

Saturday, February 25, 2012

Remarks by Fr Peter Hocken on the subject of baptism in the Spirit

### Background

*The graces the Lord has given to Mother of God Community continue to impact the Church and the worldwide charismatic renewal through the theological work of former long-time members Dr Mary Healy and Monsignor Peter Hocken.*

ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services) established a doctrinal commission to provide theological input and reflection to improve what is communicated about the Renewal. The commission has 6-7 members.

In 2001 there was a Healing Symposium in Rome and the doctrinal commission was tasked afterwards with writing a document (for publication as a booklet) on Prayers for Healing. It ended up being principally written by Dr. Mary Healy and Fr Peter Hocken. The process of producing the document involved prayer and seeking the Holy Spirit's direction, consultation with key experts within CCR and beyond, evidence-based research, preparation of a preliminary draft, review and discussion by the doctrinal commission and ICCRS executive, review by others within CCR and beyond (including bishops), and final review by Pontifical Council on the Laity before publication.

There was an ICCRS Symposium on the Charisms in 2007. At that meeting there was strong demand for a document on baptism in the Spirit. Again it happened that Mary and Fr Peter ended up writing the document on behalf of the Doctrinal Commission. The draft document was presented at a meeting in March 2011; final revision was completed in September 2011. Presently it is in the production phase at the publisher's house. Expect it to be available some time in the next few months.

### Baptism in the Spirit

*Any explanation of baptism in the Spirit needs to make sense to everyone who has been baptized in the Spirit – not just Catholics – because this grace has been freely poured out on a wide range of Christians.*

The popular explanation promoted by Fr Kilian McDennell and Fr. George Montague, and others, is that baptism in the Spirit makes the graces of your Baptism and Confirmation come alive. However, it is inadequate to say that baptism in the Spirit is simply a personal actualization of the sacraments of initiation. It is that but not only that.

Baptism in the Spirit is a special grace of God for the whole Church, but not “special” in an elitist sense. The document describes baptism in the Spirit as a sovereign work of God that opens up the heavenly dimension and pours out revelation to us now.

Baptism in the Spirit is a grace for our times. The Charismatic Renewal has been a worldwide phenomenon affecting ordinary people.

Being charismatic is not a spirituality. A spirituality describes something totally optional; you can choose one if it suits you (i.e. Carmelite spirituality, Franciscan).

### Charismatic and Institutional Dimensions of the Church

At a gathering in Rome in 1998 John Paul II told members of the new movements: “Through Vatican II the Church has recovered its charismatic dimension”. This is very important.

Pope Benedict sees the importance. He called the new movements together in Rome in 2007.

The charismatic and institutional dimensions belong together. They constitute the Church.

Baptism in the Spirit belongs to the charismatic dimension.

When we hear “institutional”, people tend to think “diocesan structure” but actually the deepest element in the institutional is Word and Sacrament. The institutional dimension expresses what is essential, what are permanent elements of the Church. It goes back to Jesus’ day, to the beginning of the Church.

The institutional dimension is present in every age. The charismatic dimension, on the other hand, is not manifest all the time. The Holy Spirit raises it up in a sovereign way when He chooses.

Charisms have been present throughout the history of the Church, but when and how they are given is unpredictable and as God chooses. The origins of religious orders fall into charismatic dimension.

The charismatic and institutional dimensions belong together. There needs to be an interaction between the institutional and the charismatic.

The charismatic is supposed to be a challenge, but not be arrogant.

### The Verb Form: Baptize

The noun form “baptism” is never used in Scripture in association with the baptism in the Spirit experience, only the verb form. BHS is not a thing; it is an action.

John the Baptist said that the one who followed him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. This points to the Day of the Lord; it has eschatological significance. Baptism in the Spirit orients toward the Second Coming.

## Repentance

Strong in MOG was its teaching on repentance. These kinds of teachings prepare for living life in the Spirit.