

FROM THE PASTOR'S



PENTECOST SUNDAY May 31, 2009 B

SEVEN WAVES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In a recent article from *The Word Among Us*, an unnamed author wrote about seven waves of the Holy Spirit that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) names in a talk to Catholic Lay Movements gathered in Rome before he was elected Pope. Since the Cardinal did not mention the original Pentecost, I feel it is important to do so.

First wave: From being scared to being fearless disciples

After the death of Jesus and prior to Pentecost, the disciples of Jesus were a frightened bunch of people. Who could blame them? When they saw what happened to their friend Jesus, it would be normal or them to think that the same could happen to them.

Then Pentecost Day occurred. It is amazing to read the *Acts of the Apostles*, often called the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, and see how electrified the frightened Apostles became. After the Holy Spirit came and filled the Apostles with his electrifying presence, they became fearless in their proclamation of the Good News. Not only that, but they performed signs and wonders just like Jesus. Furthermore, they felt *honored* to be beaten and thrown in jail because of their relationship with Jesus. This was the first and original wave of the Holy Spirit and it must have been something to behold.

In 1998, when Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger addressed 400,000 thousand people gathered in St. Peter's Square to celebrate their involvement in various Lay Movements, he sketched for them what he felt were the most significant "waves of new movements" that had occurred in the Church's history, outpourings of the Holy Spirit that led to spiritual renewal in the Church.

Second wave of the Spirit—monasticism in the third and fourth century

In these years large numbers of lay people were led to leave the world and dedicate their lives to prayer and fasting for the salvation of souls. This was a remarkable movement of the spirit in that so many people were willing to leave behind the pleasures of

the world and live very simple lives, often in caves. We may wonder how *'leaving the world'* helped to bring the Gospel to the world. In time, monasteries became great centers of learning and spirituality which slowly but surely impacted the life of the Church outside the monastic walls. Many of the writings of those desert Fathers and Mothers are still with us today. The *Catechism* has many quotes from them throughout its 600+ pages.

Third wave of the Spirit—the reform of monasticism

By the tenth century, many forms of monastic life, once powerhouses of learning and spirituality, had become lax in their practices. Worse still, they became corrupt, often due to excessive entanglements with secular and worldly rulers.

The monks living in a monastery at Cluny, France, felt led by the spirit to return to a stricter adherence to the Benedictine Rule (the Father of Western Monasticism). At its height, the abbot of Cluny was the second most influential leader in both the Church and the world—second only to the Pope.

Fourth wave of the Spirit—the Dominicans and Franciscans

In contrast to the monastic movements, the Dominicans and Franciscans sent their men into the world to preach the gospel, to care for the poor, and to invite ordinary lay people to share in their spirituality. As with Cluny, these orders quickly spread throughout the world, offering a new springtime for the Church.

Fifth wave of the Spirit—Ignatian spirituality

After Luther's reformation in the sixteenth century, the Church was in much need of spiritual reform. Recuperating from a war wound, a soldier named Ignatius of Loyola discovered the Lord and decided he wanted to live for God. At that point, Ignatius began a spiritual journey that led to the establishment of the Jesuits, a new religious order focused on evangelization, education, and charitable works. As the Easter miracle came alive for Ignatius, he chronicled his transformation in the *Spiritual*

Exercises, a series of meditations that are still effective in helping people come to deepen their relationship with Christ.

Sixth wave of the Spirit—new missionary orders

The sixth wave of the Spirit in the Church's history consisted of male and female missionary orders that started to spring up in the Church in the nineteenth century. These orders were new in that they focused more on evangelizing new lands and cultures and less on renewing the Church and bringing believers to deeper faith. Many of these orders consisted of religious brothers and sisters who dedicated themselves to evangelization, education, hospital work, and care for the poor.

Seventh wave of the Spirit—lay movements—age of the laity

In his talk to the members of Lay Movements gathered in Rome in 1998, Cardinal Ratzinger talked about the present age. He remembered how by the middle of the twentieth century, the mood in much of the Church was one of exhaustion. Fr. Karl Rahner, the great theologian of that time, referred to it as a "winter in the Church." Cardinal Ratzinger added that many people were "relying on their own strength without resorting to God," working hard for the Church, but in a way that was isolated from the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. But, as happened with the six previous waves of renewal, in the midst of this "worn out and dispirited" feeling, the Holy Spirit "took the floor" and again brought a fresh wind of excitement and hope to believers.

Around the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Church saw a new outpouring of grace touching everyone, particularly young people. Like those of the past, this current wave of the Spirit has brought people closer to the Lord and resulted in countless conversions.

Perhaps the two most significant characteristics of the present wave of the Spirit is the new awareness of the Holy Spirit and involvement of lay people in the life of the Church.

When we look at the history of Israel and the Church, we would have to conclude that God moves very slowly or perhaps it is more accurate to say that we are very slow in our response to God. The involvement of the laity in the Church is both their right and duty

because of the baptism into Christ. But it seems for hundreds of years, this basic truth was ignored or lost to church leaders. Finally, we are "getting it." It is very exciting now to see hundreds of the laity with a real sense of their call to *act* on their commission by Church to *go* into the world and help to draw people to Christ and his Church. Sadly, one wonders if church leaders would have promoted lay ministry as much if the large numbers of young men and woman had continued to go to seminaries and convents as they did in the 40's and 50's. As is often the case, "necessity is the mother of invention."

On this Pentecost Day, I am most grateful for the large number of lay faithful that are involved in the life of our local church and the wider community we belong to.

Ascension's Knights of Columbus awarded

"Council of the Year" at State Convention

It was a happy moment this past Monday, when three of our Knight's brought me to one of their vehicles, opened the back door to show me the six trophies they won at last week's Knights of Columbus State Convention. There are 374 Councils in the State of Florida, which also includes the Bahamas and St. Lucia Island. The following are the awards which our *10 month old council* won.

- Council of the Year in the State of Florida
- 1st place Supreme Council (National) Activities Award for Family.
- 1st place State Activities for Church, Family, Membership and Scrap Book/Historical Log.
- Gusiepy Award for meeting our goal for donations for vocations.

Our heartiest congratulations to our Ascension Knights. They are a wonderful new blessing to our parish. For more information about our local branch, contact Grand Knight William "Rusty" Post at 757-6318 or email him scoutsden@yahoo.com.

Have a blessed week,

