

The Spirit of the Lord Fills Our World

Part I

I have chosen for our mutual reflection in this and subsequent articles an evaluation of the most recent evidence of the continuing presence of the Spirit of Christ in the world of the 70's.



I refer to what has been called the Pentecostal Movement among Catholics—I write of its hopes and promises and its potential dangers.

The Catholic Pentecostal Movement began as a spark in 1967 at Duquesne University and since then has grown with amazing speed throughout the Midwest and the entire country.

Briefly, the Catholic Pentecostal Movement might be described as a group belief that the Holy Spirit will manifest Himself in the daily life of the average, sincere Christian. He will make Christ present, even experientially, to anyone seeking Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ordinarily, this experience of Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit come through an act of faith in an informal rite called "the baptism of the Spirit."

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is essen-

Guest Editorial

When conversation gets around to the new things that have happened and are happening in the Church, much of it centers around the New Liturgy—in particular, the changing pattern of Eucharistic worship. And, as with all change, there are many pros and cons on the topic. One of the more controversial sub-topics on this subject is the question of reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament.



It would appear, in the eyes of many, that one of the casualties of the recent changes has been this reverence. As clear points of evidence, it is noted that traditional marks of reverence are neglected, such as genuflections, so-called proper attire (both of priest and laity), silence in church, the old separation between sanctuary and nave of

tially a part of our Christian initiation, the sacrament of baptism, and its ongoing actualization in our celebration of the Eucharist and living of the Christian life. What purpose then is there, one might ask, in a Catholic pentecostal movement seeking a baptism in the Holy Spirit with the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit?

The answer lies in the fact that baptism in the Holy Spirit, as we use the term, has been poured out in the Church since Pentecost Sunday and through every complete baptismal celebration still today. The Church is filled with the Holy Spirit; as the Body of Christ, it has already received all the gifts and fruits of the Spirit. What this new pentecostal movement seeks to do through faithful prayer, and by trusting in the Word of God, is to ask the Lord to actualize in a concrete living way what the Christian people have already received. It is an attempt to respond in radical faith to the Spirit who has already been given so that His life, His gifts, and His fruit may be actualized in the lives of the members of Christ's Body.

Among Catholic pentecostals this baptism is neither a new sacrament nor a substitute sacrament. Like the renewal of baptismal promises, it is a renewal in faith of the desire to be everything that Christ wants us to be. For Catholics this experience is a renewal, making our initiation as children concrete and explicit on a mature level.

The men and women, clerics and lay peo-

ple who have sought and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit are by and large ordinary Catholic people from every walk of life, profession and socio-economic bracket. They have shared the desire to be good Catholics and to grow in the life and love of Christ. Serious about their religion, concerned for the spiritual welfare of others, anxious for constructive renewal in the Church, they have been equally involved in their civic communities and employment, entering fully into all the normal activities which mark this period of our national life—human rights, law, justice, good government, peace. They seem to be a healthy cross section of American Catholicism. But they have been united in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism by the desire to be more fully the type of Christian that Jesus wants them to be. They share, for all their differences of opinion, the belief that the Lord knows best what's right and needed in His Church. As a group they have the characteristics of serious Christian dedication, openness to the will of God, and the willingness to yield to Him.

Yet this is not the complete picture, for there have been a number of people who have come face-to-face with the pentecostal movement as persons with minimal faith, or lost faith, or nominal Christian observance. These people have been touched by the witness of a friend or by a prayer group, and being attracted by it they have found for the first time real faith in Jesus Christ and the richness of life in the Spirit.

By Father John P. Norris

Was It Really Reverence?

Father Norris is pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church, Rochester.

the church with the removal of altar rails, the increasing number of laymen in various roles and around the altar, and just the general, informal atmosphere that is becoming more and more prevalent in Catholic churches these days.

This is, it is true, a far cry from what we had been accustomed to as "reverence" for the Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. But, we may legitimately ask, is this latter notion the attitude that Christ expected us to assume in giving us His Body and Blood?

On the contrary, does it not seem possible that this kind of reverence, as it developed over the centuries, could have become even an obstacle, impeding the true purpose of this Sacrament. Certainly, we were filled with an awesome respect, an attitude of "untouchability" because of the many trappings that

surrounded the Eucharist. And this, may I point out, is the very opposite of the effect that Christ obviously wishes. He gave us His Body and Blood to be near us, to be a living, constant sign of His Presence, not of His Majesty. The Eucharist is the climax of His efforts to be with us.

In this sense, then, I submit that many of the changes have brought about a better attitude of true reverence for this greatest of signs, by allowing us to see better what is signified—the supporting Presence of Christ to men in their daily routine of joys and sorrows and the bond of unity and charity between men. I am sure that there was much conversation, much conviviality, many expressions of concern for one another among the Apostles at the Last Supper. It was within this atmosphere, and certainly with an eye to improve on such an atmosphere, that Our Lord willed to give us the sign of His continuing Presence among us.

Editorial

Caring for the Growing family of the Well-Aged

The Sisters of St. Joseph and the Diocese of Rochester have just taken an expensive stride into the future of long-term care for the elderly of this area by beginning a \$9.1 million construction to provide 250 apartments.

In late 1973, the 19-story building begun last week will be a health-related facility connected to St. Ann's Home offering "well" elderly persons safe and independent living where medical supervision and dietary care will be constantly available.

This community should applaud the imagination and courage of the St. Ann's Board and its Administrative Council for this responsible effort to share a social problem pressing on families everywhere.

Complete care desired and deserved by the elderly should satisfy their medical, social, psychological and spiritual needs. How very few nursing homes can do this

— how impossible for the family of a relative to meet these basics! St. Ann's and its future auxiliary to be called The Heritage will admirably serve the total wants of more than 600 senior residents.

The bonus of longer lives given to our times by the miracles of medicine has turned into a mixed blessing. The numbers of people living to quite advanced old age are increasing far more rapidly than are the facilities to care for them.

The frustration of the elderly who cannot make a happy life alone and the despair of the nearest relatives who cannot accommodate them are today compounded by the shortage of nursing homes and the cost of such living. The majority of the elderly are looking for a little more care than just housing and a little less than the services of a skilled nursing home or hospital.

In applauding the newest step by our diocese to help the elderly live out their lives in dignity and security we might raise a question: Could parishes help their ambulant well-elderly by sponsoring a supervised boarding home in their own neighborhood? A parish's group home—based in some vacated parish convent or a large unused residence no one seems able to buy or rent—might offer a few lonely older parishioners a rent-free room where under routine supervision they could share the management of the house and the preparing of meals. The independence of the person would remain intact but there would be security and companionship and care in the sharing of a residence with others. The total annual cost to the parish for offering the house and utilities and heat and supervision would be small but the blessing for their own aged would be great.