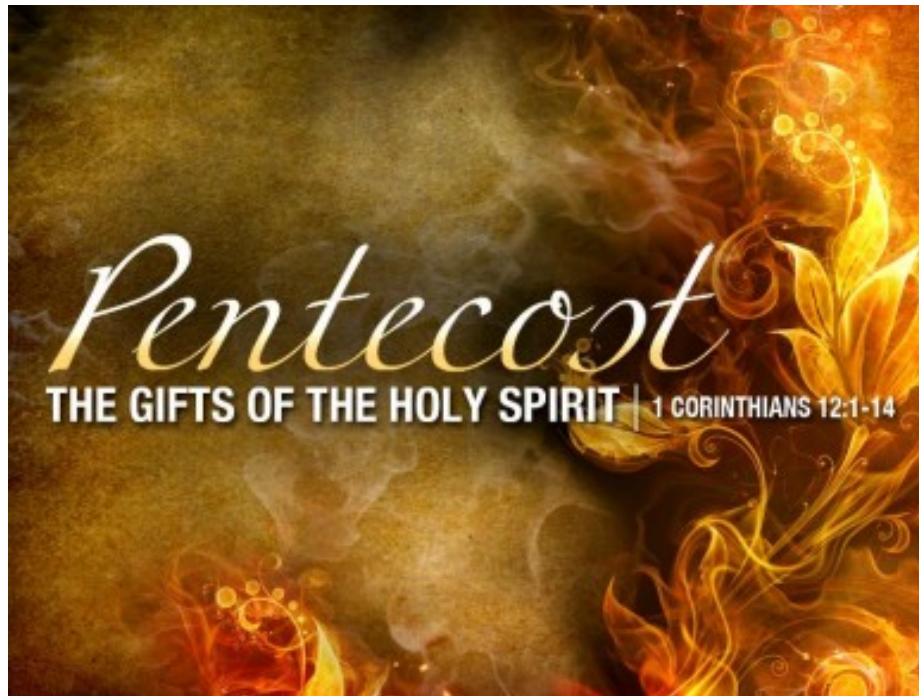
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Photo credit: Word of Life community in Ann Arbor, Michigan USA

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## Spiritual Gifts

- Manifestations of God's Presence and Power for Christian Communities Today

by Steve Clark

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed.” With these words, St. Paul begins Chapter 12 of his first letter to the Corinthians. He wants them to have information about spiritual gifts. He wants the Corinthians to understand what spiritual gifts are and how they should function in the life of the church. He is concerned because he knows that spiritual gifts can be a great source of strength to the church, as well as an occasion of trouble.

It is hard to know what St. Paul would write to the church today. He did not want to have the Corinthians uninformed, but few Christians today know much about what he wanted the Corinthians to know. Few understand what spiritual gifts are or their place in the life of the church. Now that there is a renewal in the use of spiritual gifts among us and many are experiencing prophecy, healing, speaking in tongues, and the rest, it has become even more important to understand the place of these “manifestations of the Spirit” in the life of the church.

Some Christians do not believe that miracles happened after the death of the last apostle. Yet Catholics expect to have them occur in every century and every land. Our lives have been filled with stories of the supernatural works of the saints and the miracles that occur at the shrines. We have not forgotten that God heals directly, that he speaks through prophecies, that extraordinary events accompany his work.

The great 13th century theologian, Thomas Aquinas, in the *Summa Theologiae* (in the section on “Graces

Freely Given”) taught that Christians need spiritual gifts, because Christian revelation contains truths above the power of man to know. Consequently, a Christian needs special gifts from God to know Christian truth and preach it, and he needs to have his preaching accompanied by signs so that others will believe.

Even in our own time, the Catholic Church at the Vatican Council taught Christians that they should expect spiritual gifts. In the *Decree on the Lay Apostolate* (section 3) the Council fathers say:

“For the exercise of this apostolate (of evangelism) the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the people of God through the ministry and the sacraments, gives to the faithful special gifts as well (cf. I Corinthians 12:7), ‘allotting to everyone according as he will’ (I Corinthians 12:11). Thus may the individual ‘according to the gifts that each has received, administer it to one another’ and become ‘good stewards of the manifold grace of God’ (I Cor 4:10) and build up the whole body in charity (cf. Ephesians 4:16). From the reception of these charisms or gifts, including those which are less dramatic, there arises for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and for the upbuilding of the Church.”

Something similar is stated in the *Constitution on the Church* (section 12). The fact that the Council fathers emphasize what are called the less dramatic gifts, indicates that they also expect the more dramatic gifts, the kind Paul talks about in I Corinthians 12.

We know from the Bible that we should expect these gifts. At the end of the gospel of Mark, the risen Christ says to the Apostles:

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Or St. Paul says in I Corinthians 13:

“Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues they will cease; as for knowledge it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect, and our prophecy is imperfect, but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.”

“The coming of the perfect” must mean the second coming. It is certainly not referring to anything that has happened yet. Who has yet suggested that the perfect has come and we see face to face?. Until Christ comes we can expect the spiritual gifts.

We should expect to see spiritual gifts in the life of the church. And it should not surprise us to know that they are becoming as frequent as they were in New Testament times. We know that if the church is to be renewed and if the world can ever be led to Christ, there is going to be needed a special work of the Holy Spirit. It was this realization that guided Pope John when he prayed for the Vatican Council, “Renew your wonders this day as by a new Pentecost.”

## What Are the Spiritual Gifts?

St. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapters 12–14 about spiritual gifts, and if we want to

understand more fully what spiritual gifts are and how they should be used we can study these chapters. These chapters are his special instructions about spiritual gifts to the church at Corinth, a church he had founded. He begins the whole section by talking about the spiritual gifts he has in mind: the utterance of wisdom, the utterance of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, the ability to distinguish between spirits, various kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues.

At this point we sometimes get confused. We know something about spiritual gifts, but we were taught in the catechism class that there are only seven of them: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety, fortitude, and fear of the Lord. To understand what Paul is talking about we need to understand that there are different types of spiritual gifts. The seven gifts are gifts that come along with the Spirit for the strengthening of each individual Christian. The nine gifts that St. Paul is talking about are sometimes called charismatic gifts, and are a different type of gift. As we consider what they are we will see how they differ from the seven gifts.

One way in which St. Paul describes the nine gifts that he is talking about is as “manifestations” of the spirit. In other words, when we see a spiritual gift operating, we realize that the Spirit is at work. A spiritual gift makes us aware of his presence. When, for instance, we see someone healed miraculously, or when we hear a prophecy, we know that the Spirit is present and at work. When someone is present at a manifestation of the Spirit it is hard to even think that God is dead.

Spiritual gifts also make us aware of God’s power. They manifest his ability to change the world. At a recent conference of men in pastoral ministry, several persons were sovereignly healed of physical ailments they had borne for a long time. Many of those in attendance had been very skeptical of healing until they witnessed the gift in operation before their eyes. They returned to their churches with a new faith in the effectiveness of prayer and the action of God. This is the effect authentic spiritual gifts can have in people's lives. If we see a deaf person healed, or if we are given a prophecy and see it fulfilled, we are reassured in an even deeper way that God’s power is great enough to do all things. That is why St. Paul speaks of Christians as having “tasted the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:5).

### **Manifestations of God's presence and power**

The spiritual gifts, then, are manifestations of God’s presence and power. That is why it would be a mistake to say that the gift of healing is what doctors have or the gift of tongues is the ability to speak a foreign language (that you learned in school) or the gift of interpretation is what Berlitz translators have. All these things may in a certain sense be gifts of God, but they are not the kind of spiritual gifts that Paul is talking about. If I were to try to tell a non-Christian doctor that his medical skill was a spiritual gift and a manifestation of the Spirit and that therefore he should become a Christian, he would reply that he could not see that it had anything to do with the Spirit. He learned it in school. Moreover, if that was a manifestation of the Spirit, it was an excellent proof that you could have all the spiritual gifts there are without any faith in Christ at all. Christian belief, according to his view, would be of no value in obtaining gifts of the Spirit.

For example, it is clear what St. Paul meant when he talked about gifts of healing. He himself healed people instantaneously, not by using healing, medically, but by a simple command (Acts 14:8). And it was a manifestation for the people that the power of God was present. And it is clear that when he talks about the gift of tongues, he is not speaking about a foreign language that he understands, but he is talking about speaking in a language he does not understand (I Corinthians 14:14).

As he begins to talk about the spiritual gifts, St. Paul gives us a list of the kind of gifts that he has in mind. There are other lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament (Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 and they are



not the same as the list in I Corinthians 12:4-11, so it is probable that St. Paul was not trying to give a complete list of all the spiritual gifts. But he does give us enough examples of spiritual gifts that we can understand what he is talking about.

## Teaching Gifts

The first two gifts which St. Paul mentions are teaching gifts: the *utterance of wisdom* (sometimes translated: “the word of wisdom.”) and the *utterance of knowledge* (sometimes translated: “the word of knowledge”). They are special inspirations by which God works through one person to give understanding to another person or to a group of people. A person who is given an utterance of wisdom or an utterance of knowledge can then give a lesson (an instruction or an explanation) in the Christian assembly (I Corinthians 14:26) or perhaps a special word of advice or instruction to a particular person. The New Testament in great part, especially the epistles, is made up of utterances of wisdom and knowledge, inspired teaching.

The utterance of wisdom probably refers to something different from the utterance of knowledge. The utterance of wisdom is concerned with the best way to live. It is an expression of God’s guidance in how to live as a Christian. When Christ spoke to the rich young man and advised him to sell his possessions and follow him (Mark 10:20), he was giving him a word of wisdom. Or when Peter spoke in the Council of Jerusalem and said that the Gentiles should not have to follow the full Mosaic Law, he was given an utterance of wisdom by God. Or much of what St. Paul said in I Corinthians 12–14 would be examples of the utterance of wisdom, practical spiritual teaching. The utterance of knowledge on the other hand, is more what we would call doctrinal teaching. It is the Spirit inspiring someone to speak an understanding of a truth of the mystery of Christ. Christ’s teaching about the relationship between the Father and the Son in Luke 10:22 would be an example of the utterance of knowledge as would the first chapter of Ephesians where Paul teaches the Ephesians about God’s plan.

St. Paul, when he is speaking about the utterance of knowledge almost certainly does not mean a special knowledge of facts that a person could not have known otherwise. I have been present and seen a person filled with the Spirit tell another person something about his past that he could not have known or tell us what is happening in a room that he was not present in. These things happen often, but they are not what St. Paul is referring to by “the utterance of knowledge.” When such a thing happened in the New Testament, people considered it an indication that a person was a prophet (John 4:16-19, Luke 7:39), but they did not consider it “knowledge,” a word which in the New Testament is used to describe knowledge of God and the mysteries of God.

The utterance of wisdom and knowledge are spiritual gifts that work through the understanding. The Spirit inspires a person to understand a truth, to understand things the way God understands them and then to speak about them. There is a difference between natural understanding, acquired by study, and inspired understanding. Inspired understanding feeds the spirit in a way that natural understanding cannot, because it is a manifestation of the presence of the Spirit in a person. It makes a deep change in people, giving them an increase of spiritual life.

I remember once being present when a Christian teacher spoke about the love of God. Even while he spoke, I had a sense of the presence of God and was praying while I was listening to his words. When he finished, there was a change in the whole room. People had come to life, and there was a new sense of the presence of the Spirit. Even though what he had to say was not naturally very impressive, everyone knew that God spoke through him.

Another time I was present while a mature Christian was speaking to a young man who had just been baptized in the Spirit. He was explaining how to live the Christian life, and I could see by the expression on the young man's face that his life was being changed by those words. Moreover, the older man did not know the younger man as well as I did, and I am sure that he could not have known how appropriate what he was saying was for that particular man. The Spirit, however, was working through his mind to instruct a new Christian. When I asked him later how he let these gifts operate, he said that when he felt the presence of the Spirit trying to use him, he yielded his mind to the Spirit and he "saw" what to say and how to say it. He said that very often in such a situation, he would learn as much as the person he was speaking to, and that he often found himself knowing things that he had never studied or thought through.

## Sign Gifts

The next three gifts which St. Paul mentions could be called sign gifts: *faith*, *gifts of healing*, and *the working of miracles*. They are gifts which manifest the power of God in the world in a particularly striking way. They call attention to God's reality, and so they bring people to a knowledge of God. The words of Christ at the end of the gospel of Mark tell us that this is God's way of confirming the truth of the message:

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons. They will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover... And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it."

I was present at a Kathryn Kuhlman "evangelistic" service in Los Angeles one summer, and there I saw the power of the spiritual gifts to bring men to Christ. The message at the service was simple, without a great deal of power to it. But much of the meeting was devoted to prayer for God to heal people. Early in the service a couple of men spoke who had been healed the time before. One had been healed of crippling arthritis (as he put it, "I couldn't even weed my garden, it was so bad"). Another man had been cured of terminal cancer and had his doctor with x-rays taken a week apart to show the authenticity of the cure. Neither of the men was a Christian when he was cured. In the course of that service about 35 people came forward and said that they were cured of a variety of things. A young boy had been deaf in one ear and was supposed to be operated on that week to have his eardrum sealed up, and now he could hear; a couple of people were cured of arthritis; a woman whom I had seen before her cure, on crutches and in a large brace, was able to move around and walk normally for the first time since an automobile accident nine years before. At the end of the service, when the woman who was leading it asked how many men wanted to become Christians, about 150 men filled the front of the auditorium to commit their lives to Christ, and there were probably even more women who could not find a place.

Such things have happened for many years. At the shrine at Lourdes in France, many people have turned to Christ because they have seen the power of God operate in extraordinary ways. The lives of the saints like Anthony, Francis, and Vincent Ferrer contain stories of miracles which converted whole towns. When men see the power of God do something extraordinary, they do wonder, and they do turn to God. When they can see him at work in the world in a way that goes beyond what human beings by themselves can do, they recognize the need to confront him.

The sign gifts, then, are the working of the Spirit in power through certain Christians, so that men might

know the truth of the Christian message. The first of these, the gift of faith, is not the same as the faith by which all Christians believe and turn to Christ. That is given to all Christians, not just to “another.” That kind of faith is what makes men Christians. This kind of faith is a special spiritual gift.

The charismatic gift of faith seems to be a special gift of prayer. It is a gift of praying with a God-given confidence, and it produces extraordinary results. The person who prays with faith knows through the work of the Spirit in him that what he asks for will be given. It is the kind of faith which Christ was speaking about when he said in the gospel of Mark (Mark 11:23), “Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.”

The gift of faith is what the prophet Elijah had when he confronted the prophets of Baal. He challenged them to a contest. Whoever’s God would send down fire from heaven to consume a burnt offering would be the God of Israel. The prophets of Baal went through every rite they could to get Baal to burn the offering, with no results at all. Elijah, on the other hand, first drenched the offering with water so that there would be no doubt about the power of the Lord, and then he simply prayed, knowing God would answer. And he did. Such faith is God-given. No matter how a man would try to work himself into such faith he could not do it.

The gifts of healing are different from the power of prayer for healing which is part of the ordinary life of the Christian community. Christians pray for one another for a variety of things and see results. In our community, we have seen people cured of migraine headaches which they have had for years, of colds and flu, of epileptic seizures. Not every prayer has been answered, but we have seen more than can be explained just by accident. Recently people have been approaching the sacrament of anointing with new faith and seeing results. I know of at least one person who was given up as hopeless, who improved right after receiving the sacrament and is well today. Most priests can tell stories of the differences the sacrament has made. These things are part of the normal life of the Christian community.

There are, however, people who seem to have a special gift of healing. When they pray for healing, results happen, and they happen with greater frequency and with more extraordinary effects than happen with other people. The Spirit works through them to produce “works of power,” to produce “things for people to be astonished at,” to produce miracles. These people have a special spiritual gift, probably because God wishes to use them to bring others to know Christ.

## Revelational Gifts

The next four gifts are gifts which could be called revelational gifts: *prophecy*, *the ability to distinguish between spirits* (sometimes called discernment of spirits), *various kinds of tongues*, and *interpretation of tongues*. These are gifts by which God makes known something about the present situation to his people.

Discernment of spirits has been called the protection of the Christian community. This is the gift which allows a man to “distinguish between spirits,” to tell whether an evil spirit is at work in a person or a situation or whether it is the Holy Spirit or whether it is just a man’s own spirit. This is probably the work of the Spirit by which Peter “saw” that Simon was “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity” when he tried to buy the power to confer the Spirit (Acts 8:23), or by which Paul could “see” that the Holy Spirit had given the cripple the faith to be made well (Acts 14:9).

Discernment of spirits is a kind of vision or a sense. One person described to me how the gift of discernment worked with him by saying that he often could almost see the presence of the Holy Spirit in power like a

glow. I asked him what he could discern in some people that he did not know but whom I did know. Like Paul he “peered intently” and then gave me a description of those people that I knew to be accurate and which was beyond the power of even extraordinary psychological sensitivity. Another man once told me how in talking to a girl, he was aware that what was holding her back in turning to Christ was the influence (not possession) of an evil spirit. As he put it, he could just sense that that was what the cause was, without knowing her. His discernment was proven true by the marked change in the girl's attitude toward Christ after he prayed with her for deliverance from the influence of the evil spirit. (She did not realize that he had prayed for her that way, because he prayed in a foreign language). In other words, discernment is a spiritual revelation about the operation of different types of spirits in a person or situation, a means by which God makes Christians aware of what is happening.

Prophecy is a gift by which God speaks through a person a message to an individual or to the whole Christian community. It is God making use of someone to tell men what he thinks about the present situation or what his intention is for the future, or what he thinks they should know or be mindful of right now. Prophecy is not necessarily for prediction of the future (although this frequently happens). Paul describes some of the uses of prophecy by saying in I Corinthians 14:3, “He who prophesies, speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.” It is God speaking now, to his people, words which are intended to reveal his current attitude.

Today people use the term prophecy in many different senses. In the Council documents in many places, it is used to describe any speaking of Christ's message to the world. When the word is used in this sense, teaching is a type of prophecy. When a priest or minister teaches, for instance, he is exercising a prophetic role. Another popular use of the term is that of prophecy as reading the signs of the times or judging the present situation. There are many today who would consider themselves to be exercising a prophetic role because they condemn many current situations in the name of what Christ has revealed.

However, when Paul is using the term prophecy, he is probably using it in a way that would not include teaching or judging the present situation prophecy. He is referring to the type of speaking that occurred when one of the prophets at Antioch stated that Paul and Barnabas were to be set aside for apostolic work (Acts 13:2) or when Agabus foretold that there would be a great famine (Acts 11:28) or when Agabus predicted how Paul would be taken prisoner (Acts 21:1). These prophecies were given as messages from God. They are given in the words of God (the speaker speaks in the first person). That they are more than just human speech is indicated by the accuracy of the predictions and by the fact that the prophet gives directions from God, something that would be sheer presumption if God himself were not speaking. It is clear that not all prophecies are like this. The book of Acts only reports some of the more extraordinary prophecies, but these are enough to indicate that when the New Testament speaks of prophecy, it uses the word in a special sense to indicate direct messages from God.

Speaking a prophecy is more than a person just saying something that happens to be on his mind as a message from God. The prophet receives a special “anointing,” an urging to speak. He realizes that he has a message from God, although often he does not know what it is until he actually yields to God and begins to speak. To the degree he yields to God, to that degree his message will be pure. A prophetic message is different from a teaching. A man gives a teaching with his understanding. He sees the truth of what he is saying. A prophet may not understand what he is saying, and he can never “see” that this is God's message right now. He has received a revelation, a message from God.

Prophecy can be very effective in building up the Christian community. It is clear from 1 Corinthians 14 that prophecy was very common in the early Church. The Church at Corinth apparently had so many messages



that there had to be a certain order in giving them (I Corinthians 14:29-32). When a prophecy is given at a gathering of Christians, it has a powerful effect in drawing them to God and deepening their sense of the presence of God. Prophecies are also an effective way of God's directing his people. Once in our work on campus, God predicted through prophecy that we would have a major change in our situation (leaving one position and moving to another), that he would begin soon to bring many people to the prayer meetings at Ann Arbor and throughout Michigan, that he would give us a period of trials, and that he would end that period of trials and again bring many people and a deeper life in the Spirit. Each time, the prophecies turned out to be literally true, and the guidance given in the prophecies about how to confront these coming situations turned out to be a great help.

Speaking in tongues can be two different things. First of all, it can be a gift of prayer for an individual (I Corinthians 14:14). This is the more common gift of tongues, but I will not go into it here. Speaking in tongues can also be a gift for the community when the Spirit urges someone to speak out loud in tongues for the community. In this case, the speaking in tongues should have an interpretation, so that the whole community can understand what is happening. The experience of giving interpretations is similar to the experience of prophecy. The interpreter, like the speaker in tongues, does not understand the tongues (I Corinthians 14:2, 14). In other words, the gift of interpretation is not a gift of translation. It is an urging to speak words which are given.

Speaking in tongues simply means speaking in languages. As is clear from Acts and 1 Corinthians 12–14, it was common for the Spirit to give Christians other languages to speak in which they did not understand. And it is still common today. I was talking to a man about a year and a half ago who told me of an experience that he had had a couple of years back. He went with a choir to a church to give a performance, and many of the choir members had received the baptism of the Spirit. During the concert, at a moment of silence, one of the choir members spoke in tongues and then another one gave the interpretation. The rest of the choir was embarrassed because they were afraid that the audience would not understand. But it turned out that the right afterwards, the pastor of the church turned to the choir directress and asked her if she knew the man who had spoken in tongues and the the man who interpreted the message. When she replied that she did, he asked here if they knew Hebrew. When she replied that they did not, he told her that he knew Hebrew and that the first man had given a message in perfect high Hebrew, and that the second man had given an almost literal translation of the message. It was enough to convince the pastor of the validity of the gift of tongues.

## The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

There are more workings of the Spirit than those Paul enumerates in I Corinthians 12:4-11. But these are enough to give us an idea of what spiritual gifts can be. In a community in which spiritual gifts operate, Christians are much more vividly aware of the presence and power of God.

Paul says in I Corinthians 12:7: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Another translation might be that to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for usefulness. Spiritual gifts have a very pragmatic purpose. They are given to build up the community. This is the difference between the seven gifts and the nine charismatic gifts. The seven gifts are given with the Spirit for the building up of the individual, of his relationship with God. The charismatic gifts are given so that the individual can do something for the community.

One term which Paul uses to describe the gifts is "service" (I Corinthians 12:5). Looked at from this perspective the gifts are a service for the community. In fact, the term "gift" is somewhat misleading. The gifts are not gifts to the individual Christian. They are gifts *through* the individual Christian to the

community. For the individual Christian they are a service, a service he can perform for the community. When he makes himself available to God to be used, he performs a service for the community.

It is no accident that the idea of the “body of Christ” is found in the New Testament at its earliest date in passages that are concerned mainly with charismatic gifts (I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12). The idea very likely first came to Paul or some early Christian when he was trying to explain how the spiritual gifts operated in a Christian community, a local church. “All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (Romans 12:4). In other words, in the church, different Christians are the channels for different gifts. One prophesies, another heals, another speaks in tongues. And yet all these things are the work of the Spirit, and they all work together for the building up of the community. It is much like the different members of the body. The foot, the hand, the eye, all have different functions, and yet they all make one body and they all work together to build up the one body.

It is clear that in I Corinthians 12-14 Paul is trying to teach the Corinthians how to use the spiritual gifts with love, in harmony, without envy or jealousy or conflict. No one is to envy the other, or to disdain the other, but they are to be as conscious of their dependence on one another as the different members of one body. But in making this point, Paul brings out in a vivid way an important truth about the charismatic gifts — that they are for the upbuilding of the community. They are not primarily for an individual’s benefit, but they are for the benefit of the whole Christian community. They are the way an individual can perform a service to the community — by putting himself at God’s disposal to be used in one of his “workings.”

The charismatic gifts, then, are intended to equip a Christian for service in the community. They are intended to equip him with the power of God so that he can work in the community with God-given ability to strengthen the community. That is why Paul ends the chapter with the paragraph on apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. These are the various services Christians can perform in the community. These are stable positions within a community. But in order for a person to truly perform one of these functions in the power of God, he has to have the spiritual gifts which equip him to do what these positions call for. In other words, any Christian community needs a certain number of functions to be performed, and God offers spiritual power, spiritual equipment through the spiritual gifts, for those functions to be performed. Moreover, the whole purpose of the giving of spiritual gifts is so that an individual Christian might be ready to perform a service, to carry out a function within the community.

One way of summarizing the spiritual gifts is to say that the spiritual gifts are like tools or resources. They are the equipment of God for the work he has given Christians to do in the world. Christians need the power of God to do the work of God, because the work of God is something beyond human ability. The spiritual gifts are the empowering of Christians to do God’s work — to teach, to speak his message, to perform signs of his presence. They are the Holy Spirit working through men to renew the face of the earth.

## The Spiritual Gifts and Holiness

Strange as it may seem, before becoming acquainted with the charismatic renewal, it never occurred to me that I Corinthians 13 came between I Corinthians 12 and I Corinthians 14. It sounds obvious when you say it that way, but I had never thought of it. I was not used to reading chapter 13 in its context. in First Corinthians. Like most Christians, I knew chapter 13 as the great hymn to love. But I did not realize that Paul wrote that chapter to explain to the Corinthians how to use the spiritual gifts. I did not realize that the whole point of the chapter was to say that spiritual gifts are to be used in a loving way to build up the community.

First Corinthians 13 contains much wisdom that is important for the proper understanding of spiritual gifts. It is also frequently misunderstood because it is not read in context. Paul begins by saying, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” In this opening section, Paul is not playing down spiritual gifts at all. He is not even saying that spiritual gifts are valueless if I do not have love. (A healing by God’s power is, after all, a healing by God’s power). Rather he is saying that *I* am nothing if I do not love. He is making a simple point in a forceful way; namely, that there is a difference between charismatic power and holiness, and that holiness, not charismatic power, is the measure of a person.

Jesus makes the same point is made in a passage in the seventh chapter of Matthew. He says, “Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works (miracles) in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers’.” This is a passage that came home to me with a new force after acquaintance with the new work of the Spirit, because I found that I could take it quite literally. What Christ is saying is sobering. He is not saying that they did not really prophesy or cast out demons or do miracles in his name. Rather, he is saying that that is not what makes a man a genuine disciple of his (someone he “knows”). What makes a man a genuine disciple of his is doing his father’s will - living in holiness.

It is not uncommon for someone, when he reads Paul’s exhortation in I Corinthians 12:31 to “earnestly desire the higher gifts,” to say that the gift that he want is love. But to say that or to describe love as the “greatest gift of all” is either to miss the point or to obscure what Paul is saying. In this section, Paul does not consider love one of the spiritual gifts. Rather, he calls it “a way.” And in Galatians 5:22 he describes it as a fruit of the Spirit along with “joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” In other words, love is not one of the spiritual gifts, one of the tools to build up the life of the Christian community. It is the very life of the Christian community itself. It is the way in which the Christian must walk. It is what he must aim at.

To say that Paul does not describe love as a gift is not to say that there is no sense in which love is a gift. Love is the effect of the Holy Spirit living in us. Paul conveys that idea by using the term “fruit of the Spirit, or something that grows in a person’s life from living the life of the Spirit. But love is not a gift in the same sense that prophecy or healing is. A person can prophesy or heal just by allowing the Spirit to work through him. But he loves by growing in holiness, by surrendering his heart and will to God, by growing into maturity of Christian character.

There is a relationship between holiness and the spiritual gifts. The spiritual gifts are not a sign of holiness. They are not merit badges for spiritual achievement. Rather they are equipment for working to build up the Christian community in holiness. They are often given to beginners so that growth is possible for them and also for the community that they are a part of. Perhaps the more extraordinary workings of the Spirit are only entrusted to those who are more mature in Christian character, but the whole of First Corinthians 12–14 is instruction for the use of spiritual gifts for Christians who need much more growth in love.

## Seeking Spiritual Gifts

Paul says at the beginning of I Corinthians 14, “Make love your aim and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.” This is the second time he urges the Corinthians to “earnestly desire” the spiritual gifts. He has an attitude which is much different from many modern Christians who are often reluctant to have spiritual gifts. Paul goes so far as to command the Corinthians to seek spiritual gifts.

Paul’s attitude toward seeking spiritual gifts makes a great deal of sense if we understand what they are for. If they really are God’s equipment for the building up of the church, they are really valuable to have. In these days, when the church seems to be losing ground in the world and when so much of the life of the church seems to be weakening and losing vitality, God’s power is needed desperately. It would not make sense for a carpenter to forego a hammer and try to use his fist, or for a writer to forego a pen or a typewriter. They know they need them for effectiveness in their work. And we need the spiritual gifts, because we need the fullness of God’s working among us, the fullness of the power he will put at our disposal.

The scripture does not say a great deal about how a person can obtain spiritual gifts. But the advice to seek the gifts is actually excellent advice on how to obtain them. Perhaps the biggest obstacle to our having them is not being open to them, not wanting them. There are, I think, a couple of reasons why this is so. One of them is fear of God. Many people do not want the spiritual gifts, because they bring God too close for comfort. It is one thing to think of God in heaven or as the creator. It is even safe to think of his providence, for that means that everything is God working and there is no need to confront God directly apart from dealing with things. And it is safe to think of him as speaking in the scriptures, because we can read those when we want to and absorb them as we want to. But when God starts healing my next door neighbor and speaking to me in prophecy, that is a more frightening thing. That means that I have to confront God more immediately than ever before, and it might become obvious that I have not surrendered fully to him.

Another reason for not wanting spiritual gifts is the desire to do things ourselves. Being used for a spiritual gift involves yielding to God and letting him work through you. There is a certain self-denial involved. There is a surrendering of control and a devaluing of my natural abilities. It seems like a less glorious thing to let God work through me to convert the world than to actually go out and convert the world myself. To be the instrument of a working of God is a humbling thing, and we often have an inner resistance to being humbled.

Another clue which Paul gives to obtaining spiritual gifts is in Galatians 3:5, where Paul asks the Galatians the question, “Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?” He apparently is referring to a common experience of the Galatians, because he is using the experience of seeing miracles through faith as a proof that it is not law which justifies a man.

Faith, then, is a means to obtaining the spiritual gifts, perhaps *the* means. Faith means that we know, first of all, that these things are possible, because we realize that Christ promised them to us. And then it means asking for them with expectancy, being willing to count on them happening. Peter would never have walked on the water if he had not had enough faith to actually step out upon it. And he stopped walking on the water when he started looking at the wind and the waves and started being afraid that it would not happen any longer.

God has a great deal in store for us, a great deal that we really need. But we need to be fully open to him. We need to be ready for everything he is willing to do, in fact earnestly desiring him to do more and more among us, for him to increase and for us to decrease. And we need to have faith, faith that his promises are still good. Then we will begin to see the spiritual gifts appearing among us and in our own lives.

## Why Now?



Some Christians do not find it difficult to believe that God does give prophecies and miracles, discernment of spirits and healing. But they do not expect to see them around commonly. The shrine of Lourdes and great evangelists like Kathryn Kuhlman maybe, but not my next door neighbor with the raspy voice and the irritating habit of slamming the garage door. A prophet should have a certain prophetic look, and a miracle worker should certainly have some kind of glow.

There is something new about the new movement of the Spirit that is different from what Christians have been accustomed to. It is new not because of the spiritual gifts, but because the spiritual gifts seem to be given much more commonly, and to ordinary people — not only to monks, evangelists, and nuns, but workers and housewives, lawyers and students. They are being given now. In fact, they are being given in much the same way as they were given to the Christians in New Testament times. Why now?

The fathers of the church noticed in the fourth century that there seemed to be a difference between their church and the church of the Acts of the Apostles in the frequency of spiritual gifts. John Chrysostom in his homilies on First Corinthians put it this way:

“Yes, the Church was then a heaven. The Holy Spirit reigned as its master, and inspired directly each of its ministers. Today, we have been left with nothing more than the symbols and signs of these gifts. In fact, in our own present day also, we speak in turn, two or three, and when one becomes silent, the other begins. But this is only the vestige and memorial of what used to happen.”

The reasons they gave for the departing of the spiritual gifts in their age are also clues to why they are returning in our age.

The first reason for the lack of spiritual gifts is given by St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his discussion of First Corinthians, Chapter 14:

“When we shall have the proper dispositions of faith, hope, and charity in regard to God and our brethren...we shall receive an abundance of the charisms of God.”

Cyril is saying that the disappearance of the spiritual gifts is our fault. We lack the right disposition to God which makes them possible. And this is probably one reason why the spiritual gifts are becoming more common. With more and more people receiving the baptism of the Spirit, they are receiving a renewal in the life of the Spirit of the kind that makes it possible for God to work through them in the way he did for the early Christians.

A second reason for the lack of spiritual gifts is given by St. John Chrysostom in his commentary on the Acts (chapter 2). His point was that spiritual gifts are given at God's initiative and he gives them in response to different needs. Throughout the history of the church, the Lord seems to have poured out the spiritual gifts more in some ages than in others. The early church experienced a profusion of gifts, for at that time the Lord was laying a foundation. During periods of renewal and reformation of the church, spiritual gifts operated with greater frequency. The Lord seems to be increasing their occurrence now because our need for them is so great. It is obvious that we are in an age of crisis for the church. Unbelief is increasing in the world. There is a loss of faith within the church. Christians everywhere are becoming uneasy, wondering where God is.

The church needs the spiritual gifts now to meet the challenge of our unbelieving, technological society.

The last word has to be: it is a mystery. But like every Christian mystery, man enters in and God enters in. If we wish to see God at work in the way he acted in the early church, we have to go deeper into the life of the Spirit. If we do not, the absence of God's gifts in the world is our fault. But it is also true that God is not tied down by us, and right now, almost despite us, he is renewing his church with spiritual power to meet the challenge of this age.

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Steve Clark has been a founding leader, author, and teacher for the charismatic renewal since its inception in 1976. He has authored a number of books, including *Baptized in the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, *Finding New Life in the Spirit*, *Growing in Faith*, and *Knowing God's Will*, *Building Christian Communities*, *Man and Woman in Christ*.

Steve is past president of the [Sword of the Spirit](#), an international ecumenical association of charismatic covenant communities worldwide. He is the founder of the [Servants of the Word](#), an ecumenical international missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord.

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> See other articles by [Steve Clark](#) in [Living Bulwark archives](#)

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## A Time of Perpetual Pentecost

by Michelle Moran, President,  
International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services

*'I will pour out my Spirit in abundance, generously, lavishly, and continually'*

Like all children for me Christmas was such a wonderful occasion of family togetherness, delicious food and a variety of surprises. However, with the onset of my teenage years the excitement quickly subsided and I learned to tame my expectations. In reality, these 'red letter' days pass very quickly. Indeed, sometimes the anticipation surpasses the actual celebration.

The Golden Jubilee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) is the culmination, for many of us, of an intense period of preparation at local, national and international levels. It is however important that we do not

view this as a mere celebration. Otherwise, the anniversary will come and go and then, with the passing of time, it will be no more than a distant memory.

The 50th anniversary of CCR marks the crossing of an important threshold. In one sense, it marks the drawing to a close of a particular season of the Spirit. The time when we saw the Holy Spirit at work in the Church bringing forth renewal and giving birth to many new things. This was in the slipstream of the second Vatican Council.

Reading the testimonies of those who were present at the Duquesne weekend and of other pioneers in the Renewal, I was struck by how many of them came from 'good Catholic' families and already had a residual faith. Thus when the fire of the Holy Spirit descended, their lives were quickly ignited and their faith came alive. When they were 'clothed with power from on high' they began to eagerly embrace the new things of the Spirit and spontaneously move in the charisms. Their experience was in many ways beyond their understanding. Thankfully, their openness and youthful enthusiasm enabled the fire of the Holy Spirit to spread throughout the world.

Today we live in a very different time in the Church and the world. In many societies, particularly in the West, there has been a surge of secular humanism. Christianity is under threat and various forms of persecution are becoming more commonplace. Alongside this there is an increasing apathy. St. John Paul II referred to this as a 'silent apostasy where people have all that they need and who live as if God did not exist.'

'Share with all in the Church the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit.'  
- Pope Francis

In this context, I sense that our Golden Jubilee marks a gradual progression from the Pentecost event in Acts 2:1-16 to Acts 4:23-31, where we see the Church under persecution. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on the entire assembly in the Upper Room as a grace for conversion and mission. Certainly we still need this today. Indeed, Pope Francis has encouraged us to 'share with all in the Church the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit.'

### **A prophetic consultation to prepare for the Golden Jubilee**

In preparation for the Jubilee, in November 2013, ICCRS held a prophetic consultation in the Holy Land gathering together 160 international leaders. The aim was to listen together to the Lord for his word as we approached the Jubilee. During our pilgrimage day in Jerusalem, we gathered in the Upper Room and were privileged to experience together an unforgettable prayer meeting.

There were many prophetic words. However, the final word that we heard [given by Bruce Yocum] has stayed with me. The Lord said,

*'I have poured out my Spirit abundantly, and I will continue to pour it out. I will pour out my Spirit generously, lavishly, continuously, until even the hardened hearts are softened and the wasteland becomes fertile. This I promise, that I shall pour out my Spirit continuously until I bring about, through my Spirit, that renewal that I intend.'*<sup>1</sup>

After this word we left the Upper Room and spilled out into the streets of Jerusalem. I have continued to



reflect upon why this was the last word that we heard before moving out. I sense that the Lord was giving us a confirmation that the Holy Spirit continues to be poured out.

We live in a time of the perpetual Pentecost. Therefore, we who have received this new life have a responsibility and a mission to spread the grace of Pentecost far and wide, indeed to the ends of the earth.

Certainly in today's spiritual climate the ground is more arid and perhaps not so well prepared or fertile as it was in 1967. The world faces a myriad of complex challenges and the Church is increasingly undergoing persecution. In the midst of all this spiritual battle, we all need a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring strength and courage enabling us to proclaim the truth with boldness. This is urgently required because the father of lies is increasingly busy spreading words of falsehood leading to relativism and practical agnosticism. This manifests itself in religious indifference, a lack of hope and a loss of direction.

**We should be expectant that in this new season of the Spirit there will be an increase in faith for healing and miracles.**

Our clear proclamation also needs to be accompanied by a demonstration of the Spirit. People today need more than words: they need to see that God is alive and active. Therefore we should be expectant that in this new season of the Spirit there will be an increase in faith for healing and miracles. We need to pray and be expectant that these charisms would be more fully manifest in the body of all believers and not just in the few who regularly exercise these charisms. In Acts 4 when they prayed there was a new empowerment of the Holy Spirit and they were ALL filled with a new boldness.

We want our Jubilee to be more than a celebration and a good party. We need a new outpouring. Pope Francis sees the Jubilee as an opportunity for all those who share in the ecumenical current of grace to come together and pray for a new Pentecost. So let's be ready for the surprises of the Spirit and prepare for a mighty new outpouring of the Holy Spirit beyond anything we have currently seen or could even imagine.

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#### Footnote 1

For a fuller description of the Prophetic Consultation held in Bethlehem, November 14-18, 2013 and on the final day together in the Upper Room (Cenacle) in Jerusalem where the Spirit was first poured out on the infant church, see report in *Pentecost Today*, [Spring Issue 2014](#), Volume 39 Number 1, pages 4-5.

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## The Beginnings of the Life in the Spirit Seminars

by Steve Clark

The Life in the Spirit Seminars (LSS) began to develop about 7 months after the beginning of the charismatic renewal. Like most of the early leaders of the Charismatic Renewal, we had worked in the Cursillo movement. We were now working at the Catholic student center at the University of Michigan and began a charismatic prayer meeting [Ann Arbor, Michigan USA].

In the middle of one of the first meetings, someone asked to be baptized in the Spirit, so we prayed for her then and there. The next two meetings something similar happened. So we decided to establish a time when people could ask questions and receive prayer in order not to interrupt the prayer meeting itself. First we set up a prayer room after the prayer meeting where people could come to be baptized in the Spirit. Then we added a preparation room. Then we added an explanation session before the prayer meeting. With each addition a higher percentage of the people got baptized in the Spirit.

We then packaged all this together and extended the time of initiation to six weekly sessions. In the course of those sessions we gave a fuller understanding of the gift of the Spirit and how to persevere after being baptized in the Spirit. We now put the focus on ongoing living of the life in the Spirit and decided to use the name “The Life in the Spirit Seminars”. We also formed a team of people who would work on the LSS and who could keep contact with the new people and bring them into the prayer group, subsequently the community.

This was where our Cursillo experience had been most helpful. It helped us to see that a powerful initiatory experience needed a follow-up and that an orientation to the follow-up needed to be built into the LSS. It also helped us to see that the follow-up needed to be an environment of committed people, and in addition that the weekend (and the follow-up) needed a trained team of leaders who did personal contact work with those in the LSS – both during and after the seminars. This was only one of the ways the wisdom of the Cursillo

movement on how to put together an effective movement served the Charismatic Renewal.

We then realized that we needed to add more of an evangelistic focus. We needed to preach the gospel in the seminars and make the message more personally pointed. We made use of the Four Spiritual Laws in the explanation session, and we used the second session to preach the gospel message. In a new fourth session we presented the scriptural steps of response to the gospel: repent, believe and be baptized. That meant we included repentance and obedience to God more prominently in the seminars and made an effort to get the new people to ascertain what they needed to repent for.

The result was the 1971 and subsequent editions of the LSS. Other versions have been developed, but the original is still available from [Tabor House](#) in a Catholic and an ecumenical edition and is very effective when done correctly. It is, of course, not everything people need for Christian maturity.

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Steve Clark has been a founding leader, author, and teacher for the charismatic renewal since its inception in 1976. He has authored a number of books, including *Baptized in the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, *Finding New Life in the Spirit*, *Growing in Faith*, and *Knowing God's Will, Building Christian Communities, Man and Woman in Christ*.

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## Jesus Is Lord!

### Impact of the Kansas City Ecumenical Charismatic Renewal Conference 1977

by Kevin Ranaghan

The historic Kansas City Ecumenical Charismatic Renewal Conference in July of 1977 was hot! In the 90's in the daytime, we trudged the streets between hotels, the Convention Center, and other venues, and to the stadium in the evening. Fifty thousand Christians gathered together around one theme: "Jesus is Lord." This conference, sponsored in remarkable unity by Catholic, Protestant, classical and nondenominational Pentecostal renewal groups was a significant response to Jesus' prayer that we might all be one.

It came about this way. From the beginning, many leaders of the various renewals understood that baptism in the Holy Spirit was an ecumenical grace for the whole church. Many prayer groups and communities were, in fact, ecumenical. Denominational conferences invited speakers and shared books and tapes from other streams. By 1974 there was a growing sense that we should manifest the new unity we were experiencing. Key leaders of the Catholic and Lutheran renewals along with leaders of the large non-denominational Gulf Coast Fellowship agreed to work together to plan a large ecumenical gathering.





Kansas City Ecumenical Charismatic Conference 1977

With the strong support of the ecumenical Charismatic Concerns Committee, we formed a representative planning committee. Every sponsoring group was taking a big financial risk, trusting the Lord in contracting for hotels, venues and... gasp... the stadium! The conference office of Charismatic Renewal Services in South Bend agreed to oversee the administration.

Most importantly, the Lord led us to forge a Unity Statement articulating our purpose, promising mutual cooperation and respect, and pledging commitment to one another and to the Lord for this event. Every group, speaker, performer, vendor and worker had to agree to this statement. With many different proposed agendas, the principles of this statement provided a path to resolution and unity in making decisions. We developed a pattern of distinct denominational tracks in the mornings, scores of open workshops in the afternoons, and the large unified evenings in the stadium. Both the unity statement and the three tiered pattern of events were key to the success of Kansas City and have been adopted by many other charismatic events in the decades since.

The two years of planning leading up to one week of celebration in Kansas City was the work of the Lord, and also the Spirit-led hard work of many who ministered both in public and behind the scenes. From beginning to end, it was a foretaste of the unity of the Body of Christ.

There are thousands of testimonies about what God did there: conversions, Spirit baptisms, healings, ecumenical friendships, ministries begun, growth of communities, vocations to priesthood and religious life. Here is just one story which is public.

Present at Kansas City, as an interested participant, not yet baptized in the Spirit, was an Italian Capuchin friar and theologian. Deeply moved by his experience there, he went directly afterward to a Catholic charismatic retreat in New Jersey. There, he was baptized in the Holy Spirit, recommissioned in the Lord's service. In the decades since, Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa has served the Lord as an outstanding theologian of the Renewal, a champion of ecumenism, and preacher to the papal household in the Vatican.

Praise God for the Kansas City conference.

> [\*See related article on First Gathering of Charismatic Renewal Streams Seeking Unity in the Spirit Together in Kansas City 1977\*](#)

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Kevin Ranaghan (born 1940) is an American religious scholar, Catholic deacon, and a founder of the [People of Praise](#), a charismatic, ecumenical and covenant community with 22 locations in the US, Canada and the Carribean. He is married to Dorothy Ranaghan, and has six children and twelve grandchildren.

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## A New Heart and Call to Ecumenism and Building Communities

by Dorothy Ranaghan

In March of 1967 the word boredom disappeared from my vocabulary. There was and is no time to be bored, because the Spirit poured out on us then was a Spirit of boldness and power!

As we approach the golden jubilee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, it is important to remember that we have been swept up in one of the greatest works of the Spirit in history. That is not my hyperbole speaking, it is just the simple and profound truth. To quote Pope Saint John Paul II, “The charismatic renewal is an eloquent manifestation, a bold statement of what the Spirit is saying in the church.” If the figures we have are accurate, there are over 150 million Roman Catholics in over 120 countries that have experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit.

One of the most significant works of the Spirit that we have seen is the movement towards authentic Christian community. Whether it is in the loosely structured small Christian community concept in parishes or the highly organized Catholic and ecumenical covenant communities, there has been an impetus, a call, a desire to build community. And it is very often within these communities that the gifts of the Spirit remain most in evidence.

Most importantly, there is a new heart and hope for ecumenism. Not just for theological doctrinal dialogue, but what is known as the ecumenism of relationships, a “spiritual” ecumenism. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an “ecumenical grace” for the church. Wall of separation, division and suspicion began to crumble in the wake of this Pentecostal outpouring whose origins were thoroughly ecumenical. We have come to know that from the many streams of Christianity we are already significantly one and are called to deepen that reality.

The best is yet to come. The Spirit is saying, “go out, preach the gospel, heal the sick, change the world.” And as the Anglican theologian N.T. Wright so beautifully put it, “The announcement of Jesus as Lord of the whole world which all Christians since Pentecost are mean to announce, meets the resistance of economic, social, cultural and above all political forces of the wider world. But the Spirit given to us is greater than this

resistance so that God’s work may be done through us.” It is not, Wright says, just that God intends that the Spirit will declare that the world is in the wrong, but that it is “we, trembling, but in the power of the Holy Spirit who will make that declaration.” Let those who have ears...

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Dorothy Ranaghan is a founding member of the [People of Praise](#), a charismatic, ecumenical and covenant community with 22 locations in the US, Canada and the Carribean. She is married to Kevin Ranaghan, and has six children and twelve grandchildren.

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## A Second Baptism in the Holy Spirit

by Father Raniero Cantalamessa

*You are known in Italy and abroad not only as a preacher but also for belonging to the Charismatic Renewal Movement. How did you learn about that movement, and how did you decide to be a part of it?*

Between the time of my appointment to the Theological Commission and becoming the Preacher to the Papal Household, an event occurred that changed the course of my life, so I want to spend some time on it.

It all began in 1975. I was the spiritual director for a lady named Vittoria Cagnoli. Returning one day from a retreat house, she told me about having met some strange people who prayed in an unusual manner, lifting up their arms and clapping their hands. As a cautious spiritual director, I told her, “Don’t go to that retreat house anymore.” She obeyed, but she was not easy to persuade.

One day when I was in Rome, I was invited to a meeting being held in a house of sisters. I was there as a critical observer. On the one hand, I was disconcerted, just as anyone who was formed according to a certain pre-conciliar style would be. On the other hand, I was fascinated because what I was seeing happen before my eyes seemed exactly what I, as a scholar of Early Christian History, knew had happened in the first Christian communities.

### **“A very big critic of charismatic renewal”**

The leaders of the meeting advised those present, “Don’t go to that priest because he is our enemy; he is a very big critic!” But the people, seeing a friar, came to me for confession. And hearing the confession of these people

was a shock for me. I had never encountered such sincere and profound repentance. After their confessions, sins seemed to fall off like stones from the hearts of these people, who at the end seemed reborn. It was evident that this was the work of the Holy Spirit who, as Jesus said, “will convince the world of sin” (John 16:8).

I continued with this attitude of being an observer for almost two years. I chose to teach a course at the university on the topic “Prophetic and Charismatic Movements in the Early Church” in the hope of understanding something more about what was currently going on. The members of the movement invited me to give teachings to their groups, even though they knew that I did not accept speaking in tongues (the gift mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and by Paul about expressing oneself in diverse languages they did not know), the lifting of hands, the embracing of one another....

### **Invited to the Kansas City Charismatic Conference**

In 1977 another lady from Milan offered four tickets, all expenses paid, to go to America to attend an ecumenical charismatic conference being held in Kansas City. One of these tickets was offered to Professor Giovanni Saldarini, the future Archbishop of Turin. At the last minute his mother became ill and he was not able to go, so his ticket was offered to me. Wanting to go to the United States for my own sake to learn English, I accepted, saying to myself that it would all be over after a week.

On the plane from Milan to New York and from there to Kansas City, I read an issue of the magazine *New Covenant* published for the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. There was an article by someone named Patti Gallagher, one of the students who had participated in a retreat at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh where the movement had originated in February 1967. She summarized her experiences with Jesus’s words: “Blessed are you who see what you see and the ears that hear it” (see Matthew 13:16). That troubled me. I thought, “These people must have discovered a secret that is bigger than themselves.”

...There were 40,000 people in Kansas City; 20,000 were Catholic and 20,000 were from other Christian denominations, many of them evangelical and Pentecostal. Every morning each church group met separately to celebrate their own liturgies. At night, everyone gathered together in the same stadium to hear the Word of God, sing, and pray.

There is a power in 40,000 people singing charismatic songs together that shakes the walls around one’s heart.... If on the one hand, I was convinced that certain things were coming from the Spirit of God, there were other things, especially on the part of Evangelicals, that I found myself still unprepared for and that left me perplexed.

### **I was witnessing a living prophecy**

One night one of the presenters took the microphone and began to speak in a way that was strange for me at that point. He said, “Mourn and weep, bishops, priests, pastors, for the body of my Son is broken. Weep and mourn, laypeople, men and women, for the body of my Son is broken!” I began to see people fall to their knees all around me. In fact almost all the people in the stadium were on their knees, sobbing with repentance for the divisions among Christians that were so obvious. All of this was happening while an electric sign from one end of the stadium to the other read, “Jesus is Lord!”

That scene has always impressed me as a living prophecy. I said to myself, “If one day Christians will truly be reunited in one single church, it will be like this: everyone on their knees in repentance under the lordship of Christ.” It was there that I began to discover the kingdom of the lordship of Christ—that is, what it means to proclaim, “Jesus is Lord!” The companions who had come from Italy with me knew my state of hesitation. Therefore, when the assembly sang the song about the fall of Jericho at the sound of Joshua’s trumpets, they elbowed me and whispered, “Listen closely, because you are Jericho.” They were right!

### **“I am giving you this last chance to convince me!”**

From Kansas City they invited me to go to a retreat house in New Jersey. I thought about staying there for a day

and then visiting my Capuchin brothers in Washington. I looked forward to being by myself in the environment of my community to reflect on what I was seeing. But an Irish priest named Fr. Brendan Murray invited me very gently, saying, “Stay with us this week; there’s a retreat on the Trinity!” I remember saying to myself, “This is not a house of prostitution but a retreat house; it cannot hurt me to stay! Lord, I am staying. I am giving you this last chance to convince me!”

One day I was participating in a prayer meeting. So many objections were echoing inside of me. I said to myself, “I am a son of St. Francis; I have him as my father and a rich spirituality in my religious order. What am I looking for? What do I lack? What can these brothers possibly give me?” But first and foremost the idea pounding in my head was, “I already have St. Francis of Assisi as my father!” At that point one of those present, without knowing any of this, opened the Bible and began to read a passage at random. It was the passage in Luke’s Gospel where John the Baptist says to the Pharisees, “Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’” (Luke 3:8).

I understood that the Lord was answering me. I stood up, and although I did not yet speak English, everyone seemed to understand as I said this prayer: “Lord, I will no longer say that I am a son of Francis of Assisi because I realize that I am not. And if to be a son it becomes necessary to make myself a child and accept that these brothers pray over me, I accept.” That is how I began to participate in the meetings that precede what is called “the baptism of the Spirit”; they are meetings about the great truths of the faith, about the love of God, conversion, holiness, and the charisms.

### **“Would you give me the reins to your life?”**

In the course of preparing to be prayed with, one evening I was walking in the park near the house when an image formed itself in my mind. The Lord sometimes speaks through images, which is a very simple way to communicate with human beings. Nothing miraculous, but altogether unforgettable.

I saw myself internally as a man on a coach who is holding the reins of the carriage and is deciding whether to go to the right or to the left, whether to go quickly or slowly. I understood that it was the image of myself as a man who wants to have control of his own life. At a certain point it was as though Jesus climbed up next to me in the carriage and gently said to me, “Would you give me the reins to your life?” There was an instant of panic because I understood that this was serious. However, through the grace of God, I realized in the same instant that I could not be the one to control my life; neither could I be sure of tomorrow. Therefore I said, “Yes, Lord, take the reins of my life!” Then the moment came for me to receive prayer for a new outpouring of the Spirit...

During the prayer those praying asked me to choose Jesus as the personal Lord of my life. At that moment I lifted up my eyes and saw the Crucified One above the altar. Again there was a flash and an inner voice that said, “Be careful; the Jesus you are choosing as Lord is not a nice rose-water Jesus; it is I, the crucified Christ.” That was a help to me, because I still had some doubts that all of this could be something emotional and superficial. In that moment I understood, instead, that the Holy Spirit goes right to the heart of the Gospel, which is the cross of Christ. How many times in later years did I need to remind myself of that word!

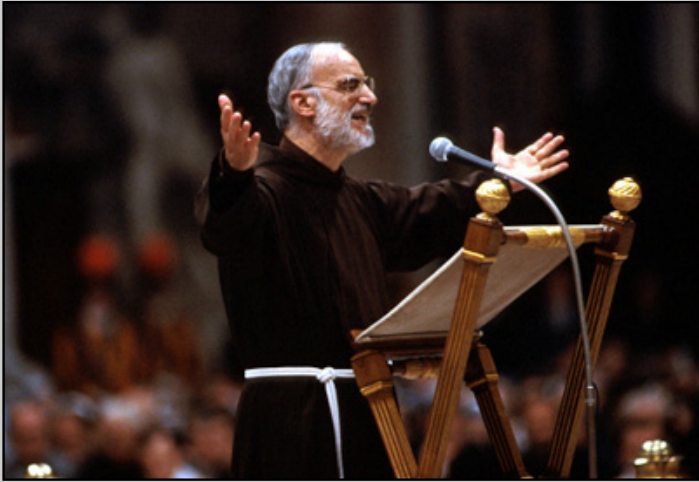
### **“The Bible became a living book for me”**

At the moment of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, many people experience particular emotions; they can burst into tears of repentance or of joy. For me, nothing in particular happened outwardly except the clear decision of entrusting the reins of my life to the Lord and renewing my baptism. Some brothers, while the prayer was going on, spoke some prophetic words over me. Someone said, “You will experience a new joy in proclaiming my Word.” Another person opened the Bible and read the passage where the risen Lord said to Ananias about Paul, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:15-16). Up until that point, my preaching consisted almost entirely of a Sunday homily. I was not a preacher but a professor.

The next day I took a plane from Newark to Washington. On the plane I began to realize that, despite appearances, something new had happened. Opening up the breviary, the psalms seemed new to me, written just for me the day before. Later I realized that one of the first effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit is that the Bible becomes a living book. It is no longer a repository of doctrine, an object of study, but the living Word of God that sheds light on situations and the state of one's soul and opens up new horizons.

[Excerpt from [Serving the Word: My Life](#), (c) 2015 by Raniero Cantalamessa, English translation by Marsha Daigle-Williamson, published by [Servant Books](#), an imprint of Franciscan Media.]

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## Establishing an International Office for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

by Ralph Martin

Somehow these somewhat obscure, smaller sized towns, South Bend, Indiana and Ann Arbor, Michigan found themselves in the middle of a worldwide movement that was significantly impacting the Catholic Church.

Friends of ours on the Duquesne weekend soon told us about what had happened to them on that famous weekend in February of 1967 and several years later Ann Arbor had become something of a center holding annual leaders' conferences and publishing New Covenant magazine, and South Bend became known for its Communication Center making products available and for the annual Notre Dame conferences.

Both cities began receiving visitors from all over the world and probably because of New Covenant magazine a lot of international visitors wrote to us and visited as well. I had a shoebox filled with letters from many different countries in my basement office when one day, in April of 1971, Gary Seromik, a grad student in French at the University of Michigan, walked into my office and offered to help. When I found out that he could speak Russian, Polish, Spanish, Italian and French I eagerly accepted his offer and he is with me to this day now as our office manager at Renewal Ministries.

In January of 1973 the International Communication Office (ICO) was officially established by the National Service Committee recognizing the work that Gary and I were doing in our basement office.

In March of 1973 Cardinal Suenens visited Ann Arbor and after he revealed his identity — he came at first as “Fr. Michel Dubois” living in our household! — offered to help us in any way he could. He gave a wonderful interview to New Covenant magazine where he declared his support for the renewal. He then suggested we have our next leaders' conference in Rome — which was a big step for us—and so we did.

In October of 1973 the First International Leaders' Conference was held in Grottaferrata, a suburb of Rome, which 126 leaders from 34 countries attended. Cardinal Suenens arranged for 13 of us to be received by Pope Paul VI which was the first papal recognition that the renewal had received.

The surprises continued and in 1976 we moved the international office (along with us!) to Brussels at the Cardinal's invitation and then in 1978 Fr. Tom Forrest took over as Director while I served as Chairman of the International Council that oversaw the office. And in 1980 ICO moved to Rome and eventually was granted pontifical recognition under its current name, ICCRS, International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services.

When my wife Anne and I were in Rome for the big conference at Olympic Stadium with Pope Francis in 2014 we visited the current offices and marveled to think of the journey from a basement in Ann Arbor to a Vatican Palace — Palazzo San Callisto! The amazing works of God, and the continuing surprises of the Holy Spirit.

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Ralph Martin is president of Renewal Ministries, an organization devoted to Catholic renewal and evangelization. Ralph also hosts The Choices We Face, a widely viewed weekly Catholic television and radio program distributed throughout the world. Renewal Ministries is also actively involved in assisting the Church in more than 30 different countries through leadership training, evangelistic conferences and retreats, and the publication and distribution of Catholic resources.

Ralph is the author of a number of books, including A Crisis of Truth, Hungry for God, Fire on the Earth, Will Many Be Saved?, and more recently, The Urgency of the New Evangelization: Answering the Call, What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization. He and his wife Anne have six children and sixteen grandchildren and reside in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

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## My Personal Encounter with Charismatic Renewal, Life in the Spirit Seminars, and Covenant Community in Auckland, New Zealand

by Maryanne Hall

### **The Holy Spirit changed my heart**

In early 1973, my classmate at St Benedict's Girl's College in Auckland told me her mother was attending prayer meetings at St Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland and that at the next meeting her mother was going to speak in tongues. When I found out that anyone could attend these meetings, I went along to hear this hitherto unusual phenomenon. I was disappointed because all those attending the Life in the Spirit Seminars, went off to other venues for their sessions and newcomers remained in the Cathedral. I enjoyed the praise and worship. Afterwards, a Franciscan brother (Br Ray Parsons) came up to me and said that he was going to pray for me that week. I told him he didn't need to as I wasn't one of 'them.' He then said he'd look out for me the following Monday night, but I had decided I was not going back.

Well, the Holy Spirit moved in my heart during that week, and some nights I lay in bed crying, and I did not know why. It was like a hardness of heart was being removed from me as I had not shed a tear for many years over anything...And I went back to the Cathedral the following Monday night and enrolled in the seminar.

### **The presence of God was real and tangible**

So many people had been coming to these meetings that there was a different venue for each week of the Life in the Spirit Seminar. Any room that could be found to squash people into was utilised. The Cathedral's sacristy, anterooms, upstairs and down at Liston house, the presbytery and also nearby businesses such as the Air New Zealand building. And newcomers came to the main prayer meeting in the cathedral until they enrolled in a seminar. The presence of God was real and tangible. The excitement amongst the people gathered was evident on their happy faces and loving hearts. It was wonderful to know God in this new and remarkable way and to see the power manifested in so many spiritual gifts.

I was in awe of the music team, and I loved singing every new song I heard there. They learned charismatic songs from the St Paul's (Anglican) Singers who later released LP's of worship music. Zoe McCarthy and Mary Pound were two sopranos, in particular, I recall who sang like angels with the most beautiful harmonies.

### **My second encounter with Life in the Spirit seminars**

In that first Life in the Spirit Seminar, I received a gift of genuine love for others. Then I enrolled to repeat the seminar again. There was a shortage of available small group leaders so from that second seminar; I was assigned a group to lead. I was amazed that adults didn't baulk at that at all and accepted a school kid as leader of their group. I recall Jackie Abraham being in a small group I lead and at a later stage Sister Alice Hardiman being in my group for her first Life in the Spirit Seminar.

Then there was a shortage of teachers for these seminars, and I attended a few short training sessions led by Ernie Milne and started to teach on Forgiveness and Reconciliation. This was in the days Ernie lived in a 'poncho' (his signature garment) before he entered the Rosminians – first as a brother; then as a priest. Other Rosminians figured significantly in my life – Fr John Moss and Fr Bill Harwood. The latter praying over me for the gift of tongues at a charismatic retreat at St Paul's College.

I eagerly attended the Charismatic Summer Schools in Palmerston North put on by Christian Advance Ministries. I still have my folder from the one in 1974. In 1975 I was married, and Greg and I attended the Pakuranga Prayer Group as by that time the renewal in Auckland had first split into regions and then into parishes. We met in the home of Mavis Skinner. I really missed the awesomeness of the enormous inner-city gatherings; the volume of the praise and worship taking the roof off the cathedral, the variety of gifts evident – prophecies in tongues (both sung and spoken) with interpretations of, prophetic utterances, wonderful revelations and healings.

### **Our first taste of Christian community**

In 1976 there was a new move of the Holy Spirit in the form of building a sense of community in parishes. We joined the first group formed in St Mark's Pakuranga. It heralded from Spain and was called the Better World Movement. It was our first taste of Christian Community.

From 1977 to 1979 Greg and I lived in Dargaville where I was posted for my country service teaching. There was no charismatic prayer group there, so we ran the local parish youth group instead. At the end of 1978, I was able to attend the Charismatic Summer School where Francis McNutt was the main speaker, taking with me a member of the local youth group – David Passell. That was a life-changing experience for him. On our return to Auckland for 1979, our first son Danjel was born, and we resumed our belonging to the Better World Group of which I was a member for eleven years while overlapping with our involvement in covenant community...

### **The fruitful formation of covenant community**

In 1982 Roger Foley from the [Lamb of God Community](http://www.swordofthespirit.net/bulwark/april2017p13.htm) in Christchurch and John Carroll of the Brisbane Emmanuel covenant community came and gave a talk in the Hillsborough Parish Hall of St John Vianney. Our whole Better World Group attended this. It really struck a chord deeply with Greg and I. Here was another move of the Holy Spirit - a form of Christian Community that was a Way of Life. - A daily belonging with a Life Commitment. It was more of what we had wanted for the life of our family. We found that the Life in the Spirit Seminar was an initial introduction to a whole series of courses on Living the New Life in God's Spirit. They were the lead-in to the formation of Covenant Communities.

At the end of 1983 a team from the Community in Brisbane, the Gamblings, and John and Penny Carroll, ran



a live-in retreat and Greg and I attended this. We met people from Auckland who were forming these covenant communities. Early 1984, after the birth of our third son, we joined, and from then there's been no looking back. Greg and I have had tremendous blessings over the past 33 years of living in committed relationships with our brothers and sisters in Covenant Community. We have had many joys shared and many sorrows supported. Covenant Community is not the only move of the Holy Spirit in the Charismatic Renewal, but for us, through service and commitment, it has borne the most fruit.

[This article is from the *Lamb of God Chronicle*, April 2017 Issue, a monthly newsletter of the [Lamb of God](#) national community in New Zealand.]

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Christmas Day Mass in ruined church in Aleppo December 2016

## *Rebuilding the Walls and Widening the Dwellings*

### Update on Emmanuel in Aleppo

by André J. Codouni

André J. Codouni, a member of the People of God in Beirut, has maintained close contact with members of Emmanuel Community in Aleppo, Syria. Below is a brief update from interviews with community members in Aleppo:

#### **An early Christmas gift!**

The third week of December 2016 brought the cessation of the fighting after more than four years of intense hostilities in the city of Aleppo, Syria. The sounds of explosions ceased nearby, scenes of civilians with white flags and convoys of buses evacuating rebel areas went on for about two weeks.

Victory was soon declared by the Syrian Government and people went out to see firsthand the damages. Some took photos in what had to be a deeply depressing activity. Yet there was relief that after the four and a half years of fighting one could go around and reminisce about what it was like before the all-out confrontation. This time the ceasefire would hold. It felt good to walk about without being on the lookout for immediate danger of snipers or rockets.

#### **Time to rebuild**

Some of my Christian friends in the Emmanuel community did like everyone else. Even during the worst times of the war they had not ceased reaching out to others, meeting in each other's homes for prayers and inviting their friends and neighbors along. They had continued to participate in the liturgical life of the few church parishes that were still operating. This time, however, it felt different, they were full of hope that during peace they could do even more to help.

Not many buildings were left unscathed. Here, a hole in a wall, a shattered store front, the blackened walls of a burnt-out apartment, while nearby a demolished car that hopefully could be replaced soon. One patriotic woman was proudly waving the national flag, yet she was very aware that there was much to be done around her.

### **Opportunity knocks!**

Because of being in a predominantly Muslim country, Emmanuel members have to think within the limits of the laws governing how Christian groups operate. The foremost condition required of them is to identify themselves with a church authority recognized by the Government. You have to be “under” a bishop to be allowed to exist and function.

One such prelate had met the group and wanted to help. His sibling’s family was becoming familiar with the group and the experience had deepened their faith and commitment. He encouraged the brothers and sisters to have a place where they could meet in small “sharing groups”, for bible studies, and for storing equipment and musical instruments they used for their evangelistic outreach. Excitement and anticipation grew quickly for having a place, a center for their growing ministry.

### **The proposed Community Center**

Emmanuel community was offered such a place long term, for a few years, by another prelate. A five-room spacious apartment, in a convenient location, that needed renovation specially in the kitchen and the bathrooms. Favorable terms were discussed for any eventual formalities. They could rent it “as is” and would be allowed to make all the necessary repairs and upgrades.

This opportunity that presented itself was unique and needed boldness and faith. Where will the leaders find the money needed and still make sure they continue helping those who have relied on the community’s help for the last few years?

In boldness and faith, they took the first step and asked one member, a civil engineer, to survey the apartment and estimate what is needed for repairs and upgrades. He returned with a report broadly outlining what is needed for them to use it effectively in their ministry, at least for the first year.

### **Prayers and support**

Many in the Sword of the Spirit regularly ask about Emmanuel and how one can pray for them. This report is intended to give the members of the Sword of the Spirit a window into this year’s current focus of the community in Aleppo. Please join them in praying that this project of a center would come to fruition and that they continue to live a life free of everyday livelihood concerns in order to give full attention to the mission God has entrusted to them.

As a side benefit, the work involved in the center will mainly be done by members of the community, thus providing at least part-time employment for some of them.

Please know that your prayers and support sustain Emmanuel in more ways than you can imagine and the brethren thank you, as always, very sincerely.

For further information, or if you wish to contribute, contact:

Andre Codouni – People of God – Beirut, Lebanon: [acodouni@gmail.com](mailto:acodouni@gmail.com)

This updated report was first published in Sword of the Spirit, March 2017.

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André J. Codouni is a member of the [People of God](#) community in Beirut, Lebanon.

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## Wonderfully Made

by Maggie Schmidt

“God, I want to see myself as you see me. I am tired of feeling worthless.” This is a prayer of desperation that we have all prayed. We question our worth, and we cry out for solace. I remember one particular evening in middle school--insecure, lost, searching--I prayed this prayer.

I knelt there, expecting some sort of out of body experience. I wanted to suddenly see myself in an entirely new light. I wanted my flaws to fade. I wanted the virtues that I had been trying so desperately to cultivate to be all that I could see. Wasn't I fearfully and wonderfully made? I was His daughter; surely the Lord wanted to convince me of my beauty.

I did not, however, receive this immediate consolation, so I assured myself that God loved me and went back to the less theoretical worries of my middle school self.

As life went on, doubts of my worth continued to plague me. I kept telling myself that I was fearfully and wonderfully made, but that truth remained a vague concept--a reassuring phrase at best. It was not the convicting reality that defined my existence.

As my insecurity persisted, I descended into the rat race of proving my worth. In eighth grade, something changed. I started to gain confidence, but it was not because I understood my identity in Christ. I became one of the top students in my class. I started swimming on the varsity team at my high school. I was voted onto the leadership board for student government. I became a leader in my youth group. I suddenly began to receive a lot of praise for my accomplishments.



At first, it simply felt nice to be recognized. I appreciated the praise that I received for acing a test. I liked hearing my name on the school announcements after a swim meet. I was proud to be voted onto the board for student government. I enjoyed being recognized as a leader in my youth group.

But very quickly, that recognition slipped from helpful encouragement to something that was vital to my survival. Success had become core to my identity. Rather than just appreciating the compliments that I received, I needed to ace every test; I needed to be voted onto the board for student government; I needed to hear my name on the school announcements after a swim meet; I needed to be recognized as a leader in my youth group. If not, I had failed. What was I if not successful?

Throughout high school, I lived in this constant fear of failure--my identity quivering at the slightest mishap. I was terrified of anyone seeing my brokenness. I was caught in the trap of perfectionism. So much of my energy went into stabilizing my outward appearance, I didn't have time to internalize the truth of my identity in Christ.

**[“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Psalm 139:14](#)**

I did not know this full well. The perfectionism that ruled my external life had seeped into my spiritual life. Not only did I have to live up to a standard of perfection in school, sports, and leadership, but also in my walk with Christ. I believed that the truth of Psalm 139 was contingent on my efforts. I had to pray every day; I had to master the joy of the Lord; I had to perfect every Christian virtue. If I could manage all this, then my identity was in the Lord.

Fast forward five years from when I first prayed, “God, I want to see myself as you see me. I am tired of feeling worthless.” It was the summer after I graduated high school. I had just moved to Detroit, Michigan for a Kairos Gap Year. In a completely new place, surrounded by a completely new set of people, I was faced with the opportunity of redefining myself.

I was reminded of that prayer of desperation that I had prayed in eighth grade. I looked back at the past five years of my life, a bit resentful of the Lord. “Why didn't you answer my prayer?”

Five days after I moved away from home, I went for a run. I was tired of the rat race of proving my worth. While I ran I repeated this question again and again. “Why didn't you answer my prayer? God, I want to see myself as you see me!” More and more emphatically with every step. With each repetition, I would reevaluate myself. What was keeping me from fully believing that I was enough? I would reassure myself, as I had a thousand times in high school, that I was “fearfully and wonderfully made.”

The answer that came wasn't the answer I was expecting. At first, it didn't even seem related.

**[“Look up. Look out. Look around.”](#)**

My life wasn't about me. My identity wasn't about me. My identity was in Christ. I was never going to find the answer to who I was by looking at myself. I had striving for a feeling of security in the Lord; I hadn't been striving for Him. I needed to direct my gaze outward. I needed to look to Him. This gave me the freedom to be broken. I didn't need to be perfect because He was perfect.

“Look up.” Stop reevaluating your worth. Stop trying to fix yourself. The Christian life is not a self-improvement plan.

“Look out.” Direct your gaze to the Lord. “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Psalm 139:14. Make your life less about discovering who you are and more about discovering who He is.

“Look around.” Imagine yourself standing on top of a mountain, endless landscapes stretching down in every direction. Take in the sheer breadth of God’s creation. Three hundred sixty degrees of beauty surround you. You cannot possibly grasp it all at once. And yet, you are greater than all of this because you were made in His image.

The longing of our hearts to find our identity in the Lord will never be satisfied by looking at ourselves. Finding our identity in Him, letting His truth penetrate to the core of our beings, will never come from racing after perfectionism. Instead you must look to real Perfection. Only by looking to Him, the one who is truly perfect, can we see ourselves as we truly are--humbled, broken yet “fearfully and wonderfully made.”



My name is Maggie Schmidt, and I grew up in the Community of Christ the Redeemer in St. Paul, Minnesota. After serving for a year in Detroit with the Kairos Gap Program, I stuck around Michigan and moved up to Lansing. I am a part of University Christian Outreach here while studying nursing and community engagement and human services.

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This article by Maggie first appeared in [The Lovely Commission](#), a new publishing venture and brand of [Kairos North America](#). It is run by Mary Rose Giles and Molly Kilpatrick

and a team of contributors from various Christian communities in North America and beyond. Together they are working to build a culture of radical love, femininity, modesty of heart, mind, and body amongst young women.

Their aim is to inspire and equip young women to embrace and promote a culture of Godly femininity in which we live out our rich identity as daughters of God and disciples of Jesus Christ.

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## Heritage: Kairos Weekend in Europe 2017

by Nathan Morrow

The Kairos Weekend 2017 was a success in many ways!

A hundred and twenty participants and staff arrived on Friday 10th February at our venue in Turcifal, Portugal filled with anticipation and excitement, and possibly some questions. People came from across Europe: England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Austria, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and Belgium and almost double that in nationalities represented!

Any worries participants many have had were soon put to rest as people were welcomed with incredible Portuguese hospitality. Over the whole weekend, the food was incredible, the venue was spectacular, the view even more spectacular.

This weekend had a different feel than others that had come before it. The international influence of Kairos was never more present at a Kairos Weekend than this one. This was the first Kairos Weekend held in Portugal, and outreaches which had never attended a Kairos Weekend came along.

We had an excellent translation team which made all those who didn't speak English fluently or at all feel welcomed and at peace during the weekend.

The Lord was acting in and through the participants

The theme of our conference was 'Heritage', over the weekend we had four talks all based on this theme mainly drawing from Psalm 16. The verse "I have a delightful inheritance" was brought to life for us by telling us how we are to be joyful in what Christ has given us. Our attention was then drawn to verse 8 "I keep my eyes always on the Lord" encouraging us to keep focused on the Lord and unwavering because in his strength we cannot be shaken.

"5 Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;  
you make my lot secure.

6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

surely I have a delightful inheritance.

7 I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;

even at night my heart instructs me.

8 I keep my eyes always on the Lord.

With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.” (Psalm 16:5-8)

Experienced university outreach leaders Paul Jordan, David Quintana, Tadhg Lynch, Mags Tierney and Christiane Lewerentz were the speakers at the conference and all were used as instruments of God’s word.

Some of the main messages of the weekend were:

- Our call to our heritage.
- Jesus loves you, and has brought you here this weekend.
- Claiming our heritage.
- God offers us abundant life with him and part of accepting this is rejecting sin.
- Living our heritage.
- God offers us an amazing inheritance, and we have to choose to say ‘yes’ to it and ‘no’ to other things.

From the very first prayer time the Holy Spirit was moving actively amongst us at the weekend. After our opening song of the weekend the room erupted into spiritual song. People singing in multiple different languages and in tongues – what a glorious sound it was.

People were ready to be spoken to and were ready to be spoken through. The ground was fertile; the workers were ready and the Spirit was active! In our main prayer meeting the Lord was clearly speaking to and through people as we had almost too many words for our discernment team to handle.

Around 75% of the room went for prayer ministry and we had to extend our meeting time by 40 minutes to incorporate the number of people responding to what the Lord was saying. We saw people give their lives for the first time to Christ, people reaffirm the faith and some step out and take radical steps in serving Christ.

The Lord moved powerfully in the lives of the participants throughout the weekend, through small groups, friendships, teaching, worship and prayer. People encountered the Lord in a real and impactful way which will see them move forward as disciples and brothers and sister in Christ.

A few quotes from some of the participants, sharing their experience of the weekend

The international aspect of Kairos weekend 2017 was the most wonderful part, I was in a small group that needed 3 languages and 2 translators but Faith united us, we shared something beyond words, this unity is so inspiring! – Jessica Supple, Dublin

God is love, God is good, and God was at the Kairos weekend. I was deeply touched by his love for us and the unity of his body. 10/10 would recommend – Ben Chua, London

I found it great. Especially worship times! I’ve never experienced it so powerful. But perhaps my favourite was the night prayer. It was my first time praying the psalms fully with my heart. And afterwards sleeping was very peaceful – Kathrin Waldner, Vienna

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Nathan Morrow is the Mission Director of Koinonia, the Sword of the Spirit university outreach in London.



## Kairos Mission Trip to India



## Outside My Comfort Zone

by Stephen Giles

I hadn't thought of doing a summer mission trip until James Munk, Director of [Kairos North America](#), shared with a group of us how he got involved in doing mission work in India. He spoke of the challenges in working with college and high school young people in India and about the mission there.

James said that one way we could serve the mission in India was to participate in the May households he was organizing. It sounded like a real adventure and it hit at something within me. I thought about it and then called James and said, 'I'd like to go.' Within about 10 minutes, James was saying, 'when you are in India...' 'Wow,' I thought, 'I'm really going; I'm on the team!'

I was looking for adventure, which I thought maybe that wasn't a 'spiritual' enough reason to go. James said no, it is good for young men to crave adventure.

Soon, I was on my way to Bangalore, the capitol of the state of Karnataka. It is an enormous city by my standards (8.42 million). Besides James and myself, our household included 12 Indian guys, one Filipino, and one American doing a GAP Year in the Philippines.

My first impressions of India: it was warm (even at 1:00 am in the middle of the night) and there was not much night traffic. Then morning came. There are too many cars for the roads and it is hot and noisy with scooters

and motorcycles everywhere. We walked around the neighborhood which was really helpful for seeing Indian street life. There are lots of street vendor stands with fruits and other foods. You can buy a fresh coconut, for example, cut the top, drink the milk, scoop out the wonderful flesh.

Living in India made me re-evaluate distance and speed. Driving an hour and a half would be normal coming back from an evening activity. 30 mph would be very fast (I don't think I ever achieved that on a scooter). Driving in the U.S. is so easy in comparison: a two-lane road in India would have three cars and a truck across the same two lanes.

My role was mainly to be part of the small group, be a solid core member of the household, and be a witness of a man 'fired up' for the Lord. I also did the morning prayer meditations. James told us on the team that we were an 'authority' just because we were there on behalf of the Sword of the Spirit and knew how to apply the talks we were hearing in our lives.

Our household did 'memory-making trips.' We traveled to national parks and had adventures together. We grew in trying new things. In our household talk series, we heard about not making decisions based on fear of discomfort or pain.

We took bucket 'showers,' had six guys sleeping on the floor as well as three each in the two bedrooms, and ate off our laps because we had no table. Personal space was lacking so it was a stretch for us all. I learned that it is OK to be uncomfortable and that we have a very easy life in the U.S. I learned what I actually need and what I just want. We all learned to do dishes, cook, and work on a task together (and stay until the job is done). There were no moms to do stuff for us!

Looking back at my time in India, I can see that I grew in an attitude of 'gameness': being willing to do things outside my comfort zone. It was a lot more fun when I was willing to try new things, new foods, and be uncomfortable. Embracing that attitude allowed me to take on more responsibilities and do things that were 'out there,' rather than sitting safely at home in the air conditioning.

I grew as a disciple – I did things that felt a little 'unsafe' like sharing the Gospel with someone. I saw that being afraid or uncomfortable keeps me from doing things for the Lord – not really good reasons. I learned lessons by 'doing,' and not just from hearing a training presentation or teaching.

I am presently doing a mission year in Detroit as a staff worker for [YouthWorks-Detroit](#), and working with local youth in Detroit. However, since I didn't get sick in India and I got a 10-year visa, James said I am coming back!

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Stephen Giles grew up in the Work of Christ Community in Lansing, Michigan USA and currently serves with [YouthWorks-Detroit](#).

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To learn more about [Kairos North America](#) visit their web site at: <http://kairos-na.org/about/>

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## YouthWorks–Detroit



## Strength in Sincerity

by Stephen Giles

Detroit is as real of a city as you will find. There is an almost tangible sense of genuineness and authenticity that pours forth from the heart of this city. I have experienced this honesty while attending the 12 step meetings at the soup kitchen, during conversations with our youth, or with people on the street.

Detroit's ability to be real and authentic has tremendous power and I think it is one of Detroit's greatest strengths.

When we share honestly, and openly with one another we allow God's strength to be known and proclaimed. When we admit how we've failed and continue to fail, we bear witness to what 2 Corinthians 12 says; "(God's) power is made perfect in weakness."

Furthermore we let others in on the not so secret fact that we are broken and in need of God's mercy. Sharing that with others then allows them the freedom to also share with raw honesty.

The fruit of sharing honestly and being vulnerable are many. I have mentioned some, but doing this also brings healing, freedom, and growth. I write this as a testimony, not because it is something that I do particularly well, but rather because through Detroit, God has shown me how much I need to work on this. He has shown me how valuable and necessary it is to live like this as a Christian.

And not just, or even primarily, because of how it will benefit me, but because of the witness of His power, love, mercy, and faithfulness that it gives and because of how others will benefit from hearing of my failings and God's perfection.

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Stephen Giles grew up in Lansing in the Work of Christ Community and currently serves with [YouthWorks-Detroit](#). He is a proud Michigander, and enjoys summers up north.

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To learn more about [YouthWorks-Detroit](#) visit their [web site](#) and [Facebook page](#)

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## Fifth Centenary of the Protestant Reformation

by Raniero Cantalamessa

The following excerpt is from a sermon by Father Raniero Cantalamessa, Preacher to the Papal Household, delivered to the General Synod of the Church of England on November 24, 2015 in Westminster Abbey in London. The words he spoke then can also give us a helpful spiritual orientation as we seek to engage in common witness of the commemoration of the 500th Reformation anniversary.

The Christian world is preparing to celebrate the fifth centenary of the Protestant Reformation. It is vital for the whole Church that this opportunity is not wasted by people remaining prisoners of the past, trying to establish each other's rights and wrongs. Rather, let us take a qualitative leap forward, like what happens when the sluice gates of a river or a canal enable ships to continue to navigate at a higher water level.

The situation has dramatically changed since then. We need to start again with the person of Jesus, humbly helping our contemporaries to experience a personal encounter with Him. "All things were created through him and for him"; Christ is the light of the world, the one who gives meaning and hope to every human life – and the majority of people around us live and die as if He had never existed! How can we be unconcerned, and each remain "in the comfort of our own panelled houses"?

### **"We preach Christ crucified"**

We need to go back to the time of the Apostles: they faced a pre-Christian world, and we are facing a largely post-Christian world. When Paul wants to summarise the essence of the Christian message in one sentence, he does not say, "I proclaim this or that doctrine to you." He says, "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:23), and "We preach . . . Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Cor 4:5). This is the real "articulus stantis et cadentis Ecclesiae", the article by which the Church stands or falls.

This does not mean ignoring the great theological and spiritual enrichment that came from the Reformation or desiring to go back to the time before it. It means instead allowing all of Christianity to benefit from its achievements, once they are freed from certain distortions due to the heated atmosphere of the time and of

later controversies.

## **Justification by faith versus self-justification!**

Justification by faith, for example, ought to be preached by the whole Church—and with more vigour than ever. Not in opposition to good works – the issue is already settled – but rather in opposition to the claim of people today that they can save themselves thanks to their science, technology or their man-made spirituality, without the need for a redeemer coming from outside humanity. Self-justification! I am convinced that if they were alive today this is the way Martin Luther and Thomas Cranmer would preach justification through faith!

Unity is not a simple matter. One has to start with the big Churches, those that are well structured, putting together that which unites them, which is vastly more important than what divides them; not imposing uniformity but aiming at what pope Francis calls “reconciled diversities”. Nothing is more important than to fulfill Christ’s heart desire for unity expressed in today’s gospel. In many parts of the world people are killed and churches burned not because they are Catholic, or Anglican, or Pentecostals, but because they are Christians. In their eyes we are already one! Let us be one also in our eyes and in the eyes of God.

## **Take courage now – the Lord is with you**

Let us conclude by returning to the text of Haggai. After the people of Israel, in obedience to the prophet’s invitation, had returned with renewed fervour to the task of rebuilding the temple, God sent His prophet again, this time with a message full of hope and consolation:

“But take courage now, Zerubbabel – it is the Lord who speaks, courage, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, high priest; courage, all you people of the country – it is the Lord who speaks. To work! I am with you, the Lord of hosts declares; and my Spirit is present among you. Do not be afraid!” (Haggai 2, 4-5).

Zerubbabel was the political leader at the time, and Joshua the religious leader. I believe that the Lord wanted me to be among you today, above all to tell you that He is addressing this same message to you... “To work, because I am with you. Says the Lord!”

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## **See related articles on the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation:**

From the February / March 2017 Issue of Living Bulwark:

- [An Introduction to the Age of the Reformation](#), by Timothy George
- [Roots that Refresh: The Vitality of Reformation Spirituality](#), by Alister McGrath
- [Reading Scripture with the Early Reformers](#)
- [Your Word is Truth: Statement of Evangelicals and Catholics Together](#)

From the April / May 2017 Issue of Living Bulwark:

- [A Spiritual Orientation to 500th Reformation Anniversary](#), by Raniero CantaleMESSA
- [Justification: A Summary of Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue and Joint Agreement](#)
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Common Witness from the official Lutheran – Catholic worldwide ecumenical dialogue



## Justification - A Summary of Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue and Joint Agreement

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### Introduction

1. In 2017, Lutheran and Catholic Christians will commemorate together the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. Lutherans and Catholics today enjoy a growth in mutual understanding, cooperation, and respect. They have come to acknowledge that more unites than divides them: above all, common faith in the Triune God and the revelation in Jesus Christ, as well as recognition of the basic truths of the doctrine of justification.
2. Already the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in 1980 offered both Lutherans and Catholics the opportunity to develop a common understanding of the foundational truths of the faith by pointing to Jesus Christ as the living center of our Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> On the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's birth in 1983, the international dialogue between Roman Catholics and Lutherans jointly affirmed a number of Luther's essential concerns. The Commission's report designated him »Witness to Jesus Christ« and declared, »Christians, whether Protestant or Catholic, cannot disregard the person and the message of this man.«<sup>2</sup>
3. The upcoming year of 2017 challenges Catholics and Lutherans to discuss in dialogue the issues and consequences of the Wittenberg Reformation, which centered on the person and thought of Martin Luther, and to develop perspectives for the remembrance and appropriation of the Reformation today. Luther's reforming agenda poses a spiritual and theological challenge for both contemporary Catholics and Lutherans.

### Notes:

1 Roman Catholic / Lutheran Joint Commission, »All Under One Christ: Statement on the Augsburg Confession 1980,« in Harding Meyer and Lucas Visser (eds), *Growth in Agreement I: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1972–1982* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 241–47.

2 Roman Catholic / Lutheran Joint Commission, »Martin Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ« I.1, in Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer and William G. Rusch (eds), *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982–1998* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), 438.

## Justification - A Summary of Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue and Joint Agreement

### Luther's understanding of justification

102. Luther gained one of his basic Reformation insights from reflecting on the sacrament of penance, especially in relation to Matthew 16:19. In his late medieval education, he was trained to understand that God would forgive a person who was contrite for his or her sin by performing an act of loving God above all things, to which God would respond according to God's covenant (*pactum*) by granting anew God's grace and forgiveness (*facienti quod in se est deus non denegat gratiam*),<sup>36</sup> so that the priest could only declare that God had already forgiven the penitent's sin. Luther concluded that Matthew 16 said just the opposite, namely that the priest declared the penitent righteous, and by this act on behalf of God, the sinner actually became righteous.

### Word of God as promise

103. Luther understood the words of God as words that create what they say and as having the character of promise (*promissio*). Such a word of promise is said in a particular place and time, by a particular person, and is directed to a particular person. A divine promise is directed toward a person's faith. Faith in turn grasps what is promised as promised to the believer personally. Luther insisted that such faith is the only appropriate response to a word of divine promise. A human being is called to look away from him or herself and to look only at the word of God's promise and trust fully in it. Since faith grounds us in Christ's promise, it grants the believer full assurance of salvation. Not to trust in this word would make God a liar or one on whose word one could not ultimately rely. Thus, in Luther's view, unbelief is the greatest sin against God.

104. In addition to structuring the dynamic between God and the penitent within the sacrament of penance, the relationship of promise and trust also shapes the relationship between God and human beings in the proclamation of the Word. God wishes to deal with human beings by giving them words of promise – sacraments are also such words of promise – that show God's saving will towards them. Human beings, on the other hand, should deal with God only by trusting in his promises. Faith is totally dependent on God's promises; it cannot create the object in which human beings put their trust.

105. Nevertheless, trusting God's promise is not a matter of human decision; rather, the Holy Spirit reveals this promise as trustworthy and thus creates faith in a person. Divine promise and human belief in that promise belong together. Both aspects need to be stressed, the »objectivity« of the promise and the »subjectivity« of faith. According to Luther, God not only reveals divine realities as information with which the intellect must agree; God's revelation also always has a soteriological purpose directed towards the faith and salvation of believers who receive the promises that God gives »for you« as words of God »for me« or »for us« (*pro me, pro nobis*).

106. God's own initiative establishes a saving relation to the human being; thus salvation happens by grace. The gift of grace can only be received, and since this gift is mediated by a divine promise, it cannot be received except by faith, and not by works. Salvation takes place by grace alone. Nevertheless, Luther constantly emphasized that the justified person would do good works in the Spirit.

### By Christ alone

107. God's love for human beings is centered, rooted, and embodied in Jesus Christ. Thus, »by grace alone« is always to be explained by »by Christ alone.« Luther describes the relationship of human persons with Christ by using the image of a spiritual marriage. The soul is the bride; Christ is the bridegroom; faith is the wedding ring. According to the laws of marriage, the properties of the bridegroom (righteousness) become the properties of the bride, and the properties of the bride (sin) become the properties of the bridegroom. This »joyful exchange« is the forgiveness of sins and salvation.

108. The image shows that something external, namely Christ's righteousness, becomes something internal. It becomes the property of the soul, but only in union with Christ through trust in his promises, not in separation from him. Luther insists that our righteousness is totally external because it is Christ's righteousness, but it has to become totally internal by faith in Christ. Only if both sides are equally emphasized is the reality of salvation properly understood. Luther states, »It is precisely in faith that Christ is present.«<sup>37</sup> Christ is »for us« (*pro nobis*) and in us (*in nobis*), and we are in Christ (*in Christo*).



## Significance of the law

109. Luther also perceived human reality, with respect to the law in its theological or spiritual meaning, from the perspective of what God requires from us. Jesus expresses God's will by saying, »You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind« (Matthew 22:37). That means that God's commandments are fulfilled only by total dedication to God. This includes not only the will and the corresponding outward actions, but also all aspects of the human soul and heart such as emotions, longing, and human striving, that is, those aspects and movements of the soul either not under the control of the will or only indirectly and partially under the control of the will through the virtues.

110. In the legal and moral spheres, there exists an old rule, intuitively evident, that nobody can be obliged to do more than he or she is able to do (*ultra posse nemo obligatur*). Thus, in the Middle Ages, many theologians were convinced that this commandment to love God must be limited to the will. According to this understanding, the commandment to love God does not require that all motions of the soul should be directed and dedicated to God. Rather, it would be enough that the will loves (i. e., wills) God above all (*diligere deum super omnia*).

111. Luther argued, however, that there is a difference between a legal and a moral understanding of the law, on the one hand, and a theological understanding of it, on the other. God has not adapted God's commandments to the conditions of the fallen human being. Instead, theologically understood, the commandment to love God shows the situation and the misery of human beings. As Luther wrote in the »Disputation against Scholastic Theology,« »Spiritually that person [only] does not kill, does not do evil, does not become enraged when he neither becomes angry nor lusts.«<sup>38</sup> In this respect, divine law is not primarily fulfilled by external actions or acts or the will but by the wholehearted dedication of the whole person to the will of God.

## Participation in Christ's righteousness

112. Luther's position, that God requires wholehearted dedication in fulfilling God's law, explains why Luther emphasized so strongly that we totally depend on Christ's righteousness. Christ is the only person who totally fulfilled God's will, and all other human beings can only become righteous in a strict, i. e., theological sense, if we participate in Christ's righteousness. Thus, our righteousness is external insofar as it is Christ's righteousness, but it must become our righteousness, that is, internal, by faith in Christ's promise. Only by participation in Christ's wholehearted dedication to God can we become wholly righteous.

113. Since the gospel promises us, »Here is Christ and his Spirit,« participation in Christ's righteousness is never realized without being under the power of the Holy Spirit who renews us. Thus, becoming righteous and being renewed are intimately and inseparably connected. Luther did not criticize fellow theologians such as Gabriel Biel for too strong an emphasis on the transforming power of grace; on the contrary, he objected that they did not emphasize it strongly enough as being fundamental to any real change in the believer.

## Law and gospel

114. According to Luther, this renewal will never come to fulfillment as long as we live. Therefore, another model of explaining human salvation, taken from the Apostle Paul, became important for Luther. In Romans 4:3, Paul refers to Abraham in Genesis 15:6 (»Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness«) and concludes, »To one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness« (Romans 4:5).

115. This text from Romans incorporates the forensic imagery of someone in a courtroom being declared righteous. If God declares someone righteous, this changes his or her situation and creates a new reality. God's judgment does not remain »outside« the human being. Luther often uses this Pauline model in order to emphasize that the whole person is accepted by God and saved, even though the process of the inner renewal of the justified into a person wholly dedicated to God will not come to an end in this earthly life.

116. As believers who are in the process of being renewed by the Holy Spirit, we still do not completely fulfill the divine commandment to love God wholeheartedly and do not meet God's demand. Thus the law will accuse us and identify us as sinners. With respect to the law, theologically understood, we believe that we are still sinners. But, with respect to the gospel that promises us »Here is Christ's righteousness,« we are righteous and justified since we believe in the gospel's promise. This is Luther's understanding of the Christian believer who is at the same time justified and yet a sinner (*simul iustus et peccator*).

117. This is no contradiction since we must distinguish two relations of the believer to the Word of God: the relation to the Word of God as the law of God insofar as it judges the sinner, and the relation to the Word of God as the gospel of God insofar as Christ redeems. With respect to the first relation we are sinners; with respect to the second relation we are righteous and justified. This latter is the predominant relationship. That means that Christ involves us in a process of continuous renewal as we trust in his promise that we are eternally saved.

118. This is why Luther emphasized the freedom of a Christian so strongly: the freedom of being accepted by God by grace alone and by faith alone in Christ's promises, the freedom from the accusation of the law by the forgiveness of sins, and the freedom to serve one's neighbor spontaneously without seeking merits in doing so. The justified person is, of course, obligated to fulfill God's commandments, and will do so under the motivation of the Holy Spirit. As Luther declared in the Small Catechism: »We are to fear and love God, so that we . . . ,« after which follow his explanations of the Ten Commandments.<sup>39</sup>

### **Catholic concerns regarding justification**

119. Even in the sixteenth century, there was a significant convergence between Lutheran and Catholic positions concerning the need for God's mercy and humans' inability to attain salvation by their own efforts. The Council of Trent clearly taught that the sinner cannot be justified either by the law or by human effort, anathematizing anyone who said that »man can be justified before God by his own works which are done either by his own natural powers, or through the teaching of the Law, and without divine grace through Christ Jesus.«<sup>40</sup>

120. Catholics, however, had found some of Luther's positions troubling. Some of Luther's language caused Catholics to worry whether he denied personal responsibility for one's actions. This explains why the Council of Trent emphasized the human person's responsibility and capacity to cooperate with God's grace. Catholics stressed that the justified should be involved in the unfolding of grace in their lives. Thus, for the justified, human efforts contribute to a more intense growth in grace and communion with God.

121. Furthermore, according to the Catholic reading, Luther's doctrine of »forensic imputation« seemed to deny the creative power of God's grace to overcome sin and transform the justified. Catholics wished to emphasize not only the forgiveness of sins but also the sanctification of the sinner. Thus, in sanctification the Christian receives that »justice of God« whereby God makes us just.

### **Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue on justification**

122. Luther and the other reformers understood the doctrine of the justification of sinners as the »first and chief article,«<sup>41</sup> the »guide and judge over all parts of Christian doctrine.«<sup>42</sup> That is why a division on this point was so grave and the work to overcome this division became a matter of highest priority for Catholic–Lutheran relations. In the second half of the twentieth century, this controversy was the subject of extensive investigations by individual theologians and a number of national and international dialogues.

123. The results of these investigations and dialogues are summarized in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* and were, in 1999, officially received by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. The following account is based on this Declaration, which offers a differentiating consensus comprised of common statements along with different emphases of each side, with the claim that these differences do not invalidate the commonalities. It is thus a consensus that does not eliminate differences, but rather explicitly includes them.

### **By grace alone**

124. Together Catholics and Lutherans confess: »By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works« (*JDDJ 15*). The phrase »by grace alone« is further explained in this way: »the message of justification ... tells us that as sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way« (*JDDJ 17*).<sup>43</sup>

125. It is within this framework that the limits and the dignity of human freedom can be identified. The phrase »by grace alone,« in regard to a human being's movement toward salvation, is interpreted in this way: »We confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation. The freedom they possess in relation to persons and the things of this

world is no freedom in relation to salvation« (*JDDJ 19*).

126. When Lutherans insist that a person can only receive justification, they mean, however, thereby »to exclude any possibility of contributing to one's own justification, but do not deny that believers are fully involved personally in their faith, which is effected by God's Word« (*JDDJ 21*).

127. When Catholics speak of preparation for grace in terms of »cooperation, « they mean thereby a »personal consent« of the human being that is »itself an effect of grace, not an action arising from innate human abilities« (*JDDJ 20*). Thus, they do not invalidate the common expression that sinners are »incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining salvation by their own abilities. Justification takes place solely by God's grace« (*JDDJ 19*).

128. Since faith is understood not only as affirmative knowledge, but also as the trust of the heart that bases itself on the Word of God, it can further be said jointly: »Justification takes place ›by grace alone‹ (*JD nos 15 and 16*), by faith alone; the person is justified ›apart from works‹ (Romans 3:28, cf. *JD no. 25*)« (*JDDJ, Annex 2C*).<sup>44</sup>

129. What was often torn apart and attributed to one or the other confession but not to both is now understood in an organic coherence: »When persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imputes to them their sin and through the Holy Spirit effects in them an active love. These two aspects of God's gracious action are not to be separated« (*JDDJ 22*).

### Faith and good works

130. It is important that Lutherans and Catholics have a common view of how the coherence of faith and works is seen: believers »place their trust in God's gracious promise by justifying faith, which includes hope in God and love for him. Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works (*JDDJ 25*).« Therefore, Lutherans also confess the creative power of God's grace which »affects all dimensions of the person and leads to a life in hope and love« (*JDDJ 26*). »Justification by faith alone« and »renewal« must be distinguished but not separated.

131. At the same time, »whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it« (*JDDJ 25*). That is why the creative effect Catholics attribute to justifying grace is not meant to be a quality without relation to God, or a »human possession to which one could appeal over against God« (*JDDJ 27*). Rather, this view takes into account that within the new relationship with God the righteous are transformed and made children of God who live in new communion with Christ: »This new personal relation to God is grounded totally on God's graciousness and remains constantly dependent on the salvific and creative working of the gracious God, who remains true to himself, so that one can rely upon him« (*JDDJ 27*).

132. To the question of good works, Catholics and Lutherans state together: »We also confess that God's commandments retain their validity for the justified« (*JDDJ 31*). Jesus himself, as well as the apostolic Scriptures, »admonish[es] Christians to bring forth the works of love« which »follow justification and are its fruits« (*JDDJ 37*). So that the binding claim of the commandments might not be misunderstood, it is said: »When Catholics emphasize that the righteous are bound to observe God's commandments, they do not thereby deny that through Jesus Christ God has mercifully promised to his children the grace of eternal life« (*JDDJ 33*).

133. Both Lutherans and Catholics can recognize the value of good works in view of a deepening of the communion with Christ (cf. *JDDJ 38f.*), even if Lutherans emphasize that righteousness, as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ, is always complete. The controversial concept of merit is explained thus: »When Catholics affirm the ›meritorious‹ character of good works, they wish to say that, according to the biblical witness, a reward in heaven is promised to these works. Their intention is to emphasize the responsibility of persons for their actions, not to contest the character of those works as gifts, or far less to deny that justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace« (*JDDJ 38*).

134. To the much discussed question of the cooperation of human beings, a quotation from the Lutheran Confessions is taken in the Appendix to the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* as a common position in the most remarkable way: »The working of God's grace does not exclude human action: God effects everything, the willing and the achievement, therefore, we are called to strive (cf. Philippians 2:12 ff.). ›As soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated his work of regeneration and renewal in us

through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit . . .»<sup>45</sup>

### *Simul iustus et peccator*

135. In the debate over the differences in saying that a Christian is »simultaneously justified and a sinner,« it was shown that each side does not understand exactly the same thing by the words »sin,« »concupiscence,« and »righteousness.« It is necessary to concentrate not only on the formulation but also on the content in order to arrive at a consensus. With Romans 6:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:17, Catholics and Lutherans say that, in Christians, sin must not and should not reign. They further declare with 1 John 1:8–10 that Christians are not without sin. They speak of the »contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam« also in the justified, which makes a »lifelong struggle« against it necessary (JDDJ 28).

136. This tendency does not correspond to »God’s original design for humanity,« and it is »objectively in contradiction to God« (JDDJ 30), as Catholics say. Because, for them, sin has the character of an act, Catholics do not speak here of sin, while Lutherans see in this God-contradicting tendency a refusal to give oneself wholly to God and therefore call it sin. But both emphasize that this God-contradicting tendency does not divide the justified from God.

137. Under the presuppositions of his own theological system and after studying Luther’s writings, Cardinal Cajetan concluded, that Luther’s understanding of the assurance of faith implied establishing a new church. Catholic–Lutheran dialogue has identified the different thought forms of Cajetan and Luther that led to their mutual misunderstanding. Today, it can be said: »Catholics can share the concern of the Reformers to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ’s promise, to look away from one’s own experience, and to trust in Christ’s forgiving word alone (cf. Matthew 16:19; 18:18)« (JDDJ 36).

138. Lutherans and Catholics have each condemned the other confession’s teachings. Therefore, the differentiating consensus as represented in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* contains a double aspect. On the one hand, the Declaration claims that the mutual rejections of Catholic and Lutheran teaching as depicted there do not apply to the other confession. On the other, the Declaration positively affirms a consensus in the basic truths of the doctrine of justification: »The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics« (JDDJ 40).

139. »In light of this consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their differences open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding the basic truths« (JDDJ 40). »Thus the doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century, in so far as they relate to the doctrine of justification, appear in a new light: The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration« (JDDJ 41). This is a highly remarkable response to the conflicts over this doctrine that lasted for nearly half a millennium.

### Notes:

36 »God will not deny his grace to the one who is doing what is in him.«

37 WA 40/II; 229, 15.

38 Luther, »Disputation against Scholastic Theology (1517),« tr. Harold J. Grimm, LW 31:13; WA 1, 227, 17–18.

39 Luther, »The Small Catechism,« in BC, 351–54.

40 Council of Trent, Sixth Session, 13 January 1547, can. 1.

41 Luther, »Smalcald Articles,« in BC, 301.

42 WA 39/I; 205, 2–3.

43 JDDJ, op. cit. (note 4).

44 Ibid., 45.

45 JDDJ, Annex 2C, quoting »The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration,« II. 64f., in BC, 556.

Full text of the report, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*, can be downloaded from the following links:

- <https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/From%20Conflict%20to%20Communion.pdf>



- [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/lutheran-fed-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_2013\\_dal-conflitto-alla-comunione\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/lutheran-fed-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_2013_dal-conflitto-alla-comunione_en.html)

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## Benedict XVI says Martin Luther's doctrine on justification is correct, if faith "is not opposed to charity"

VATICAN CITY, NOV. 19, 2008

The Pope said this today during the general audience dedicated to another reflection on St. Paul. This time, the Holy Father considered the Apostle's teaching on justification.

He noted that Paul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus "changed his life radically: He began to regard all his merits, achievements of a most honest religious career, as 'loss' in face of the sublimity of knowledge of Jesus Christ."

"It is precisely because of this personal experience of the relationship with Jesus that Paul places at the center of his Gospel an irreducible opposition between two alternative paths to justice: one based on the works of the law, the other founded on the grace of faith in Christ," the Pontiff explained. "The alternative between justice through the works of the law and justice through faith in Christ thus becomes one of the dominant themes that runs through his letters."

What is law

But in order to understand this Pauline teaching, Benedict XVI affirmed, "we must clarify what is the 'law' from which we have been freed and what are those 'works of the law' that do not justify."

He explained: "Already in the community of Corinth there was the opinion, which will return many times in history, which consisted in thinking that it was a question of the moral law, and that Christian freedom consisted therefore in being free from ethics. [...] It is obvious that this interpretation is erroneous: Christian liberty is not libertinism; the freedom of which St. Paul speaks is not freedom from doing good."

Instead, the Pope said, the law to which Paul refers is the "collection of behaviors extending from an ethical foundation to the ritual and cultural observances that substantially determined the identity of the just man — particularly circumcision, the observance regarding pure food and general ritual purity, the rules regarding observance of the Sabbath, etc."

These observances served to protect Jewish identity and faith in God; they were "a defense shield that would protect the precious inheritance of the faith," he remarked.

But, the Holy Father continued, at the moment of Paul's encounter with Christ, the Apostle "understood that with Christ's resurrection the situation had changed radically."

"The wall — so says the Letter to the Ephesians — between Israel and the pagans was no longer necessary," he said. "It is Christ

who protects us against polytheism and all its deviations; it is Christ who unites us with and in the one God; it is Christ who guarantees our true identity in the diversity of cultures; and it is he who makes us just. To be just means simply to be with Christ and in Christ. And this suffices. Other observances are no longer necessary.”

And it is because of this, the Bishop of Rome continued, that Luther’s expression “by faith alone” is true “if faith is not opposed to charity, to love. Faith is to look at Christ, to entrust oneself to Christ, to be united to Christ, to be conformed to Christ, to his life. And the form, the life of Christ, is love; hence, to believe is to be conformed to Christ and to enter into his love.”

“Paul knows,” he added, “that in the double love of God and neighbor the whole law is fulfilled. Thus the whole law is observed in communion with Christ, in faith that creates charity. We are just when we enter into communion with Christ, who is love.”

[original source: Source: <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-clarifies-luther-s-idea-of-justification/>]

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## The Gift of Salvation

### A Statement by Evangelicals and Catholics Together

### January 1998

In the spring of 1994, a distinguished group of Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants issued a much-discussed statement, “Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium” (First Things, May 1994). That statement, commonly referred to as “ECT,” noted a growing “convergence and cooperation” between Evangelicals and Catholics in many public tasks, and affirmed agreement in basic articles of Christian faith while also underscoring the continuing existence of important differences. The signers promised to engage those differences in continuing conversations, and this has been done in meetings of noted theologians convened by Mr. Charles Colson and Father Richard John Neuhaus. At a meeting in the fall of 1996, it was determined that further progress depended upon firm agreement on the meaning of salvation, and especially the doctrine of justification. After much discussion, study, and prayer over the course of a year, the following statement was agreed to at a meeting in New York City, October 6-7, 1997. The convenors and participants express their gratitude to Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, for his very active support throughout this process. In future conversations they intend to address the outstanding questions noted at the end of this statement.

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.*

—John 3:16-17

We give thanks to God that in recent years many Evangelicals and Catholics, ourselves among them, have been able to express a common faith in Christ and so to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. We confess together one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; we confess Jesus Christ the



Incarnate Son of God; we affirm the binding authority of Holy Scripture, God's inspired Word; and we acknowledge the Apostles' and Nicene creeds as faithful witnesses to that Word.

The effectiveness of our witness for Christ depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit, who calls and empowers us to confess together the meaning of the salvation promised and accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. Through prayer and study of Holy Scripture, and aided by the Church's reflection on the sacred text from earliest times, we have found that, notwithstanding some persistent and serious differences, we can together bear witness to the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. To this saving gift we now testify, speaking not for, but from and to, our several communities.

God created us to manifest his glory and to give us eternal life in fellowship with himself, but our disobedience intervened and brought us under condemnation. As members of the fallen human race, we come into the world estranged from God and in a state of rebellion. This original sin is compounded by our personal acts of sinfulness. The catastrophic consequences of sin are such that we are powerless to restore the ruptured bonds of union with God. Only in the light of what God has done to restore our fellowship with him do we see the full enormity of our loss. The gravity of our plight and the greatness of God's love are brought home to us by the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

God the Creator is also God the Redeemer, offering salvation to the world. "God desires all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). The restoration of communion with God is absolutely dependent upon Jesus Christ, true God and true man, for he is "the one mediator between God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5), and "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). He is the holy and righteous one who was put to death for our sins, "the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

The New Testament speaks of salvation in various ways. Salvation is ultimate or eschatological rescue from sin and its consequences, the final state of safety and glory to which we are brought in both body and soul. "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." "Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed" (Romans 5:9, 13:11). Salvation is also a present reality. We are told that "he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy" (Titus 3:5). The present reality of salvation is an anticipation and foretaste of salvation in its promised fullness.

Always it is clear that the work of redemption has been accomplished by Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). Scripture describes the consequences of Christ's redemptive work in several ways, among which are: justification, reconciliation, restoration of friendship with God, and rebirth from above by which we are adopted as children of God and made heirs of the Kingdom. "When the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

Justification is central to the scriptural account of salvation, and its meaning has been much debated between Protestants and Catholics. We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God's gift, conferred through the Father's sheer graciousness, out of the love that he bears us in his Son, who suffered on our behalf and rose from the dead for our justification. Jesus was "put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). In justification, God, on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, declares us to be no longer his rebellious enemies but his forgiven friends, and by virtue of his declaration it is so.

The New Testament makes it clear that the gift of justification is received through faith. "By grace you have

been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). By faith, which is also the gift of God, we repent of our sins and freely adhere to the Gospel, the good news of God’s saving work for us in Christ. By our response of faith to Christ, we enter into the blessings promised by the Gospel. Faith is not merely intellectual assent but an act of the whole person, involving the mind, the will, and the affections, issuing in a changed life. We understand that what we here affirm is in agreement with what the Reformation traditions have meant by justification by faith alone ( *sola fide* ).

In justification we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, through whom the love of God is poured forth into our hearts (Romans 5:5). The grace of Christ and the gift of the Spirit received through faith (Galatians 3:14) are experienced and expressed in diverse ways by different Christians and in different Christian traditions, but God’s gift is never dependent upon our human experience or our ways of expressing that experience.

While faith is inherently personal, it is not a purely private possession but involves participation in the body of Christ. By baptism we are visibly incorporated into the community of faith and committed to a life of discipleship. “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

By their faith and baptism, Christians are bound to live according to the law of love in obedience to Jesus Christ the Lord. Scripture calls this the life of holiness, or sanctification. “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). Sanctification is not fully accomplished at the beginning of our life in Christ, but is progressively furthered as we struggle, with God’s grace and help, against adversity and temptation. In this struggle we are assured that Christ’s grace will be sufficient for us, enabling us to persevere to the end. When we fail, we can still turn to God in humble repentance and confidently ask for, and receive, his forgiveness.

We may therefore have assured hope for the eternal life promised to us in Christ. As we have shared in his sufferings, we will share in his final glory. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). While we dare not presume upon the grace of God, the promise of God in Christ is utterly reliable, and faith in that promise overcomes anxiety about our eternal future. We are bound by faith itself to have firm hope, to encourage one another in that hope, and in such hope we rejoice. For believers “through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5).

Thus it is that as justified sinners we have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. All this is the gift of God. Faith issues in a confident hope for a new heaven and a new earth in which God’s creating and redeeming purposes are gloriously fulfilled. “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

As believers we are sent into the world and commissioned to be bearers of the good news, to serve one another in love, to do good to all, and to evangelize everyone everywhere. It is our responsibility and firm resolve to bring to the whole world the tidings of God’s love and of the salvation accomplished in our crucified, risen, and returning Lord. Many are in grave peril of being eternally lost because they do not know the way to salvation.

In obedience to the Great Commission of our Lord, we commit ourselves to evangelizing everyone. We must share the fullness of God’s saving truth with all, including members of our several communities. Evangelicals must speak the Gospel to Catholics and Catholics to Evangelicals, always speaking the truth in love, so that “working hard to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . . the body of Christ may be built up

until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:3, 12-13).

Moreover, we defend religious freedom for all. Such freedom is grounded in the dignity of the human person created in the image of God, and must be protected also in civil law.

We must not allow our witness as Christians to be compromised by halfhearted discipleship or needlessly divisive disputes. While we rejoice in the unity we have discovered and are confident of the fundamental truths about the gift of salvation we have affirmed, we recognize that there are necessarily interrelated questions that require further and urgent exploration. Among such questions are these: the meaning of baptismal regeneration, the Eucharist, and sacramental grace; the historic uses of the language of justification as it relates to imputed and transformative righteousness; the normative status of justification in relation to all Christian doctrine; the assertion that while justification is by faith alone, the faith that receives salvation is never alone; diverse understandings of merit, reward, purgatory, and indulgences; Marian devotion and the assistance of the saints in the life of salvation; and the possibility of salvation for those who have not been evangelized.

On these and other questions, we recognize that there are also some differences within both the Evangelical and Catholic communities. We are committed to examining these questions further in our continuing conversations. All who truly believe in Jesus Christ are brothers and sisters in the Lord and must not allow their differences, however important, to undermine this great truth, or to deflect them from bearing witness together to God’s gift of salvation in Christ. “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

As Evangelicals who thank God for the heritage of the Reformation and affirm with conviction its classic confessions, as Catholics who are conscientiously faithful to the teaching of the Catholic Church, and as disciples together of the Lord Jesus Christ who recognize our debt to our Christian forebears and our obligations to our contemporaries and those who will come after us, we affirm our unity in the Gospel that we have here professed. In our continuing discussions, we seek no unity other than unity in the truth. Only unity in the truth can be pleasing to the Lord and Savior whom we together serve, for he is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

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## The Spiritual Meaning of Fasting

by Carlos Alonso Vargas

When people talk about fasting these days, it is most common to focus on what we might call its “social” or “horizontal” dimension: it is said that fasting finds its meaning in giving to the poor the food that one didn’t eat when fasting (or the monetary equivalent of such food.) Therefore, we deprive ourselves of food in order to share it with the needy.

That is, without a doubt, a praiseworthy expression and justification for fasting. It encourages us to share our material goods with those who regularly need them, when we regularly have them. Moreover, it brings us to a true solidarity with them: by not eating, we experience “in our own flesh” (literally) what they commonly experience because of their destitution.

Not only is it good to regard fasting in this way, but it has a clear foundation even in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 58:3-12 (especially vv. 6-10) the Lord rebukes those who fast while exploiting their laborers, and states what true fasting is, the fast that is pleasing to him – releasing the captives, being kind to the needy, not exercising brute force. I must clarify, however, that the point of this passage is not so much that we should give to the poor the food that we don’t eat or the money we don’t use, but that our life ought to be consistent.

In order for fasting to be pleasing to God, it must go together with a righteous life, a life in which we treat others fairly and do not take advantage of them, and in which we share our goods and help the needy. If, on the other hand, we are unfair and selfish, our fasting and other religious practices will be something merely external which is worthless before God.

Even some Fathers of the Church, (1) in the early centuries of Christianity explicitly mention this practice of giving to the poor the food that we give up when fasting. And it has been a part of all of the major streams of Christianity throughout the centuries.

It seems, however, that in modern times there is a tendency to emphasize exclusively this “social” aspect of fasting, which, even if it has solid foundations in both the Jewish and the Christian traditions, does not exhaust the meaning of fasting. This social dimension is so strongly emphasized today that it seems as if other dimensions, which also give value and meaning to the practice of fasting, have been forgotten or set aside.

In Catholic tradition (I speak of it because it’s the tradition I know best) there is also a certain tendency to view fasting as a “sacrifice” understood as “deprivation.” This also has its foundations (which I will refer to further on,) but it is easily distorted into a “commercial” relationship: people have a tendency to think that depriving yourself of things “earns you points” before God. This matches a wrong way of understanding what “sacrifice” means – it is not necessarily a negation or deprivation, but rather an *offering*, a gift given to God to worship him and recognize his lordship.

People also highlight the practical reality that when we are fasting we have more time available for prayer. This is true, and it is also true that it is very advisable to turn to prayer during the times one would normally be eating. It is also true – as we will see further on – that fasting and prayer are closely related to each other. But that does not mean that this is *the reason* for fasting, or that it completely explains the practice of fasting and gives it meaning. That would be like saying that Christian fasting is for losing weight – it is true that if you fast you may lose weight, but this will be a by-product of the fast, not its main objective. (If that were the main objective, then we can no longer refer to it as Christian fasting nor to fasting as a religious practice.)

### Background in Scripture and in Christian Tradition

In the Old Testament we find that fasting is practiced mainly with two purposes: “to afflict the soul” and “to seek the face of the Lord.” By “afflicting the soul,” the Old Testament mainly refers to breaking our own pride: by depriving yourself of food, we are no longer satisfied and don’t have anything to boast about. We are in a kind of mourning. Meanwhile, “seeking the face of the Lord” refers to engaging into a personal relationship with God, characterized by righteousness and obedience to his commandments.

As for Christians, we know for sure that fasting was practiced from the very beginning; this is indicated in the New Testament (Mt 6:16; 9:15; Acts 13:3; 14:23; 27:9; 1 Cor 7:5) and it is clearly stated in the *Didache* (2) and other ancient writings. But the so-called “Desert Fathers” (pioneers of the monastic movement in the deserts of Egypt, Syria and Palestine, from the 4th century on) were the first ones to state at least two very clear purposes for fasting – communion with God and Christian growth. For them, fasting is one of the main means for *fighting against the passions* – that is, acquiring self-control, and fighting against temptation – and also a form of *spiritual warfare* against the enemy.

### Dimensions of the spiritual meaning of fasting

When speaking about the “spiritual” meaning we are referring directly to what relates to *our personal relationship with God*, our Christian growth and our lives of holiness, which include, of course, every aspect of our lives. This is a relationship of communion with God *in the Holy Spirit*, and hence we call it “spiritual.” Thus, we are not in any way using the word “spiritual” in dualistic terms, as it is commonly understood

among the followers of esoteric or occult schools, where it is opposed to the “material,” which is considered as evil – or at least inferior to the unseen.

On the contrary: as we shall see, precisely because Christianity is not dualistic but considers the human being as a unified entity, something material like fasting (which is a practice directly related to our body, our matter) has its implications for and effects in our spiritual life. So, what gives fasting a spiritual meaning?

### 1. Fasting as “*seeking the face of the Lord*”

Fasting is something whose physical effects, especially after a few hours, we can feel, experience or perceive: this sensation, perhaps not always of true hunger, but at least a “desire to eat,” helps us remember – whether we want to or not – that we are fasting. And if we remember that we are fasting, we will immediately remember *why* we are fasting. We could then direct all of our attention to ourselves (what are we feeling, how much we think we need food...) or if we truly are serious as Christians, it won’t be hard to instead direct our attention towards God, because, regardless of the purpose of that specific fast, we are ultimately doing it *for God’s sake* and for the sake of our relationship with him.

This is why fasting has been traditionally understood as a means of “penitence,” that is, of *conversion to God*, of personally *turning back* to him. Fasting, then, as prayer, is a means for what the Old Testament calls “seeking the face of the Lord,” that is to say, relating personally to him, being in his presence, seeking intimacy with him. This is clearly seen when, in a day of fasting, we devote ourselves to prayer: it is much easier to pray – be it praise, repentance, petition or any other kind of prayer – to relate personally to God, when we are fasting than when we have our stomach full and are totally satisfied.

Fasting allows us, indeed, to vividly experience the reality that God is our greatest good, our treasure, what we most long for. When we feel physical hunger we will more easily be hungry for God, for his presence and his power, and we will be able to live out the truth that he is the only one who can truly fill us and satisfy us. Moreover, by fasting we are declaring with our bodies that what we are interested in above all is being close to the Lord.

Then the answer that Jesus gave to the devil at the end of his fast in the desert, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, is fulfilled in us: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Mt. 4:4). That is why, precisely, fasting is directly related not only to prayer, but also to our feeding on the Word of God in Scripture. It is also an expression of how earnestly we are “seeking the face of the Lord”.

### 2. Fasting as a means of “*afflicting the soul*”

The Hebrew expression “afflicting the soul” refers to humbling ourselves. It is the opposite of “being puffed up” or “becoming vain.” A person who has everything material, or who is satisfied and full after a banquet, will easily boast about his abundance. “Afflicting the soul” is in a certain way to mourn. That is why parties and banquets prevent us from “afflicting our soul.” Thus, fasting is a practical way of humbling ourselves, limiting ourselves and putting ourselves in a situation of need.

Food is something necessary and good. It is part of God’s creation and he provides it for our sustenance and our joy. Thus, when we fast we are not giving up something bad, but depriving ourselves of something good, something that we need.

In other words, fasting is *becoming poor*. By doing without something that is necessary, something to which we are entitled, we are making ourselves *needy* before God. We are presenting ourselves before him empty-handed, in poverty. We recognize ourselves as *in need of him, hungry for him*. And this is nothing less than being “poor in spirit” –recognizing ourselves as poor, recognizing that we cannot attain blessedness by our own means, that the power to save us is not in our own hands. And these poor in spirit, Jesus says, are

blessed because “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:3). When we recognize ourselves as poor and limited before God, we open ourselves to the blessing, the salvation and the happiness he has for us.

### 3. Fasting and spiritual sensitivity

If much food easily makes us sluggish and distracts us (cf. Luke 21:34), being deprived of it through fasting may help us to be more sensitive and alert to spiritual realities: the presence of God and his power, the message of his Word, the guidance of the Spirit. Hence it is possible that, when we are fasting, some gifts of the Spirit (like discernment) may become more intense or manifest themselves more easily.

That is why the Desert Fathers saw fasting as one of the main ways of “vigilance,” of watching before the Lord, as Jesus commands us in the Gospel (Mt. 24:42-44). Much food makes us drowsy. Fasting helps us to stay awake and be ready for the Lord’s action. This is the reason why fasting is recommended to those who are about to be baptized as adults or who are being prepared for confirmation.

### 4. Fasting, prayer and sacrifice

Fasting in a certain way is prayer. It amounts to making our whole body participate in prayer by presenting it empty, poor and needy before God. It is precisely because we are unified beings (we are not a soul “locked” into a body-prison or a body-shell, but a unified being consisting of body and soul, a material element and a spiritual one,) that our body “participates” in prayer. Prayer is not something exclusively mental or interior – prayer belongs to the whole human being. In the same way, when we pray we stand or kneel, raise our hands or fold them, close our eyes, sing.

In the case of fasting, it is the whole body that is entering into prayer. Fasting is taking prayer to a corporal level, showing that our prayer is so “serious” that we come to it with our whole being, that we are able to go “from words to deeds”.

We thus arrive at a correct understanding of fasting as *sacrifice*. These days, many Christians have the idea that a sacrifice involves, first of all, denying themselves something instead of enjoying it, or even having that deprivation cause pain. But sacrifices in the Old Testament were not so much things that people would deny themselves of, but mainly things people *offered or delivered to God as a gift of worship to him*.

A frequent event nowadays might help us understand this. When political leaders or a heads of state visit another country they often place a wreath, a “floral offering,” if you will, at a monument that has a special significance for the country being visited. By doing so they are not “depriving” themselves of anything but giving a gift as a way of *recognizing and honoring* the value or the importance of that monument and, therefore, of the host country itself. Similarly, presenting a *sacrifice* or an *offering* to God is a way of recognizing him and honoring him as God, in other words, *worshipping him*. (Of course, when people would “give” an ox or a sheep to God in sacrifice, the animals would have to be killed, or when they “gave” him an offering of wine they poured it out as a libation, because that was the way of saying that they were renouncing their own use of these things and giving them over to the Lord, consecrating them to him. In that sense they were “depriving” themselves of them. But the main thing about a sacrifice is not the deprivation itself, nor the suffering that may cause, but the giving or the *dedication/consecration*.) We can then see that sacrifice, in the biblical sense, has a positive dimension. It is *giving* more than it is *taking away*.

In the New Covenant, only the sacrifice of Christ gathers all the Old Testament sacrifices in itself, surpasses them and abolishes them, as is explained at length in the letter to the Hebrews. This unique sacrifice is the maximum and definitive expression of worship to God, which all Christians join ourselves to as the body of Christ we are. But precisely because of that union with Christ, the New Testament claims that we too, in our worship to God, “offer spiritual sacrifices” (1 Pet 2:5). The letter to the Hebrews mentions two examples of such sacrifices: our praise, and sharing what we have with others (Heb. 13:15-16).



In addition, Paul tells us that the authentic or “spiritual” worship we must offer to God is to “present our bodies as a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1). Even though it is possible that by “body” he means our whole being, it is precisely about our whole being because it encompasses our physical body. We would be stretching the text too much if we said that Paul is specifically referring to fasting. But at the same time, if fasting is something we do with our body, it is a concrete expression of this authentic worship in which we present our body and our being before God.

## 5. A form of intercession

Because of its strong connection with prayer, fasting can specifically be a form of intercession. Some Christians believe that even during the times of the day when they are not praying, our body, in fasting, continues the prayer: it is like an ongoing intercession, not with words nor with the mind but with the body that is being “presented to God” as an offering.

That is why we could say we are fasting “for” a given need or petition that we are bringing before God. Fasting to intercede could be a way to make our intercession more intense, serious and complete before God.

## 6. “Fighting against the passions”

As we have said, fasting is depriving ourselves of something necessary and good – food. In order to fast, we must exercise willpower, because what we would “instinctively” or by nature do is eat. Fasting is a decision that requires self-control, but it doesn’t just require it – it exercises it. By controlling ourselves in something that is natural and good (the desire to eat, hunger,) our character is strengthened and we acquire more self-control in general. Self-control, let us recall, is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Gal. 5:22-23) – that is to say, it’s part of mature Christian character.

Therefore, fasting is a way in which we learn to control all those other desires which are not good. It is a way to defeat our inclination towards evil and overcome temptation. It is, in that sense, a “spiritual exercise,” a “discipline.”

## 7. Spiritual Warfare

Precisely because fasting strengthens our Christian character, it equips us to face the enemy’s wiles and temptations. It is, then, a weapon of Christian warfare against Satan. That is why fasting is associated with exorcism (Mk. 9:29, in some versions); that is why fasting is one of the typical practices for Lent, when we intensify the Christian warfare against all the manifestations of evil in our life.

## Some practical instructions on fasting

Like many other traditional Christian practices, fasting declined much in Western societies from the times of the Enlightenment (18th century,) and was impacted, of course, by the resulting secularization and de-Christianization of society. This caused many good Christians to stop fasting, or never to learn how to do it, because they could not find persuasive reasons to do so.

The modern emphasis on the “horizontal dimension” that I spoke about the beginning of the article has emerged in modern times as the only valid reason many would accept for fasting, not taking into account the spiritual meaning I have presented here.

In the specific case of the Catholic Church (the tradition I know best) its requirements concerning fasting were loosened greatly around the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), largely with the intention of facilitating the participation of the faithful in the liturgy and their experience of conversion in a deeper sense, in the midst of modern society. Even though that intention had some good in it, its negative result has been the almost complete disappearance of fasting as a spiritual discipline amongst Latin rite Catholics. The

Catholic Church's precept on fasting is still in force (although only for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday,) but the norm is extremely lax, since it describes fasting as having three meals during the day, only one of which is to be "a main meal" (a non-defined term) and such that the other two together are smaller than the main meal; and not eating anything in between meals. In my estimation, it qualifies as a "light fast." On top of that, many Catholics, not understanding the meaning of fasting, limit themselves to doing the minimum required to obey the norm. Other Christian traditions may practice fasting with more rigor.

The relaxed definition of fasting from food encourages people to "fast" from (deprive themselves of) other things that are not food – smoking, drinking alcohol, eating sweets, going to the movies, watching too much television, etc. As a result, many people do not fast from food itself but deprive themselves of these other things. Those forms of self-denial are often admirable and can certainly have their place in the Christian life, and they can help in self-control. They are related to fasting and share some of its spiritual meaning, but are not in themselves fasting or a replacement for an actual fast.

Here are some ways of fasting that can, in general, be practiced in the circumstances of modern life.

### **1. "Normal" or "basic" fasting**

This, I would recommend, be a fast for one day. It can be repeated over several days, but always with a meal at the end of each day. It consists of the following:

- The day before, meals must be normal; dinner must not be too abundant (not "filling up" the day before in order to endure the fast).
- Do not have breakfast or lunch; you can drink something at those times.
- Eat dinner in the evening, but a rather light dinner (if not, it may cause indigestion; and it is also not the case that we want to fill ourselves up to compensate for having fasted).
- Do not eat between meals; you can drink water or other liquids.

### **2. The "half-fast" or half-day fast**

This is a milder version of the previous one:

- Normal meals the day before.
- No breakfast; you may drink something.
- Eat lunch normally, that is, break the fast at noon.
- Do not eat between breakfast and lunch; water or other liquids may be drunk.

### **3. Mild fast**

- Normal meals the day before.
- Do not eat breakfast or lunch, but at those times (or at one of them,) in addition to drinking, you may eat something small like a piece of bread, a fruit or some salad.
- Eat dinner in the evening.
- Do not eat between meals; water or other liquids may be drunk.

### **4. Bread-and-Water fast**

This form of fasting was quite common among Christians in former times. It is stricter than the "normal" one and can be very helpful when fasting for two or more days.

- Normal meals the day before.

- Do not eat breakfast, lunch or dinner, but only a piece of bread and some water at those three times.
- Do not eat in between meal times; water may be taken.

Many Christians, if they do a “normal” fast, do it for one day. If they decide to take on a stricter fast, they may repeat the “normal” fast over many days or (if they are experienced) do the “bread and water” fast. It is also possible to combine in a week one day of “normal” fasting (e.g. Wednesdays and Fridays are traditional fasting days) with a “moderate” fast or a “half-day” fast the remaining days (except Sunday. Christian tradition indicates that one does not fast on Sundays, not even during Lent, with the exception, at least in my tradition, of fasting before taking Communion. Sunday, the Lord’s Day, is the day when “the Bridegroom is with them” and is a feast day.)

### **For the Christian practice of fasting, here are some guidelines:**

- In order to care for your own health, do not stop drinking water on fast days. Dehydration is very dangerous.
- Do not “feast” before a fast nor at the time of breaking it; not only would this take away its meaning but it may cause physical problems.
- Small children and sick people must not do a “normal” fast. Older people should only fast if they are capable of doing it. These people, if they are to fast, can do it in a reduced way, like the “moderate” fast or the “half-day” fast described above.
- The same applies to people whose health condition prevents them from spending many hours without eating, as is the case with some types of diabetes.
- Someone who has never practiced fasting or who has practiced it only a little should not venture into suddenly fasting for more than one day. Even more, a fast like that should only be undertaken for serious spiritual reasons, after having discerned (hopefully with advice from other people, and especially from a wise spiritual advisor) that it is the right thing to do, for a special reason, in order to further spiritual growth.
- In the practice of fasting in its various forms, each person must find what works best for their physical condition and their age, and what is most fruitful in their Christian life.

Fasting has been an immensely valuable discipline in the whole biblical and Christian history. Today’s Christians can recover its meaning and its practice, always seeking “the fast that the Lord chooses” (Is 58:6-10), that is, a consistent Christian life and not merely external practices. If we do so, we will discover the great fruit fasting can bear in our Christian growth, in our personal relationship with God and in our communion with the rest of the Christian people.

\* \* \*

#### **NOTES:**

- 1) Leo the Great (fifth century): “May our fasting contribute to the relief of the needy. No sacrifice by the believers is more acceptable to the Lord than one the poor can benefit from” (*Sermon 48*, 5; PL 54:300). Similar ideas might perhaps be found in other Fathers.
- 2) The *Didache* or “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” is the most ancient non-biblical Christian writing; it dates probably from the late first century or the middle of the second.

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Carlos Alonso Vargas is a coordinator of the [Arbol de Vida](#) community in San Jose, Costa Rica and a former president of the [Sword of the Spirit](#). Adapted from “[Un discípulo en camino](#).”

## CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



### Joy and Happiness Are An Inside Job

by Tom Caballes

***"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."***

***- John 10:10b ESV***

What is your basic attitude in life? Do you often look at life as half-empty or as half-full? What will make you really happy – ten million dollars? Fame and fortune? A rock star career? The fact is that everything that your earthly life offers to you is only temporary – fleeting joy that will come and unfortunately will also go. Sometimes the things that we think can make us truly happy are already here – our family, friends, our jobs and our homes. Sometimes we need to see the good and the blessings rather than the bad and imperfections of our families, jobs, and homes. I believe that true joy and happiness comes from inside – especially if you are following the Lord. You have an inheritance awaiting you – and it can never rust, spoil or be stolen. One day, you will realise how tremendously blessed you are with God in heaven. How can you ever be happier?

### ***So How Do You Become Happy and Stay Happy?***

1. Have an attitude of gratitude to God in life, in spite of your current challenges and problems. Enjoy the

- blessings that you already have. See and appreciate the big and small miracles in your daily life – many times we take things for granted once we get what we want. Be thankful for all that God has blessed you with, big and small. Count them! Every week, thank God for your week – the good and the bad.
2. Enjoy the things that you have rather than think of and complain about the things that don't have. We tend to compare ourselves with people who have more than we have, but the reality is that we already have been blessed by God tremendously in our different way. Be happy for what others have and be mindful of others who do not have anything. See Philippians 4:8. Learn to be content; avoid greed and the desire to have more and more money and possessions. Godliness with contentment is a great gain, says 1 Timothy 6:6.
  3. Don't let any person, circumstances or situation rob you of the joy and peace you have inside. You are the only person who can allow yourself to be angry, resentful, fearful or worried about things. Learn to surrender things you cannot control to God, who is in control of everything. He knows the past, present, and future.
  4. Value and invest your life in your relationships. We are social beings; long and lasting happiness usually occurs in the context of relationships. Yes, you can be extremely happy with a brand new phone, car or any other gadget, but that happiness will only last for a while. Good relationships bring lasting joy.
  5. Seek and obey Gods' will for your life. No matter how much you struggle or pout against God, you can never be truly happy if you are outside of God's plan and will for your life. Surrender your life fully to God.
  6. Guard your mind against negativity, hopelessness, lies, and other destructive thoughts. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says we should take every thought captive to obey Christ. So we should filter our minds from all negativity.
  7. Have an eternal perspective about things in life. Do not sacrifice long-term values for short-term pleasures.
  8. The key to true and long-term happiness is to be at peace with yourself and God. Learn to love and appreciate your gifting and talents, even if you know very well your weaknesses. Strive to live a life pleasing to God.

### Other Scripture passages:

1. *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7 ESV)*
2. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! (**Psalms 34:8 ESV**)
3. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and hope. (**Jeremiah 29:11 ESV**)
4. Other references: *Ecclesiastes 3:12-13; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Timothy 6:6-12; and Proverbs 16:20.*

### For personal reflection or group sharing

1. In a scale of 1 to 10 with one being the saddest and ten being the happiest, how happy are you? Why?
2. What attitudes and way of thinking do you need to change for you to be joyful now – and stay joyful?





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Tom and his wife Mhel and their two daughters live in Wellington, New Zealand.

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## The Pig in London and the Lamb in Israel

by Sam Williamson

When I was twenty years old, I wanted to spend a summer abroad, but as a college student I could barely afford ramen noodles. I found work on a communal farm in Israel. For a bit of manual labor, they provided me food, a room, ten dollars a month, and a pack of cigarettes a day. (It was the cigarettes that sold me.)

The weekend before I departed, I heard my first talk ever on being a man. On the way to Israel, I stopped in London to visit some friends. With the talk on manliness ringing in my ear, I swaggered, spat, and unsuccessfully tried to play the man.

During a two-hour dinner party in London, I was introduced to a young woman who promptly deemed me shallow, insincere, and stupid. (I skipped dessert so I could quit while I was ahead.)

A few years later she married a friend of mine, but her opinion of me was chiseled in stone. I once loaned her husband ten thousand dollars; and she suspected me of manipulation. But if I forgot to send him a birthday card, she felt my true colors were revealed.

To her, I was a jerk. And everything I did or said reinforced her judgment.

### **She Wasn't the Only One To Misjudge Me**

After the dinner party, on the plane to Tel Aviv, I read this verse: *“Even a fool who keeps silent is considered*

*wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent*” (Proverbs 17:28). I felt convicted and decided to speak less and listen more.

The following day I began my first job on the communal farm, but it began at 4:00 a.m. and I didn’t have an alarm clock. My roommate promised to wake me, but he forgot.

I desperately wanted to impress my new boss Amnon, but the proverb — *When he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent* — was still fresh. I decided not to blame my roommate. Instead I apologized without excuse.

The next day, my roommate forgot again, but the verse still haunted me, so I apologized again.

That evening I had a few hard words with my roommate (I didn’t keep *completely* silent), and he swore he would remember. And then he forgot. To Amnon, I apologized a third, agonizing time. I desperately wanted him to know my circumstances, but I kept my lips closed.

On the fourth night, I “borrowed” my roommate’s alarm. I was the first to arrive for work. Later that day, my roommate secretly spoke with Amnon. He confessed that it was his own negligence that caused me to be late three days in a row.

## A New Opinion

Amnon later searched me out and told me of my roommate’s confession. He said, “Sam, the volunteers I work with are shallow, defensive, and overflowing with creative justifications. You are my first volunteer ever to apologize without excuse. I will call you ‘*Emet*’ [which means true, genuine, or pure].” From that day forward, he called me nothing else.

And he thought I could do no wrong. If I was late, he assumed I had good reason; if I offered an idea, he thought me a genius; if I suggested a stupid plan, he applauded my initiative.

## A New Self-opinion

For years that women’s snap judgment of me felt unfair. Why couldn’t she see me as Amnon did? Today I realized that it is I who had misjudged *her*.

I don’t know what shaped her life. Maybe she was bullied by a schoolyard tyrant or an abusive father. Maybe I was a faint echo of those past torments. I don’t know. And that’s the point. She may be handling her past with greater grace than I handle mine.

My denigration of her criticism reveals my own inner fraud. Maybe her judgment is fairer than Amnon’s. After all, Jesus didn’t die for me because of my “*emet*” (purity); the true lamb of Israel died for that pig in London.

A spiritual man doesn’t swagger or spit. He simply admits he’s been a jerk.

Sam

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## Some Spiritual Reading Resources on the Cross of Christ

### Sermons / homilies from the early church fathers

- [\*What Happened on the Cross\*](#), by John Damascene
- [\*A Few Drops of Blood Renew the Whole World\*](#), by Gregory Nazianzen
- [\*What We Behold on the Cross\*](#), by Augustine
- [\*Contemplating the Lord's Passion\*](#) by Leo the Great
- [\*The Lamb that was Slain\*](#) by Melito of Sardis
- [\*The Power of the Blood of Christ\*](#) by John Chrysostom
- [\*By One Death and Resurrection the World Was Saved\*](#) by Basil
- [\*The Life-giving Cross of Christ\*](#) by Theodore the Studite
- [\*Let us too glory in the Cross\*](#) by Augustine
- [\*The Cross of Christ\*](#) by Leo the Great
- [\*The Body of Christ Gives Life to Those Who Receive It\*](#), by Cyril of Alexandria
- [\*The Death of Death\*](#) by Augustine
- [\*The Good Shepherd gives new life beyond the grave\*](#), by Basil of Seleucia

### Reflections and Meditations

- [\*He Bore Our Pride In His Body on the Cross\*](#), by Raniero Cantalamessa
- [\*The Throne of Love\*](#), by Rupert, Abbot of Deutz
- [\*Contemplating Christ's Passion\*](#), by Jeanne Kun
- [\*Jesus' Crucifixion: 'It Is Finished'\*](#), by Jeanne Kun
- [\*Freedom from Sin and Death\*](#), by Jeanne Kun
- [\*The Seven Last Words of Jesus\*](#), reflections and paintings by John Dunne
- [\*The Shedding of Christ's Blood\*](#) (meditation on Hebrews 9)
- [\*"It is Finished!"\*](#) (meditation on John 19)
- [\*The Passion, Death, & Resurrection\*](#): meditations on the Four Gospels

### Hymns and poems

- [\*Oh, The Cross\*](#) (an early church hymn)

- [\*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross\*](#)
  - [\*God has Reigned From a Tree\*](#)(a passion hymn)
  - [\*Awakened to Eternity\*](#): a spiritual journey of poems for Passiontide and Easter
- 

Links to other seasonal spiritual readings:

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## Some Spiritual Reading Resources on the Resurrection and Easter Season

### Sermons / homilies from the early church fathers

- [The Easter Alleluia](#), by Augustine, 5th century
- [The Power of Faith](#), by Cyril of Jerusalem, 4th century
- [The Spiritual Passover](#), by Pseudo-Chrysostom
- [Why Christians come together on Sunday](#), by Justin Martyr, 2nd century
- [The Lord's Descent into the Underworld](#), from an ancient homily for Holy Saturday
- [The Victory of the Lamb of God](#), by Melito of Sardis, 2nd century
- [The Easter Praise of Christ](#), by Melito of Sardis, 2nd century
  
- [The Good Shepherd gives new life beyond the grave](#), by Basil of Seleucia
- [The Cross of Christ gives life to the human race](#), by Ephraem Syriac, 4th century
- [The Lamb that was slain has given us new life](#): Passover homily by Melito of Sardis (2nd century AD)
- [The Death of Death](#) by Augustine

### Reflections and Meditations

- [What Is the Resurrection of Jesus?](#) by Josef Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI
- [The Cross - the One True Glorification of God](#), by Joseph Ratzinger/ Pope Benedict XVI
- [Recognizing the Presence of Jesus](#), by Romano Guardini
- [The Ascension of Christ](#), by Fulton J. Sheen
  
- [The Incarnate, Crucified, and Risen Christ](#), by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- [The Resurrection of Christ Is God's Yes to Us](#), by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- [Exalted Over All](#), by Steve Clark
- [Receiving Redemption](#): United with Christ we pass from death to new life, by Steve Clark
- [New Life in Christ](#), by Steve Clark
- [Dying to Defeat Death](#): The death of Jesus was a victory over death itself, by Steve Clark
- [The Redeemer Who Died](#), by Steve Clark
  
- [New Birth into Living Hope](#): A commentary on 1 Peter 1:3-9, by Dr. Daniel Keating
- [The Good News of Easter](#), by Fr. Herb Schneider, SJ
- [Behold the Lamb](#) by Dave Quintana
  
- [The Triumph of the Cross](#): The Risen Lord opens the Scriptures to his disciples on the road to Emmaus, by Jeanne Kun
- [Mary Magdalene: A portrait of love stronger than death](#), by Jeanne Kun
- [Simon Peter: transforming weakness into strength](#), by Jeanne Kun
- [Mary Magdalene: The First Witness to the Risen Christ](#), by Jeanne Kun
- [Awakened to Eternity](#), poem by Jeanne Kun
- [Thomas meets the Risen Christ](#), by Jeanne Kun
- [Graven on the Palms of Your Hands](#), a poem by Jeanne Kun
  
- [Road to Emmaus](#), painting and reflection by John Dunne
- [The Son Risen with Healing](#), by Patrick Henry Reardon
- [The Truth Who Lives](#), by Patrick Henry Reardon
  
- [News of the Resurrection](#) (meditation on Mattahew 28:8-15)
- [Breaking of the bread at Emmaus](#) (meditation on Luke 24:13-35)
- ["Do not be faithless, but believing!"](#) (meditation on John 20:19-31)

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## Some Spiritual Reading Resources on Pentecost and Gift of the Spirit

### ***Reflections for Pentecost***

- [Pentecost: The Way to Conversion and Unity](#), by Raniero Cantalamessa
- [The Holy Spirit Keeps Us in Perfect Peace](#), by John Henry Newman
- [The Grace of Pentecost: What does Pentecost mean for us today?](#) by Steve Clark
- [The First Fruits of Pentecost - Shavuot](#), by Don Schwager
- [The Indwelling Spirit](#), by John Henry Newman (1801-1890)
- [“Come, Holy Spirit” – A selection of prayers and invocations](#)

### ***Sermons / Homilies on the Holy Spirit from the early church fathers***

- [The Sending of the Holy Spirit](#), by Irenaeus of Lyons (115-202)
- [The Living Water of the Holy Spirit](#), by Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386)
- [The Holy Spirit Perfects and Renews Us](#), by Didymus of Alexandria (313-398)
- [The Glory of the Holy Spirit](#), by Gregory of Nyssa (330-395)
- [The Anointing with the Holy Spirit](#), by Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386)
- [The Spirit Restores Paradise to Us](#), by Basil the Great (372-379)
- [The Work of the Holy Spirit](#), by Basil the Great (372-379)
- [The Spark of Divine Love Within You](#), by Basil the Great (372-379)
- [The Coming of the Holy Spirit](#), by Leo the Great (400-461)
- [Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is truth](#), by Leo the Great (400-461)

### ***Prayers for Pentecost***

- [“Come, Holy Spirit” – A selection of prayers and invocations](#)
- [Prayer of Intercession for Pentecost](#) - prayer of Taizé Community

- [Come Holy Spirit](#) - a prayer by Stephen Langton (13th century)
- [Fire of the Spirit](#) - a prayer by Hildegard of Bingen (12th century)
- [Prayer to the Holy Spirit](#), a poem by Edith Stein
- [Sweet Manna from the Son's Heart](#), verse by Edith Stein

### ***Baptized in the Holy Spirit***

- [The Baptism in the Holy Spirit - A Grace for the Whole Church](#), by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa
- [The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Proclaiming the Gospel Message](#), by Sue Cummins
- [Baptized in the Holy Spirit](#), by Steve Clark
- [The "Breath" of God and Gifts and Graces of the Spirit](#), by Steve Clark
- [The Fire of the Holy Spirit](#), by Don Schwager
- [Why God Wants Every Christian to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit](#), by Don Schwager
- [The Magnificent Stranger](#), by Carlos Mantica
- [The Holy Spirit and a New Society](#), by Jerry Munk
- [The Century of the Holy Spirit](#), Origins of the Pentecostal - Charismatic Movement, by Dr. Vinson Synan
- [Empowered to Live in Community](#), by Bob Tedesco
- [Preparing Children for a Spirit-filled Life](#), by Jerry Munk

### ***Gifts of the Spirit***

- [Gifts and Graces](#): Part I - The Breath of God, by Steve Clark
- [Gifts and Graces We Can Expect](#): Part II, by Steve Clark
- [Gifts and Graces for All](#): Part III, The Gifts of the Spirit in Isaiah 11:1-5, by Steve Clark
- [Spiritual Gifts](#), by Steve Clark
- [Have the Gifts of the Spirit Ceased?](#) by Jerry Munk
- [The Gift of Prophecy – The Prophet's Role](#), by Bruce Yocum
- [The Gift of Speaking in Other Tongues](#), by Don Schwager
- [Yielding to the Gifts of the Spirit](#), by Don Schwager
- [Godly Hobbits: On the Pentecostalism of Tolkien's Inspired Heroes](#), by Lance Nixon

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## The Habit of Perfection

a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89)

ELECTED Silence, sing to me  
And beat upon my whorlèd ear,  
Pipe me to pastures still and be  
The music that I care to hear.

Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:  
It is the shut, the curfew sent  
From there where all surrenders come  
Which only makes you eloquent.

Be shellèd, eyes, with double dark  
And find the uncreated light:  
This ruck and reel which you remark  
Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.

Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,  
Desire not to be rinsed with wine:  
The can must be so sweet, the crust  
So fresh that come in fasts divine!

Nostrils, your careless breath that spend  
Upon the stir and keep of pride,  
What relish shall the censers send  
Along the sanctuary side!

O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet



That want the yield of plushy sward,  
But you shall walk the golden street  
And you unhouse and house the Lord.

And, Poverty, be thou the bride  
And now the marriage feast began,  
And lily-coloured clothes provide  
Your spouse not laboured-at nor spun.

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"Gerard Manley Hopkins was born to an artistic and deeply religious English family. His father was a poet, his mother loved music and reading. His grandfather was a colleague of the poet John Keats, and his aunt taught him to sketch.

"His poetry was not well known during his lifetime; but after his death, Gerard Manley Hopkins became one of the leading Victorian poets. His writing is often characterized by the unique "sprung rhythm," which is structured around feet with a variable number of syllables, generally between one and four syllables per foot, with the stress always falling on the first syllable in a foot. The innovative formula never became a popular literary form, but it helped to revive an interest in accentual verse."

by [Kathy Schiffer](#)

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view from Tully Mountain and Ballynakill Harbour, County Galway, Ireland, photo by Don Schwager

## Meeting on the High Road

by Sean O'Neill

Coming up the ribbon of the road,  
With banter flying  
Like hollow messengers before him,  
This gray man stops to talk.  
What of my father?  
He is well.  
My words curry him back to favor,  
Back to bars and friends  
Too well to make much of me  
Dangling from the company.  
I am adopted into the family of the sure-footed,  
The level-headed  
And the reassuring round  
Of tight evenings by the table  
And partings at the door.  
I have seen, as though reflected  
In the stained window of their lives,  
Predatory gulls of doubt

Veer away from the blank sand of their shores  
Down to my craggy inlet  
Hidden from the wind  
And the corrosive tides of familiarity.  
He is well.  
If I am brief  
I can tell you the tale,  
My own story in heroic couplets  
Of yin and yang.  
A very little time  
And I will take you down with me  
And Virgil  
To the iceman  
At the centre of it all.  
I have lived not far from there  
Awaiting my Beatrice  
Waiting by the lost coast  
For the flash of a sail  
On the long trackless grey,  
Looking out to the breakers  
And other phantom hopes.  
But he is well.  
All is well.

---

Sean O'Neill is originally from Glasgow, Scotland, and currently lives in Lansing, Michigan, USA. He has [published several books](#), including six novels, six books of poems, and a series of very helpful and instructive books on a beginner's guide to writing, including [How to Write a Poem: A Beginner's Guide](#).

His poems range from the sacred to the mundane and sometimes, inadvertently, both at the same time.

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