

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

3. Theology & Practice

INITIAL PRESENTATIONS

1. The release or entry into conscious experience of the graces objectively given in the sacrament(s) of baptism (and confirmation).

Major Concern: To show that speaking of a baptism in the Spirit is not contrary to Catholic teaching on baptism.

PROBLEMS/WEAKNESSES

- This explains very little
- It says nothing about what is producing this outpouring of the Holy Spirit now
- What for example is the role of the Word of God, of preaching, of the witness of others?
- Says nothing about link between BHS and charisms

- It implies a rather unrenewed way of talking about graces as though everything is there inside a baptized baby and now it comes out

Post Vatican Two theology has moved beyond explaining everything in terms of graces. We are talking about the manifold working of the Holy Spirit, about relationship to the divine persons, from planting of first seed to full maturation and final destiny.

2. A new mission of the Holy Spirit (Fr Francis Sullivan, sj appealing to St Thomas Aquinas)

Fr Sullivan rightly criticized the release view of not doing justice to the newness in this work of the Holy Spirit.

But Sullivan's presentation like the first is too individualistic - the context is individuals being blessed - not sufficiently ecclesial.

Neither theory takes account of the ecumenical.

THE ICCRS BOOKLET

We took the position that both these theories address one aspect but are not adequate by themselves (see III.5.2).

From release theory: “actualization of the full power of the sacraments of initiation” (III, 5. 1)

From Sullivan: “not only the ‘already given’ but the ‘new from above’” (III, 5. 2).

INSTITUTIONAL & CHARISMATIC

At Pentecost 1998 St John Paul II gave a very important address to the new ecclesial movements and new communities.

He spoke about the institutional and charismatic elements in the Church both belonging to her constitution. He said that through the Second Vatican Council the Church had rediscovered the charismatic dimension.

BHS BELONGS TO CHARISMATIC

“Baptism in the Spirit, as a manifestation of the spontaneous working of the Spirit, belongs to the charismatic dimension, but at the same time it brings new life and dynamism to the institutional dimension of Christian life grounded in the sacraments.” (III. 4).

This perspective adds something important.

CONSEQUENCES

1. There cannot be a doctrine of baptism in the Spirit.
2. Baptism in the Spirit as experienced in the Renewal cannot be made normative. (III.5.2. end).
3. There cannot be a liturgical ritual for baptism in the Spirit.

REMAINING QUESTIONS

1. Why is this outpouring of the Holy Spirit taking place at this moment in Christian history?
2. Why is speaking in tongues playing an important role in this Renewal?
3. Does it belong to the Lord's preparation of the Church for the second coming of Jesus?
(this would fit with the eschatological context of the BHS passages in Matthew and Luke)

KEY ELEMENTS PASTORALLY

- Ecclesial Context a Grace for the Church
- Surrender to Risen & Ascended Lord Jesus
- Opening a channel of constant flow
- Allowing the Lord to use all of our being as His instrument, our bodies, our voices, our hearts, our minds