

Why 'Baptism in the Spirit' Is a Gift for the Whole Church

Father Cantalamessa

Tells What This Baptism Is and How It Relates to the Sacraments

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The preacher of the Pontifical Household, Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, was a keynote speaker at a conference last week in Norfolk, Virginia.

The [conference](#) was titled "Awakening the Domestic Church," and Father Cantalamessa gave three addresses there. This one is called "The Baptism in the Spirit, A Grace for the Whole Church."

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Before speaking about the baptism, or outpouring, in the Spirit, I think it is important to understand what the renewal in the Spirit is, where this experience happens and of which it constitutes the source and the high point. Then we will better understand that the outpouring is not an event in and of itself but rather the beginning of a journey whose aim is the profound renewal of life in the whole Church.

Renewal in the Spirit

The expression "renewal in the Spirit" has two biblical equivalents in the New Testament. To understand the soul of the charismatic movement, its profound inspiration, we must primarily search the Scripture. We need to discover the exact meaning of this phrase that is used to describe the experience of the renewal.

The first text is in Ephesians 4:23-24: "*Be renewed in the spirit of your minds and . . . clothe yourselves with the new self.*" Here the word "spirit" is written with a small "s," and rightly so, because it indicates "our" spirit, the most intimate part of us (the spirit of our minds), which Scripture generally calls "the heart." The word "spirit" here indicates that part of ourselves that needs to be renewed in order for us to resemble Christ, the New Man par excellence. "Renewing ourselves" means striving to have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had (see Philippians 2:5), striving for a "new heart."

This text clarifies the meaning and the aim of our experience: The renewal should be, above all, an interior one, one of the heart. After the Second Vatican Council, many things were renewed in the church: liturgy, pastoral care, the *Code of Canon Law* and religious constitutions and attire. Despite their importance, these things are only the antecedents of true renewal. It would be tragic to stop at these things and to think that the whole task has been completed.

What matters to God is people, not structures. It is souls that make the church beautiful, and therefore she must adorn herself with souls. God is concerned about the hearts of His people, the love of His people, and everything else is meant to function as a support to that priority.

Our first text is not enough, however, to explain the phrase “renewal in the Spirit.” It highlights our obligation to renew ourselves (“be renewed!”) as well as what must be renewed (the heart), but it doesn’t tell us the “how” of renewal. What good is it to tell us we “must” renew ourselves if we are not also told how to renew ourselves? We need to know the true author and protagonist of the renewal.

Our second biblical text, from Titus, addresses that precise issue. It says that God “*saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit*” (Titus 3:5).

Here “Spirit” has a capital “S” because it points to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. The preposition “by” points to the instrument, the agent. The name we give to our experience signifies, then, something very exact: renewal by the work of the Holy Spirit, a renewal in which God, not man, is the principal author, the protagonist. “I [not you]” says God, “am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5); “My Spirit [and only He] can renew the face of the earth” (see Psalm 104:30).

This may seem like a small thing, a simple distinction, but it actually involves a real Copernican revolution—a complete reversal that people, institutions, communities and the whole church in its human dimension must undergo in order to experience a genuine spiritual renewal.

We often think according to the “Ptolemaic system”: Its foundation consists in efforts, organization, efficiency, reforms and good will. The “earth” is at the center of this scheme, and God comes with His grace to empower and crown our efforts. The “Sun” revolves around the earth and is its vassal; God is the satellite of man.

However, the Word of God declares, “We need to give the power back to God” (see Psalm 68:35) because the “*power belongs to God*” (Psalm 62:11). That is a trumpet call! For too long we have usurped God’s power, managing it as though it were ours, acting as though it were up to us to “govern” the power of God. Instead, we need to revolve around the “Sun.” That’s the Copernican revolution I’m talking about.

Through that kind of revolution, we recognize, simply, that without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. We cannot even say, “Jesus is Lord!” (see 1 Corinthians 12:3). We recognize that even our most concerted effort is simply the effect of salvation, rather than its cause. Now we can begin to really “lift up our eyes” and to “look up,” as the prophet exhorts (see Isaiah 60:4), and to say, “*I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth*” (Psalm 121:1-2).

The Bible often repeats the command of God, “*You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy!*” (Leviticus 19:1; see Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15-16). But in one place in that very same book of Leviticus, we find a statement that explains all the others: “*I am the Lord; I sanctify*

you!" (Leviticus 20:8). I am the Lord who wants to renew you with My Spirit! Let yourselves be renewed by My Spirit!

Baptism: An "Unreleased" Sacrament

Now let's move on to the theme of the baptism of the Spirit. First of all it must be said that this expression is not a recent invention of pentecostals and charismatics. It comes directly from Jesus. Before leaving his disciples he said to them: "*John baptized in water but, not many days from now, you are going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit*" (Ac 1:5). We know what happened not many days from that moment: Pentecost! The expression baptism in the Spirit therefore on one hand refers to the event of Pentecost and on the other hand to baptism. We could speak of it in terms of "a new Pentecost" for the church (and I often do so) or in terms of a renewal of our baptism. This time I want to explore this second dimension of it.

The term "baptism in the Spirit" indicates that there is something here that is basic to baptism. We say that the outpouring of the Spirit actualizes and revives our baptism. To understand how a sacrament received so many years ago and administered in infancy can suddenly come alive and be revived and release such energy as we see on the occasions of outpouring, we must recall some aspects of sacramental theology.

Catholic theology can help us understand how a sacrament can be valid and legal but "unreleased." A sacrament is called "unreleased" if its fruit remains bound, or unused, because of the absence of certain conditions that further its efficacy. One extreme example would be the sacrament of marriage or of holy orders received while a person is in the state of mortal sin. In those cases, such sacraments cannot confer any grace on a person. If, however, the obstacle of sin is removed by repentance, the sacrament is said to revive (*reviviscit*) due to the faithfulness and irrevocability of the gift of God. God remains faithful even when we are unfaithful, because He cannot deny Himself (see 2 Timothy 2:13).

There are other cases in which a sacrament, while not being completely ineffective, is nevertheless not entirely released: It is not free to work its effects. In the case of baptism, what is it that causes the fruit of this sacrament to be held back?

Here we need to recall the classical doctrine about sacraments. Sacraments are not magic rites that act mechanically, without people's knowledge or collaboration. Their efficacy is the result of a synergy, or collaboration, between divine omnipotence (that is, the grace of Christ and of the Holy Spirit) and free will. As Saint Augustine said, "He who created you without your consent will not save you without your cooperation."

To put it more precisely, the fruit of the sacrament depends wholly on divine grace; however, this divine grace does not act without the "yes"—the consent and affirmation—of the person. This consent is more of a "*conditio sine qua non*" than a cause in its own right. God acts like the bridegroom, who does not impose his love by force but awaits the free consent of his bride.

God's Role and Our Role in Baptism

Everything that depends on divine grace and the will of Christ in a sacrament is called “*opus operatum*,” which can be translated as “the work *already* accomplished, the objective and certain fruit of a sacrament when it is administered validly.” On the other hand, everything that depends on the liberty and disposition of the person is called “*opus operantis*”; this is the work yet to be accomplished by the individual, his or her affirmation.

The *opus operatum* of baptism, the part done by God and grace, is diverse and very rich: remission of sins; the gift of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (given in seed form); and divine sonship. All of this is mediated through the efficacious action of the Holy Spirit. In the words of Clement of Alexandria:

Once baptized, we are enlightened; enlightened, we are adopted as sons; adopted, we are made perfect; made perfect, we receive immortality The operation of baptism has several names: grace, enlightenment, perfection, bath. It can be called a “bath” because through it we are purified of our sins; “grace” because the punishments deserved for our sins are removed; “enlightenment” because through it we can contemplate the beautiful and holy light of salvation, and see into divine reality; “perfection” because nothing is lacking.

Baptism is truly a rich collection of gifts that we received at the moment of our birth in God. But it is a collection that is still sealed up. We are rich because we possess these gifts (and therefore we can accomplish all the actions necessary for Christian life), but we don’t know what we possess. Paraphrasing a verse from John, we can say that we have been sons of God until now, but what we shall become has yet to be revealed (see 1 John 3:2). This is why we can say that, for the majority of Christians, baptism is a sacrament that is still “unreleased.”

So much for the *opus operatum*. What does the *opus operantis* consist of in baptism?

It consists of faith! “*The one who believes and is baptized shall be saved*” (Mark 16:16). With regard to baptism, then, there is the element of a person’s faith. “*But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God*” (John 1:12).

We can also recall the beautiful text from the Acts of the Apostles that tells about the baptism of Queen Candace’s court official. When their journey brought Philip and the official near some water, the official said, “*Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?*” Philip said, “*It is permitted if you believe with all your heart*” (Acts 8: 36-37). (Verse 37 here, an addition from the early Christian community, testifies to the common conviction of the church at that time.)

Baptism is like a divine seal stamped on the faith of man: “*When you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, [you] were marked with the seal [this refers to baptism] of the promised Holy Spirit*” (Ephesians 1:13). Saint Basil wrote, “Truly, faith and baptism, these two modes of salvation, are bound indivisibly to one another, because if faith receives its perfection from baptism, baptism is founded on faith.” This same saint called baptism “the seal of faith.”

The individual's part, faith, does not have the same importance and independence as God's action because God plays a part even in someone's act of faith: Even faith works by the grace that stirred it up. Nevertheless, the act of faith includes, as an essential element, the response—the individual's "I believe!"—and in that sense we call it *opus operantis*, the work of the person being baptized.

Now we can understand why baptism was such a powerful and grace-filled event in the early days of the church and why there was not normally any need for a new outpouring of the Spirit like the one we are experiencing today. Baptism was administered to adults who were converting from paganism and who, after suitable instruction, were in a position to make an act of faith, an existential, free and mature choice about their lives. (We can read about baptism in the *Mystagogical Catecheses*, attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, to understand the depth of faith of those who were prepared for baptism.)

They came to baptism by way of a true and genuine conversion. For them baptism was really a font of personal renewal in addition to a rebirth in the Holy Spirit (see Titus 3:5). Saint Basil, responding to someone who had asked him to write a treatise on baptism, said that it could not be explained without first explaining what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, because the Lord commands,

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. --MATTHEW 28:19-20

In order for baptism to operate in all its power, anyone who desires it must also be a disciple or have a serious intention of becoming one. According to Saint Basil:

A disciple is, as the Lord Himself taught us, anyone who draws near to the Lord to follow Him, that is, to hear His Words, to believe and obey Him as one would a master or a king or a doctor or a teacher of truth. . . . Now, whoever believes in the Lord and presents himself ready to be disciple must first set aside every sin and everything that distracts from the obedience which is owed to the Lord for many reasons.

The favorable circumstance that allowed baptism to operate in such power at the beginning of the church was this: The action of God and the action of man came together simultaneously, with perfect synchronism. It happened when the two poles, one positive and one negative, touched, making light burst forth.

Today this synchronism is usually not operative. As the church adopted infant baptism, little by little the sacrament began to lack the act of faith that was free and personal. The faith was supplied, or uttered, by an intermediate party (parents and godparents) on behalf of the child. In the past, when the environment around the baby was Christian and full of faith, the child's faith could develop, even if it was slowly. But today our situation has become even worse than that of the Middle Ages.

The environments in which many children now grow up do not help faith to blossom. The same must often be said of the family, and more so of the child's school and even more so of our society and culture. This does not mean that in our situation today normal Christian life cannot exist or that there is no holiness or no charisms that accompany holiness. Rather, it means that instead of being the norm, it has become more and more of an exception.

In today's situation, rarely, or never, do baptized people reach the point of proclaiming "in the Holy Spirit" that "Jesus is Lord!" And because they have not reached that point, everything in their Christian lives remains unfocused and immature. Miracles no longer happen. What happened with the people of Nazareth is being repeated: "Jesus was not able to do many miracles there because of their unbelief" (see Matthew 13:58).

The Meaning of the Outpouring of the Spirit

The outpouring of the Spirit, then, is a response by God to the dysfunction in which Christian life now finds itself. In these last few years we know that the church, the bishops, have also begun to be concerned that Christian sacraments, especially baptism, are being administered to people who will make no use of them in their lives. Thus, they have considered the possibility of not administering baptism when the minimum guarantees that this gift of grace would be valued and cultivated are absent.

We cannot, in fact, "throw our pearls before swine," as Jesus said, and baptism is a pearl because it is a fruit of the blood of Christ. But we can say that God is concerned, even more than the church is, about this dysfunction. He has raised up movements here and there in the church that are proceeding in the direction of renewing Christian initiation among adults.

The renewal in the Spirit is one of those movements, and its principal grace, without doubt, is tied to the outpouring of the Spirit and what precedes it. Its efficacy at revivifying baptism consists in this: Finally a person is doing his or her part, making a decision of faith that is prepared through repentance. This allows the work of God to "be released" in all its power.

It is as though God's outstretched hand has finally grasped the hand of the individual, and through that handclasp, He transmits all His creative power, which is the Holy Spirit. To use an image from physics, the plug has been inserted into the outlet, and the light has been turned on. The gift of God is finally "unbound," and the Spirit permeates Christian life like a perfume.

For the adult who has been a Christian for many years, this faith decision necessarily has the characteristic of a *conversion*. We could describe this outpouring of the Spirit, insofar as the person is concerned, either as a renewal of baptism or as a second conversion.

We can understand something else about this outpouring if we also see its connection with confirmation, at least in the current practice of separating it from the sacrament of baptism and administering it later. In addition to being a renewal of the grace of baptism, the outpouring is also a "confirmation" of baptism itself, a conscious "yes" to it, its fruit and its commitments. As such it parallels (at least in its subjective aspect) the effects of confirmation on the objective, sacramental level.

Confirmation is understood as a sacrament that develops, confirms and fulfills the work of baptism. The outpouring is a subjective and spontaneous—not sacramental—confirmation in which the Spirit acts not from the power of the sacramental institution but through the power of His free initiative and the openness of the person.

The meaning of confirmation sheds light on the special sense of greater involvement in the apostolic and missionary dimension of the church that usually characterizes someone who has received the outpouring of the Spirit. That person feels impelled to help build up the church, to serve the church in various ministries, clerical or lay, and to give testimony to Christ. All of these things recall Pentecost and actualize the sacrament of confirmation.

Jesus, “The One Who Baptizes in the Holy Spirit”

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is not the only occasion in the church for this renewal of the sacraments of initiation and, in particular, of the coming of the Holy Spirit at baptism. Other occasions include the renewal of baptismal vows during Easter vigils; spiritual exercises; the profession of vows, called “a second baptism”; and, on the sacramental level, confirmation.

It is not difficult, then, to find the presence of a “spontaneous outpouring” in the lives of the saints, especially on the occasion of their conversion. For example, we can read about Saint Francis at his conversion:

After the feast they left the house and started off singing through the streets. Francis’ companions were leading the way; and he, holding his wand of office, followed them at a little distance. Instead of singing, he was listening very attentively. All of a sudden the Lord touched his heart, filling it with such surpassing sweetness that he could neither speak nor move. He could only feel and hear this overwhelming sweetness which detached him so completely from all other physical sensations that, as he said later, had he been cut to pieces on the spot he could not have moved.

When his companions looked around, they saw him in the distance and turned back. To their amazement they saw that he was transformed into another man, and they asked him, “What were you thinking of? Why didn’t you follow us? Were you thinking of getting married?”

Francis answered in a clear voice: “You are right: I was thinking of wooing the noblest, richest, and most beautiful bride ever seen.” His friends laughed at him saying he was a fool and did not know what he was saying; in reality he had spoken by a divine inspiration.

Although I said the outpouring of the Spirit is not the only time of renewal of baptismal grace, it holds a very special place because it is open to all of God’s people, big and small, and not just to certain privileged people who do the Ignatian spiritual exercises or take religious vows. Where does that extraordinary power that we have experienced in an outpouring come from? We are not, in fact, speaking about a theory but about something that we ourselves have experienced. We can also say, with Saint John, “What we have heard, and what we have seen with our own eyes and touched with our own hands, we declare to you because you are in communion with us” (see 1

John 1:1-3). The explanation for this power lies in God's will: It has pleased Him to renew the church of our day by this means, and that is all there is to it!

There are certainly some biblical precedents for this outpouring, like the one narrated in Acts 8:14-17. Peter and John, knowing that the Samaritans had heard the Word of God, came to them, prayed for them and laid hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit. But the text that we need to begin with to understand something about this baptism in the Spirit is primarily John 1:32-33:

And John [the Baptist] testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'"

What does it mean that Jesus is "the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit"? The phrase serves not only to distinguish the baptism of Jesus from that of John, who baptized only "with water," but to distinguish the whole person and work of Christ from His precursor's. In other words, in all His works, Jesus is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

"To baptize" has a metaphoric significance here: It means "to flood, to bathe completely and to submerge," just as water does with bodies. Jesus "baptizes in the Holy Spirit" in the sense that he "gives the Spirit without measure" (see John 3:34), that He has "poured out" His Spirit (see Acts 2:33) on all of redeemed humanity. The phrase refers to the event of Pentecost more than to the sacrament of baptism, as one can deduce from the passage in Acts: "*John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now*" (Acts 1:5).

The expression "to baptize in the Holy Spirit" defines, then, the essential work of Christ, which already in the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament appeared oriented to regenerating humanity by means of a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit (see Joel 2:28-29). Applying all this to the life and history of the church, we must conclude that the resurrected Jesus baptized in the Holy Spirit not only in the sacrament of baptism but in different ways and at different times as well: in the Eucharist, in the hearing of the Word of God, in all other "means of grace."

The baptism in the Spirit is one of the ways that the resurrected Jesus continues his essential work of "baptizing in the Spirit." For this reason, even though we can explain this grace in reference to baptism and Christian initiation, we need to avoid becoming rigid about his point of view. It is not only baptism that revives the grace of initiation, but also confirmation, first communion, the ordination of priests and bishops, religious vows, marriage—all the graces and charisms. This is truly the grace of a new Pentecost. It is, like the rest of Christian life, a new and sovereign initiative, in a certain sense, of the grace of God, which is founded on but not exhausted in baptism. It is linked not just to "initiation" but also to the "perfection" of Christian life.

Only in this way can we explain the presence of the baptism in the Spirit among Pentecostal brothers and sisters. The concept of initiation is foreign to them, and they do not invest the same importance in water baptism as do Catholics and other Christians. In its very origin the baptism in the Spirit has an ecumenical value, which is necessary to preserve at all costs. It is a promise

and an instrument of unity among Christians, helping us to avoid an excessive “catholicizing” of this shared experience.

Brotherly Love, Prayer and Laying on of Hands

In the outpouring there is a hidden, mysterious dimension that is different for each person because only God knows us intimately. He acts in a way that respects the uniqueness of our personalities. At the same time, there is also a visible dimension, in the community, that is the same for all and that constitutes a kind of sign, analogous to the signs in the sacraments. The visible, or community, dimension consists primarily in three things: brotherly love, prayer and the laying on of hands. These are not sacramental signs, but they are indeed biblical and ecclesial.

The laying on of hands can signify two things: invocation or consecration. We see, for example, both types of laying on of hands at Mass. There is the laying on of hands as invocation (at least in the Roman rite) at the moment of epiclesis, when the priest prays, “May the Holy Spirit sanctify these gifts so that they may become for us the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Then there is the laying on of hands when the concelebrants pray over the offerings at the moment of consecration.

In the rite of confirmation, as it now occurs, there are also two occasions for the laying on of hands. The first has the character of invocation. The other, which accompanies the anointing with the oil of chrism on the forehead, by which the sacrament becomes actualized, has the character of consecration.

In the outpouring of the Spirit, the laying on of hands has only the character of invocation (similar to what we find in Genesis 48:14; Leviticus 9:22; Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 19:13-15). It also has a highly symbolic significance: It recalls the image of the Holy Spirit's overshadowing (see Luke 1:35); it also recalls the Holy Spirit as He “swept over” the face of the waters (see Genesis 1:2). In the original the word that is translated “swept over” means “to cover with one’s wings,” or “to brood, like a hen with her chicks.”

Tertullian clarifies the symbolism of the laying on of hands in baptism: “The flesh is covered over by the laying on of hands so that the soul can be enlightened by the Spirit.” This action is a paradox, like many things in God: The laying on of hands enlightens by covering, like the cloud that followed the chosen people in Exodus and like the one that surrounded the disciples on Mount Tabor (see Exodus 14:19-20; Matthew 17:5).

The other two elements are brotherly love and prayer, or “brotherly love that expresses itself in prayer.” Brotherly love is the sign and vehicle of the Holy Spirit. He, who is Love, finds a natural environment in brotherly love, His sign par excellence. (We can also say this love is like a sacramental sign, even if it is in a different sense: “a signifying cause.”) We cannot insist enough on the importance of an atmosphere of brotherly love surrounding those who are going to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is also closely connected with the outpouring of the Spirit in the New Testament. Concerning Jesus' baptism, Luke writes, "While he was in prayer, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him" (see Luke 3:21). It was Jesus' prayer, we could say, that made the heavens open and the Holy Spirit descend upon Him.

The outpouring at Pentecost happened this way too: While they were all continuing in prayer, there came the sound of a violent wind, and tongues of fire appeared (see Acts 1:14-21). Jesus Himself said, "*I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate*" (John 14:16). On every occasion the outpouring of the Spirit is connected to prayer.

These signs--the laying on of hands, brotherly love and prayer--all point to simplicity; they are simple instruments. Precisely because of this, they bear the mark of God's action. Tertullian writes of baptism:

There is nothing which leaves the minds of men so amazed as the simplicity of the divine actions which they see performed and the magnificence of the effects that follow. . . . Simplicity and power are the prerogatives of God.

This is the opposite of what the world does. In the world the bigger the objectives are, the more complicated are the means. When people wanted to get to the moon, the necessary apparatus was gigantic.

If simplicity is the mark of divine action, we need to preserve it in our prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit. Simplicity should shine forth in prayers, in gestures, in everything. There should be nothing theatrical, no excited movements or excessive words, etc.

The Bible records the glaring contrast between the actions of the priests of Baal and the prayer of Elijah during the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. The former cried out, limped around the altar and cut themselves until they bled. Elijah simply prayed, "*O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, . . . answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back!*" (1 Kings 18:36-37). The fire of the Lord fell on the sacrifice prepared by Elijah but not on the one prepared by the priests of Baal (see 1 Kings 18:25-38). Elijah later experienced that God was not in the great wind, or in the earthquake, or in the fire but in the still, small voice (see 1 Kings 19:11-12).

From where does the grace of the outpouring come? From the people present? No! From the person who receives? Again, no! It comes from God. It makes no sense to ask if the Holy Spirit comes from inside or from outside of the person: God is inside and outside. We can only say that such grace has a connection to baptism because God always acts with consistency and faithfulness; He does not contradict Himself. He honors the commitment and the institutions of Christ. One thing is certain: It is not the brothers and sisters who confer the Holy Spirit. Rather, they invite the Holy Spirit to come upon a person. No one can give the Spirit, not even the pope or a bishop, because no one possesses the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus can actually give the Holy Spirit. People do not possess the Holy spirit, but, rather, are possessed by Him.

When we talk about the mode of this grace, we can speak of it as a new coming of the Holy Spirit, as a new sending of the Spirit by the Father through Jesus Christ or as a new anointing corresponding to a new level of grace. In this sense the outpouring, although not a sacrament, is nevertheless an event, a *spiritual event*. This definition corresponds most closely to the reality of the thing. It is an *event*, something that happens and that leaves a sign, creating something new in a life. It is a *spiritual* event, rather than an outwardly visible, historical one, because it happens in a person's spirit, in the interior part of a person, where others may not recognize what is happening. Finally, it is spiritual because it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

There is a wonderful text from the apostle Paul that speaks specifically of the renewing of the gift of God. Let's hear it as an invitation addressed to each of us:

I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.--2 TIMOTHY 1:6-7

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