

A CHARISMATIC EXAMINATION

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In 2 Corinthians 13:5, St. Paul says "examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith." Following upon that exhortation, I prepared a list of ten questions for us in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal to use as we "examine ourselves" at the beginning of this New Year.

1. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit changed your life?

Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit made a decisive difference in your life? Is there a definite "before and after" in your life?

Cardinal Cantalamessa, preacher to the popes for 44 years, has said that he had two lives - one before Baptism in the Spirit, and one after.

Is that true for you? Can you honestly say that the Baptism in the Spirit has made a clear difference in your life?

2. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit given you a personal relationship with the Father and the Son?

Romans 5:5 says "The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." That is the best definition of what it means to be baptized in the Spirit - to experience the love of God poured into our hearts.

Since being baptized in the Spirit, do you know that you are a beloved child of God the Father and can call Him "Abba, Father?" (cf. Romans 8:15) Abba is the name used for "Father" within the family.

Do you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? (cf. 1 Cor.12:3) Is Jesus truly your Friend and Brother?

Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit brought you into an intimate, personal relationship with God?

3. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit changed your prayer life?

Do you have a real, definite, regular prayer life? Do you make time to pray every day? How much time do you actually pray?

Does your prayer include adoration and praise, thanksgiving, contrition, and petition?

Are you open to experiencing charismatic gifts in your prayer, for example, tongues, prophecy, revelation, etc.?

4. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit given you a love for the Word of God in Holy Scripture?

Do you have an irresistible attraction to the Word of God since being baptized in the Spirit? (One of the first effects of the Baptism in the Spirit.)

Do you want to "eat and drink" the Word of God like Ezekiel in the Old Testament (cf. Ezekiel 3:1-3) or like John in the Book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 10: 8-11)?

Do you have that kind of love and attraction to Scripture, so that you look forward to reading it and can't put it down?

5. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit given you the power and desire to bear witness?

Do you look for opportunities to witness to Jesus?

Jesus specifically connected bearing witness to the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:8 and John 15:26-27.

Since being baptized in the Spirit, do you have a desire to share the gospel and look for ways to do that?

6. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit given you a desire to meet together with other Catholic Charismatics for fellowship and support?

Scripture says, "Do not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some" (Hebrews 10:25).

If you pull logs apart, the fire goes out. Likewise, if Catholic Charismatics stop meeting together, groups die and then the whole renewal movement grows very weak.

Do you have some kind of regular meeting with a group for prayer, fellowship and support as a Catholic Charismatic?

7. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit given you an exercise of spiritual gifts, charismatic gifts?

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see a mysterious link between the coming of the Holy Spirit and the outbreak of charismatic gifts and activity.

See the various accounts of the First Pentecost in Acts 2; the Samaritan Pentecost in Acts 8; the Gentile Pentecost in Acts 10; the Ephesian Pentecost in Acts 19...all relate comings of the Holy Spirit to groups of people, connected with charismatic activity.

St. Paul says that the gifts of the Spirit are given for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). There are 27 different charismatic gifts in the New Testament. Several are listed in 1 Cor. 12:8; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11; and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

Are you aware of receiving charismatic gifts and do you use them to build up the Body of Christ?

8. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit helped you make a change in your moral life...in your attitudes and behavior?

Have you made a real break with serious sin or is serious sin -especially sexual sin - still a regular occurrence in your life?

Are you still attached to some "favorite sin" - that is, an affection for some area of wrongdoing that you are attached to and reluctant to give up? (For example, misuse of the tongue, cf. James 3: 2-12).

Is the Holy Spirit helping you to die to self and to overcome self-love and self-centeredness?

9. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit helped you to experience a change in your approach to the sacraments?

Do you receive the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation regularly (preferably monthly)?

Has your experience of the Mass changed, so that you attend to actively join your offering with the priest and not merely as a passive spectator?

Is your reception of the Eucharist a time of blessed communion with the Lord and not a mere formality or routine?

10. Has the Baptism in the Holy Spirit given you a conversion of your mind?

Do you have a desire and motivation to learn what the Church teaches?

Are you familiar with the teachings of the Catholic Catechism? Do you read good spiritual books, such as Lives of the Saints?

Do you follow good Catholic speakers and writers?

St. Paul tells us to "put on the mind of Christ" (cf. Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:16).

So, how did you do? Did you get a passing grade? No matter how we may have scored on this exam, the good news is that as long we desire to go forward with the Lord, He is committed to help us by the grace of His Holy Spirit. Let us praise and thank Him, now and forever! Have a blessed New Year.