



WORKSHOPS – A1.2	SPEAKER : Fr. DAVE PIVONKA TOR
TITLE : A NEW PENTECOST FOR A NEW EVANGELIZATION	
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It startled me at first.

In the middle of my talk a woman stood up and passionately asked, almost yelling, “Why have I never heard this before? Why hasn’t anyone ever told me this? I have been an active Catholic my whole life and I have NEVER heard this before.”

As the woman spoke she was becoming increasingly frustrated and animated.

What was I talking about that caused her to react so passionately?

I was sharing about how the Holy Spirit wanted to work in her life and in the life of all Catholics. I was preaching about how the Holy Spirit wants to come with power, with healing, with hope, joy and love. I stated that Jesus came in order to baptize us in the Holy Spirit and the Spirit wants to animate our faith and bring everything we have heard about Jesus alive.

“I’ve never heard that.” She stated.

She is not alone. There are a tremendous number of Catholics who have little or no idea what it means to live a life animated by the Holy Spirit. This is sad for so many reasons. But one of the main ones is that men and women are being invited to be disciples of Jesus, to live their life in relationship with Jesus, but what is lacking is a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Often times Catholics hear that God wants them to live in a certain manner. Men and women are encouraged to do this or not to do that. The Church invites them to a life of holiness, to love, to forgive, to be patient, generous, kind and to live a life of purity. For many people all of this become a burden. They hear from the pulpit how they are supposed to live and as is often the case they don’t feel like they measure up. They want to live their faith, and then they fall. They get up and try again and end of falling again. This cycle continues and what often ends up happening is the person gets frustrated and despairs. He begins to believe that it is isn’t really possible to live a dynamic faith life, they get frustrated and often give up.

The problem is that we haven’t equipped them to actually live their faith. I think this is also one of the reasons that the New Evangelization hasn’t been as successful as many of us had hoped. Many people bought into a program of evangelization thinking that the particular program alone would be able to change a person’s heart. But there must be more than a program. What must happen is the individuals must be encounter Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

We are reminded of what Pope Francis stated in Evangelium Gaudium “**I never tire of repeating those words of Benedict XVI which take us to the very heart of the Gospel: “Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction” Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God’s love. (EG-7)**



No doubt the encounter with Christ is key to the success of the evangelization. I love how often Pope Francis is addressing this need. As St. John Paul spoke of a civilization of love Francis is speaking of a culture of encounter which is absolutely essential for evangelization. With everything we do in the Church we need to ask ourselves whether or not there exists the possibility of an encounter with Jesus. We need to be certain that the possibility for encounter exists.

However, it is not only an encounter with Christ that is necessary for evangelization. But the presence of the Holy Spirit must also animate this encounter. We need only to look to the apostles and realize that individuals can encounter Jesus and still not fully understand who Jesus is and what he desires to do for them. I believe this is absolutely key for our discussion today.

The disciples had every advantage. They were able to spend several years with Jesus. They saw his miracles, heard his preaching, and experienced his mercy and his love. And yet, it seems that this was not enough. There had to be more than an encounter, more than many encounters with Jesus. Even with every advantage before Pentecost we find the disciples in a room with the doors locked. And I believe, that this is where the vast number of Christians are living the Christian life, in a room with the doors locked. This is a tragedy because the spiritual life was never intended to be lived in a locked room.

A NEW PENTECOST

It wasn't until the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit that were able to live the life that Jesus had intended. My experience tells me that many Catholics are trying to live the Christian life without the grace of Pentecost. Sadly, there are too many women like the one I mentioned at the beginning of my talk; men and women who have never heard about and experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit and the transforming grace that comes from this grace.

It's imperative that we share the message of the Holy Spirit along with the message of Jesus. St. John reminds us that it is the Spirit that gives witness to Jesus (John 15:26). We are also reminded what Pope Paul VI said that it is the Holy Spirit that is the evangelizer and that evangelization is not possible without the Holy Spirit (Evangelii Nuntiandi).

My father is a physician and as a physician if he became aware of what was causing someone's illness and failed to prescribe the appropriate medicine he would be held liable for that. And yet, I think it is what is happening in all around us. What the church needs is the Holy Spirit and yet we are not addressing this as powerfully as we ought. Perhaps it is the work of the evil one that is causing us to be silent. As early as the beginning of the last century Pope Leo XIII saw the need for the grace of the Holy Spirit and consecrated the World to the Holy Spirit. St. John 23rd prayed for the Holy Spirit at the Second Vatican Council and the previous Popes have all prayed for a new Pentecost.



If the New Evangelization is going to produce the fruit that John Paul desired it is essential that we couple the saving message of Jesus with an encounter with the Holy Spirit. To try to evangelize without the grace of the Holy Spirit is setting us up for failure. When the Holy Spirit is present in our evangelization we will see signs of God's power. We will see men and women

- filled with the love of God (Romans 5:5)
- freed from sin (John 16:8)
- they will become aware that they are God's children and that God is their Father (Romans 8:15)
- they will be free (2nd Corinthians 3:17)
- and they will be healed.

Just recently I received a letter from a member of a parish where I did a teaching on the Holy Spirit. The person stated "our community continues to be blessed by the Holy Spirit. We have continued to have people experience healing that are miraculous. People are free from past sin and addiction. There is a deep desire for holiness and the things of God."

Only the Holy Spirit is able to produce such fruit as this. We do the People of God a disservice by not sharing with them the very grace and power that is going to bring the message of Jesus alive for them.

STUMBLING BLOCKS

Those who desire to evangelize in the power of the Holy Spirit can expect to encounter difficulties.

- Fear is the enemy of the Spirit. Do not be afraid to share the grace of Pentecost. Since it is so essential to the work of God the evil one will try to cause you to be afraid. Stand in the power of God and preach the work of the Holy Spirit with boldness.
- Ignorance of the work of the Spirit continues to be a problem. We need to take every opportunity to teach and preach about the Holy Spirit.
- God does not ration his Spirit (John 3:34) and he does not show favourites (Romans 2:11). The grace of the Holy Spirit is available to all and should be shared with anyone and everyone. The message of the Holy Spirit is not a secret held by a select few, rather the Spirit is available to all who desire.
- Pope Francis has asked us not to control or tame the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is supposed to control us and we need to let the Spirit lead and guide us.

The Spirit of God continues to do something new in the Church. I have seen a movement of God's grace that is touching lives and moving hearts. It looks different than it did 50 years ago and this should surprise no one. God is always fresh and he meets us where we are. In order for us to continue in the New Evangelization we need to be consumed with the new grace of the Holy Spirit. As we experience this in our own lives we will then be compelled to share it with those we encounter.

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful.