

Holy Spirit, Renew Us

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When my son Cameron graduated from Oral Roberts University in 1998, the speaker was Atlanta pastor Creflo Dollar. His topic was unusual for a commencement address—he talked about the importance of praying in tongues and interpreting the message.

It wasn't unusual to hear someone talk about speaking in tongues at ORU. Oral Roberts has testified that when his campus was just a pasture he prayed in tongues and God showed him how to build a great university.

In the early days of the charismatic movement it seemed that every week I heard another story about someone being baptized in the Spirit and speaking in tongues. The joke back then was that after someone was filled with the Spirit we needed to lock them up for months because they were so crazy for God!

The late Jamie Buckingham, my longtime mentor, described the first time he spoke in tongues. In his 1976 book *Risky Living* he wrote: "From the very depths of my inner being, I heard the Holy Spirit Himself beginning to speak. ... I was speaking the language of the angels. It was an unforgettable moment. Sheer ecstasy."

Jamie often joked that trouble was the evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. That's because entire congregations were being swept up in the charismatic renewal during the 1960s and 1970s, and many churches split over it. Today, churches that once opposed the gifts of the Spirit are open to renewal.

The charismatic experience was also a bridge builder. Christians who argued about how to take communion or perform water baptism were swept up in this renewal movement. As more and more Christians experienced the intoxicating power Jamie described, it became more difficult for us to argue about secondary doctrines.

One of the most surprising bridges between denominations was built when charismatic renewal erupted in the Roman Catholic Church. Before the 1962 Vatican II reforms, Catholics believed anyone outside their church was lost. But after Pope John XXIII called for a “new Pentecost,” they began viewing Protestants as “separated brethren.”

A few years later, in 1967, a group of Catholics at Duquesne University received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The fervor spread to Notre Dame, where my colleague Bert Ghezzi was then a graduate student. I’ve enjoyed listening to Bert’s stories of how a group of Catholic students spoke in tongues and prophesied for hours after some businessmen prayed for them in South Bend, Indiana. The renewal in the Catholic Church has now touched an estimated 60 million Catholics worldwide.

One of the first leaders of the Catholic charismatic renewal, Ralph Martin, wrote a feature in this issue on Pope John Paul II, who endorsed the renewal (see page 46). Martin and others believe the pope himself was charismatic.

Catholics, in fact, were the first to use the term “charismatic”—deriving it from the Greek word *charism*, or spiritual gift. The word was mentioned in a Vatican II document, which called on the church to “embrace charismatic gifts ... with thanksgiving.” When we chose to name this magazine *Charisma* in 1975, the term had become widely used by

Protestants.

The charismatic movement has evolved and changed since then. Charismatic churches are growing. The entire evangelical church seems more open to charismatic worship styles.

But at a time when the media pays more attention to evangelicals, I fear that charismatics are fitting in more and emphasizing the Holy Spirit less. Many people are still baptized in the Holy Spirit, but hardly anyone talks about it. It seems our fervor has waned.

God poured out His Spirit at Pentecost to empower the church. He did it again during the Azusa Street Revival in 1906, and again during the charismatic movement, to renew and empower us all.

I believe we need to heed the words of Pope John Paul II, who said these words in 2004, less than a year before he died: "Whenever the Spirit intervenes, He leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history."

Let's pray that the Holy Spirit will again intervene in our lives, empower us afresh and astonish our generation.

Stephen Strang is the founder and publisher of Charisma.