

The Spirit of the Lord Fills Our World

PART II

To renew their baptismal commitment, to live concretely in the Spirit of Christ, hundreds of American Catholics have prayed to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. There is no set form or formula or setting for this type of prayer. It takes place in small or large prayer groups, with a friend or alone — but always with Jesus. It takes place with the laying on of hands or without this gesture, at home, at school, at work, at Mass, in the car — but always in expectant faith.



In fact, if there is any one thing which most strikingly characterizes Catholic pentecostals it is not tongues or singing or prayer groups; it is that they came to seek a renewal in the Holy Spirit in simple faith, and having received the answer to their prayer they begin to walk in a newness of faith. The people involved in the charismatic renewal are basically men and women of new, richer faith.

Faith, of course, is a gift of God, a grace, an unearned favor. It comes to one, in the plan of redemption, by hearing and believing the word of God, by witnessing the life of the world lived out in the lives of Christians, by seeing the results of faith in the beauty of

those around us. The life of witness is the life of the Church, it is the lived-out proclamation of the good news of salvation. Through preaching in action, the Spirit draws men to God in Christ and the life of faith is born.

When men of faith pray with expectation, Christ's answer builds up their faith. A man may come to seek baptism in the Holy Spirit because he has seen and believed the work of the Spirit in the life of a friend. He then trusts Jesus in prayer and expects that the Lord will renew in him the gifts and fruits bestowed in baptism but not fully actualized in a living way. In the answer to that prayer, Jesus often becomes more real to the believer. He is much closer, more present and active in one's life. He is not only enthroned at the "right hand of the Father," but He, the Risen Lord, is also really alive among the members of His body. Our old belief becomes a new awareness, becomes really real to the believers. The relationship of faith between this man and the Father through Christ has been deepened, transformed, and has become the center of personal existence. It would be false to characterize this newfound faith-life as a purely emotional experience. Certainly, human emotion is involved in any act of love, and people respond emotionally according to their temperament. But it seems better to speak of this new faith-life on the level of a penetrating and all-encompassing awareness and conviction which involves the whole body-person, with all his human qualities in a response of deep commitment.

If anything has been renewed, enlivened or rediscovered by Catholics in the pentecostal movement it has been this new emphasis on a life of radical faith in the loving presence of the Risen Lord in our midst by the power of His Spirit. This renewal of faith seems destined to play an even greater role as it suffuses and enlivens the several movements of renewal within the Church: liturgical and spiritual, reform of clerical and religious life, the ascendancy of the laity to full responsibility as the People of God, and in the broad field of ecumenical relationships. We can also expect the effect of this lively faith in Christian involvement in the vital crises of political, social, and economic development in the world.

Granting the seeming goodness of the movement, its bearing of good fruit and all that, why should it happen in today's Church, in sharp contrast to our experience in former generations? In today's whole movement of renewal, characterized by a drawing together of clergy and laity, by a mutual confession of past failings, by a desire to purify the Church's Bride of Christ, there is an openness of the whole Church to everything Jesus would have it be. In such an atmosphere Jesus is able to break through the wall of human weakness with the result that the charismatic life of the Church grows once again, alongside the growth in liturgy, scripture, and role of the laity.

Guest Editorial

A Reason for the Decline in Church Attendance

By Father Raymond G. Heisel

"I don't go to church anymore because I don't get anything out of it."

It is quite obvious that attendance at Sunday Mass is steadily dropping and of course we are concerned.



Although each parish in our diocese has its own distinct personality the history of each seems to follow the same pattern. St. Margaret Mary's in Irondequoit traces its beginnings, like almost all other parishes, back to a day when a priest appointed to start a new parish surrounded himself with a group of dedicated men and women gathered at an open field, who rolled up their sleeves and went to work. Forty-two years ago Father Charles Bruton at a meeting with 176 "new parishioners" sounded the challenge. There would be months and years of hard work and sacrifice ahead for all. There was no question of "What will I get out of it?" but rather

Father Heisel is Pastor of St. Margaret Mary Parish, Rochester

"What can I put into it?"

Because this parish family is still young enough to number among its members many who were the pioneers, the memory of those early years of real work is still fresh. The Men's Club wrote a chapter into the history of the parish that will never be surpassed. This is not in any way to underestimate the contributions that the women made under the banner of the Altar and Rosary Society. Back of every successful man, they say, there is a woman.

These were the people who accepted their responsibilities and recognized their obligations and never asked the question "What do I get out of it?" The same story is true in varying degree in all parishes of the diocese. Perhaps it is due to the generous giving of selves to the building of the parish church, school, convent and rectory that the people of St. Margaret Mary's are consistently among

the most generous supporters of the missions.

But as the years pass and the parish "grows up" changes must take place. Motivation for participation in parish activities may lessen because the parish is now out of its infant years and no longer needs to be nursed along. However, personal obligations do not lessen. Our obligation to worship God continues as long as we consider ourselves His children. If I say that I do not get anything out of going to church (which means assisting at Mass) I seem to be indicting myself. What should I be getting out of Mass if I have put nothing into it? If I walk into a church with the attitude that God owes me something and the priest better keep me entertained and pleased while I am there then I do not deserve to get anything out of it.

We can expect a turned-off attitude when there is no longer a challenge. We can expect alibis and excuses for not "going to church" when we expect to be handed something wherever we go. God expects us to give only then can we expect Him to give and only then can we expect to get.

Editorial

Alcoholism . . . the 'Other' Addiction Problem

Without understating one bit the terrible problem of drug abuse it can be said that alcoholism probably constitutes a more serious threat to the family and society.

Although alcohol is not usually referred to as a drug, Dr. Harold C. Miles, head of the County Department of Mental Health, considers it the number one problem of addiction in Monroe County.

"By 100 to 1," he emphasized to a Courier-Journal reporter.

The same statistic is cited by Robert E. Smith, director of the National Council on Alcoholism, Rochester.

There are 100 times as many alcoholics as drug addicts," he says, adding, "in Monroe County there are 28,000 alcoholics."

Smith had some other interesting

figures, such as 3½ per cent of the Monroe County population are alcoholics; that a survey of civil service showed that 7 per cent are alcoholic; 65 per cent of the people using his office's service are suburbanites; and that alcoholism breaks down at about 50-50 between men and women.

Probably as important a fact as any of these is that although alcoholism has long been regarded as an illness, only two out of 106 medical schools in the United States offer alcoholism as a course.

"Statistics, however, are not that important," stresses Smith, "it must be remembered that it is a human problem and a treatable illness. Although strides have been made in its study and treatment, it is unfortunately still regarded by too many as some sort of moral leprosy—even by doctors and hospitals."

What classification is used to determine an alcoholic? Generally speaking it is anyone whose drinking affects his life style as to health, home, job and community with repeated and negative impact.

Smith's warning that "alcoholism is a progressive and fatal illness" may sound despairing but, on the contrary, he offers hope.

"If we can get the alcoholic early enough there is a 70 per cent rate of recovery," he says.

So if you think you have a drinking problem or have a loved one who does, contact the Alcoholism Information and Counseling Center, 9773 East Ave., 271-3540.

You owe it everyone concerned.