



Seek ye first.....

As a cradle Catholic I have always wondered what it would have been like to have had a 'Damascus' experience and thus be converted. My father, Victor, had befriended a Mexican boy who was a boarder at the school whilst at St Joseph's College at Beulah Hill in the 1920s. This youngster was recalled home to Mexico and his parents being in politics and the Country experiencing problems, he knew he was going to his death and indeed he and his family were all shot and killed. This had a profound effect on my father and he became a Catholic, but like a lot of young men ceased to practice after leaving school. My mother Grace was searching all sorts of places for the meaning of life before becoming one of Sir Oswald Mosley's 'black shirts' in the 1930s. Victor and Grace met at one of the political meetings and eventually married in a registry office.

In 1936 they both realised that the political party they were so intrigued with, which had ideas such as a member of parliament for doctors, nurses etc instead of per mixed population, was anti-semitic and both left the party in disgust. Just as well or they would have been interned during the second world war!

My brother Chris was a toddler and my brother Peter a babe in arms when my mother was accepted into full communion in the Catholic Church and my father returned to practising his faith. My parents then had to remarry in the Church! That amused my mother, but my dad being lapsed, the church did not recognise the civil marriage. My mum said the priest told them to live like brother and sister till the wedding. My brother Adrian was born in 1942, 2 years later, and I arrived in 1944 when my mother was 42. Naturally all of us children were brought up in the Catholic Faith.

My father died in 1980 and my mother in 1986, so working full-time and bringing up my own children I had little opportunity to think about deepening my faith, other than obeying the rules about Mass attendance, prayers and confession regularly.

Now retired my thoughts are more concentrated on my faith and I realise that I should have tried to deepen my faith earlier.

For the last two years I have attended the Churches Together Orpington, (CTO), meetings regularly as my parish representative, and have seen members of other denominations becoming so demonstrative and excitable in their prayers that I wondered if I too could experience some deeper spirituality. I hold a strong conviction but I feel some discomfort at what I perceive sometimes as flowery prayers and almost hysterical worship.

But why should we not worship our God in such a way? It should be shouted from the rooftops.

The Life in the Spirit Seminars at Holy Innocents' Church was an ideal opportunity to seek a more spiritual life, so I have been attending most of them and found them most uplifting and worthwhile. Indeed why should worship not be emotionally charged, after all I was seeking to deepen my spirituality and should I not give great praise to my Maker and Saviour? The seminars began with the Holy Innocents' music group playing and singing hymns to the Holy Spirit, so beautifully, as always. Then James Wilkinson introduced each speaker and he/she would speak for about an hour. We then broke into discussion groups; the aim to be in the same groups every week. The facilitator of each group encouraged us to share our thoughts about the evening, but keep anything disclosed within the group as confidential. Some members felt comfortable with charismatic gifts and had the gift of speaking in tongues. Others found this uncomfortable and difficult to understand in our conservative English culture. Perhaps by the end of the Seminars we could be more open to the gifts. Each seminar followed the same pattern. I was unable to attend the fourth, which I do regret as it was about receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The fifth session did not have the discussion group, but there was the opportunity for personal prayer with a two person team. I chose this and it was a very powerful time and I did benefit. It was very inspiring and I felt a peace that was very comforting, and indeed slept well that night with no arthritic pains, though they did return the next day.

It did not occur to me to take notes until the sixth seminar, when **Charles Whitehead KSG** was the speaker and his subject, **Growth in the Holy Spirit**. The lady next to me took notes and so I did likewise.

Charles reinforced that our journey in life is towards heaven and is not completed until the end of life. The seminars are to encourage us to grow, not go back to 'normal,' but allow ourselves to respond to that Grace that comes from the Holy Spirit, so the power within us is released to change us. We need to realise the Holy Spirit is as much a person as God the Father, and Jesus Christ the Son. At Baptism we receive the Holy Spirit and the Gifts given are for all, not just a select few. But we need to open our lives and welcome the Spirit in and then we will receive the gifts which are appropriate for us as individuals.

Christian maturity is about becoming more dependent on God to be led, inspired and touched. God meets us where we are..... There is no criticism.... He just leads us forward. If we plant seeds we get worried if they do not grow..... if children fail to thrive we are concerned. So too we should be disquieted if we were not growing spiritually.

'We have two ears to listen and one mouth to speak'

G.R.O.W.T.H.

- **G. Go to the Lord in prayer....on a regular basis**
- **R. Receive the Life of God.. through His Word, receiving the sacraments and being fed by the Eucharist.**
- **O. Obey the Lord.. *"If you love Me.. keep My commandments."***
- **W. Witness ..You are the light of the world...show others by living in the Word.**

➤ **T. Trust Him....turn to Him.. expectant Faith**

The Holy Spirit.. is not just a power ..it is life.. love, a person & the presence of God.

We are given Gifts.. but the fruits have to grow.

Hoist our sail to the wind of the spirit and let it blow.

The Spirit is like a wind filling the sails of the church and if we look at her closely the sails are made up of the sails of the faithful.. Do not be afraid to unfurl your sail to the wind of the Spirit..

HAS THE SPIRIT GOT YOU?

On my journey home after this meeting I felt a presence behind me and I touched my right shoulder which gave me a great feeling of peace and reassurance. Indeed repeating this regularly since, I have experienced the same sense of peace.

The Final Seminar in the series Tuesday 25th October: Transformation

This time it was the turn of James Wilkinson to address us. Earlier in the year James had visited Holy Innocents' speaking about his experiences after a Holy Spirit Conference weekend. It was a time of many prayers, healing and on the Sunday there was the opportunity for reconciliation.

During a prayer session seeking an outpouring of the Spirit, a lady had prayed specifically for James. This lady had been given the insight by the Holy Spirit to have the perception of what James was feeling about God. Her prayer was: *"Let him say Abba Father and know that God was not a policeman but my dad."*

For James, nothing seemed to happen and his hopes were dashed and he felt disappointed. Then driving home on the M23 he was suddenly overcome by a joy so profound he could not explain it! It was the 2nd of January 1986 and that experience proved to be a life-changing event. For the next two days James had a permanent smile on his face.

James said the Holy Spirit is at work in us to draw us into a deeper union with God and one another. There were two universal callings to be Holy and to evangelise and James quoted **Romans 12 v 1-2.** (*I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, Holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*)

Every day we should be striving to become more Holy and seeking perfection, but only God can lead us to this state.

Philippians 2 v 1-2 *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*

Thessalonians 1 v 5. *for our Gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.*

We should seek more ways to be Holy.... conversion is emotional, intellectual, moral and socio-political. Every part of our lives needs to be affected.

James referred us to the **APOSTOLIC LETTER.**

NOVO MILLENNIO INEUNTE OF HIS HOLINESS **POPE JOHN PAUL II**
TO THE BISHOPS, CLERGY AND LAY FAITHFUL AT THE CLOSE OF THE GREAT
JUBILEE OF THE YEAR 2000



Webpage:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte_en.html

Each person is called to respond whole-heartedly to the call to Holiness.

James recalled a time when he was on a treadmill of sin and forgiveness and it was not until that January 1986 that he changed to accept God as his Father and not a policeman in the sky. Though filled with the Spirit, James said he was not transformed and did not know quite how to achieve this. The he went to a New Dawn Conference in 1994, a week long experience near Walsingham. There were workshops in the afternoon. One in particular, sought the Gift of Healing. They prayed for words of knowledge and were told, *“Some of you will feel tingling in your hands.”* James knew his hands were tingling, but he tried to make excuses to himself that there were other natural reasons for this, but had to admit the real reason was because he was scared what would happen. The apostles had spent three years living and working with Jesus, learning from him, but at the time of trouble they all ran away. It wasn’t until Pentecost Day that they, in a most spectacular way, received the Holy Spirit and began doing Christ’s work. James no longer felt worried about himself and the fruits of the spirit began to grow in him.

Galatians 5. V22 .. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.*

The Gifts: The harvest is large, the labourers are few.. we must pray for workers.

We receive natural gifts, but charisms are higher gifts that should be used to build up the Church. Healing and prophecy have a major use in evangelisation. The Spirit puts into a mind a fact about a person and significant healings can follow. James stressed these gifts are real and gave examples. We need to learn more about the gifts. There will be trials and difficulties. These are a part of life and the Lord will use these to his purpose.

Romans 8 v 28... *We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him.*

John 15 v 1... *“I am the true vine, and My Father the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes that it may bear more fruit.”*

We have to trust in God more and less in ourselves. We will have a new power to deal with our difficulties, but must persevere in Life in the Spirit.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our nourishment and we should read the bible every day, perhaps parts that we are not familiar with and read more books about the Faith. In addition there are magazines such as Good News, many events to attend both local and countrywide. We need to join prayer groups, share experiences and support each other. We must step out in faith and proclaim Christ by following His Word and living His way of life. Consider Alpha groups.

Peter 2 v 5..... *and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a Holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Will you let Him transform you?

God meets us where we are now, however powerful or inadequate we are.

What effect did it have?

Three parishioners then spoke of how the Life in the Spirit seminars had affected them.



All felt it was the beginning of a new life and were determined to seek a fuller life in the Spirit.

The Diocese held a day of Prayer, Worship & Renewal, along with a few other parishioners and Father Victor, I set off for St George's Cathedral.

St George's Cathedral
Diocesan Day of Prayer,
Worship & Renewal
15th October 2011

“Come Follow Me” Matthew Chapter 4: v 19

A Prayer for the Diocese of Southwark

“God our loving Father, pour out on us afresh the gifts of Your Holy Spirit ... so that strengthened by Your grace we can truly be a sign and instrument of Your presence in our world today.”

The Charismatic renewal in the Church is 45yrs old. Peter, the disciples and Our Lady, were all charismatic. The charismatic gifts and the fullness of the Holy Spirit are not on the edges, but right at the heart of the Church.

We were all baptised in the Holy Spirit, but unless we invite the Spirit to come to us to bestow gifts upon us He will not come.

Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would come and on that first Day of Pentecost suddenly from heaven came the mighty rushing wind that shook the house and flames of fire descended above the heads of *all those present* filling them with the Holy Spirit.

All means all and all spoke in tongues. God was saying it was for all his Church.

The Holy Spirit, the Church and you.... Speaker David Matthews

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

These gifts are given as the Holy Spirit decides.. We call ourselves *Roman* Catholics as we follow the Petrine Ministry, which is universal. This means whether local or universal, beliefs are the same. Charismatic does not mean it is a fringe movement.

David encouraged everyone to raise their hands in praise, to be demonstrative.

When Peter speaks receive it with good intentions in your hearts. He is the man with the key, given him by Jesus. Peter is the rock. “Repent be baptised and receive the Holy Spirit.” His instructions and still the Church is attempting to fill people with the Holy Spirit.

When the Apostles spoke to the world at that time it was thought they were ‘drunk,’ but they were not.... they were filled with the Holy Spirit. St Teresa of Avila frequently went into ecstasy... filled with the Holy Spirit.

But how can I experience more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

If it's the Lord you can't say no!

Grace builds on nature... some of the first Christians were amazed when the gentiles received the Holy Spirit, but this is God's intention ... that all should receive the gifts.

In conclusion David led prayers and as he had said, he spoke in tongues. I had never heard tongues before and it sounded exactly like the sounds coming from the lady next to me.

When prayers were over, I asked her if she was speaking in tongues and she said yes and she has done so for many years. I have always wondered what is the point of speaking in tongues if the person uttering the sounds does not understand what is being said and neither do other people and she said she knows it is in praise of God and God understands so that is a good reason, which answer does seem valid.

There was the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which was especially rewarding.

Speaker: Paschal Uche:

(The young man who welcomed the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV1 to Westminster Cathedral on the occasion of the Papal visit to the UK in 2010.)

Paschal said meeting the Pope was a life-changing experience and this Holy generous man was a wonderful leader. Paschal spoke very eloquently on his life.

Acts 2 v 42 *“The disciples were devoted to the teachings of the apostles, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.”*

The Friars of the Renewal

If suffering in life one can either offer it up, or consider seeking healing. But our Lord both preached and healed not only the physical, but the heart. So seeking healing is desirable. Follow Jesus and receive His blessings.

A healing service followed with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Whilst this was taking place a Friar sang praise and the people prayed silently. The Friar carried the Blessed Sacrament pausing to pray in front of each person. It was a very powerful awe-inspiring moment.

The Celebration of Mass

Today being the Feast of St Teresa of Avila, Fr Mark White spoke of her in his homily.

St Teresa declared herself for God. We must never forget the humanity of God, and if we declare ourselves for Jesus He will declare himself for us.

A Cardinal Lorenzo who used to visit imprisoned students in a South American country, used to phone the Chief of Police before visiting the prison to declare if anything happened to him, then the Chief of Police would be held personally responsible. The Cardinal admitted his ‘knees were knocking,’ but he recalled .. *“Do not worry how to defend yourselves, the Holy Spirit will give you strength and words to say.”* The Cardinal said that on 300 plus occasions this advice had never failed.

Does our behaviour show that we are for Jesus.. that we are being nourished by Him?

How do we as Christ’s Ministers, bring people to the personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. As Christ said to Peter *“Who do you say I am?”* (Mark 8: v 7)

How do we get this message across?

When Mass ended the day was concluded.

How did I feel, was I changed? I certainly felt a great sense of peace and less inhibited about being more demonstrative in my worship.

The way forward now is to continue my journey, using prayer and other opportunities afforded me, to seek a fuller *Life in the Spirit*. Amen.

