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| <b>Circo Massimo June 2<sup>nd</sup> – CM2.3</b> | <b>SPEAKER : VINSON SYNAN – Pentecostal</b> |
| <b>TITLE : Testimony</b>                         |   |
| <b>LANGUAGE : ENGLISH – Video (En )</b>          | <b>COUNTRY : USA</b>                        |

I'll never forget one morning in 1972, when I went to the post office to check my mail. In the stack was a letter from St. Johns University in Collegeville, Minnesota, from Father Kilian McDonnell. He was inviting me to speak at the third annual Catholic Charismatic Conference, which would convene on the campus of Notre Dame University in June of 1972. .

It was daunting to think of speaking at Notre Dame, the intellectual and football capital of American Catholicism. When I was growing up, regardless of who Notre Dame played, we always rooted against the football team simply because they were Catholics. As a teenager, I'd become quite anti-Catholic. Indeed, I was probably more afraid of Catholics than of communists or rattlesnakes. Although I'd written about Catholic Pentecostals, I was still unconvinced that Catholics could receive a full Pentecostal experience as we had in established Pentecostal churches. I also felt sure that the Roman Catholic Church would not tolerate the renewal and that Catholics who spoke in tongues would soon be out of the church. It seemed inconceivable that the Pentecostal experience could ever be incorporated into the Catholic system.

With deep foreboding, I boarded my plane to South Bend. When I arrived at the Notre Dame campus, I saw multitudes of people standing in line to register. They had expected 4,000 people that summer, but more than 12,000 came. I was informed that a small prayer meeting was being held in the basketball coliseum for early arrivals. As soon as I could, I hurried to my dormitory room, threw my luggage on the bed, and ran across the campus to see what would happen at this prayer meeting. I'd never seen a living, breathing, tongues-speaking Catholic and I was quite excited about the prospect. I expected that maybe a few hundred people would come early that night. But to my surprise, I was shocked to see 8,000 people already at the coliseum. In order not to be "contaminated" with Catholicism, I went to the highest level of seats as far away from the platform as I could get.

I'd read that Pentecostal Catholics were considered the "quiet Pentecostals." So I expected a quiet and decorous meeting. But when the priest on the platform called on everyone to "stand and praise the Lord," I was overwhelmed at the sheer volume of praise that filled the place. Everyone had their hands raised and many around me were speaking in tongues. This cacophony of praise soon turned into a beautiful four part harmony that rose to a loud crescendo. A huge harmonious chord filled the place.

As I looked at the priests, nuns, young backpackers, and older Catholics around me, I realized that they were singing in tongues. I, a "Classical Pentecostal," was the only one who wasn't joining in. Suddenly, I was overcome with weeping as I sensed that these people were truly baptized in the



Spirit and were singing like the “heavenly choir” at Azusa Street. In fact, this was the first time I’d heard a large group sing in tongues at one time. As I wept, it soon became almost impossible to breathe. So I ran to a restroom and literally sobbed before the Lord. As I tried to recover, I heard almost audibly the words: “This is real. I’m doing a new thing in the Catholic Church and it will spread over all the earth. You’ll be a part of it and contribute to this great awakening. You must tell your own people what you’ve seen and lead them to pray for these Catholic Pentecostals.”

You see, there is only one Holy Spirit, not a Pentecostal, or Protestant, or Catholic Holy Spirit. Jesus said about this:

**“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses (martyrs) unto me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)**

When I promised the Lord that I would be obedient to this call, I realized that I would probably pay a great price among the people of my own denomination. Yet I felt assurance that the Lord would protect me and use me in a most unusual way to bless these newfound brothers and sisters in Christ. I really had no clue what this meant at the time. But I was so filled with the awesome presence of the Holy Spirit that I felt I could do anything.

During that week, I saw sights that were burned forever into my memory. All night, there were sounds of prayer and praise from prayer groups both inside the dormitories and those outside. During the day, hundreds of prayer circles assembled on the lawn as people prayed and ministered to one another.

In my workshop session with Kilian McDonnell, more than 1,500 persons filled the auditorium. The paper that McDonnell presented was the first proposed systematic theology for the Catholic charismatic movement. It was soon published under the title *Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an Ecumenical Problem*.

I also saw incredible sights in the plenary sessions. The crowd was overwhelmingly made up of young people, many who had hitchhiked and backpacked to get to South Bend. From the platform, a young man sang a solo in tongues and then sang the interpretation. The only instrumental music for the 8,000 people gathered was a flute, a guitar, and a tambourine. Some of the songs were new and exotic to me, coming from Catholic folk masses that had sprung up after Vatican II. But most impressively, they sang many songs from the Pentecostal tradition, including “Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me” and the old camp meeting song “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.

The leaders were so young. Most of them were in their early twenties and some were destined to play major roles in the renewal. Among those I met were Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, Bert Ghezzi, Steve Clark, Ralph Martin, and Bruce Yocum. Most of these leaders were just finishing their graduate studies in theology at Notre Dame and had the dew of youth upon them. They were



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bubbling over with incredible enthusiasm for the revival that had engulfed them. That was fifty years ago.

**Where do we go from here?**

**Ancient Rome was famous for its great system of roads that carried Roman soldiers and merchants to the remotest reaches of the Empire. Now let us take the dynamite power of the Holy Spirit from Rome to the uttermost bounds of the earth. So be it!**