

Father Hocken – Talk given at 5/19/11 Alleluia Prayer Meeting

Thank you for your warm welcome. I was here in 2003 and 2005, and I remember those visits well, especially I think 2003, the prayer meeting which was very blessed.

I want to talk tonight about an aspect of the importance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our day. The importance of the whole charismatic movement, like many others, at the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic renewal, I knew this was something of huge importance. I'm sure this sentiment was experienced also by people like Dennis McBride and Bill Beatty (Alleluia founders) and others back in those days in the early '70's, that this was of huge historical and spiritual significance. It was obviously, I saw, very important for unity, for ecumenism, because I had been involved a lot in ecumenism before I came into the renewal, so that helped me to understand immediately that this had to have huge ecumenical potential, because I saw it was the first movement at all in history since the divisions of the 16th century that the same work of the Spirit was received in both the Protestant world and in the Catholic Church. And this was unique. How can that not be of major significance for unity? And so, I saw it was the same work of God in all the different Christian churches and communions. It was the same fruit, the same gifts, but in different framework, in different contexts, but it was the same spiritual reality.

And so this created a new situation between the churches because when Charismatic Christians baptized in the Spirit came together, they could worship and pray in a way that was familiar to all of them in a way that wasn't possible for other Christians, and this was very important. I'm not going to go into some of the theological questions this raised in which I've been much involved, this isn't the place to do that. But I think that these were all signs that this was not just another blessing, another grace of the kind that comes along fairly regularly in the history of the church. There was something very special about what God was doing.

As I prayed into this, and reflected on it, and wrote about it, I saw more. I saw for the first time, I remember teaching about this for the first time in 1990. A message based on, first of all, Acts 1:8, because here the risen Jesus says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. And you will bear witness to me in Jerusalem, and throughout all Judea and Samaria, even to the furthest ends of the earth." And now, the insight I had in 1990, I wouldn't say this is a teaching, I think it was a prophetic insight that needed discernment. It wasn't something to be taught like a doctrine, but it was an insight that it's important to evaluate for discerning, whether this is true or not. But what I saw and sensed was, that just as at the beginning, the Holy Spirit drove the Church out from Jerusalem through Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth, so in our day, the Holy Spirit is being poured out in a reverse movement. And I want to speak more about this because I think if this is right it's of huge significance for understanding what this whole work of the Holy Spirit is about.

Now this week we have had Mass readings in daily Mass in Catholic Church from the book of Acts, in fact, the whole of Eastertide is going through the book of Acts. And, what we've found, we heard this week from Acts 11 and Acts 13, and here it describes how the Holy Spirit came on Cornelius and his household in Caesarea when Peter was preaching to them. See, it's very interesting because Peter didn't lay hands on anybody; the Holy Spirit didn't wait for the end of Peter's message. The Spirit fell on the people while Peter was speaking. And he was amazed! When he reports back to the other apostles and elders in Jerusalem, he says,

"the Holy Spirit fell on them as He had on us in the beginning." See, they had the same blessings, the same work of the Holy Spirit. And these are not Jews. Then in Acts 13, you get the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas for the first missionary journey of Paul who's been chosen as the apostle to the nations, the apostle to the Gentiles. Here again, we find that the whole thing is absolutely led by the Holy Spirit, initiated by the Holy Spirit. What we read at the beginning of Acts 13 is, that in the church of Antioch, there were prophets and teachers. It says, "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, " now, we don't know how the Holy Spirit said it, but it just simply says the Holy Spirit said it, but it was obviously something that they all heard, "Set apart from me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. After they had fasted and prayed they placed their hands on them and sent them off." Then in the next verse it says the two of them sent on their way by the Holy Spirit. So the first missionary journey that went in places in central present day Turkey was the result of the Holy Spirit's intervention, and telling them to do it. And all through the Acts of the Apostles, we see the going out of the Gospel, the going out of the message of salvation, the going out of the word of God is led by the Holy Spirit.

And then we see when the Apostles and Elders meet to discuss this question about whether the Gentile converts should be circumcised, in other words, whether they have to become Jews to receive salvation, and the Spirit leads them to a consensus that they did not. Therefore, it says in the conclusion of this meeting, that "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us", and they make their decision, no. But they were led by the Spirit, and it's clear from the discussion when they arrived they were not all of the same opinion. They were led into unity because they were praying and because they believed in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

And then in the next chapter, it says that Paul wanted to go into Bithynia, which is in Asia Minor and the west of Turkey, and it said the Spirit would not let him. See? The Spirit was guiding him. The Spirit wouldn't let Paul go where he wanted to go to preach the gospel. And it says that that night he had a dream, and he sees a man from Europe, from Macedonia, and this mans says, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" This is the beginning of the gospel being taken into Europe for the first time. This again, this new step was led by the Holy Spirit.

What I think is happening is that we are now in the reverse process of the in-gathering, the coming together, after the going out to the ends of the earth. We're in the process of coming back from the ends of the earth to Jerusalem. This also has to be guided by the Holy Spirit just as much as the going out in the beginning was led by the Holy Spirit. I think this fits with the other word of the angels just after Jesus ascended into heaven, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will be come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." This is giving an idea of this way of what will happen at the end, in some way is related to the pattern at the beginning. Now what helped me to see that we are involved in the process of return of ingathering, I like the word ingathering, it also is related to the word harvest, which I think is also appropriate.

In fact, for me, I saw this clearly for the first time after I had really become aware and understood something about the Messianic Jews, because the Messianic Jews is a movement of Jews who come to faith in Jesus and who believe that they're supposed to be Jewish disciples of Jesus. They're not just supposed to do what Jewish converts were required to do

through the centuries, which was become Gentile Christians, or assimilated like us. And of course this is very important for unity, because in the letter to the Ephesians in chapters 2 and 3, Paul gives as the example of unity and reconciliation the fundamental reconciliation is the union established through the cross between Jew and Gentile, and that was the original unity. The emergence of Jewish believers who say that we are still Jews is of huge significance for Christian unity, even though many of them don't realize that yet, unfortunately. The Messianic Jewish movement, there have been Jews sort of moving in this direction over the last century, the beginnings of it. A dynamic movement spreading led by the Spirit that was Charismatic really only dates from mid-1967, about 4 months after the beginnings of the Catholic Charismatic renewal near Pittsburgh, and I think this is significant, because you see what I saw was another aspect of the going back. This going back from the ends of the earth. See, from this point of view, you could say that the United States in relationship to Jerusalem can be seen as the ends of the earth, from a Jerusalem-centered perspective. That's probably not how you're accustomed to seeing things.

What I saw was that the outpouring of the Spirit began really like this: the baptism of the Spirit with the Pentecostals, not only this began in California, but it was outside the whole world of historic Christianity, and I think this is significant. But then it moves into the Protestant churches. And after that, it moves to everyone's surprise, into the Catholic Church, and immediately after that you get the phenomenon of Jews coming to faith in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the World. And so, here you've got not only a return towards Jerusalem, but it's like this is what the process of unity involves, and the process of unity involves healing of the divisions of history, and this means there has to be a going back in some sense through this thing for the healing of this history in order that there can be unity again. So this is another sign, the whole call, for example, of John Paul II, for a confession of Catholic sins against unity, etc., is a major step in this direction. Now of course the whole movement towards unity can be seen in this way as a movement of return, of gathering together. But what this vision, let's call it a vision, adds to it is, that the return, is in a fundamental way, to Jerusalem.

And of course it's no accident that Jerusalem is one of the most divided cities on the face of the earth, this is not surprising. So, what I've discovered, as I've had quite a bit to do with Jerusalem in recent years is, that the spiritual conflict, the opposition of Satan to any progress is strongest in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a very tough place for people to live, and this is not surprising, because this process of the restoration of unity is a spiritual battle all the way. This is something that the ecumenical movement, which is very important, has not been strong in recognizing. There is too much confidence in thinking that dialogue will do the whole job. Now, dialogue has been extremely important, and we shouldn't deny that. There has been a lot of fruit from ecumenical dialogue. But, if that's all that's happening what we find is, the churches don't look to be a lot more united now after 40 years of dialogue. They're friendlier to each other, but that's not unity the Lord wants. And this extra thing, something more is needed, and it is the Holy Spirit, its dependence on the Holy Spirit. But more of the Holy Spirit also involves more humility, and acknowledging the things that all of us have done wrong in the past, the evils that happen, because division does not occur without sin, and sin normally on both sides.

And so, I think here we've got this whole process of going back, and there are other things that confirm this today. Today is a phenomenon what's called reverse mission that the countries to whom missionaries used to be sent are now sending missionaries back to the

countries that they used to be sent from, especially in Europe. This is very significant. Yes, South America also. Now another thing is that with this work of the Spirit there has been a restoration of the gifts of the Spirit, of the charisms, of prophecy of healing, and so on. These have not existed in the way that they're being experienced today since the early days of the church. This tells us something important also. Now, of course it's not true that these gifts were unknown totally through the centuries. You can find all these things in the lives of some saints, not all saints but many.

So what is new today? First of all, in the course of history these things were regarded as only happening to very holy people. Today these gifts are poured out on ordinary Christians. But the other important new element is that these gifts are seen in relation to building up the body of Christ. They're not just signs of holiness. They are the gifts that the church needs; they are part of the equipment of the church to fulfill the mission of the church. This is why these gifts are important for the restoration of unity. And of course the whole teaching on gifts in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 for example, is totally in a context of unity of the whole body. And so here again we have a confirmation that what we're seeing happening today is something that hasn't been seen in this way since the first centuries.

We have to be careful here because in our enthusiasm at the beginnings of the renewal you can go out and sort of talk in an arrogant way as though we know everything, we've got the spirit, all you lot, that you don't know these things at all, and so on. This is not the way of the Lord. But also, I think that there is always this tendency for people that are caught up in something exciting to think it's totally unique and never been known before. So this testing of things, what is really new? Yes, there are things that have not been seen in this way since the beginning, but we need to be careful how we say this if we are to convince other people because it has to be based on accurate thinking and history. And here, you know, some enthusiasts have not been helpful. And of course you find, I've been much blessed by contact with Pentecostals, all this could not have happened without the Pentecostals, and our fundamental attitude should be one of gratitude and honoring. But it's also true that Pentecostals tended to adopt the widespread view that the church was more or less dead from the second or third century that there was nothing of significance until the Reformation. And of course this is nonsense. This could only be said by people that don't know that history at all, and so I'm not backing that kind of reading of history. What I'm saying is, the signs are that we are in this phase of the going back of the gathering in. Now what point we are at in that phase is another question, but I don't think we are still in the going out phase because there are so many things that point to the opposite, that we are in the reverse stage of going back to Jerusalem. This is linked to the whole thing about returning to the Jewish roots.

Of course when we are talking about approaching the end, I talk about it in terms of preparing, the Holy Spirit is preparing for the completion, the Holy Spirit is preparing for the fulfillment of God's whole plan in Jesus that has been fundamentally achieved in the cross and His resurrection, but has to be worked out in the world and in the church throughout history. The Holy Spirit is the agent of bringing that to fullness and completion and this is what we are involved in. Now, it's also true that there are prophetic words indeed of Jesus himself in the New Testament about all sorts of catastrophes as we approach the end. You know, there's mention of earth quakes and disasters, and so on. Now that is not the focus that I give, and I feel that I'm supposed to give, because that does not arouse hope in people. There are signs that this may be so, yes, but majoring on that as motivation is not, I think, the focus of the Holy

Spirit. Warnings can move some people to pray; probably not very many, in fact. But my focus is on hope; the Holy Spirit fills God's people with hope. And so the Holy Spirit is doing these things that are preparing for the fullness to come, pouring out the Spirit, pouring out the gifts, arousing praise and worship from the whole people and bringing divided Christians together. These are all things that are happening and that give us great hope. What God has begun he will not allow to remain unfulfilled. I think this is the message I want to give. Yes I think there are signs of the negative kind that indicate there are our hard times coming, but I don't think that is what we are supposed to preach. I think, yes we can be given words and told to prepare for harder times, and there's a lot of about this in the New Testament, but that is not the gospel. The gospel which brings life, which brings hope, that is what we have to preach, even if we know, that the way ahead, the process, the nearer we get to the end, in many ways the more difficult it will be, and the bigger battle it will be. The Lord will give the power, the Lord will give the anointing, the gifts, and that is what we are to know and to focus on. And in the New Testament there is no trace for the Christians of angst, anguish, of being afraid of what is to come. They have confidence about what is to come because they're focused on the work of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. That's what I want to say to you.

I would particularly invite the younger people here, whether I should specify an age, I'm not sure. I'll leave that to discernment of the elders. 30 and down I'm told. Is this the Alleluia definition of young? I am long past 30 myself. I would invite those under 30 who really want to receive and live in this deep hope for your lives and for the future that you would let go of all worries that can crowd in on you, especially when you're reading the papers and looking at the media, and I'd ask you to come forward because I think the Holy Spirit, the Lord wants to strengthen you, and give you the vision and the courage to go forward with your lives with total hope and confidence in the Lord. Let go of all anxiety or worries about what's going to happen to you, how are we going to provide for our family, everything else. Just look to the Lord, and we'd like to pray for people like that. I can start praying for people, I certainly don't think I'm capable of praying for everyone here. I don't think it would be wise for me to do more than make a contribution to this. But so, young people who feel, "Yes, I want to live with this hope and take my place in the church moving forward towards the completion which is underway." Amen, do you believe that?