

# *My Father's House*

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## The Springtime for the Church

**Fr. Bill McCarthy, MSA**

Fr. Harold Cohen, who is known to many of you because of his appearances on ETWN, recently spoke to a group of us at the Shrine of Divine Mercy at Eden Hill in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He shared some insights from Pope Paul II on *The Springtime of the Church*. He mentioned that the Holy Father met in St. Peter's Square on Saturday, May 30, 1998 with more than 500,000 members of new movements and new communities from throughout the world. On this, the eve of Pentecost, the Holy Father was greeted enthusiastically and listened to the personal testimonies given by the founders of the Focolari Movement, the NeoCatechumenal Way, the Arche Community, the Communion and Liberation Movements, and the Charismatic Movement.

He spoke of a New Pentecost coming into the Church, coming in through these new, ecclesial movements and new communities. It was a historic meeting for as far as the eye could see, members of these movements and communities filled not only St. Peter's Square, but overflowed down the Via Della Conciliazione and surrounding streets. The photograph taken from atop St. Peter's saw every inch of ground covered with people. This was the headline photograph on the June 3 edition of the *L'Osservatore Romano*. The Holy Father said in his address, "Today's event is truly unprecedented; for the first time, the movements and new ecclesial communities have all gathered together with the Pope. It is the great 'common witness' I wished for the year which, in the Church's journey to the Great Jubilee, is dedicated to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is here with us! It is he who is the soul of this marvelous event of ecclesial communion. Truly, 'this is the day which the Lord had made; let us rejoice and be glad in it'" (Ps 117:24). The address in its entirety is published later in this paper.

Fr. Cohen commented upon this address by saying that we are living in the *Springtime of the Church*. He quoted St. Paul who said, "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, grant you a spirit of wisdom and insight to know him clearly. May he enlighten your inmost vision that you may know the great hope to which he has called you, the wealth of his glorious heritage to be distributed among the members of the Church, and the immeasurable scope of his power in us who believe" (Eph 1:17-18).

We are living in the age where eye has not seen nor ear heard nor has it even entered into our minds the things that God is now revealing to His faithful ones. We are seeing miracles. We are witnessing healings. Even the dead are being raised. Fr. Rick Thomas, a Jesuit from Juarez, NM, tells of a lady who had died during one of the prayer meetings. She lay dead for over a half hour as people prayed over her. Finally, he said, "I took authority over the situation and said to the lady, in the name of Jesus Christ, arise." The woman immediately came back to life and got up.

Ralph Martin tells of a certain Brother Love from Europe, who has not only brought 25,000 pagans into the Church but has also raised four people from the dead. John Paul II, in his apostolic constitution on the *Mission of the Redeemer*, stated, "I see the dawning of a new missionary age, a great springtime for the Church."

## Signs of the New Springtime

1. The first sign of the New Spring time is **Pope John Paul II**, himself, who is what Fr. Cohen calls, *A One Man Wave of Renewal*, forged in the crucible between Communism and Nazism, who has dedicated his whole life to Jesus through Mary. *Totus Tuus* (Totally Yours) is his motto. He is the one who is leading the Church to cross the *Threshold of Hope*.

2. **The Second Vatican Council.** The Second Vatican Council came as a great surprise to the Church. The long history of the Church is filled with the wonders of the Holy Spirit. John XXIII came as a surprise, as did the Council, itself. The Council not only renewed the original vision and fire of the Church, but proclaimed to all the world that the Church is the light of the nations, open and willing to be a humble servant to everyone without exception including the poorest of the poor. The Council's mission was to bring the light of the Gospel into the minds and hearts of all men.

Pope John Paul II has said that the whole thrust of his ministry is to carry out the vision of the Second Vatican Council and to implement its teachings in every aspect of Catholic faith. He stated, "From my apostolic visits to all the continents, I have concluded that right now, evangelization is underway in the world as never before. Conscious of this, the Church is strongly committed to the dual task of evangelizing the world and re-evangelizing its own Christian people." In his apostolic constitution, *On the Deposit of Faith* that is the introduction to the New Catechism, Pope John Paul II stated, "The principle task entrusted to the Council by Pope John XXIII was to guard and present better the precious deposit of Christian doctrine in order to make it more accessible to the Christian faithful and to all people of good will. For this reason, the Council was not first of all to condemn the errors of the time, but above all to start calmly to show the strength and beauty of the doctrine of the faith. For me, then, who had the special grace of participating in it and actively collaborating in its development, Vatican II has always been, and especially during these years of my pontificate, the constant reference point of my every pastoral action, in the conscious commitment to implement its directives concretely and faithfully at the level of each Church and the whole Church" (Discourse, January 25, 1985).

3. **The renewed interest in the Eucharist, especially Eucharistic Adoration.** Parishes are springing up around the world that have perpetual adoration. In 1993, Pope John Paul exclaimed, "Let adoration never cease", and called for perpetual adoration in every parish. Fr. Cohen said that there in the presence of Jesus, we can receive *radiation therapy* that will heal all spiritual sickness.

4. **A renewed devotion to Mary, the Mother of God.** The Marian Movement throughout the world has come alive, especially because of the many Marian apparitions. Fr. Stephano Gobbi, under the inspiration of Mary, has founded the Marian Movement for Priests, which reaches right to the heart of the Church's leadership. Tens of thousands of cardinals, bishops, and priests are now members, as well as countless thousands of lay people. Cenacles in honor of Mary are springing up everywhere. It is interesting to note that these four vanguards are decidedly Catholic movements of the Spirit--the Pope, The Church, Eucharist, and Mary. Fr. Cohen jokingly remarked that the reason the Baby Jesus is crying is because with all the Marian apparitions around the world, Mary is hardly ever at home anymore.

John Paul II has called us to rely upon Mary's help. "Let us confidently ask Mary to intercede with her Son to obtain for the Church a new missionary advent for the Jubilee Year 2000 and for the beginning of the Third Millennium of the Christian faith.

5. **A New Devotion to Divine Mercy.** Since the apparitions of Jesus to Sr. Faustina and the Encyclical Letter, *The Father Rich in Mercy*, there has been a renewed interest in the mercy of God. The Chaplet of the Divine Mercy is said by millions of people throughout the world, usually at 3:00 p.m. And priests like Fr. George Kosicki, have been used powerfully to spread this devotion. Once again, the greatest single advocate of this devotion has been Pope John Paul II, himself.

6. **The Pro-Life Movement.** Throughout the world, many millions of people have fought for a renewed respect for life. As the *Culture of Death* spreads further and further, countless millions have deepened their respect for and commitment to the preservation of life from the moment of conception to the moment of death.

7. **The Charismatic Movement.** The Charismatic Movement has touched over 70 million Catholics throughout the world, and brought these countless millions into a deeper and more personal relationship with Jesus and a more sincere openness to His Spirit. Once again, Pope John Paul II has said that the rediscovered Charismatic dimension of Christianity is a constitutive element of the Church.

8. **Other Charismatic Movements.** Other Charismatic movements such as the Cursillo Movement, the Marriage Encounter Movement, the Focolari Movement, the Regnum Christi Movement, the Liturgical Movement, the House of Prayer Movement, the Opus Dei Movement, the Lay Apostolate Movement, the Parish Mission Movement, the Retreat Movement, the Small Community Movement, the Renew Movement, the Emmaus Movement -- are all movements of the Spirit. The triple aim of all these movements is the same. First, they aim to bring everyone into a deeper and more personal relationship with Jesus. Second, they aim to enhance relationships within the Church and the family so that everyone becomes more sensitive, caring, forgiving and loving. And third, they aim to convince everyone to continue across their time and space the redemptive, healing, evangelizing mission of Jesus. Every person, by reason of their baptism, is being called to minister and to evangelize.

9. **The New Evangelization.** The Holy Father is calling everyone to participate in what he calls the New Evangelization -- an evangelization in which every baptized Christian should take part; an evangelization in which every means, including television and radio, are used to spread the Gospel; an evangelization which will flow from a deeper union with Christ; an evangelization that will spread to every person and every culture.

The Holy Father said in Haiti in 1983, "Look to the future with commitment, to a New Evangelization, one that is new in its fervor, new in its methods, and new in its expression. In 1989, in Chile, the Holy Father stated, "When we say that the Church is Catholic, we mean that she is evangelizing, missionary and apostolic. If she lacks these qualities, she would not be the true Church." In the United States in 1988 he said to the bishops, "Through the year 2000 preparations are needed. All the faithful must be lead to contribute to the priests in Rome in 1990. Young men called to the priesthood face the challenge of bringing to their contemporaries the life and light of Christ." He said to families in Rome in 1989, "Families are the primary evangelizers of families. The New Evangelization cannot succeed without the contribution of Christian families." He said to youth in Spain in 1989, "I wish to invite young people to open their hearts to the Gospel and become Christian witness; if necessary, *martyr witnesses* at the threshold of the Third Millennium." He called to Christians of other denominations in Norway in 1989 saying, "On the eve of the Third Christian Millennium it is more urgent that ever that Christians bear common witness to the Gospel."

10. **A Renewed Interest in Praise and Worship.** Throughout the Church, there is a renewed interest in praise and worship. Precisely through the many movements and through a deeper appreciation of the Liturgy, Catholics in particular and Christians in general are coming to a renewed interest in praise and worship. From Fr. George Kosicki in Massachusetts to Fr. Mike Scanlon in Steubenville, from Monsignor Vincent Walsh in Philadelphia to the co-directors of My Father's House in Moodus, the Lord has been teaching a simple but powerful formula. Praise leads to worship, worship leads to the glory, the glory leads to the anointing, and the anointing leads to the power. So we are to praise God until the Spirit of worship comes, we are to worship God until the glory comes, and we are to stand in the glory and praise God.

# Pope John Paul II's Pentecost Eve Address

## ***"The Church wishes to spread Christ's fire in human hearts"***

In Jerusalem, almost 2,000 years ago, on the day of Pentecost, before an astonished and mocking crowd, due to the unexplainable change observed in the Apostles, Peter courageously proclaims: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God ... you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up" (Acts 2:22-24). Peter's words express the Church's self-awareness, based on the certainty that Jesus Christ is alive, is working in the present and changes life.

The Holy Spirit, already at work in the creation of the world and in the Old Covenant, reveals himself in the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery of the Son of God, and in a way "bursts out" at Pentecost to extend the mission of Christ the Lord in time and space. The Spirit thus makes the Church a stream of new life that flows through the history of mankind.

With the Second Vatican Council, the Comforter recently gave the Church, which according to the Fathers is the place "where the Spirit flourishes" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 749), a renewed Pentecost, instilling a new and unforeseen dynamism.

Whenever the Spirit intervenes, he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history. This was the unforgettable experience of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council during which, under the guidance of the same Spirit, the church rediscovered the charismatic dimension as one of her constitutive elements: "It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the people, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts according as he wills (cf. 1 Cor 12:11), he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank ... He makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*, n 12).

### **"You are tangible proof of the Spirit's outpouring"**

The institutional and charismatic aspects are co-essential as it were to the Church's constitution. They contribute, although differently, to the life, renewal and sanctification of God's People. It is from this providential rediscovery of the Church's charismatic dimension that before and after the Council, a remarkable pattern of growth has been established for ecclesial movements and new communities.

Today the Church rejoices at the renewed confirmation of the prophet Joel's words which we have just heard: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2:17). You, present here, are the tangible proof of this "outpouring" of the Spirit. Each movement is different from the others, but they are all united in the same communion and for the same mission. Some charisms given by the Spirit burst in like an impetuous wind, which seizes people and carries them to new ways of missionary commitment to the radical service of the Gospel, by ceaselessly proclaiming the truths of faith, accepting the living stream of tradition as a gift and instilling in each person an ardent desire for holiness.

Today, I would like to cry out to all of you gathered here in St. Peter's Square and to all Christians: ***Open yourselves docilely to the gifts of the Spirit! Accept gratefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow on us! Do not forget that every charism is given for the common good, that is, for the benefits of the whole Church.***

By their nature, charisms are communicative and give rise to that "spiritual affinity between persons" (*Christifideles laici*, n. 24) and that friendship in Christ which is the origin of "movements". The passage from the original charism to the movement happens through the mysterious attraction that the founder holds for all those who become involved in his spiritual experience. In this way movements

officially recognized by ecclesiastical authority offer themselves as forms of self-fulfilment and as reflections of the one Church.

Their birth and spread has brought to the Church's life an unexpected newness which is sometimes even disruptive. This has given rise to questions, uneasiness and tensions; at times it has led to presumptions and excesses on the one hand, and on the other, to numerous prejudices and reservations. It was a testing period for their fidelity, an important occasion for verifying the authenticity of their charisms.

Today a new stage is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity. This does not mean that all problems have been solved. Rather, it is a challenge, a road to take. The Church expects from you the "mature" fruits of communion and commitment.

#### **Church's Pastors must judge authenticity of charisms**

In our world, often dominated by a secularized culture which encourages and promotes models of life without God, the faith of many is sorely tested, and is frequently stifled and dies. Thus, we see an urgent need for powerful proclamation and solid, in-depth Christian formation. There is so much need today for mature Christian personalities, conscious of their baptismal identity, of their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world! There is great need for living Christian communities! And here are the movements and the new ecclesial communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium. You are the providential response.

True charisms cannot but aim at the encounter with Christ in the sacraments. The ecclesial realities to which you belong have helped you to rediscover your baptismal vocation, to appreciate the gifts of the Spirit received at Confirmation, to entrust yourselves to God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation and to recognize the Eucharist as the source and summit of all Christian life. Thanks to this powerful ecclesial experience, wonderful Christian families have come into being which are open to life, true "domestic churches," and my vocations to the ministerial priesthood and the religious life have blossomed, as well as new forms of lay life inspired by the evangelical counsels. You have learned in the movements and new communities that faith is not abstract talk, nor vague religious sentiment, but new life in Christ instilled by the Holy Spirit.

How is it possible to safeguard and guarantee a charism's authenticity? It is essential in this regard that every movement submit to the discernment of the competent ecclesiastical authority. For this reason, no charism can dispense with reference and submission to the pastors of the Church. The Council wrote in clear words: "Those who have charge over the Church should judge the genuineness and proper use of these gifts, through their office no indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good (cf. 1 Thes 5:12; 19-21)" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 12). This is the necessary guarantee that you are taking the right road!

In the confusion that reigns in the world today, it is so easy to err, to give in to illusions. May this element of trusting obedience to the Bishops, the successors of the Apostles, in communion with the Successor of Peter never be lacking in the Christian formation provided by your movements! You know the criteria for the ecclesiality of lay associations found in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (cf. n. 30). I ask you always to adhere to them with generosity and humility, bringing your experiences to the local churches and parishes, while always remaining in communion with the Pastors and attentive to their direction.

#### **'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel'**

Jesus said, "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!" (Lk 12:39). As the Church prepares to cross the threshold of the third millennium, let us accept the Lord's invitation, so that his fire may spread in our hearts and in those of our brothers and sisters.

Today, from this upper room in St. Peter's Square, a great prayer rises: *Come, Holy Spirit*, come and renew the face of the earth! Come with your seven gifts! Come, Spirit of Life, Spirit of Communion and Love! The Church and the world need you. Come, Holy Spirit, and make ever more fruitful the charisms you have bestowed on us. Give new strength and missionary zeal to these sons and of daughters of yours who have gathered here. Open their hearts; renew their Christian commitment in the world. Make them courageous messengers of the Gospel, witnesses to the risen Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of man. Strengthen their love and their fidelity to the Church.

Let us turn our gaze to Mary, Christ's first disciple, Spouse of the Holy Spirit and Mother of the Church, who was with the Apostles at the first Pentecost, so that she will help us to learn from her *fiat* docility to the voice of the Spirit.

Today, from this square, Christ says to each of you: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). He is counting on every one of you, and so is the Church. "Lo", the Lord promises, "I am with you always to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). I am with you. Amen.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will increase the flame of his love in your hearts so that you may be ever more effective in bringing the Gospel message to the world of the new millennium. The Church needs your commitment and your love!