

Yes, a New Pentecost!

[Thoughts from a homily preached at Sacred Heart Cathedral on May 2, 1976 for the Charismatic Renewal Groups in the Diocese of Rochester.]

Praise the Lord and Peace be with each one of you! Today, in the midst of this Easter Season of Joy, we hear the word of God calling us to

repentance and to be, at peace. Even sins can be turned to our benefit because we are most capable of receiving the forgiveness of the Risen Jesus. And the Lord said to them, "So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in His name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be

preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this. And now I am sending down to you what the Father has promised" now as He blessed them. He withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven. They worshipped him and then went back to Jerusalem Full of Joy, and they were continually in the Temple praising God. (Luke 24:46-53). The Word of God presents a common message: Joy about the resurrection must be joined with firmness of faith and abiding trust in the Holy Spirit. Dedication to Jesus does not save us from problems but rather gives us new courage and new hope.

God is so good to us! Christ Jesus, Our Lord, has conquered death. The note of Victory rings out loud and clear. Death has been conquered. We can live forever in God. Through Easter, hope has been re-enchanted for all people, not only for the dying and the bereaved, but also for the living; the parents of the afflicted child, the oppressed who look forward to freedom, the sinner who can rid himself of sin, the doubtful who can be made certain, the sick and suffering who can realize that the miseries which burden them have a purpose in the mind of God and will be turned to good. Our Liturgy is a celebration of many themes, a reminder that God does not wish to be isolated, a revelation of the emptiness out of which life is made. To be a community of faith, we need to be a community working and praying together at peace with the Church. At every liturgical celebration, we form a circle of need so that we may create life and give life — life through the resurrected Jesus in the Spirit.

We beg for the Spirit because we are trapped by the materialism of the world, the limitations of secular life, the suffocation of our own resources. Beggars for the spirit, we plead for a presence not of this world and yet in it to save us from the world, so that we may live devotedly for the world. Our Liturgy today is for us wanderers in the wilderness of life who ask God to make a home for us in the hearts of others so that we will not be estranged from our brothers and sisters. More than anything else our Liturgy this day intends the gift of the Spirit. So long as there is a Spirit to empty the world of its sense of sufficiency there will be hope for the world and love. Our Liturgy today is the song we sing in an alien land, a song of the disinherited and dispossessed who have chosen the Lord as their portion. This is the desert in which the Spirit flourishes, the aridity from which the fountains of living waters flow. The Spirit that created the world requires that we recognize the Lordship of Jesus in our lives. May it be that a community of poor believers becomes a herald of the future and a harbinger of the Spirit.

A careful reading of the Acts of the Apostles shows us that the Apostolic Church was Charismatic. The sacramental life of the Church took its form of expression through the power of the risen Lord. The Charismatic Church of the Acts of the Apostles was a Church alive with the power of the Holy Spirit. That same Spirit is "at work in the Church and in the world, even where His name remains unheard." (Suenens). Be assured that we who live today have inherited a rich legacy from the Apostolic Church. Catholics in the Charismatic Movement have everything they need to live the fullness of the Christian life. If you are looking for signs to mark your authenticity, please consider these: A strongly grounded spirit of faith in Jesus Christ

as Lord, a renewed interest in private and group prayer, a new sense of spiritual values, a heightened consciousness of the Holy Spirit, the praise of God and a deepening personal commitment to Christ and the Church. You will see, too, a growth in your devotion to the Eucharist and you will partake more fully in the sacramental life of the Church. Reverence for the Mother of the Lord will take on fresh meaning and you will feel a deeper sense of, and attachment to, the Church. Charismatics who sever themselves from the fullness of Christ in His Mystical Body will soon find that it is not the Holy Spirit of God leading them, but the false spirits of confusion and darkness. While we have to respect difference in people's call to God: "There are many rooms in my Father's house." (Jn. 14:2) we must, however, realize that the foundation of the house is one. We, as Catholics, called by the Spirit, must give the best of ourselves to the building up of the Kingdom for the salvation of the world.

I have been the Bishop of the Diocese of Rochester since November 1969. Before the first nine months of my episcopal service were completed, I spoke publicly of the Charismatic Renewal Movement. On the occasion of my sixth episcopal anniversary last November, I directed a pastoral letter, **You Are Living Stones**, to all my priests, sisters and laity. May I spend just a few more minutes of our precious time sharing with you some helpful thoughts for all the renewal groups in our Diocese:

1. There is a great spiritual hunger in our times, and you, perhaps more than any other groups in the Church, struggle to respond to that hunger. I do not know where we would be without the special gifts you have in this area.

2. I wish to recognize and commend your **willingness and zeal to be involved** as servants in our parishes.

3. I have seen outstanding signs of your goodness in the **leadership** that you have developed for the Church on every level. That leadership is spiritually renewed and brings so much hope to all of us. I look forward to the day when more contact between leaders and members of the Charismatic Movement with Bishops and Pastors and the full integration of Charismatic Groups into the structures of parish life is established. I look forward to the day when a liaison between the Diocese and the Charismatic Movement is appointed.

4. Another special gift you bring to the entire Church which we desperately need is your **spirit of joy and confident hope**. But you also face **some temptations** that are common to groups that generate so much response and so much enthusiasm.

Be careful of a tendency to set yourself and your ways as the norm of what constitutes a fully developed Christian today. While you offer a rich and fruitful approach to Christian living, you must realize that your way is but one among many others. Do not use your special graces as a means of judging others and finding them wanting. I would like to offer for your personal meditation and prayerful reflection, St. Paul's first letter to the people of Corinth, Chapters 12 and 13. There were those in the early Church who vied with one another for special recognition. Some claimed that they had the gift of tongues, and therefore, they were on "first base." Others said, "No, we are teachers" or "We are prophets," or "We are the interpreters of tongues."

St. Paul hastens in his 13th chapter to tell the early followers of the Lord that they would have nothing if they did not have the beautiful gift of love. How aptly St. Paul reminds us: "All the special gifts and powers from God will some day come to an end, but love goes on forever. Someday prophecy, and speaking in unknown languages, and special knowledge — these gifts will disappear. There are three things that remain — faith, hope, and love — and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:8, 13) I would also like to suggest that

you read the wonderful book by Cardinal Suenens, **A New Pentecost?** I also highly recommend Father John Haughey's book: **The Conspiracy of God.** I know that you will be particularly impressed with Chapter V of that book, "Who is Duped, Who is Spirit-led." You have the graces you possess because you are called to service of others. Therefore, I expect all renewal groups to develop proposals for assisting parishes.

In your discovery of a deep and rich personal spirituality, you may be tempted, as Peter was at the time of the transfiguration of Jesus. He wanted to remain on Mount Thabor and build a shelter. But Jesus took him back down the mountain and along the humble way that led to Jerusalem and the cross. Listen to the sayings of the Gospel that urge us toward compassion and zeal in responding to the needs of those who suffer in our world. The social mission is recognized as a necessary and intrinsic dimension of the Church.

Be careful that you don't give so much time to your renewal groups that you neglect your responsibilities in your home.

Our Liturgy today reminds us that we live in the Spirit with Easter hope. I, your Bishop, am a man with much hope because I see so many signs of God's loving care for us. I see the Spirit, who gives life to the Church, at work at the heart of the world. Like Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, I and all of us dare to be people of hope:

"Because I believe that God is born anew each morning, because I believe that He is creating the world at this very moment. He did not create it at a distant and long-forgotten moment in time.

It is happening now: We must therefore be ready to expect the unexpected from God.

The ways of providence are by nature surprising. We are not prisoners of determinism nor of the sombre prognostications of sociologists.

God is here, near us, unforeseeable and loving. I am a man of hope, not for human reasons nor from any natural optimism.

But because I believe the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church and in the world, even where His name remains unheard.

I am an optimist because I believe the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of creation.

To those who welcome Him He gives each day fresh liberty and renewed joy and trust.

The long history of the Church is filled with the wonders of the Holy Spirit.

Think only of the prophets and Saints who, in times of darkness, have discovered a spring of grace and shed beams of light on our path.

I believe in the surprises of the Holy Spirit. John XXIII came as a surprise, and the Council, too. They were the last things we expected.

Who would dare to say that the love and imagination of God were exhausted?

To hope is a duty, not a luxury.

To hope is not to dream, but to turn dreams into reality.

Happy are those who dream dreams and are ready to pay the price to make them come true."

May God Bless you!