



What is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

By Pat Mullins

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While Jesus was in their company he told them not to leave Jerusalem. *'You must wait', he said, for the promise made by my Father, about which you have heard me speak: John, as you know, baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and within the next few days.'* Acts 1:4-5 NEB

'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth.' Acts 1:8 NAB

From the Apostle Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost: "The Jesus we speak of has been raised by God, as we can all bear witness. Exalted thus at God's right hand, he received the Holy Spirit from the Father, as was promised, and all that you now see and hear flows from him." Acts 2:32-33 NEB

What is the baptism in the Holy Spirit? It is an experience of God the Holy Spirit present in the life of a person to lead and empower their life as witnesses of Christ. It is an experience required by Jesus for all of His disciples. The Sacrament that prepares us for the experience is Confirmation—the receiving of the Holy Spirit. As with all the Sacraments, Confirmation is bestowed with faith, hope and love. Faith, that in fact God is acting to impart a special grace to the person receiving; hope, that the persons receiving will indeed open their heart and mind to receive all that God would have them receive from the Sacrament; and love, that entrusts to God the outcome of the Sacrament.

As we look at this question, we pray that the Holy Spirit will take these efforts in words, as poor and inadequate as they may be, and use them to bless the reader with a deeper experience of the love of God and the power of God available to each of His children. This we pray in Jesus' name, amen. Let us begin by establishing the basis of understanding from what we have been taught in the Scriptures by our Church over the centuries since

the resurrection of Jesus. God became man in the person of Jesus in order to pay the price of our redemption from the hold of Satan. As revealed in Genesis, God had given the entire world over to the responsibility of man in the person of Adam. The action of our first human father caused him to be separated from God by his own free choice, and consequently all human children would be born into a family that was separated from God. But more than that, we learned that when the separation from God occurred, we came under the dominion and rule of Satan as children of a human father ruled by Satan.

Even now in the world, if a citizen of one country wants to become a citizen of another, the person must make the request and follow the laws necessary, or the new citizenship is not granted. If the person is a criminal trying to avoid the law in their native land, the new country may not be able to grant citizenship. This may help us to understand why God knew He must become a human being (limited by humanity, and subject to all the temptations of humanity) in order to qualify as a worthy substitute for the punishment due to Adam, and every child of Adam.

The Scriptures put it this way, and our Church has taught it as the Doctrine of Original Sin: one person sinned, and many were made sinners, and yet one Man—Jesus—did not sin. Jesus willingly laid down His life to pay the penalty for the one man Adam who did sin. Since Jesus paid the penalty for Adam, the scale of justice is balanced and the Devil has no right to hold Adam separated from God any longer.

But then what about you and me? God's plan for all of us was effective in Jesus. Since none of us had any choice when we were born into this world about whether or not we wanted to be separated from God by our birth into the family of Adam, God could now open the door for our free choice in Christ Jesus. So God summed up all humanity that would ever be born from the family of Adam into Adam. Therefore when Jesus paid the penalty for the one person, He thereby paid the price for all persons. Now God's provision for redeeming us from the ownership of Satan by our birth could be received by any human that would receive the gift of Jesus as our substitute. Jesus became our Substitute in full payment for our life of sin that deserved the death penalty.

Why did we deserve a death penalty? Consider that

your father gave you a legacy for your children of 1,000 acres of land for each child. Then you decided you wanted to spend the money that the land would bring, so you sold your children's birthright. When your children were born they had lost their birthright, not due to their own action, but to yours! Now consider that your father is still alive, and his plan for blessing your children has not changed. So he must now go to the legal owner and pay the necessary price to redeem the land back. Then if any of your children come to your father, doesn't he have right to give the legacy to them for their enjoyment? So God did this in Jesus. Otherwise, God would have been unrighteous to demand back something that had rightfully passed to the ownership of another without paying the full price. So now it is possible for God to give us the right to have fellowship with Him again as we are reconciled to Him in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer. Now we are each faced with the responsibility of a choice.

But let us look at another aspect of this wonderful plan of God's for a moment in order to understand what our choice must be. Let's say you were born into the Smith family. After you grew up, you decided you did not like the name of Smith, so you changed your name to Jones. Even though you have a new name you are still in the Smith family, and the bloodline of your father is still in your veins. You may try to change your name a hundred times, but you will always be in the Smith family until you die. So it is with each of us born into the family of our human father, Adam.

We separated from God by birth. We are sinners not because of what we do, but by our birth. It is not our sin that makes us sinners, but we sin because it is in our nature as humans, as sinners by birth. Fish swim because it is in their nature to swim, and we sin because it is in our nature to sin!

God knew this and so He made provision in Jesus for us to be able to choose to enter into the death that Jesus died for us and thereby pass out of the control of the nature of sin that Satan had held us under. We see the basic sin with which we are tempted is that we want to do things our way in our time and not need to depend upon God. This is the 'pride of life' that ensnared our first father, Adam, and it lives in us. So there is a power in our nature that wants to sin; God needs to provide for us a greater power if we are going to be able to resist the daily temptations to live independent from Him. This is God's secret revealed through the Church by the

Holy Spirit—Christ Jesus will become our life through the ongoing ministry of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now we need to understand the word 'baptism.' 'Baptism' is a Greek word that can be understood in this way: a sunken wooden ship is a baptized ship. The wood is both completely immersed in the water, and the water has permeated into the very fiber of the wood. Not only has the use of the ship been severely altered, but the very substance of the ship is transformed. As we begin to understand this word 'baptism,' we can see the gift of life that is given in the Sacrament of Baptism.

By faith in the active power of God, we receive an immersion into the death of Jesus Christ at the Sacrament of Baptism. The blood that He poured out of His veins became the substance that washes away all our actions of sin, and the death that He dies allows us to be free of the nature of sin which made us sin in the first place. We are sunk into Him, into His substitutionary death for each of us, and we are free to be reconciled with our real father, God.

In Baptism, we are given new life in Him through our identification with Him in His resurrection. We are born again from the dead. All of this happens in fact at the time of our Sacrament of Baptism, and it is received by our parents by faith in God in our behalf. They know that someday God will bring into our experience that which they had entrusted to Him by faith. Our full experience of this new life awaits our willingness to enter into that death to our own self-centered lives, in order that we also can experience His resurrection with Him.

All the facts are now in place in our lives, and God waits for us to come to Him in Christ Jesus to claim our new birthright. At this point, we can see both what the 'baptism' in the Holy Spirit is, and why Jesus would insist upon the disciples waiting for the empowerment before beginning their task of being His witnesses. What about this 'baptism' in, or with the Holy Spirit, or perhaps we could also call it them Spirit of Holiness? Again, our Father God is so very thorough in His love for us. God knew that we would not be able to hold onto this new life in Christ that He had given us in the death and resurrection of Christ without the power, or ability, of the Holy Spirit active in our lives. So God gives the Holy Spirit to Jesus for Him to give to all who would come to Him as their ability to follow Him each

day of their lives. To be baptized into or with the Spirit of Holiness is to allow ourselves to be completely filled in our hearts and minds with Holiness, and to give over the control of our lives to the Holy Spirit.

The plan of God in our lives is the same as in the life of Jesus when He walked the earth in the limitations of humanity. It was the Holy Spirit that caused Him to be conceived and was with Him as He grew and matured in obedience. The Holy Spirit empowered Him to walk in ministry in Israel, suffer, be crucified on our behalf, and be willing to die so that His Father's plan might take full effect for all of us. This same Spirit of Holiness that enabled Him is now given by Him to enable us to walk in holiness of life with Him and in Him and for Him. Holiness may be understood as single-mindedness in wanting God to have the joy of guiding and enabling our lives.

Now all this is bestowed by faith at the time of our Confirmation, but few people actually experience this empowering at that time of their lives. All the things of God are first received by faith in the facts He has spoken. Our experience of these facts will follow as we continue in faith to believe that what God has said is really true.

Over the ages, our Church has proclaimed and continues to proclaim the personal responsibility of all human beings to choose for themselves the plan of God—or the gifts so lavishly given cannot be experienced. The basic Sacraments of initiation into our faith have been given to all of us, and yet without mature adult understanding and acceptance, we do not experience the full benefit of all that God has provided for us in the facts of these Sacraments. Let us not continue in our ignorance that is so costly to our everyday life of grace in Jesus Christ, but come to Him from whom all blessings flow—Jesus, the Christ, the Anointed of God, our Savior, our Redeemer, and humbly ask Him to immerse us into His Spirit of Holiness.

During the season of Pentecost may each one of us experience a new Pentecost, the first-fruits of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Perhaps you will join us all now and let us pray together.

Heavenly Father I want to have all the experiences in my life that You have provided for me in Jesus. I am sorry for my pride of knowledge that may have kept me from experiencing any part of the gift You have so graciously

provided. I do repent of this pride, Father, and I ask You, Lord Jesus, to come ever deeper into my experience of life and reveal Your life and love to me. I will receive the gift of Your love in Your death for me, and all that it means. I want You to take over the guidance of my life and be my Lord. Even though I don't know all that this means now, I trust You to teach me. Lord Jesus, I ask You to baptize me in Your Holy Spirit with all that it means to You to do so. I want all You have suffered so much to give me to be a part of my life and experience. O, Lord Jesus, I empty myself of all that I thought I knew if it stands in Your way of teaching me more about Yourself. Teach me Your love—may Your Holy Spirit now be my ability to love, to speak and to live a life worthy of Your name. I thank You

JESUS SAID
When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you shall receive

POWER

To love Me with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength
To see the areas of your life that need changing
To obey My commandments because you love Me
To experience My joy that has no bounds
To experience My peace in the midst of tribulation
To offer outstretched arms or a listening ear to someone who is troubled
To have a deeper faith in My promises
To proclaim My name with power and conviction
To endure persecution
To act justly
To have hope in times of disappointment
To humble yourself
To accept others as I accept you—just as you are
To know I am your healer
To love yourself and others
To deny yourself for the sake of others
To understand the spiritual message of My word
To overcome weakness and temptation
To persevere
To know beyond a doubt that I am the source of your power

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