

Today I would like to extend this invitation to everyone: Let us rediscover dear brothers and sisters, the beauty of being baptized in the Holy Spirit; let us be aware again of our baptism and our confirmation, sources of grace that are always present. Let us ask the Virgin Mary to obtain a renewed Pentecost for the Church again today, a Pentecost that will spread in everyone the joy of living and witnessing to the Gospel.

(Pope Benedict XVI on Pentecost Sunday, 2008)

Fostering Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Covenant of Understanding

Baptism in the Spirit is a life-transforming experience of the love of God the Father poured into one's heart by the Holy Spirit, received through a surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ. It brings alive sacramental baptism and confirmation, deepens communion with God and with fellow Christians, enkindles evangelistic fervor and equips a person with charisms for service and mission.

(*Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Doctrinal Commission, p. 13)

Introduction

This “Covenant of Understanding” is a means of increasing unity among those who are called to promote “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” the exercise of charisms, and the full role of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church. The grace of “baptism in the Holy Spirit” has led to a diversity of charisms, expressed in various groups, ministries and communities that have enriched the life of the Church. It is important in the midst of this diversity that we maintain an awareness of our commonality rooted in personal surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the foundational grace of “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Pope Francis, in his 2013 Pentecost homily to a gathering of lay movements said: “Only the Spirit can awaken diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time building unity.”

In this Covenant of Understanding we want to recognize more clearly the common heritage and the spiritual bond that we share as disciples of Christ through the grace of “baptism in the Holy Spirit”. We believe that this grace of “baptism in the Holy Spirit” will be fostered and deepened, if there is a greater sense of spiritual connectedness and unity (communion) among us. We therefore seek a greater unity in this calling, which we have from God and from the Church. We believe that the fruit of this grace for the good of the Church will be deepened through a greater sense of unity (communion) among us.

Many persons, prayer groups, ministries and communities have been influenced by this grace that seeks renewal in the Church through an increased awareness of, and dependence on, the Holy Spirit. A number of leadership groups promoting a “renewed Pentecost” in the United States are inviting those who have their origins in this grace, or have been inspired by this grace, to form a greater spiritual bond by joining together in a covenant of understanding.

Our Common Understandings

Past: We affirm the Second Vatican Council's teaching (e.g., *Lumen Gentium 4*) that the whole Church is both hierarchical and "charismatic." We agree that the roots of our particular groups/ministries/communities lie in the post-Vatican II movement of the Spirit in the Church characterized by "baptism in the Holy Spirit."

Present: We are seeking to work for the good of the Church under the guidance and power of the Spirit in the various expressions that the Spirit has raised up. We commit ourselves to pray for each other and to be open to supporting each other in the ways that the Spirit leads us.

Future: We will pray, hope and work for the ongoing renewal of the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We make a distinction between:

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit: God's plan to renew the full role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church is bigger than any particular movement. Vatican II already stated that we are a hierarchical and charismatic Church. We affirm all true workings of the Spirit and want to learn from them. There are a variety of callings and graces in this outpouring of the Spirit. These include youth ministry, healing ministry, prayer groups, renewal centers, covenant communities, men's and women's ministries, intercession ministry, evangelization ministry mercy ministries, and ministries devoted to renewal in specific ethnic and language groups.

The Grace of the Movement: The Church has acknowledged a number of ecclesial movements and new communities that emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit, supporting their role in being a reminder and witness in the Church of the importance of the Holy Spirit. This includes the ones commonly associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Not everyone that is renewed by "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is part of these movements. However, since the Church has affirmed a number of movements and new communities that foster "baptism in the Holy Spirit," the exercise of charisms, and the full role of the Holy Spirit, there are special graces for those who affirm their membership in them. When they stay in communion with these movements and new communities, they enter a wider current of grace. We believe that it is important to realize that God has a purpose for these movements and new communities in influencing the Church that goes beyond the individual calling of any prayer group, ministry or community. We believe that a greater spiritual communion among these movements and new communities will foster the grace of "baptism in the Holy Spirit," the exercise of charisms, and the full role of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the whole Church.

Our goal is to affirm:

- 1) The basic grace of God's plan to renew the full role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.
- 2) The variety of expressions, both Catholic and ecumenical, that have been birthed as part of God's plan.
- 3) The importance of ongoing movements and new communities that support this grace as they continue to influence the life of the Church.
- 4) The importance of spiritual communion among these movements and new communities.

Covenant of Understanding

Introduction: This "Covenant of Understanding" is meant to be a spiritual expression of unity, strengthening our communion with God and enhancing communion among groups dedicated to the fostering of "baptism in the Holy Spirit," the exercise of charisms, and a renewal of the full role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

Covenant Statement: A significant part of the birth of our prayer group, ministry or community has been the grace of renewal in the Holy Spirit within the life of the Church. The Church has affirmed this grace of the Holy Spirit through acknowledging a number of ecclesial movements and new communities. Some individuals and groups are called to acknowledge themselves as a specific part of these movements and new communities for the good of the Church. Other groups, birthed through this grace, can acknowledge the role of the movements and new communities in their heritage and affirm their openness to work in communion with them without being specifically identified with any particular expression. We choose to work together with this stream of grace through:

- 1) Acknowledging the role of "baptism in the Holy Spirit" in our association or group's birth.
- 2) Praying for the international, national and diocesan leadership groups of all such associations and groups that support this grace.
- 3) Being open to working in communion with associations and groups influenced by this Holy Spirit renewal internationally, nationally, and in our diocese; seeking to build unity and connections of mutual support.
- 4) Seeking God's direction in the way our association or group is called to support the movements and new communities dedicated to Holy Spirit renewal internationally, nationally, and in our diocese, through our time, talent, and treasure.
- 5) Signing a certificate that affirms our "Covenant of Understanding" and our openness to work in communion with one another.