

Saints *Alive!*

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The Quarterly Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

Pray for Conversions

The Holy Spirit's Role in Calling and Conforming Catholics to Christ

By Rich Cleveland

Depending on the Holy Spirit in evangelization should result in our increasing prayer for individuals, our nation, and the world. Praying is something we can do; it is something we should do to advance the Gospel of Jesus and his Kingdom.

At a southern university in the early '70s, a friend of mine was returning to the dorms to visit with a convert he had "led to the Lord" the previous week. As he knocked on the dorm room door and called out the student's name, he heard a rustling in the room. But no one answered the door. My friend knocked again and called out the student's name. It opened, and he was surprised to see his new "convert" climbing out the dorm window to avoid my friend—which he successfully did from that point on. After some reflection on that incident, my friend concluded that he had indeed elicited a "decision" from the student but genuine conversion obviously had not taken place.

Over the years, he and I both have come to realize that evangelization and true conversion is primarily a work of the Holy Spirit and not a product of the evangelizer's expertise or the results of the most effective evangelization resources. Jesus indicated as much by the words he used upon commissioning the Church to take the message of Jesus and his Kingdom into the world: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."¹ As Pope Paul VI points out, Jesus was sent by the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit descends on Jesus of Nazareth at the moment of His baptism . . . Jesus is 'led by the Spirit' to experience in the desert the decisive combat and the supreme test before beginning this mission. It is 'in the power of the Spirit' that He returns to Galilee and begins His preaching at Nazareth, applying to Himself the passage of Isaiah: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.'"² So it is appropriate upon sending the Church to the world in the same manner as the Father sent him that "he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"³

So how does the Holy Spirit affect the work of evangelization? Pope Paul explains it this way: "It must be said that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization: It is He who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is He who in the depths of conscience causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood."⁴ The Holy Spirit does so by motivating and equipping the evangelizers with zeal for the advancement of the Gospel, with a life of holiness and compassion that is attractive to their fellow man, and with the wisdom necessary to engage non-Christians in meaningful dialogue about the claims of Christ. Simultaneously, the Spirit works within the hearts of pre-believers to create a place of receptivity and responsiveness to Jesus, the Word of God. Additionally, he illuminates the minds of pre-believers to recognize the truth of the Gospel, whereas previously it did not make sense to them, and he gives them the faith to believe and follow Christ as Savior and Lord. This is what Paul means when he says the "gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."⁵ The student referred to above seems to have been an example of the person who responded only to my friend's words and consequently they did not have the lasting conversion affect of which Paul speaks.

So what should be the implications for us who desire to see a movement of evangelization and conversion in and through the Catholic Church? First is a renewed recognition of our dependence on the Holy Spirit. This dependence should motivate us daily to more deeply open our hearts and lives to the Holy Spirit's influence and fullness. "This spirituality is expressed first of all by a life of complete docility to the Spirit. It commits us to being molded within by the Spirit, so that

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Emmaus Journey Mission Statement

Emmaus Journey is a Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry that is conducted primarily in and through Catholic parishes. Emmaus Journey has embraced Goal 1 of *Go and Make Disciples: A Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, produced by The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

Emmaus Journey's Goals are:

- To help enable non-practicing Catholics, occasional Catholics, and nominal Catholics experience conversion to Christ, transformation in Christ, and mobilization for Christ as Catholic disciples.
- To encourage Catholics to embrace Jesus' call to advance the Gospel and his Kingdom by becoming laborers who live and disciple others from among the non-religious.
- To help mature and gifted Catholics discover a particular call to participate more fully in the task of evangelization.
- To indirectly serve Catholic parishes' evangelization efforts through small-group materials, evangelization and discipleship resources, seminars, ministry events, and messages that move them forward in their efforts to make Christ known, and to nurture mature Catholic disciples who can help others experience conversion, transformation, and mobilization for Christ.



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From the Heart

By Rich Cleveland

In Appreciation of the Holy Spirit's Presence

It is hard to think of an analogy that would depict what the Christian life would be like without the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the closest analogy would be to picture the chaos and impotency that would come if the existence of language, verbal and nonverbal, were suddenly to cease. One can only begin to imagine the sense of hopelessness we would experience not being able to communicate with even one other person. The powerlessness would be overwhelming. We would be unable to accomplish much of anything. There would be no information system, no books, and no written instructions on how to do things. The sense of isolation and dislocation would be unbearable. Love, appreciation, and belonging would not be able to be expressed or received. Needs could not be expressed, nor could help be provided. Communication, one of the essential elements that make us distinctively human, when removed, would change life beyond recognition or description.

The Holy Spirit is the Father and Son's gift to us to enable us to cope and to make the Christian life enjoyable. The Holy Spirit is the essential presence that makes us distinctively Christian, the absence of which would change our life beyond recognition or description.

To appreciate the Holy Spirit's presence, we want to think for a minute of what life would be like without him, if history was suddenly turned back and the Holy Spirit was removed. How would our Christian life be different? There would be:

No belonging—*"But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."* (Romans 8:9)

No assurance—*"In him you . . . were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it."* (Ephesians 1:13,14)

No revelation (Scripture)—*"The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."* (John 14:26)

The Holy Spirit is the Father and Son's gift to us to enable us to cope and to make the Christian life enjoyable.

No illumination—*"So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God."* (1 Corinthians 2:10-13)

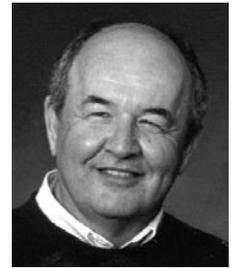
No power in prayer—*" . . . we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words . . . the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."* (Romans 8:26,27)

No power to witness—*" . . . you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses."* (Acts 1:8)

No unity—*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . ."* (1 Corinthians 12:13) *" . . . maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit . . ."* (Ephesians 4:3,4)

Scary, isn't it? These are just a few of the things made possible to us by the Holy Spirit's presence and which we would lose by his absence. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit **was given** to us, his Body, and his presence **will remain** with us until Jesus returns. How can we more fully express our appreciation for the gift of the Holy Spirit? We can do this by fully opening our hearts and lives anew to his indwelling presence.

"In our day too, the Spirit is the principal agent of the new evangelization. Hence it will be important to gain a renewed appreciation of the Spirit as the One who builds the Kingdom of God within the course of history and prepares its full manifestation in Jesus Christ, stirring people's hearts and quickening in our world the seeds of the full salvation which will come at the end of time," (From *On the Coming of the Third Millennium* by Pope John Paul II.)



Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

Saint Philip the Deacon

St. Philip was an ordinary man who became extraordinary because he was a man of “good standing and filled with the Spirit and wisdom.” This first mention of him in Acts 6:3 points out the interconnection between the centrality of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life and the presence of virtue and insight. This affect is, and should be, normative for, “The first form of witness is *the very life of the missionary*.”¹



Later in the book of Acts (chapter 8) we see St. Philip directed by God to the city of Samaria, where he effectively proclaimed Christ and reinforced his message with miraculous signs. The people listened “eagerly to what was said” and responded with “great joy” to God’s message. Later, St. Philip is directed to an Ethiopian official—the treasurer of the Ethiopian queen—who invited him to clarify a passage of Scripture from Isaiah. “Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.” In response to St. Philip’s witness, the Ethiopian believed in Christ and asked to be baptized.

We see in these passages another interesting interconnection. When the Holy Spirit is central to one’s life, there is a natural interest in proclaiming (communicating) to others the Good News of Jesus Christ. This should be expected inasmuch as telling people about Jesus is the primary role of the Holy Spirit, as we see in John 15:26–27: “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.”

St. Philip exemplifies what is meant by a life in the Spirit. He was a *good* man filled with the fruit and characteristics of the Spirit. He was filled with the Holy Spirit’s *wisdom* as he was schooled in the truths of the Scriptures and he became concerned that others might know Jesus and salvation. We who are interested in Catholic evangelization would do well to emulate St. Philip by welcoming the Holy Spirit to fill our lives and by allowing him to lead us to opportunities to proclaim Christ.

“Light immortal, fire divine, with your love our hearts refine; come, our inmost being fill, make us all to do your will . . .”²

Maurice Blumberg

Maurice Blumberg is the executive director of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men (NFCM) and a Jewish convert to Christ and Catholicism. Maurice, both as an individual and as the director of NFCM, has learned the importance of reliance on the Holy Spirit as he endeavors to fulfill Christ’s commission.

After being a Catholic Christian for some time, Maurice attended a Life in the Spirit Seminar at his parish. Life in the Spirit Seminars can vary from parish to parish, but they generally consist of a series of talks on basic Christianity and how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can become more central to our lives. As these truths took hold in Maurice’s mind and as he responded to them, the Holy Spirit changed Maurice’s heart so that he became more sincere about following Christ: “I recognized my need for him in living an authentic Christian life as a Catholic man.” With this fresh awareness and new dependence on the Holy Spirit, Maurice began to see his life transformed.

One particular area of that transformation had to do with an increased desire to see other people come to know and follow Christ, especially Catholic men. Maurice believes strongly that, now more than ever, Catholic men need to take their place and assume their responsibilities as Christian men in their Church, families, and communities. Consequently, on an individual basis and as head of NFCM, by the empowering of the Holy Spirit, Maurice is reaching out evangelistically to men.

“I have found that when individual opportunities for evangelizing arise and I ask the Holy Spirit to give me courage, boldness, and wisdom to speak the right words,” he says, “it makes a huge difference in the effectiveness of my efforts. When I don’t seek his help, I can see the difference.”

If you could communicate with Maurice (and you can at www.catholicmensresources.org), he would tell you, “When people give more and more of their lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and welcome the Holy Spirit into every aspect of their lives, they will see the power of the Holy Spirit transforming them more and more into the image of Jesus Christ.”

Like Maurice, we need to seek the Holy Spirit’s help in our lives, be sensitive to his influence and direction, and invite him into the witnessing situations we encounter.



1 *Mission of the Redeemer*, by Pope J Paul VI, Section 42

2 *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, verse 3, from *Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. III

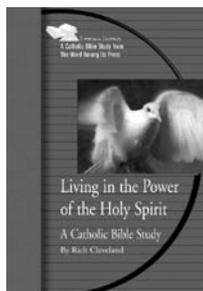
Tools You Can Use

Want to Learn More About the Holy Spirit?

“As someone who preaches all over America on devotion to the Holy Spirit and especially on the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelization, I want to enthusiastically recommend Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit: A Catholic Bible Study by Rich Cleveland. Rich makes the fruits and gifts of the Spirit of Christ truly come alive for the individual reader and faith-sharing group.”

—Father Bruce Nieli, C.S.P., Paulist Preacher, and Former Director for Evangelization, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Included in *Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit*:



- Session 1: Meditating on God's Word
- Session 2: Who Is the Holy Spirit and How Does He Work?
- Session 3: The Holy Spirit, God's Greatest Gift to Us
- Session 4: The Work of the Spirit . . . to Bear Fruit for God
- Session 5: The Fruits of the Spirit Are Love and Joy
- Session 6: The Fruits of the Spirit Are Peace and Patience
- Session 7: The Fruits of the Spirit Are Kindness and Goodness
- Session 8: The Fruits of the Spirit Are Faithfulness, Meekness, and Temperance
- Session 9: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Saints Alive! points out that, “As baptized Christians, we too have been given an abundance of gifts, but sometimes we fail—at least initially—to appreciate them. During Jesus’ last evening with apostles, he introduced three gifts that would, despite his impending absence, make his presence known on earth for all time. In their last fleeting hours together, Jesus gave his followers his everlasting presence in the Eucharist (Matthew 26:26–30), in his word (John 14:23–24), and in his Spirit (John 14:15–17). All three make it possible for us to experience the fullness of life in him.”

Learn more about the Holy Spirit and how you can more fully appropriate his presence in your life through *Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit*. It and other resources are available at www.emmausjourney.org.

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we may become ever more like Christ. It is not possible to bear witness to Christ without reflecting his image, which is made alive in us by grace and the power of the Spirit.”⁶

Second, we should increasingly pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of non-Christians with whom we are involved to bring about conversion to Christ. Perhaps this prayer should not only be directed toward those individuals with whom we are personally involved in a witnessing relationship, but also for a broader movement of conversion here in the United States, since there is a large percentage (millions) of Catholics and Protestants who no longer practice their faith, millions more who remain unformed as Christ’s disciples and devoid of understanding of the rudiments of Christianity, and still millions more non-Christians whose

secularization makes them “strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”⁷

Back in 1934, Pope Pius XI made a universal appeal to Catholics to pray for the conversion of Russia. Around the world Catholic families would gather daily in their living rooms or around their dining table to pray for Russia, and they did so for years. In 1989, the world stood in amazement as they witnessed the sudden and comprehensive collapse not only of the well-defended concrete walls of communism, but also of the political, psychological, and anti-Christian ideological walls that were designed to keep people enslaved. Not unlike the walls of Jericho, in response to his people’s prayers the Holy Spirit opened the way for the Gospel to once again permeate the darkness and set people free.

Will the Holy Spirit once again respond to our prayers for the conversion of individuals and our nation? I think so, it is consistent with his mission to make the Son known to the world. Depending on the Holy Spirit in evangelization should result in our increasing prayer for individuals, our nation, and the world. Praying is something we can do; it is something we should do to advance the Gospel of Jesus and his Kingdom.

1 John 20:21

2 *On Evangelization in the Modern World* by Pope Paul VI. Section 75

3 John 20:22

4 *On Evangelization in the Modern World* by Pope Paul VI. Section 75

5 1 Thessalonians 1:5

6 *Mission of the Redeemer* by Pope John Paul II, Section 87

7 Ephesians 2:12