

THREE Ps OF A PERSONAL PENTECOST

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No doubt there are many different ways to define and describe the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Over the years there have been, and still continue to be, numerous terms and ways to categorize and characterize this Charismatic Renewal experience of a "personal Pentecost." As I was reflecting on this recently, it occurred to me that it could possibly be referred to in terms of three Ps - Presence, Praise, and Power. At the risk of overgeneralization and oversimplification, I would propose this as one way to capture and understand this contemporary visitation of the Holy Spirit that since February 1967 we have called the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR).

PRESENCE

I believe that one of the first effects of being baptized in the Holy Spirit is a profound realization of the Presence of God. On the Duquesne Weekend, both David Mangan and my wife Patti testified to having had overwhelming experiences of the Presence of God, so much so that each of them - individually and at different times - ended up prostrate on their faces before the majesty and glory of the Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Patti described it this way:

"I'd always believed by the gift of faith that Jesus is really present in the Blessed Sacrament but I had never experienced his glory before. As I knelt there that night, my body literally trembled before his majesty and holiness. I was filled with awe in his presence" (*As By A New Pentecost, Golden Jubilee Edition*, p. 77).

One of the truly great graces of the CCR has been a renewed emphasis on the reality of God's Presence. Being baptized in the Spirit nearly always brings about a renewed faith in God's abiding Presence with us. "Behold, I am with you all days, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

PRAISE

Our initial response to an experience of God's Presence is one of Praise. In using the word Praise, we have to understand that this is meant to also encompass attitudes of reverence, awe, adoration, thanksgiving and worship - even sentiments of contrition, sorrow for sin, and compunction of heart as well.

Needless to say, vocal expressions of Praise, especially in song and the gift of tongues, have been a prime characteristic of the CCR since it began almost 60 years ago.

Especially since Vatican II, congregational singing has been encouraged at Mass, with mixed results at best. It is a testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit that group singing in Praise of the Lord has continued to be a fixture in CCR gatherings.

POWER

I use the word Power to refer primarily to the charisms and spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit, although the word can certainly be applied as well to the Power of the Holy Spirit helping us to lead lives of virtue.

Some of the very last words that Jesus addressed to His Apostles before the Ascension are these:

"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes to you, and you shall be my witnesses..." (cf. Acts 1:8). In this case the Power of the Holy Spirit seems to refer to bearing witness to Jesus, as the Lord told the Apostles they would do (cf. John 15:26-27).

We see the Power of the Holy Spirit at work in the charismatic gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, not only in gifts of healing and working of miracles, but also in gifts such as prophecy, revelation and discernment of spirits.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT, ANYWAY?

God is love and God loves us (cf. 1 John 8,16). He created us out of love. He redeemed us out of love (cf. John 3:16). He desires our love and has poured His love into our hearts through His Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5). We seek to love God only because He has loved us first (cf. 1 John 4:19).

Being baptized in the Spirit, receiving a personal Pentecost, is all about receiving God's love and loving Him in return. That is what happens when we enter into the Presence of the Lord and we come into contact with His immense love.

Praise is simply our love responding to God's love. The Scripture records literally hundreds of verses in which we are encouraged to praise the Lord or give thanks to God. A favorite refrain in the Old Testament, which occurs time and again is this one: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; for His mercy endures forever."

A prominent theologian once said that the CCR was about "giving the power back to God." This was an allusion to Psalm 68:34, "Ascribe power to God over Israel; His excellence and His strength is in the clouds." As we "give power back to God," He in turn imparts His power to us through the Holy Spirit, that we might do mighty works in His Name.

Presence, Praise and Power... may the grace of the Holy Spirit lead us into the fullness of "the promise of the Father" (cf. Luke 24:49) - that we would be immersed in the Holy Spirit and live our lives in the same Holy Spirit.