

Often “repressed and buried” Christian powers are coming to life (CL 2, 23). “The commitment of the laity to the work of evangelization is changing ecclesial life.... Above all, there is a new awareness that missionary activity is a *matter for all Christians*, for all dioceses and parishes, Church institutions and associations” (RM, 2).

It is clear that for many who bear the name of Catholic a more “genuine contact with Christ” is needed for such a call to evangelization to even begin to make sense. Pope Paul VI makes clear that evangelization needs to start with the Church herself.

Even for those who are considered “devout” Catholics, a real conversion is needed, to seeing themselves not just as concerned with their own holiness and works of Christian service but consumed with a passion to share Christ with others.

May our “yes” to the call to holiness and to the call to evangelization, be ever deeper and may the life of Christ shine forth from our faces and the face of the Church so that as many as possible might be saved!

For this, of course, a “new Pentecost” is needed, appropriated on a personal level.

# Chapter IV

## A New Pentecost for the New Evangelization

### The Papal Insistence on the Need for a “New Pentecost”

From the prayer of Pope John XXIII for the Council, asking God to send us a “new Pentecost,” through Pope Benedict XVI’s call for prayer for a renewal of Baptism and Confirmation, the “baptism in the Spirit,” the popes have strongly emphasized the need the Church and each of us has to experience today the work of the Spirit as described in the Acts of the Apostles. As one surveys the persistent calls for a rediscovery or reappropriation of the work of the Holy Spirit as first experienced at Pentecost, one is struck by the fervor and depth of conviction in these repeated pleas. Sometimes even a note of desperation.<sup>21</sup>

### Pope Paul VI

As Pope Paul VI put it in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “In our day, what has happened to that hidden energy of the Good News, which is able to have a powerful effect on man’s conscience?” (4)<sup>22</sup>

He identifies a lack of fervor that “comes from within” and is “manifested in fatigue, disenchantment, compromise, lack of interest and above all lack of joy and hope” as a major obstacle to evangelization and exhorts us “always to nourish spiritual fervor” (80).

Pope Paul VI identifies the Holy Spirit as the source of spiritual ardor and points out the difference in the disciples before and after Pentecost. “It must be said that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization: it is He who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is He who in the depths of consciences causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood. But it can equally be said that He is the goal of evangelization....”

Pope Paul VI then talks about signs of the Spirit’s action that he sees happening, calling the current time a “privileged moment of the Spirit.”

We live in the Church at a privileged moment of the Spirit. Everywhere people are trying to know Him better as the Scripture reveals Him. They are happy to place themselves under His inspiration. They are gathering about Him; they want to let themselves be led by Him.... It is not by chance that the great inauguration of evangelization took place on the morning of Pentecost, under the inspiration of the Spirit. (*Evangelii Nuntianti*: 75)

The world is calling for evangelizers to speak to it of a God whom the evangelists themselves should know and be familiar with as if they could see the invisible. (*Evangelii Nuntianti*: 76)

Was it not an inner renewal of this kind that the recent Council fundamentally desired? Assuredly we have here a work of the Spirit, a gift of Pentecost. One must also recognize a prophetic intuition on the part of our predecessor John XXIII, who envisaged a kind of new Pentecost as a fruit of the Council. We too have wished to place ourselves in the same perspective and in the same attitude of expectation. Not that Pentecost has ever ceased to be an

actuality during the whole history of the Church, but so great are the needs and the perils of the present age, so vast the horizon of mankind drawn toward world coexistence and powerless to achieve it, that there is no salvation for it except in a new outpouring of the gift of God. (*Gaudete in Domino*)<sup>23</sup>

And:

More than once we have asked ourselves what the greatest needs of the Church are ... what is the primary and ultimate need of our beloved and holy Church? We must say it with holy fear because as you know, this concerns the mystery of the Church, her life: this need is the Spirit ... the Church needs her eternal Pentecost; she needs fire in her heart, words on her lips, a glance that is prophetic.<sup>24</sup>

### Pope John Paul II

Almost from the time he first mentioned the need for a “new evangelization” in Haiti in 1983 Pope John Paul II equally emphasized the need for a “new Pentecost.” In *Christifideles laici* he interprets the whole post-conciliar spiritual renewal that has happened in the Catholic Church, characterized by renewal movements and the awakening of the laity to mission, as “a renewed outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost” (2). Like Pope Paul VI before him, he devoted considerable attention in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* to the role of the Holy Spirit in energizing the mission of the Church. It was the “experience of Pentecost” that enabled the disciples to become “witnesses and prophets” (24).

Despite years of teaching and formation “they proved to be incapable of understanding his [Jesus’] words and reluctant to follow him along the path of suffering and humiliation. The Spirit transformed them into courageous witnesses to Christ and enlightened heralds of his word. It was the Spirit himself who guided them along the difficult and new paths of mission” (87).

Pope John Paul II's continued calls for a new Pentecost and a new evangelization and his steadfast welcome of renewal movements as a "hope for the Church" were based in part on an acute awareness of the depth of the challenges we face in preaching the gospel in the midst of an aggressive, international, pagan culture.

We often experience the dramatic situation of the first Christian community, which witnessed unbelieving and hostile forces gathered together against the Lord and his Anointed (Acts 4:26). Now as then, we must pray that God will grant us boldness in preaching the Gospel; we must ponder the mysterious ways of the Spirit and allow ourselves to be led by him into all the truth (cf. Jn 16:13). (87)

On the eve of the feast of Pentecost, in 1998, Pope John Paul II asked representatives of all the renewal movements of the Church to join with him to celebrate the outpouring of the Spirit. Over five hundred thousand people from more than fifty different movements came. In his address on this occasion he gathered together the teaching of Scripture and Vatican II on the reality of Pentecost and the gifts of the Spirit, and proclaimed it with urgency and passion, in the light of their actual embodiment in the various renewal movements and communities. He began:

The Church's self-awareness (is) based on the certainty that Jesus Christ is alive, is working in the present and changes life.... With the Second Vatican Council, the Comforter recently gave the Church ... a renewed Pentecost, instilling a new and unforeseen dynamism.

Whenever the Spirit intervenes, he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history. This was the unforgettable experience of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council during which, under the guidance of the same Spirit, the Church rediscovered the charismatic dimension as one of her constitutive elements: "It is not only through

the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the people, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts according as he wills (cf. 1 Cor 12:11), he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank ... makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 12).

With these words Pope John Paul II boldly proclaimed the teaching of Vatican II, namely, that the charismatic workings of the Holy Spirit are an essential and complementary reality to the Spirit's working through the sacramental and hierarchical dimensions of the Church's existence. The pope also honestly acknowledged that the charismatic dimension, important as it is, was nevertheless in a way forgotten, or overshadowed by a perhaps too exclusive emphasis on the sacramental and hierarchical; and that it required a special action of the Holy Spirit in the Second Vatican Council to bring the Church back to an awareness of the importance of this "constitutive" dimension.

The pope also made this explicit: "The institutional and charismatic aspects are co-essential as it were to the Church's constitution. They contribute, although differently, to the life, renewal and sanctification of God's People. It is from this providential rediscovery of the Church's charismatic dimension that before and after the Council, a remarkable pattern of growth has been established for ecclesial movements and new communities.... You present here, are the tangible proof of this 'outpouring' of the Spirit."

The pope then made this extraordinary plea to all Christians: "Today, I would like to cry out to all of you gathered here in St. Peter's Square and to all Christians: Open yourselves docilely to the gifts of the Spirit! Accept gratefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow on us!"<sup>25</sup>

As Pope John Paul II worked to prepare the Church for the challenges and opportunities of the third millennium, he published in 2001 *Novo Millennio Ineunte* in which he set out to

“decipher” what the Holy Spirit had been saying to the Church from Vatican II until the beginning of the new millennium. This is a remarkable document that attempts to read the signs of the times and declare what the Pope believed the Spirit to be communicating to us at this moment of history. The document draws an explicit connection between the current historical situation of the Church, the main feature of which is the collapse of Christendom, and the need for a new evangelization. This in turn necessitates a rediscovery of the power of the Spirit as the first Christians experienced it on the day of Pentecost. We have already commented on certain aspects of this text earlier, but now we need to read it with attentiveness to its emphasis on the importance of Pentecost.

Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a “Christian society” which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone. Today we must courageously face a situation which is becoming increasingly diversified and demanding, in the context of “globalization” and of the consequent new and uncertain mingling of peoples and cultures. Over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the New Evangelization. I do so again now, especially in order to insist that we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardor of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16).

This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of “specialists” but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach

is needed, which will be lived as the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups.<sup>26</sup>

The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope “which does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5).<sup>27</sup>

### Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI has continued the theme of the need for a new Pentecost if our hopes for a new evangelization are to be realized. One of Pope Benedict XVI’s first initiatives upon being elected pope was to call another meeting of the “new movements and communities” as a follow-up to the significant 1998 gathering convened by Pope John Paul II. His concluding prayer: “Let us pray to God the Father, therefore, through our Lord Jesus Christ, in the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that the celebration of the Solemnity of Pentecost may be like an ardent flame and a blustering wind for Christian life and for the mission of the whole Church.... Upon all of you I invoke an outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit, so that in our time too, we may have the experience of a renewed Pentecost. Amen!”<sup>28</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI has not only called for a “renewed Pentecost” but has called for a “culture of Pentecost” to be established in the Church.<sup>29</sup>

He also frequently identifies the mission of Jesus as to “baptize in the Holy Spirit.”

On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on January 13, 2008, in connection with his administering the sacrament of Baptism, he declared:

Jesus was revealed as the One who came to baptize humanity in the Holy Spirit: he came to give men and women life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10), eternal life, which brings the human being back to life and heals him entirely, in body and in spirit, restoring him to the original plan for which he was created.<sup>30</sup>

Later that day he elaborated:

Christ's entire mission is summed up in this: to baptize us in the Holy Spirit, to free us from the slavery of death and "to open heaven to us," that is, access to the true and full life that will be a "plunging ever anew into the vastness of being, in which we are simply overwhelmed with joy" (*Spe Salvi*, n. 12).<sup>31</sup>

At the World Youth Day in Australia in 2008 he proclaimed:

Together we shall invoke the Holy Spirit, confidently asking God for the gift of a new Pentecost for the Church and for humanity in the third millennium.<sup>32</sup>

In reflecting on the text from Acts in which Jesus promises his disciples that they will be baptized in the Spirit, he invited not only youth but the whole Church: "Today I would like to extend this invitation to everyone: Let us rediscover, dear brothers and sisters, the beauty of being baptized in the Holy Spirit; let us be aware again of our Baptism and of our Confirmation, sources of grace that are always present. Let us ask the Virgin Mary to obtain a renewed Pentecost for the Church again today, a Pentecost that will spread in everyone the joy of living and witnessing to the Gospel."<sup>33</sup>

Certainly it can't be claimed that Pope Benedict XVI, by using the biblical terminology of baptism in the Holy Spirit, is asking everyone to be baptized in the Holy Spirit as it is understood and practiced in the Catholic charismatic renewal. It must be acknowledged, though, that he is making a very strong call to a re-

newal of the graces of Baptism and Confirmation in relationship to the event of Pentecost and its substance, which is described by Jesus as being "baptized in the Spirit." It must also be acknowledged that Pope Benedict XVI is perfectly aware of the use of this terminology to describe what the Catholic charismatic renewal calls baptism in the Spirit.

Upon his arrival in the United States on the occasion of his first visit as pope he strongly called for a "new outpouring of the Spirit."

In the exercise of my ministry as the Successor of Peter, I have come to America to confirm you, my brothers and sisters, in the faith of the Apostles (cf. Lk 22:32). I have come to proclaim anew, as Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, that Jesus Christ is Lord and Messiah, risen from the dead, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father, and established as judge of the living and the dead (cf. Acts 2:14ff.). I have come to repeat the Apostle's urgent call to conversion and the forgiveness of sins, and to implore from the Lord a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church in this country.<sup>34</sup>

Later on the same visit, in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, he even more emphatically proclaimed:

Let us implore from God the grace of a new Pentecost for the Church in America. May tongues of fire, combining burning love of God and neighbor with zeal for the spread of Christ's Kingdom, descend on all present!<sup>35</sup>

### A New Pentecost: Why Now?

How to summarize the continuing papal calls for a New Pentecost? It seems to be based on two main perceptions. One perception is of the weakness of the Church and the "collapse of

Christendom” or as Pope John Paul II put it, the end of Christian society as we once knew it. This is related to the growth of an international, secular culture characterized by a “dictatorship of relativism,” which is increasingly hostile to claims of truth and most especially the claims of Christ and the Church. A situation has now developed that is more similar to the situation the early Church faced than anything we’ve known in many centuries.

The second perception is that what is most needed is a renewal of a personal relationship with God himself, a relationship that “comes alive” in the reality of Pentecost, in both its contemplative and charismatic dimensions. Quite bluntly, it appears that the popes are crying out: we need God! We need a new Pentecost! This is in turn opening us to the perception that indeed, God is hearing our prayers and that we are beginning to see the unfolding of a new Pentecost, most notably in various renewal movements, but hopefully extending in an ever-widening circle to the entire Church. Pentecost and the gifts of the Spirit are not the property of any one movement or all the movements together, but the heritage of the entire Church. The movements perhaps can be seen as a “vanguard” of the renewal the Lord has in mind for the whole Church. The values and realities we see embodied in the movements and new communities are intended to stimulate the renewal of such values and realities throughout the Church.

### Baptism in the Spirit: Preliminary Observations

It’s been more than forty-five years since the charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church first appeared and nearly that long since the first attempts to theologially understand the core experience of this renewal — “baptism in the Holy Spirit” — from a Catholic point of view.

“Baptism in the Spirit” is the main terminology used in North America to describe an experience of the Spirit that is often accompanied by a deeper personal encounter with Christ. It is char-

acterized by a glimpse of his Lordship and an experience of the Father’s love that is personal and deeply liberating. And it evokes a new awareness that we are truly not orphans but that the Holy Spirit is truly present and ready to encourage, convict, guide, and help us understand the things of God. This vital experience of the Trinity brings with it a new or renewed desire for prayer, including in a special way, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, a new or renewed desire to read the Scripture, often described as “the Scriptures coming alive” and a desire to tell others about the goodness of God. A desire to be in relationship with other Christians frequently accompanies being baptized in the Spirit. And it often involves the manifestation of one or more of the charisms listed in 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Peter 4, and Romans 12. Fr. Francis Sullivan offers this as a brief definition of the experience:

A religious experience which initiates a decisively new sense of the powerful presence and working of God in one’s life, which working usually involves one or more charismatic gifts.<sup>36</sup>

Cardinal Paul Cordes, recently retired president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, offers this description:

“Baptism in the Holy Spirit” is a concrete experience of the “Grace of Pentecost,” in which the working of the Holy Spirit becomes an experienced reality in the life of the individual and of the faith community. The experience of “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” is the certain and sometimes overwhelming “realization” of the loving nearness of God.... It is a threshold of spiritual life that is crossed, bringing trust in the Father and a desire to being open to the teaching of the Holy Spirit ... making possible the perception of God’s effective presence. This experiential perception reveals God in His immense incomprehensibility as well as in His loving and Fatherly care. This revelation of God attracts, opens new categories of thought, reveals

new goals and desires, makes clear the significance of God's will as well as of human sinfulness and the need for repentance.... It is, in short, the experiential rediscovery, in faith, that Jesus is Lord by the power of the Spirit to the glory of the Father.... It is an opening up, and unfolding of Trinitarian life in the baptized.<sup>37</sup>

Cardinal Suenens, for example, one of the main leaders of Vatican II, was living a very dedicated life, and his episcopal motto was *In Spiritu Sancto*. And yet he tells of the change that happened in him when he was prayed with for a greater release of the Holy Spirit in his life.

I did not discover the Holy Spirit through the Renewal. As I have said, the Spirit had long been at the center of my life.... I saw how some Christians live, who took the Acts of the Apostles at its word, and this led me to question the depth and the genuineness of my own faith. As a result, I found that I believed in the action of the Holy Spirit, but in a limited sphere; in me the Spirit could not call forth from the organ all the melody he wished; some of the pipes did not function, because they had not been used.

He continues to list the specific changes he experienced.<sup>38</sup>

Fr. Cantalamessa, Preacher to the Papal Household, tells of his struggle to open to another dimension of the Spirit's working, given his dedication as a son of St. Francis, his theological understanding as a university professor, the graces of priesthood, his already having received the Spirit in many ways. Eventually, it was noticing that Jesus humbled himself in asking for Baptism from John the Baptist "who was just a layman!" that overcame his resistances. He describes his decision to pray for "a new outpouring of the Spirit" as a "conscious renewal of my Baptism ... surrendering the reins of my life to Christ." His book is a theological analysis of the experience and its fruits in a person's life.<sup>39</sup>

It has been understood from the very first Catholic charismatic theological reflection, in 1969, that the term "baptism in the Spirit" had its primary referent in the giving of the Spirit that we see described in several places in the Acts of the Apostles. For the early Church, this Pentecostal outpouring was understood as normally experienced in the sacraments of Christian initiation. But in the contemporary situation many initiated Catholics — those who have received Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist — need to encounter in a more experiential manner the graces of the sacraments. In order to make this clear, the earliest charismatic theologians recommended speaking of a "renewal of baptism in the Spirit."<sup>40</sup> By this they wanted to communicate their acknowledgment of the validity of the sacraments of initiation that Catholics have received and at the same time to communicate that more could and should be expected to be experienced.

Any terminology has its problems. Speaking of the "renewal" of baptism in the Spirit emphasizes that the Spirit has already been given in the sacraments but perhaps doesn't as clearly communicate that what the New Testament describes as happening hasn't yet happened for many Catholics today. Speaking simply though of "baptism in the Spirit" runs the risk of neglecting the fact that this grace is rooted in the sacraments of initiation. The terminology discussion will go on!

Let's now take a look now at some of the main Scripture texts that refer to the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

### Baptism in the Spirit in Scripture

#### *John the Baptist declares Jesus will "baptize in the Holy Spirit"*

In all four of the Gospels (Mt 3:1–12; Mk 1:1–8; Lk 3:3–18; Jn 1:22–34) John the Baptist introduces Jesus as the one who will baptize in the Holy Spirit. Pope Benedict XVI identifies the event

of Pentecost as “the ‘Baptism in the Holy Spirit,’” which had been announced by John the Baptist and promised by Jesus. Jesus’ “whole mission was aimed at giving the Spirit of God to men ... in a superabundant way, like a waterfall able to purify every heart, to extinguish the flames of evil and ignite the fire of divine love in the world. The Acts of the Apostles present Pentecost as a fulfillment of such a promise and therefore as the crowning moment of Jesus’ whole mission.”<sup>41</sup>

### *Jesus’ post-Resurrection instructions*

Jesus, in a post resurrection appearance, interprets the Scriptures to his disciples, explaining that it was necessary that “the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations.” He tells them, though, not to undertake the mission until they receive the “promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:44–47, 49).

Luke recounts, in the Acts of the Apostles, that just before Jesus ascended to the Father, completing his post-resurrection appearances, he instructed the disciples, again, “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” The disciples’ response was typical, asking Jesus if the time had arrived for him to restore Israel’s independence under their own king. Jesus, also typically doesn’t directly answer their question, discouraging their eschatological curiosity, but underlines the importance of their paying attention to what he has just told them. “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:1–12).

### *The Pentecost event and Peter’s interpretation*

On the Jewish feast of Pentecost, originally a “first fruits” harvest festival, the disciples were praying in an “upper room” when the remarkable Pentecost event happened. The outward manifestations of the sound of a driving wind and the appearance of flames of fire signaled a profound interior experience that expressed itself in bold preaching. A multilingual crowd miraculously were able to hear what the disciples were saying each in their own languages. Raniero Cantalamessa, echoing multiple fathers of the Church, describes this inspired proclamation of the “mighty acts of God” as a “sober intoxication.”<sup>42</sup>

Luke gives an insight into what the scene must have been like by recording the interpretation of some whom had gathered that the apostles “have had too much new wine” (Acts 2:1–4, 12).

Peter then stands up and denies that they are drunk with wine. (Paul would later exhort the Christians in Ephesus: “do not get drunk on wine ... but be filled with the Spirit” [Eph 5:18].) And he explains that what they “see and hear” is nothing less than the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament preparation of God’s people for the Messiah.

Pentecost is the name of the feast day on which the “event” of the disciples being baptized in the Spirit happened. Pentecost was the occasion; baptism in the Spirit is the term used by Jesus and the apostles for the substance of what happened.

## The Extension of Baptism in the Spirit

### *Samaria*

Luke now develops the theme that the apostles expect each new convert to come into the same experience of being baptized in the Spirit as the disciples themselves each did on the feast of Pentecost. When word reached the apostles that “Samaria had

accepted the word of God," they sent Peter and John who "prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit." Luke points out that when Simon "saw that the Spirit was conferred by the laying on of the apostles' hands," he sought to pay for the secret of being able to do this (Acts 8:14–19). In the "Samaritan Pentecost" as with the initial "Pentecost" there are visible signs of the Spirit's coming, charismatic manifestations, unspecified in this instance, which cause bystanders to marvel.

### *Cornelius and his household*

By means of divine guidance Peter is led to the home of Cornelius, a Roman God-fearer, who also has been prepared by the Spirit to receive his visit and message. Peter explains the saving deeds of Christ to Cornelius. While he is still speaking, "the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word." The Jewish Christians who were with Peter "were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles, also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God." Peter then declares that they should be baptized because they "have received the Holy Spirit even as we have." What happened to the disciples on the day of Pentecost, being baptized in the Spirit, happens now to Cornelius and his household. Peter's assurance of the appropriateness of baptizing these Gentiles rests on perceiving, through visible indicators — speaking in tongues and glorifying God — that they have been baptized in the Spirit just as the apostles have been. This, of course, is an indication that Jesus is present again, baptizing in the Spirit (Acts 10:44–48).

Peter, understandably, is criticized for baptizing Gentiles. In his defense he describes the manifest "falling" of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, an experience that he could not deny; and then he recalls the theological explanation: "I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water but you

will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" Peter then declares that if God has given "the same gift" to the Gentiles that he gave to the Jewish Christians, how could he hinder what God was doing. The criticism turned to praise as Peter's colleagues acknowledged that God indeed had decided to grant "life-giving repentance to the Gentiles too" as they were obviously baptized in the Spirit just as the apostles had been (Acts 11:15–18).

### *Ephesus*

Paul encounters a group of "disciples" in Ephesus but must have noticed that something was missing in their experience of God. He asks them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they became believers. He discovers that they have never even heard about the Holy Spirit but have simply been baptized with the baptism for repentance of John the Baptist. Paul explains that John was simply preparing the way for Jesus and baptizes them in the name of Jesus. "When Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:1–7). Paul "fills in the picture" for these well-meaning but insufficiently evangelized and catechized "disciples," which enables them to be joined to Jesus through Baptism and filled with the Spirit. Again, there are tangible signs that normally accompany being baptized in the Spirit. In this instance speaking in tongues and prophesying are noted. All these accounts in Acts of the Apostles reflect the Apostles' persistent concern that each new group of converts come into the same experience of the Spirit as they did on the day of Pentecost. Sometimes it is noted that these events are in the context of "new horizons" that are opening up for the spread of the gospel and perhaps the "same experience" should not be expected in other, less significant, circumstances. Such observations overlook the whole witness of Acts and the epistles to numerous Christian communities living a life characterized by a "culture of Pentecost" well beyond the specific incidents of initiation recounted in Acts. To cite just one:

O stupid Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? I want to learn only this from you: did you receive the Spirit from works of the law, or from faith in what you heard? Are you so stupid? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so many things in vain? — if indeed it was in vain. Does, then, the one who supplies the Spirit to you and works mighty deeds among you do so from works of the law or from faith in what you heard? (Gal 3:1–5)

### *Repeated fillings with the Spirit*

As opposition rises against the believers (which includes harsh threats, beatings, and actual imprisonments), they confidently ask God for the boldness and supernatural power necessary to carry out their mission in the face of such opposition. “And now Lord, take note of their threats, and enable your servants to speak your word with all boldness, as you stretch forth your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ As they prayed, the place where they were gathered shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:23–33).

As almost 1,700 years of Christendom collapses and a new international pagan culture gains the ascendancy, even rising to that “dictatorship of relativism” that Pope Benedict XVI warns us about, the Church in the West is encountering circumstances that are more like those encountered by the early Church than anything we’ve known in our lifetimes. The recent popes’ consistent calls for a new Pentecost as being perhaps the deepest need of the Church today, surely can only be advanced by a deeper theological understanding of what many millions have experienced as baptism in the Holy Spirit.

And as Fr. Kilian McDonnell has graciously and wisely said:

Whether the release of the Spirit is due to an awakening of sacramental grace or merely the fruit of prayer, the important thing is that it *happen*.<sup>43</sup>

Let’s pray that it “happens” for us and for the whole Church.<sup>44</sup>

Lord, I want more of your Holy Spirit. Activate aspects of His work that have been dormant in my life. Bring me into a deeper relationship with you. Give me greater zeal to be a witness for you and live a life of prayer, love, and service. Pour out your Holy Spirit on the whole Church! We need you Lord! Come!