

FOUR

*SPIRIT &
CHURCH*

THE CHURCH MAY BE VIEWED in many different ways: as institution, sacrament, herald, servant, body of Christ, colony and more. Here let us view it from the standpoint of the Spirit. Let us see it as a continuation of the Spirit-anointed event that was Jesus Christ. This is a natural way to regard a community that was created by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost to carry on the kingdom ministry of Jesus and be firstfruits of the new humanity he represented. Spirit was present at the birth of the church as well as at Bethlehem, and the church is dependent on the power of the Spirit just as Jesus was. The church is also an event in the history of the Spirit.

The first act of the risen Lord was to breathe the Spirit on the disciples and send them forth into mission (Jn 20:21-22; Acts 1:8). This alerts us to the fact that the effectiveness of the church is due not to

human competency or programming but to the power of God at work. The church rides the wind of God's Spirit like a hawk endlessly and effortlessly circling and gliding in the summer sky. It ever pauses to wait for impulses of power to carry it forward to the nations. What a dynamic and hopeful image to cherish in a day when thinking about the church is often heavy and pessimistic. The main rationale of the church is to actualize all the implications of baptism in the Spirit.¹

After the resurrection, God's kingdom, which had begun to manifest itself in Jesus himself, would continue to transform the world through the community of empowered disciples. The church is an extension not so much of the incarnation as of the anointing of Jesus. Jesus is the prototype of the church, which now receives its own baptism in the Spirit. Spirit, who maintained Jesus' relationship with the Father and empowered him for mission, now calls the church into that relationship, giving it the power to carry on the mission. There had to be, after Jesus' departure, a colony of heaven, living the life and power and experiencing the freedom of the kingdom. Spirit indwells the church as a perpetual Pentecost and communicates gifts to its members. Spirit ecclesiology focuses not on the quality of the members but on the power of God at work in and through them.²

As noted in the last chapter, the representation and participatory journey of Jesus Christ triggered the promised outpouring of the Spirit. Having walked our path to death and been vindicated by God, Jesus poured out the Spirit on all flesh to effect the hope for world transformation. Pentecost completed Good Friday and Easter Sunday by changing history with the transforming power of these events. Christ came to set people free, and now there is a community dwelling in God's love, living freely, embodying the grace of God: Father, Son and Spirit. Now the life-giving Spirit by resurrection, Christ is present in a new way in history, bringing life to the world by the Spirit, who can make his representative journey a reality in people's lives.

The last Adam is forming a new solidarity, enlarging himself as a person. Once confined to Palestine, Jesus has become head of a new international body of Spirit-baptized disciples sharing his risen life. How great are the riches of the glory of this mystery—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). The Risen One is working out the

participatory journey of atonement in the world through a community that lives by the power of the Spirit.

The danger of subordinating the Spirit to the Son in Christology also exists in ecclesiology. This happens when church is seen as the body of Christ to which the Spirit is added as a helper. The fact is that Christ did not first establish the church and add the Spirit secondarily. The Spirit's role is not a junior role. As Jesus was conceived by the Spirit in Mary and empowered for mission in baptism, so the church is born and empowered by the Spirit. The Spirit who filled Jesus empowers the community of disciples to be the vehicle of God's saving activity. Jesus, who received the Spirit and ministered in power, communicates God's life to the church to carry on the mission. Like Jesus, the church must live not out of its own resources but by the power of the indwelling Spirit, which breathes, strengthens, inspires and guides.

On Easter the narrative shifts its focus from the earthly Jesus to the community of his brothers and sisters who are imbued with the same Spirit. These are the people who indwell his journey and share his living, dying, and rising. "The body of Christ" no longer denotes only the physical existence of Jesus but is a corporate term, referring to the community on its way to Christlikeness. Even the term *Christ* itself can apply to those who participate in the community and share his risen life. As the body has many members, so is it with Christ, for the community is baptized and anointed as he was (1 Cor 12:12-13). Recall how Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting him in the person of his downtrodden people (Acts 9:4). Christ and his people are tied together. We encounter the Risen One not only in word and sacrament but also when we meet one another. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18:20).

The Second Vatican Council supplemented a hierarchical understanding of church expressed by the First Council with the vision of the church as the body of Christ, ordered and sustained by the Spirit. "Rising from the dead, Christ sent his life-giving Spirit upon his disciples and through this Spirit has established his body, the church, as the universal sacrament of salvation" (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* par. 48). This was a noble move, though since the council

there has been a struggle over how to appropriate this ecclesiology in the local church. The charismatic renewal has helped by introducing priests and laity to a personal experience of the Spirit, but the gap in all our traditions between theory and practice in this regard needs narrowing.³

The church is the instrument of Christ, called to carry on his mission in the power of the Spirit. This power is a special kind of power, since he who baptizes us in the Spirit is the Lamb and Servant of God (Jn 1:29, 33). This means paradoxically that though it is the power of creation, it is also the power of suffering love, which does not remove our weakness or eliminate pain. The nature and direction of this power are clarified by the cross, the power of suffering love by which Christ overcame the world. The desire for worldly power is carnal. The Spirit's power comes from the Crucified One, and the reason for seeking it is the desire to be involved in his mission. The church is a dwelling place of God by the Spirit (Eph 2:22). "I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live" (Ezek 37:5). Only as God breathes on the church is it enabled to carry on Christ's mission.⁴

Although the Spirit is omnipresent and not confined to the church, Spirit's presence in the community is highly significant. For millennia Spirit has longed to breathe into the body of human life more effectively, intensely and redemptively. Pentecost offered the Spirit a unique opportunity to work freely. Here is a community open to God's love, a place where (in principle) there can be a fuller realization of the kingdom, a more decisive presence of God in history. New possibilities have arisen for the Spirit because of the participatory journey of Jesus Christ.

Though present everywhere, Spirit can be more effectively present among those who know the risen Lord, can work there with greater intensity promoting human renewal. The Spirit experienced this freedom in the case of Jesus, but that opportunity was snuffed out in the crisis of his death. With the vindication of the resurrection, however, the movement of world transformation can go forward.

Community is important because God does not want faith to be expressed only in an interior way within the hearts of individual disciples. Human experience itself is social, and faith needs to assume

corporate form. It needs to be ecclesial and have public attestation. The Spirit has a vested interest in the church, where men and women confess Jesus Christ and are open to participation in the divine life. The mission of Jesus, bringing hope to humanity and ultimately justice to nations, has been passed on and the power to implement it transferred to the community of disciples.⁵

Community is also central to the purposes of God because it allows the relationality of triune life to be reflected in the created order. This mirroring back gives delight to God and at the same time supplies fulfillment to our own lives as semitranscendent and relational beings. Made in God's image, as differentiated creatures, as male and female, we too delight in community. Stanley Grenz writes, "God intends to bring to pass a reconciled creation in which humans reflect in their relationship to each other and the universe around us the reality of the triune God. God's actions are aimed at establishing the reconciled community of love as the human reflection of the social trinity—the divine nature—which is love."⁶

The Spirit is central for ecclesiology because he is the source of fellowship among humans in history and the bond of love between Father and Son in eternity. Fellowship on earth corresponds in a measure to fellowship in heaven. The Trinity is an open, inviting fellowship, and the Spirit wants the church to be the same, responsive in the same sort of way. God wants to hear from us an echo of the dynamic relations within his own life, anticipating the coming of the kingdom. The church is meant to resemble the triune life by being itself a place of reciprocity and self-giving. The fellowship that we have with one another is related ultimately to our fellowship with Father and Son (1 Jn 1:3). *Fellowship* refers both to divine life and to community life, because the community is meant to reflect the communion of the Trinity, which is the ontological basis of the church.⁷

As Christ himself embodied the new humanity as the last Adam, the church also is meant to embody it and anticipate the future of the world. God purposes a world that receives grace and says yes to love, and this is what the community of disciples does. In some ways church is one social network among others, but it has a higher promise. When

the church embodies Easter life, it is capable of becoming a sign of the coming reign of God. It is the human assembly that points to a much larger convocation at the end of time, and the community that anticipates the consummation of God's purposes for the world. The goal of creation was achieved in principle in the resurrection of Jesus. Now it has to take shape in a community that is the firstfruits of the future and the model of what human relationships can be, the sign of God's project for the world.⁸

At Pentecost the church received the Spirit and became the historical continuation of Jesus' anointing as the Christ. The One baptized in water and Spirit now baptizes the disciples. He transferred Spirit to them so that his actions could continue through their agency. The bearer of the Spirit now baptizes others with the Spirit, that there might be a continuation of his testimony in word and deed and a continuation of his prophetic and charismatic ministry.

The church exists for the world, not for itself, by participating in the apostleship of Christ by the power of the Spirit. With the goal of new humanity in sight, God truly delights over his people (Zeph 3:17). The blessings of the kingdom can now flow to the world, and Christ's mighty acts can continue and be enlarged in ever-widening circles through the community at God's disposal. There is a new family on earth, made up of brothers and sisters, among whom Christ is firstborn (Rom 8:29; Heb 2:11). Here the memory of Jesus is kept alive by proclamation, sacrament and mission.⁹

The world begins to become "christomorphic" in the community where love is being perfected (1 Jn 4:12). Such a community is intended to depict what God wants the world to become. At Pentecost a ruptured and broken world began to heal. People from all over the world came together and began to understand one another. A community was formed, full of differences and yet united in its longing for the coming of the kingdom. The conversion of people from many nations foreshadowed the evangelization of the world. Through baptism in the Spirit, the disciples were formed into an agency of the Spirit and a community in which God would work to rescue the world from self-destruction. At Pentecost God began to move the world from alienation to its goal and place in divine life. Michael Welker writes,

"Through the pouring out of the Spirit, God effected a world-encompassing, multilingual, poly-individual testimony to Godself." The church is the sacrament of the presence of Jesus Christ in the world.¹⁰

Power and Presence

As Jesus was empowered, the church is empowered for its mission by the Spirit. Outward forms are not enough—the power must be at work in us (Eph 3:20; 2 Tim 3:5). The kingdom of God is not just a matter of talk but of power (1 Cor 4:20). Outsiders ought to be able to sense the life-changing presence (1 Cor 14:25). More than churches full of people, God wants (and the world needs) people full of the Spirit.

Let us now take up the issue of power in the church, how Spirit is powerfully present sacramentally and charismatically for the sake of mission. We shall begin with the sacramental, proceed to the charismatic and conclude with transforming mission.¹¹

A dualism of spirit and matter has to be confronted here. Moderns perceive Spirit as something ghostly, intangible, impalpable, numinous, lacking concreteness. There is resistance to linking the Spirit to the material. Many of us shy away from physical manifestations of the divine presence and expect intangible, not real-life effects of the Spirit. It is as if the Spirit were a "holy ghost" who does not deal in material reality or transform real worlds. Matter-spirit dualism is, however, not the Bible's view, and it is far from the ancient consensus. There is a physical side of being spiritual. Spirit is not a ghost but the life-giver who moves in and shapes the material realm. We are physical creatures, the Son became incarnate in flesh and blood, and Spirit wants to effect changes in history *concretely*.¹²

It appears that in the early centuries the churches were sacramental and charismatic. The spiritual and the physical flowed together. But the balance has not always been sustained. In the Middle Ages the tendency was to favor sacramental over charismatic, and at the Reformation the sacramental principle itself suffered. Today renewal frequently takes place in nonsacramental contexts, not in the historic churches, which worship God sacramentally. The fire often burns outside the fireplace of the historic institutions. My concern here is to

try and recover the two-dimensionality of charism and sacrament original to Christianity.¹³

Let's begin by looking into the sacramental dimension of the Spirit's power and presence. Worship is central because the church delights in what God has done and is doing in history and in its fellowship in relation to the world's future. As firstfruits of new humanity, we worship God on behalf of the world in anticipation of the harvest. We acknowledge God's greatness on behalf of all peoples and press toward the goal of union with God. Responding to the Spirit, we move ever closer to God, shedding preoccupation with self and pursuing the true basis of our human life.

In worship we become assimilated to the humanity of Jesus, mystically and sacramentally, and pursue his journey. To the church Jesus is much more than a historical memory. He is present in the midst of the community as the life-giving Spirit. God summons the church to worship him in Spirit and truth (Jn 4:24; Phil 3:3). Spirit incites us to give God praise as his holy temple (Eph 2:22; 1 Pet 2:5). As he helped the Son to offer himself to the Father, the Spirit helps us come to the Father through the Son, making communion possible.¹⁴

Material signs foster the relationship between God and creatures. They help us approach the incomprehensible mystery, and they make invisible grace tangible. Sacraments exist simply because we are bodily creatures inhabiting a material world. There is in theory no limit to the number of them. Created reality is richly imbued with sacramental possibilities. The world reflects God's glory; therefore anything can mediate the sacred, where there are eyes to see and ears to hear. Since the Spirit pervades the universe, any event or experience can bring God to mind and mediate his presence. Thus the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush (Acts 7:30), and Elijah heard God speak in wind, earthquake, fire and silence (1 Kings 19:11-12). God speaks in the glory of sunsets and towering peaks. In particular, because humans are made in God's image, we encounter God in other people; we love God when we love them and honor God when we honor them. The sacramental principle operates, let it be noted, not only in liturgy but also in the ordinary experience that grounds it.¹⁵

The life of many churches needs to be enriched with more signs

and symbols. Iconoclasm has impoverished the life of the church and often reduced worship to a cognitive affair. This means that the Spirit is denied certain tools for enrichment. We are impoverished when we have no place for festivals, drama, processions, banners, dance, color, movement, instruments, percussion and incense. There are many notes on the Spirit's keyboard which we often neglect to sound, with the result that God's presence can be hard to access.

Jesus, as the image of the invisible God, is himself the fundamental sacrament (Col 1:15). He reveals the Father into whose presence the Spirit brings us. God has communicated himself and the mystery of his love in Christ. Incarnation is the paramount event of the divine nearness and the fundamental sacrament of our encounter with God. No Christians are really nonsacramentalist in the strict sense, since Jesus is the sacrament we all acknowledge. No one who confesses Christ, the primordial sacrament, and is enriched by the church, the sacrament of Christ, can be called nonsacramentalist. This reveals a unity of the catholic and free churches which should not be forgotten.¹⁶

The church too is a derived sacrament because, indwelt by the Spirit, it perpetuates the presence of the Lord. Through members of the body, Christ is present in the world by the Spirit. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18:20). Spirit constituted Christ's human body as Word made flesh in Mary and continues to make him effectively present in the church. The Risen Lord lives in the community, releasing his Spirit, drawing people into union with God. Conversions occur when people encounter Christ in members of his body, who become means of grace to them. As he acted through Christ, God continues to act through the words and actions of disciples. If Christ is the sacrament of God, the church is the sacrament of Christ, because it represents him in the world. When people receive grace through members of the body, they experience communion with God. Church and churchly sacraments derive from the basic sacrament, Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council calls the church "sacrament of the world" because it exists to bring people into relationship with God (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* 1.1).¹⁷

Ordinarily when we hear the word *sacrament* we think of baptism

and the Lord's Supper. But church life is sacramental in more ways than these. God's presence is evoked variously: through singing and prayer, through praise and thanksgiving, through greeting and fellowship, through teaching and instruction, through loving acts and kind service. Reading Scripture in the liturgy is sacramental because it mediates the Word of God. As Vatican II comments, "God himself speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in church" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* par. 7). For this reason, in some churches (such as the Orthodox) the Bible is given ritual recognition, by being formally carried in and even kissed. As wine is the sign of the blood of Christ, biblical texts enable one to hear God's Word.

Christ is present in the church in many embodied ways. In each of them, the material becomes spiritual and the spiritual is conveyed through material. Among the Quakers silence is sacramental, because they listen for God speaking in stillness. Other Quaker sacraments include the simplicity of the meeting house, sitting together in a circle, singing and praying, waiting and listening. Sacraments are media that transmit the grace of God to bodily creatures, and thank God, there are many of them. By many means of grace Christ pursues his work in us as firstfruits of the new humanity so that he may offer us to the Father.¹⁸

Let us not impoverish ourselves. Let us not, in reaction to excess, go to the extreme of reducing worship to grim austerity and hyper-spirituality. Human beings are symbol users, and God is a symbol maker. In charismatic circles people are feeling free to recover the richness of dance, clapping, raising hands, percussion, shouting, celebration, processions, banners and the like. We should not put aside means of grace that can enrich our lives. We do ourselves harm when we eliminate arts, drama, color, vestments, pageantry, incense, saints, calendars, lectionary, sculpture. To do so is to threaten the mystery.

Jesus *touched* the leper's skin when he healed him (Mk 1:41). He *touched* the hand of Peter's mother-in-law, and the fever left her (Mt 8:15). Paul laid hands on Timothy's head to communicate the Spirit (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6). Peter and John laid hands on some Samaritans that they might receive the Spirit (Acts 8:17). The physical and the spiritual are not antithetical but cooperative and synergistic. The Spirit

is passed from one person to another, from Moses to Joshua, from Elijah to Elisha. God comes to us and deals with us through material signs.¹⁹

Baptism and Eucharist

The term *sacrament* is normally used to refer to churchly rituals used in worship, and most commonly to baptism and Eucharist. Baptism initiates people into community, and Eucharist renews participation in it. Together they signify initiation and participation, and are properly associated with Christ's commitment in baptism and his willingness to suffer in obedience to God depicted in the Last Supper.

The identity of a community is sustained by ritual as well as word. Sermons touch us on the cognitive level, while ritual moves us on the affective level. Without ritual, traditions wither. Sacraments are material signs and symbols using words and actions, through which God gives life to us by the Spirit. As we open our hearts, we experience being the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:16).²⁰

The effectiveness of the sacraments is bound up with the Spirit and faith. Calvin wrote, "Sacraments fulfill their office only when the Spirit, that inward teacher, comes to them, by whose power alone hearts are penetrated and affections moved and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter in. If the Spirit be lacking, the sacraments can accomplish nothing more in our minds than the splendor of the sun shining upon blind eyes or a voice sounding in deaf ears" (*Institutes* 4.19.9). Faith is also important. Vatican II states,

In order that the sacred liturgy may produce its full effect, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their thoughts match their words, and that they cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realise that, when the liturgy is celebrated, more is required than the mere observance of the laws governing valid and licit celebration. It is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part knowingly, actively, and fruitfully. (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* par. 11)

Baptism and Eucharist are the two central sacraments that have been present from the beginning. Others were introduced gradually but

were conceived in relation to these originals. For example, the sacrament of confirmation (receiving the Spirit through the laying on of hands) and reconciliation (repentance through confession) are related to baptism, while anointing the sick, marriage and ordination to holy orders are related to Eucharist.

Baptism is the act in which the Spirit initiates individuals into the fellowship of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). As Jesus when baptized in water received the Spirit, so he would baptize us in water and in Spirit. Born of water and Spirit, we become members of his mystical body and receive the forgiveness of sins. Jesus says, in the long ending of Mark, "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk 16:16). At Pentecost, Peter called the people to be baptized and receive the gift of the Spirit in the context of their water baptism (Acts 2:38). Through the sign of water, people are baptized into solidarity with Christ and put on Christ (Gal 3:26). They receive the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Spirit (Tit 3:5-6). Baptism is the moment when the Spirit is imparted and when people open themselves to gifts of the Spirit. Baptism is an expression of the obedience of faith and the moment when God gives the Spirit. In experience the Spirit may be manifested before baptism, as with Cornelius, but water remains the public sign of the Spirit's coming (Acts 10:44-48).²¹

The Spirit is normally given with water in response to faith. This makes baptism a sacrament and means of grace. Proper initiation is water baptism coupled with Spirit baptism. Earlier encounters with the Spirit call for a fresh infusion in water baptism, and later encounters should be viewed as occasions of release of the potentials of grace bestowed in the sacrament. One does not begin life in the Spirit more than once, but one may be filled with the Spirit many times in terms of awareness and appropriation.²²

At baptism there ought to be an invocation of the Spirit. We find a nice example of this in the order for baptism of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church: "We therefore pray thee, O Lord, send thy Holy Spirit into this water and sanctify it as thou didst sanctify the river Jordan by descending thereinto and prefiguring thereby this font of baptism for the regeneration of all men."

As a member of the free church tradition, I am not used to thinking of baptism this way. Baptists seldom make the link between water and Spirit baptism, but see water baptism as human response only. A sharp line is often drawn between baptism in water and in Spirit. The former is viewed not as a sacrament but as a response to what God has done in Christ, the true sacrament. Baptism and Eucharist are demythologized as events of grace and portrayed as events of response. For Karl Barth, baptism in the Spirit is conversion, and water baptism is the first step in following Jesus. In such thinking baptism is witness to a human decision and not an occasion of receiving the Spirit. A number of scholars agree that water baptism plays no essential role in initiation; thus a wedge is driven between water and Spirit.²³

This does not seem to square with a number of Scriptures that connect the coming of the Spirit more closely with water baptism, and it is certainly out of keeping with the tradition of one and a half millennia of church history with regard to the sacramental character of baptism. Most Christians historically have held that God acts in baptism to bestow grace. As Tertullian said, "The act of baptism is carnal, in that we are plunged in water, but the effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from sins" (*On Baptism* 7). As the Spirit came upon Jesus as he came up out of the water, so water and Spirit baptism are associated. This is the impression conveyed by sayings such as Peter's: "Baptism . . . saves you" (1 Pet 3:21). Scripture seems thus to support the catholic position—as Luther says, God's blessings are poured out on candidates for baptism. The breaking of this link seems to have been the result of Zwingli's dualism of matter and spirit, which led many Protestants into antisacramentalism.²⁴

At first baptism was administered to converts, not to infants. In baptism people renounced their sins and received anointing for ministry. Baptists today continue the practice and defer baptism of children until riper years, whereas catholic traditions (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist) opt for infant baptism, in which parents along with the congregation promise to raise the child in the faith and provide for her or his spiritual formation. Confirmation later completes baptism by adding the dimension of faith (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* par. 1225). This makes a certain

sense. In religion, as other areas of life, parents take responsibility for children as they grow up. Naturally they want them to be part of the faith community and to be nourished by the means of grace. To deprive a child of this blessing, they reason, would place them outside the community and might even propel them in the wrong direction.

The danger of baptizing infants is that the action might be regarded as magical and the importance of faith be lost sight of. We must not rely on a ritual to save us in the absence of a call to serious discipleship. The danger of insisting on believers' baptism, on the other hand, is that we might regard the human decision so highly that we forget God's enabling grace. What about the mentally handicapped? Can God not work grace in the young and weak? Can the Spirit not anoint them? It also places the children of believers in an awkward position ecclesially.

As a Baptist, I opt for the dedication of infants and water baptism later, as a practice that can preserve the elements we all wish to protect (anointing, dedication, renunciation, responsibility). On the other hand, infant baptism followed by real confirmation could have the same result. Each community will have to decide in its own setting which danger is greater and what it should do. Whatever we decide (and I am not taking a position), the relationship between water baptism and Spirit baptism should be kept. One might think of the Spirit as truly present in infant baptism, with the effectiveness of it unfolding gradually as the child grows in faith over the years. For all of us, however, baptism points to a lifetime of following Jesus, however performed and whoever the candidates. All the baptized are called to live in newness of life (Rom 6:4).

As regards the Eucharist, it commemorates Jesus' self-surrender to God. He commanded it to continue so that the charism of self-giving would be perpetuated in the church down through history. Christ promised to be present in the meal ("this is my body") so that believers might experience his presence and commit themselves to his mission when they partake of it. His own charism was deposited, as it were, in the Eucharist, where Christ is present in the elements as the One who surrendered himself to the Father.²⁵

In the Eucharist we receive Jesus in the form of bread and wine

and share thereby in his death and resurrection. He makes himself known to us in the breaking of bread (Lk 24:35). The supper is our supernatural food and drink (1 Cor 10:4). It puts us in touch with the bread that came down from heaven (Jn 6:35). Therefore we invoke the Spirit upon the bread and wine, that they might become the vehicles of his body and blood. This is captured in many prayers of consecration: "We ask you to send your Holy Spirit upon the offering of your holy church. Gather into one all who share in these sacred mysteries, filling them with the Holy Spirit and confirming their faith in the truth." And it is prayed: "Recalling his death, proclaiming his resurrection, and looking for his coming again in glory, we offer you, Father, this bread and this cup. Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts, that all who eat and drink at this table may be one body and one people, a living sacrifice in Jesus Christ, our Lord."

The effectiveness of the sacrament is not due to any magic surrounding what happens to the elements; rather, it is due to the power of the Spirit in the action itself. There must be a coming of the Spirit upon the sacrament and the people. Consider this Ethiopic eucharistic prayer: "We beseech thee to send thy Holy Spirit upon this oblation of the church, that in joining them together, thou mayest grant that it be to them for holiness and for filling them with the Holy Spirit, and for strengthening of faith in truth, that they may glorify and praise thee through thy Son our saviour Jesus Christ."²⁶

As bodily creatures, we need embodied expressions such as baptism and Eucharist to make inward grace visible and tangible. Worship is rich when it makes use of material media. Without them it can be thin, abstract, notional. Symbols help believers apprehend the invisible things of God and serve as channels of grace.²⁷ God acts in the sacraments in the context of the response of faith. They are neither magical actions nor mere symbols of human response. In the sacraments God offers grace that is effective when people receive it. The sacraments do not work automatically but derive their effectiveness from the presence of the Spirit in relation to faith.

Misunderstanding about this may be due not just to prejudice but also to the focus in Western Catholicism on the transformation, even transubstantiation, of the elements of the Eucharist. The situation is

better in the Eastern churches, where a change in the elements is less emphasized. Stress is placed instead on participants' encountering the presence of Christ. In the prayer of invocation, clergy stand before the altar with arms outstretched, imploring the Spirit to descend on the gifts, while a deacon fans the air, depicting the movement of the Spirit; the elements are also displayed after the service. In other words, the Eastern Church has a more dynamic understanding of Eucharist than the Roman tradition. "The transformation of the elements is not the central issue for the Orthodox believer. For him, the central event of eucharist is the descent, appearance, and divine presence of the resurrected Christ."²⁸

By invoking Spirit at Eucharist, we understand that the effectiveness of the sacrament is due not to any magical operation but to the coming of Spirit in response to prayer. Because effectiveness is not automatic, participants' preparation for their response cannot be neglected. Grace, when offered, must be received in faith by a genuine response. If not, the sacrament fails and the ritual is empty.²⁹

The sacramental principle, along with other beliefs of the church, such as the possibility of signs and wonders, has suffered from modernity, which leaves little room for the activity of God. In the modern view, what is real is what can be scientifically established. This mindset looks for physical causation and disregards divine action. It is materialistic in outlook and exalts reason while discounting revelation and tradition. When influenced by modernity, religion is powerless in both its sacramental and its charismatic dimensions. Modernity does not expect God to be present or to move in power in either realm.³⁰

Let us not tolerate skepticism in regard to God's presence in the sacraments or the charisms. Spirit is not opposed to material media and signs. The Spirit speaks through human voices, feeds us with bread, washes us in water. Worship is weakened when the sacramental is lost. There is loss of mystery, liturgical beauty and traditional practices. Such neglect not only represents a break with the historic churches but also brings a self-improvement that accelerates secularization.³¹

The sacramental principle has been widely acknowledged in the

historic churches. The sacraments ought to be viewed as means of grace and not reduced to mere ordinances. They are both events in which God moves and acts of obedience. One should not repudiate sacraments because they have been abused, for to do so impoverishes the church. They are God-given and embodied means of grace. Sacraments are events in which the Spirit comes and we respond.³² My own sense is that the more we experience the love of the Father in movements of renewal in the church, the more we will reject the rationalistic repudiation of sacraments, and the more we will thirst for the concrete manifestations of the Spirit found in the historic liturgies.

The Catechism concludes:

In this sacramental dispensation of Christ's mystery, the Holy Spirit acts in the same way as at other times in the economy of salvation: he prepares the church to encounter her Lord; he recalls and makes Christ manifest in the faith of the assembly. By his transforming power, he makes the mystery of Christ present here and now. Finally the Spirit of communion unites the church to the life and mission of Christ.

Charismatic Presence

As well as receiving sacraments from the Spirit, we need to cultivate openness to the gifts of the Spirit. The Spirit is present beyond liturgy in a wider circle. There is a flowing that manifests itself as power to bear witness, heal the sick, prophesy, praise God enthusiastically, perform miracles and more. There is a liberty to celebrate, an ability to dream and see visions, a release of Easter life. There are impulses of power in the move of the Spirit to transform and commission disciples to become instruments of the mission.

The longer ending of Mark captures the early view of these matters: "Signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (16:17-18). Hebrews says something similar: "It [salvation] was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and

various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will" (Heb 2:3-4). Paul confirms it: "The weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds" (2 Cor 10:4).³³

The Scriptures describe a rich effusion of gifts upon the church and do not indicate that they will be withdrawn before the parousia. Paul writes, "In every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:5-7). For this reason Paul urges the Corinthians, "Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor 14:1). Paul expects gifts to operate widely in the churches. He tells us not to quench the Spirit by despising any of them (1 Thess 5:19-20). Paul would have agreed with Moses (I think) in his reply to Joshua: "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them" (Num 11:29).³⁴

The term *gift* or *charism* has a spectrum of biblical meanings. It may refer to the gift of salvation (Rom 6:23), some benefit communicated through one's life (Rom 1:11) or a specific ability such as speaking in other tongues (1 Cor 13:1). The word is related etymologically to grace (*charis*) and points to the gracious workings of God. Gifts are divine actions that build up the community and advance its mission. They demonstrate the power of the Spirit, who is at work in the church. They are manifestations of the Spirit's presence (1 Cor 12:7). Spirit works not only noetically, creating an awareness of the work of Jesus, but ontically as well, releasing supernatural, life-giving powers. Gift-giving is an aspect of the work of the Creator Spirit who energizes history until God's goals are realized.³⁵

It is a false dichotomy to split the charisms that flow from liturgical actions from charisms that flow free of institutional structures. God gives benefits through sacraments administered by ordained clergy as well as in other ways. Indeed they are interrelated. Gifts of leadership are charismatic as well as prophecy and healing. Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, "The Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the

church of God" (Acts 20:28). Leadership is a gift of the Spirit and a part of the larger charismatic structure of the congregation. Through leaders, persons may meet Jesus and experience the Spirit. Leadership is especially needed when the Spirit is flowing freely in the church, to protect it from the abuses of freedom. Revivals are messy and create considerable disorder. At times when the power is being poured out, we should pray for the Spirit to rest on our leaders that they be able to rule us well, for the good of the body. The need of wise pastoral oversight is even greater when the Spirit is breaking through than at ordinary times.³⁶

Yet the circle of gifting is wider than liturgy and institutional leadership. The church and its leaders belong to the Spirit—the Spirit does not belong to them. They are subject to the Spirit, who is not under their control. The church is under the reign of the Spirit, not the reverse. The Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus, not the Spirit of the church. Any church that denies the Spirit freedom stands in danger of becoming a lifeless and self-glorifying church. Paul does call us to be concerned that things be done decently and in order (1 Cor 14:40). But he is not advocating an order that quenches the Spirit. He is commending an order in which prophecy and tongues, revelation and knowledge are flowing, not an order that clamps down on such things. Paul is asking for order in the midst of a charismatic meeting, an order that does not rule out freedom and surprises.³⁷

God gives us leaders, but clericalism must not be allowed to snuff out freedom. The community is blessed with gifts in every member. Some are exceptional like prophecy; others are everyday like generosity. Each is given to serve the community; all of them are intended to be conduits through which God's love can flow down. There are all kinds of gifts, not only for a select few but for everyone. The church is a charismatic community with all sorts of giftings, including but surpassing ordained leadership. God delights in both form and freedom. There is value both in the freely charismatic and in the regular activities of the Spirit in the ordered community. In this balance we avoid anarchy on the one hand and bland uniformity on the other.³⁸

The charismatic dimension crops up in Old Testament narratives where the Spirit comes upon persons, giving them abilities for

delivering the people. We see it in the inspiration of the prophets and in the promise that prophecy will become a universal gift. The Old Testament looks forward to the day when there will be an outpouring of the Spirit, not just on leaders but on people at large, even the disenfranchised (slaves, women, young people). All will be able to prophesy and see visions.³⁹

The charismatic dimension was prominent in Jesus' ministry as he inaugurated the kingdom with words of authority and deeds of power. He challenged the rule of Satan and brought the kingdom of God near in a saving wholeness. The miracles and healings of Jesus were not incidental to his mission but concrete evidences of God's reign of love. His signs announced the end of Satan's reign and the coming transformation of the world: a new phase of history is beginning that will culminate in new creation.⁴⁰

This pattern continued after the resurrection in the mission of the church. Paul's preaching was not in words of human wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and power (1 Cor 2:4-5). He described his mission as being "by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit" (Rom 15:18-19). The author to Hebrews spoke of how God was bearing witness by signs and wonders, miracles and gifts of the Spirit (Heb 2:4). It seems implied that this would be the pattern of the Christian mission until the coming of Christ. While it is true that the ministry of the apostles was foundational and unrepeatable, their signs and wonders were directed to human needs that persist to this day. Why would the relevance of the kingdom to these needs vary? Why would the sick not always need prayer and the possessed deliverance? Spirit has not gone into retirement, or the power of the kingdom into recession.

Some doubt this, contending that charismatic life was not meant to persist after the age of the apostles. But it is hard to make the case for their view biblically. God's kingdom has arrived in the power of the Spirit, and the impression is given that it will be so on into the future. Spiritual gifts are not linked to the apostles narrowly but broadly to kingdom ministries. The promise of the Spirit was for the first generation and also for their children (Acts 2:39). Gifts belong to all the latter days of salvation history, not just to a short time. The ideal

is for every congregation to be well equipped with gifts (1 Cor 1:4-9). Every evangelist should proclaim the gospel powerfully in word *and deed*. The theory in the writings of B. B. Warfield that certain gifts have ceased, for example, is more easily explained in terms of his polemic against the Catholic Church and his apologetic agenda vis-à-vis miracles in the period of the Enlightenment rather than in terms of biblical data.

Sadly, the cessationist mindset becomes self-fulfilling. Failing to take seriously what the Bible sets forth as possibilities, people come under the influence of secular modernity by the back door. It leads to an experiential deficit that prevents people from entering into full Spirit reality.⁴¹

Spirit was not so much a creedal issue for the early church as a fact of their experience. His coming made a difference to their lives, outwardly and empirically. It had powerful and palpable effects. The love of God burned in their hearts, people spoke God's word with boldness, they prophesied and saw visions, they healed the sick. The Spirit was not a theory but altered real-life situations. People were awake to the powers of life, and spiritual gifts were basic to church life—gifts for building up the community and gifts for empowering mission.⁴²

Joel's prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost, and the new epoch began which is the watershed in salvation history. At baptism Jesus entered the new age as the anointed representative of humanity. It culminated on the cross, where Jesus went through a baptism of suffering (Lk 12:49-50; 22:42). Now raised to life, Jesus can baptize his disciples in the Spirit as it was prophesied that he would do (Lk 3:15-16; Jn 1:33). Salvation history has been lifted onto a new plane, and global mission begins. The Pentecost event parallels the baptism of Jesus—the disciples were baptized and empowered for mission, as Jesus had been in the Jordan. At Pentecost a transference of power and anointing took place from Jesus to the disciples. Like Jesus, they were clothed in power and equipped for mission directed by the Spirit.⁴³

The New Dimension

The charismatic dimension has implications for worship and ministry.

Beyond sacramental occasions of the Spirit are celebration and giving room for inspired speech and action. Spirit comes in liturgy but also freely in possibilities we need to treasure and cultivate. Be careful not to close down the freedom of the Spirit or refuse any gift designed to enrich life and mission. Let us consider three of them which the churches need to recover.⁴¹

Paul considered prophecy the most important gift in a congregation (1 Cor 14:1). It is called "revelation" because God speaks through someone, giving a word needed at that moment (1 Cor 14:30). Prophetic words are inspired words designed to upbuild, encourage and console (14:3). The picture Paul paints for us is that of a people waiting on God and listening to the Spirit. The potential can be glimpsed in the fact that world missions began by means of prophecy. The church in Antioch was fasting, praying and listening to its prophets when the call came to commission Paul and Barnabas as missionaries (Acts 13:1-4). Prophecy is one way the Spirit leads God's people forward in mission.

It is wrong for churches to suppress this gift. The community that silences its prophets is in danger of becoming a Spiritless place. Outwardly things may run smoothly, but inwardly the Spirit is rebuked. Prophecy is a charism that belongs to church life and should not be a rare occurrence. Like tongues, it arises from encountering God and from listening. Teaching is of crucial importance, but the prophets must also be heard. A climate of listening must be fostered among God's people.⁴⁵

Prophetic utterances can vary greatly in quality. Our hearing is far from perfect. Human elements enter into the word of God. Inspiration does not eliminate this factor. Therefore prophecies are not self-authenticating but must be tested. There can be false or trivial prophecies. There must be testing. As Paul said, when one speaks, others need to weigh what is being said, because prophets are subject to the congregation and are not exalted over it (1 Cor 14:29). The *Didache* reveals that by the year A.D. 100, the need of criteria for measuring claims to prophecy was already felt.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the fear of false prophecy must not prevent us from listening to God. Paul's principle holds: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do

not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good" (1 Thess 5:19-21). Let us ask with Zedekiah: "Is there any word from the LORD?" (Jer 37:17). To his credit, the king asked for the Lord's word, even though the answer did not please him. We must make room in our liturgies for the word of the Lord.

Healing the sick was a prominent activity of Jesus, and it deserves a place in the ministry of today's church. The long ending of Mark reads, "They [the disciples] will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (16:18). The gospel is about healing in the broad sense and even envisages a wholly renewed universe. God cares about the healing of individuals, communities, nations and the cosmos. Spirit gives gifts of healing which speak eloquently of God's care for the whole person (1 Cor 12:9, 28). Healings signify the dawn of God's reign and point to the day when the eyes of the blind will be opened (Is 35:5-6). Even apart from the gospel imperative, sickness is a major human concern, and simply for the sake of building bridges to people, churches ought to signal God's concern about it.

Healing prayer does not imply a negative view of medical science. The powers of healing are at work in the creation. Our bodies, when damaged, immediately begin to heal themselves. What medicine can learn about God's healing which is built into creation is all to the good. Skill in medicine is a creational charism. Prayer for healing simply means that we place problems of physical bodies before the Father and ask for help. It is not that we worship health or demand to be free from suffering. On the contrary, we accept our frail and mortal life. There is "a time to be born, and a time to die" (Eccles 3:2). We live and we die unto the Lord, accepting whatever comes from his hand (Rom 14:8). Humanity was made for resurrection, and healing is at most a temporary stop-gap. Nevertheless, in times of crisis and trauma God invites us to lay our concerns humbly before him.⁴⁷

James mentions the use of oil in the context of praying for the sick (Jas 5:14). This unction is not only for persons at the point of death but for the sick at large (*Constitution on the Liturgy* par. 73). When we anoint the sick, God makes himself present tangibly and sacramentally. Gestures and symbols are important along with the use of

language. As bodily creatures, we respond to such actions and are helped to reach out to God for blessing.

* As we open ourselves to prayers for healing, let us be careful not to trespass on the divine freedom. God is free to grant healings, whether few or many, whether usual or unusual, as he chooses. Those that are granted point to the coming kingdom but do not replace the need for complete renewal. Not until resurrection will sickness and death be removed completely. How many signs will be given depends entirely on God's will. We know that God wants to relieve suffering but that he has other concerns as well to think about. For example, God maintains the stability and regularity of the universe and may have reasons for not interfering too often in the natural order. Raising the dead has happened, but not very often. In addition there are factors related to issues of soul making and character formation. When we pray for healing, we simply ask: Lord, here are our needs; give us what you please.⁴⁸

Though there are exorcisms in the Gospels and teaching about spiritual warfare in the Epistles, intellectual and practical recognition of this dimension is often missing in Christian communities today. Jesus thought it important to deliver people from Satan's grasp by the Spirit. Jesus sent the apostles to preach and cast out demons also (Mt 10:7-8). He said, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Mt 12:28). Exorcisms reveal the presence of God confronting evil and bondage. Jesus may have spoken of such matters in the language of his time, but that does not mean he was not wrestling with dark and powerful realities, whatever they are called. Then and now, Satan is engaged in ruining human lives, and Jesus is intent on winning victories over him. John says, "The Son of God was revealed . . . to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8).

Without falling into superstition, let us not make the mistake of minimizing the titanic struggle between God's kingdom and the powers of evil. God's sovereignty is not contested in this world, and his kingdom does not come without a fight. There are people who need to be delivered from Satan's power, and the church is responsible for ministering deliverance.

Spiritual warfare needs to be taken seriously in many areas. Even churches can become entrapped and need setting free. Such deficiencies often lie deeper than that which can be observed. Communities come under the control of traditions and doctrinal strongholds and can be incapable of extricating themselves. It is notorious how spirits of bitterness and conflict dozens of years old can continue to dominate congregations. Even denominationally, we cannot save ourselves but must cry out to God to save us.

* A false dichotomy should not be created by distinguishing too sharply between gifts natural and supernatural. Spirit is active in creation as well as redemption and can activate natural potentials already present. Intuition, for example, is a natural faculty, developed more in some than others; healing is a process going on all the time in our bodies; possession is a condition known to psychology. Spiritual gifts are not necessarily discontinuous with natural possibilities. Spirit supplies natural gifts like artistry and creativity, and it would be strange if all this were bypassed in spiritual gifting. Gifts of the Spirit can animate natural capacities and may not be foreign to nature as created by God.⁴⁹

Openness to the Spirit

How charismatic life is restored in the churches is mysterious. On the one hand, the level of God's manifest presence itself varies, and the degree to which there are signs, wonders and anointing is not constant. God is free to be present as he wills, on a spectrum from ordinary to extraordinary ways. It is simply not under our control. When the power falls, it is marvelous in our eyes. On the other hand, openness is a human variable. Response runs the gamut from unbelief to unrestricted surrender (Mk 6:5; Acts 4:29-30). The best-case scenario is God's manifested presence coupled with unrestricted human openness. The worst case is the withdrawal of God coupled with human indifference.

History witnesses to revivals of Spirit when God rends the heavens and comes down. At such times people fall under the power, sinners are converted, the sick are healed, and history is changed. Let us ask God to disturb our tranquillity so that he may surprise, refresh,

empower us. Let congregations be transformed to flow with celebration and hope. Lord, grant us a fresh anointing, a renewing of our baptism and a release of its latent potentials. We desperately need a demonstration of the Spirit with power for the mission to go forward. Over and above the evidence that God raised up Jesus, evidence is needed of people having been set free. Nietzsche's Zarathustra taunts the church: "They would have to sing better songs to make me believe in their Redeemer." Though these are the words of a bitter and lonely philosopher, they make a valid point. Are there not many forms of faith today called Christian that leave people captive and do not set them free?⁵⁰

Mark records that Jesus could not do any miracles in Nazareth because of unbelief (Mk 6:5). Limited expectations dishonor and diminish God's freedom to act. Where there is no confidence in God's saving power, the church declines (Ps 78:22). Therefore, let God's people be open to the power of the Spirit without restriction. Let us not allow tradition to control our reading of the Bible in ways that silence its message. Let us not restrict what God is wanting to give us.

Many today suffer worldview impediment. Though we may believe intellectually that God can move in power, something inside of us says this is not going to happen, prayer is an illusion, the sick must only go to doctors. This may be coupled with a fear of change. We have our comfort zones and may prefer the orderliness of an unrenewed church to the disorderliness of renewal. There are reasons for not wanting the Spirit to move. We do not want to look ridiculous. We may not want to exchange Sunday-morning religion for real discipleship. We may not want to run the risk of opposition, which usually comes when the world discovers that the church is serious about mission. May the Lord shake us loose and allow us to see the possibilities of new creation.⁵¹

Jürgen Moltmann puts a finger on the issue:

The essential impediment to the charismatic experience of our potentialities for living is to be found in our passive sins, not our active ones. For the hindrance is not our despairing attempt to be ourselves, but our despairing attempt not to be ourselves, so that out of fear of life and fear of death we fall short of what our lives

could be. The charismata of the Spirit are present wherever faith in God drives out the fears of life and wherever the hope of resurrection overcomes the fear of death.⁵²

Our responsibility is to be open. Regardless of whether this is a time of revival, we belong to a community baptized in the Holy Spirit. God has given us the power to be witnesses, and it is essential to be open to the Spirit. In particular, we need to be open to the full range of spiritual gifts, not a select number.

The problem becomes visible when we think of gifts as falling along a spectrum from *A* to *Z*. Let *A* to *P* refer to gifts we are comfortable with (such as teaching and administration) and *R* to *Z* represent gifts we are hesitant about (like prophecy and healing). Whereas the early Christians were open to the full spectrum of gifts, often we are not. Our communities hardly recognize certain gifts as real possibilities. The result is, because we are not open to them, that these charisms are not operative. Limited expectation results in an experiential deficit. Gifts *R* to *Z* are impeded from operating in communities that do not acknowledge them as real options. We need to allow the gifts to be rekindled among us as we raise the level of our expectation and allow God to decide what should happen. Openness does not mean knowing the outcome—for example, whether miracles will be few or many. It just means openness.⁵³

We need to ensure, of course, that our openness is not undiscerning. Under the guise of charism, there can be undocumented claims, irresponsible prophecies, elitism, charismania. There can be inspired utterances that contradict the word of Scripture and refuse to be subject to the discernment of the community. There can be a love of power that is not the power of love and sound mindedness (2 Tim 1:7). There can be lust after the theology of glory, which looks for victory, prosperity and success but repudiates the cross and the power that works through love.

There are risks in any call for openness. But fear of making mistakes and seeing counterfeit charisms must not close down faith in us. How tragic it would be if focusing on dangers closed us to the Spirit. It is a fundamental principle that God must be free to act when and where and how he pleases.⁵⁴

Office and Charism

Given the promise and the peril, the need of office alongside charism is evident. The two are positively disposed to one another. Charism needs office the way a delicate plant needs a solid pot to hold it. Church is community *and* institution—the former being the goal of the latter, the latter holding the promise of the former. Freedom needs order, and order needs freedom in the church. We need neither a supercharged church without discipline nor a lifeless church without Spirit. Renewal needs wise oversight to protect it from abuse. It needs leaders who encourage and supervise the ministries of the laity. Such leaders benefit the body when they are visionary and create room for the Spirit.

At the same time, leaders can impede renewal if they are unduly cautious. Rigidity can set in when a certain kind of order is preferred to the disorder of the divine presence and when the word is preferred to the Spirit. Leaders are sometimes nervous about Spirit, which may explain why revivals usually break out in communities less hampered by office. The way of the institution may make it necessary for God to work at the fringes, with the people others look down on, because they are open. God's strategy may be to stir the fire outside the mainline churches where people are more open to it, with a view to moving it back into those churches later, after the fruit is tested and those who are slow to receive are softened.⁵⁵

Paul experienced the problem of maintaining order where freedom was operating. He exercised his own authority as an apostle and commended various offices of teaching and oversight, while exhorting the people to evaluate what they were hearing.⁵⁶ It was and is a delicate balance. Leaders are important to the community, yet community must not be too tightly controlled. Leaders should not be trying to control everything but foster life and discern gifts of those under their care. Ideally there should be a harmonious synergism of gift and office, a dialectic of charism and institution, for the Spirit is given not only to officeholders but to the whole congregation. Laity should respect leaders, but everyone should also listen to prophets and honor gifts of faith. The work of officeholders is to foster the charisms of the community and harmonize them for the common good.⁵⁷

Renewal in the Spirit promises enrichment for the churches. True, mistakes have been made and divisions created in the course of renewal. It is not always a happy situation. Misunderstandings happen owing to historical circumstance, and separated ecclesial communities are formed. Nevertheless, the goal is unity and empowerment. The goal is not to divide but to bless the church. God grant, in the not too distant future, that renewal will be integrated into mainline churches and result in the revitalization of Christianity as a world movement.⁵⁸

Transforming Mission

What has been said about the church as the continuation of Jesus' anointing and the Spirit as present in sacramental and charismatic ways all has to do with mission. God did not pour the Spirit out for us to exult in it as a private benefit. The purpose was (and is) to empower witnesses to God's kingdom (Acts 1:8). God justifies and saves individuals only to give them a vocation in the service of the kingdom. He awakens a knowledge of the truth in people in order to conscript them into the service of mission. God wants a community that, like Jesus, gets caught up in the transformation of the world. The church is the provisional representation of God's call to humanity, and like Jesus it exists for the world and nonmembers of the church.⁵⁹

Vocation is so important—and so neglected. We are saved not just for our own benefit but to become disciples of Jesus who bear witness to and embody the coming kingdom. We have been brought into the representative journey of Jesus in order to live in ways that contrast to worldly ways. Otherwise the salt loses its savor, and we become conformed to the world (Rom 12:2). Christians are called to live the life of beatitude, the life that anticipates and prefigures new creation (Mt 5:3-10). When we forget this, the spiritual life becomes empty and its point is lost. It leads to the very unreality of so much Christian living. Though Jesus gave us a vocation, multitudes live as though they had none. Believers are often frustrated because they belong to churches that are not clear about mission. Normally they would discover their vocations within the fruit-bearing activities of the community. But if a congregation has forgotten its own vocation to be a continuation of Jesus' anointing, its members become confused

and may be sucked back into worldly patterns for want of vision and structures of accountability.

A major hindrance to mission is the lack of interest in discipleship on the part of many Christians. No one is naturally disposed to join Jesus in the business of confronting the powers of evil or in the costly action of embodying the new order. It is hard to market a mission that goes beyond appealing for faith and advocates practicing the way of Jesus in the world. It is almost impossible unless the church keeps the vision alive and before us.⁶⁰

The Spirit comes in power through sacrament and charism to enable the church to participate in God's mission of mending creation and making all things new. The church is placed at the disposal of the Spirit and commissioned to serve the kingdom in the world. The Spirit is present in order that the world might be touched by divine grace. We have been called out of darkness into marvelous light to declare God's mighty deeds (1 Pet 2:9). The challenge facing the church is not theory but practice—not so much showing that Christianity is intellectually plausible as enacting the gospel in recognizable signs of the kingdom.⁶¹

Mission is a Spirit event—it is God's mission, not ours. It is not a duty following the work of Christ but is itself God's work. Pentecost was an act of God that initiated the new age, which is to be the sphere of God's new actions. It was a historical turning point and the beginning of the end-time harvest. Indeed, mission is a sign of the end. "This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, . . . and then the end will come" (Mt 24:14). Spirit is the power behind mission, and the church is an instrument of it, not its initiator. The church can participate in God's mission only if it has the power of Pentecost (Lk 24:49).

Mission is not human effort responding to a commandment. It is not even obedience to the Great Commission. It is natural and spontaneous. Only after the Spirit fell did the disciples speak (Acts 2:4). The Spirit creates a witnessing church. "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Mt 10:20). Spreading the gospel is dependent not on human wisdom and strength but on a demonstration of Spirit and power (1 Cor 2:4-5). Mission is

not something we do to expand the size of the church; it is something God does to gather and bring justice to the nations. The Spirit is not the sustainer of the church but the driving power of its mission. The main thing for us to do is place ourselves at the Spirit's disposal.⁶²

The goal is world transformation. "See, I am making all things new" (Rev 21:5). The church, filled with the Spirit, is agent of God's coming kingdom and sacrament for the world. God touches the world when the church speaks the truth, proclaims good news, performs Jesus-actions, identifies with pain, builds community, shares and forgives.⁶³ The mission is holistic and has broad parameters. Spiritual ecstasy is not meant to be an end in itself—the goal is transformation. The purpose of the outpouring of the Spirit is to bring the kingdom near and change real-life situations. Mission is an activity that initiates people into the kingdom and promotes the reality of the new order.⁶⁴

In early texts the Spirit clothes judges like Gideon and Sampson with power to rescue people from oppression. In Isaiah's prophecy, Spirit commissions the servant to bring justice and mercy to nations. He wants to restore community, transform life and instill hope. In Joel's prophecy, Spirit acts on behalf of the weak and powerless, giving the disenfranchised a voice. The theme of liberation is central in Jesus' ministry. He rejects charismatic actions done in his name if they do not promote the will of God (Mt 7:21). For Paul too, the purpose of spiritual gifts, including spectacular ones, is fostering deeds of love (1 Cor 13:1-3). Gifts are like a pipe down which love is to flow. Spirit is about renewing life and creating community in order to benefit people. The Spirit becomes tangible in the deeds of love that function like sacraments in the world.

The power of the Spirit is given to help the church become a servant who follows the sacrificial path of Jesus. The believers have said yes to Christ's representative journey on behalf of humankind, and God's strategy now is to create out of them a new community marked by deeds of love and caring that anticipate the coming kingdom. We look not only for the salvation of souls but for the redemption of creation. Our goal is not to triumph in world politics but to live the life of beatitude, in which blessings of the age are prefigured in this world. Discontented with existing realities, we put our hope in the God who

raises the dead. We say: Come, Lord, send your power, make us whole. We love your kingdom—we want to see more of it.⁶⁵

The Spirit can throw a wonderful party. He can set our hearts on fire and fill our mouths with songs of praise. But the goal remains the gathering of the nations and the transformation of creation. Sacramental and charismatic grace is wonderful, full of awe and delight, but still the goal is the formation of compassionate, truthful, tender creatures. Spirit is longing for more redeemed human beings like Mary, mother of Jesus, who wait patiently at his cross, full of love for him and for the world.

We need renewal not because we are bored but because a powerless church cannot become a mighty army. Disciples who are discouraged and enjoy no intimacy with God will not be able to follow Jesus in costly ways. Not until they know God as their Father, as Jesus knew him, and taste God's kindness. To become kind and loving, we must know God's love and kindness. We need grace to help others in their infirmities. The Spirit awakens us to life to enable us to liberate others.⁶⁶

Spirit may be mysterious, but we are not left in the dark about his goals. The Spirit is not a mystical presence beyond any comprehension. Yes, Spirit is invisible and beyond our control, but that does not mean he is incomprehensible. Spirit wants God's will done on earth as in heaven—justice, mercy and love. This is demanding, but it is not mysterious. If we are open to the Spirit, we must also be open to the goals of the Spirit. "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). Spirit brings us into intimacy with God, not to foster mystical rapture as an end in itself but to sensitize us to the will of God. Spirit wants us to follow Jesus and embody the kingdom in our lives and relationships.⁶⁷

Empowered Mission

We are called to holistic mission in the power of God. Our own baptism in the Spirit is a prolongation of Jesus' baptism, and our mission is an extension of his mission. Jesus is looking for laborers to enter the vineyard and carry it forward (Mt 9:37). This involves proclaiming the gospel, healing the sick and caring for needs. We

cannot love our neighbors without caring for their needs. We cannot teach converts to observe all of Christ's teachings without attending to human needs. After Pentecost, human situations were transformed when the Spirit came in power (Acts 2:43-45; 4:32-35). It will be always so.⁶⁸

Because mission is holistic, it must be empowered—it simply cannot be carried out by our human wisdom and strength alone. Actions have to be initiated and empowered by the Spirit. The Shepherd has to go on ahead of us. There is a partnership in which the Spirit is the leading player and we are junior partners and instruments. It is God's mission, and we are being caught up in it. The Spirit bears witness, and you also (Jn 15:26-27). When the New Testament describes the disciples as ordinary, uneducated people, afraid and often lacking understanding, is it not telling us that participation in mission does not depend on being talented and well educated (Acts 4:13)? Does it not prove that any success they enjoyed was not due to them but to God? If there was greatness in the disciples, surely it was not their ability but their openness to the Spirit. It was baptism in the Spirit that enabled them to give testimony to Jesus Christ. This reminder can help us deal with our own feelings of inadequacy in the face of the task. What a relief to know God uses weak people! This underscores how crucial it is to maintain a good relationship with the Spirit.

The shape of empowered mission is not arrived at ideologically or even pragmatically. In mission we ask not just "Is this action good and necessary?" We also ask, "Where is God leading? Is this God's undertaking?" There are no rules and regulations for mission, because Spirit leadership is central. Mission is not social work but deeds directed and empowered by the Spirit. Through the gifting of the whole congregation, the church is enabled to express its missionary character as it speaks the Word and ministers in the power of God (1 Pet 4:10-11). Apostles and evangelists plant churches, accompanied by signs and wonders; prophets speak the word of God to specific situations; those with the gift of faith point the way forward. The Spirit motivates and equips the church to move in mission.⁶⁹

The world did not set the agenda for Jesus. People could not predict

what he would do next, because he had no plan but sought what the Father wanted. He did not operate from a program. Need alone did not constitute the divine call. He waited for God's urging and the Spirit's guiding. In the same way, the church should not go where God is not leading or become involved just because the world tells us to. There is no formula or doctrine of the church's role in society. The church lives out its witness in concrete historical situations, waiting for God to lead. There is a role for thinking about what to do next, but this thinking should be always done in the context of waiting on God.

Prayer is evidence of dependency on God. In prayer we envisage a new future, and we protest the world order as it is. We stand against darkness and invoke God's light. Using weapons of the Spirit, we pull down strongholds and join the uprising against the present disorder. Prayer shows that we belong to a different order of reality which defies the powers of evil and anticipates the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdom of Christ (Rev 11:15). History belongs to intercessors, because history belongs to God.⁷⁰

Mission is holistic because sin is more than personal infraction. Sin affects the structures of the world, and we oppose sin in all its manifestations, including our own complicity in what is wrong. Conversion points, then, not only to individual change but beyond to the coming transformation of the world. Since we are creatures in society and in a world, God wants to renew both us and our created context. If God did not intend that, he would be tackling only half the problem. Social sanctification and cosmic renewal are ultimately part of God's plan. This can begin to happen as the church injects values of God's kingdom into the public square and improves the climate for them. As salt and light, the church is a catalyst for righteousness in society. Many benefits exist in society because of Jesus Christ. The church can be a means by which God's kingdom gets its foothold in the world.⁷¹

At the same time, there is a certain powerlessness in the messianic way of bringing justice. The servant of the Lord does not cry in the street and does not quench the dimly burning wick (Is 42:2-3). He has authority, but it is the authority of one who suffers and one who is

politically powerless. In the temptations Jesus rejected worldly ways of power and chose the path of suffering love. His hope for worldly change was based on the presence of new community. This approach need not lead to disengagement for fear of accommodation. Instead we choose a different sort of engagement. The nonviolent messianic community penetrates the social order in its own fashion.⁷²

A mission whose goal is the transformation of the world is stupendous. A powerless church can hardly consider it. It presupposes the anointing and empowerment of Spirit. May the Spirit quicken in us a fresh vision, so that we see ourselves as a continuation of Jesus' anointing, are enriched with the entire charismatic structure and remember the transforming mission of Jesus.

God has broken into history—the new age has begun. We wait for the consummation of history and hope for the glory of God. We are neither optimistic or pessimistic about the world, but wait in hope, serving the Lord. As the church echoes trinitarian relations, it models the coming kingdom and prefigures the destiny of humanity.