

# **ON BECOMING A CHRISTIAN: INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE AND THE PATRISTIC WRITINGS With Some Contemporary Reflections**

Report of the Fifth Phase of the International  
Dialogue Between Some Classical Pentecostal  
Churches and Leaders and the Catholic Church  
(1998-2006)

## **The Status of this Report**

The Report published here is the work of the Catholic/Pentecostal International Dialogue between the Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders. It is a study document produced by the Dialogue members. It is not an authoritative declaration of either the Catholic Church or of any of the Pentecostal Churches involved in the Dialogue. It is offered to them and to all others who are interested for review, evaluation and reception. The Dialogue members hope that it will be widely discussed.

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## Introduction

1. This is the report of the fifth phase of the international dialogue between some Classical Pentecostal churches and leaders and the Catholic Church held from 1998-2006.
2. This dialogue began in 1972 and thirty-five years of conversation have shown that Pentecostals and Catholics share many aspects of Christian faith and life. Although they have much in common and the unity of the church is a concern that both share, there are still a number of important areas where Pentecostals and Catholics remain divided. Thus, it has been our intention in this dialogue to continue the development of a climate of mutual respect and understanding in matters of faith and practice, to find points of genuine agreement, and to indicate areas in which we believe further dialogue is required.
3. The goal of this dialogue is to foster this respect and understanding between the Catholic Church and Classical Pentecostal churches rather than to seek structural unity. We hope to continue to seek resolution to those differences that keep us separated from one another, especially in light of the prayer of Jesus for his disciples “that they may all be one... so that the world may believe...” (John 17:21).<sup>1</sup>
4. The first two phases of the Dialogue published reports in 1977 and 1984 respectively. The report of the third phase was entitled *Perspectives on Koinonia* (1990). The fourth phase was on *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness* (1997).<sup>2</sup> During the years in which these four studies were completed (1972-1997), Pentecostals and Catholics often referred in their discussions, not only to the Scriptures, but also to some of the theologians of the early church—the patristic witnesses—when they explained their respective understandings of the Christian faith. The current round of dialogue has chosen to be more intentional in appealing not only to biblical sources, but also to patristic sources. As a result, throughout this report the reader will see many references made to contributions in which these sources have enriched our work together.

### A. On Becoming a Christian

5. The theme of this phase of dialogue has been “On Becoming a Christian.” Catholics and Pentecostals are convinced of the importance of being fully integrated into the life

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical references are to the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.(1989).

<sup>2</sup> The official versions of the four reports of the previous rounds of discussions can be found in: *Final Report 1972-1976*, in: Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* [IS] 32 (1976/III) 32-37 and in: *One in Christ* 12:4 (1976) 309-318; *Final Report 1977-1982*, in: IS 55 (1984/ II-III) 72-80 and in: *Pneuma* 12:2 (1990) 97-115; *Perspectives on Koinonia*, in: IS 75 (1990/IV) 97-115 and in: *Pneuma* 12:2 (1990) 117-142; *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness*, in: IS 97 (1998/I-II) 38-56 and in: *Pneuma* 21:1 (1999) 11-51. All these reports are gathered in: Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, Eds. *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements on a World Level, 1982-1998* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications / Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 713-779.

of the church. In this dialogue we have attempted to understand how an individual moves from his or her initial entry into the Christian life to being a fully active member of the church.

6. There are at least two important reasons why we have focused on this theme. First, during the study of *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness* participants in the dialogue concluded that some members of our churches do not always recognize one another as Christians. As a result, it is easy to imagine that from time to time, tensions exist between Pentecostals and Catholics. By exploring *together* how one becomes a Christian, how one is initiated into the Christian community, how one is taught to follow Jesus and is formed by the community, and by reviewing the importance of religious experience in one's life, we believe that we might be able to assist our communities to recognize more easily that we are sisters and brothers in Christ. The topics we chose to help us understand how one becomes a Christian include faith, conversion, experience, formation and discipleship, and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Both teams made presentations on these subjects, each of which was the focus of one annual session.
7. Second, as a direct result of conversations on the subject of Baptism in the Holy Spirit that took place in earlier sessions of the dialogue, Father Kilian McDonnell OSB, who served as the Catholic Co-Chair from 1972-2000, co-authored a book entitled *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit*.<sup>3</sup> Through his study of early Christian texts, Father McDonnell maintained that Baptism in the Holy Spirit has a direct relationship to the earliest understandings of Christian Initiation. He suggested that in the writings of the Fathers of the church there is evidence of the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in the process of Christian Initiation in such a way that Baptism in the Holy Spirit belongs to that which is "constitutive of the church." By undertaking its own inquiry into this subject, the dialogue studied these and other early texts to determine whether they might provide a bridge between our two communities.

## B. Biblical and Patristic Sources

8. Pentecostals and Catholics, along with other Christians, acknowledge the uniqueness of the Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of God, normative for the faith and life of the church. The Scriptures, therefore, are obviously the most basic, foundational source for Christian reflection. But why did we choose to include extensive reference to various writings from the patristic era in this study?
9. The writings of the Fathers of the church play an important role in the Catholic understanding of the Word of God. As a result, the Catholic team wanted to share with

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<sup>3</sup> Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book / The Liturgical Press, 1991, 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised Edition, 1994), 396 pp.

its Pentecostal partners some of the richness of this patristic tradition. These writers are, after all, part of the larger Christian community that spans the centuries. Their writings share much from their life and wisdom, obtained when the church was still young and frequently living in difficult times. They bear witness to the faith and to the ways in which the Christian lives and ministries of these writers were strengthened through their faithfulness as well as their love and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

10. Members of the Pentecostal team thought that this approach might enrich its study as well. They wondered just how much they differed with Catholics on the nature of authority they grant to the Fathers of the church. Like Catholics, Pentecostals view the Fathers as providing genuine and vital testimonies to the faithfulness of God. As Christians, their testimony to what it meant for them to love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and their neighbours as themselves, is compelling. The Pentecostal team believed that the proximity of these Christian leaders to the time in which Jesus and His disciples lived might prove to be instructive as we sought together to understand how the earliest Christians were moved from the point of conversion to full participation in the life of the church.
11. While the value we ascribe to the authority of the patristic writings may differ, Pentecostals and Catholics together acknowledge the importance of these authors, many of whom were leaders, pastors and bishops, and many of whom became martyrs, in the ongoing life of the church. It was they who contributed to the process of discernment that ultimately gave us the canon of Scripture, which has served the church in subsequent centuries. Patristic texts demonstrate how biblical teaching was applied in everyday life in each new situation during their day. They provide insight into the ways in which these Fathers understood Scripture, and Catholics believe that they help the church to interpret Scripture.
12. The patristic writers helped the church to translate the biblical faith into the conceptual frameworks of the people dominant in cultures different from those in the lands and times in which the Bible was written. They can assist the church in following Jesus' command to "go...and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). Most of these writers enjoyed a reputation for holiness. Some are celebrated and recalled within the liturgical life and patterns of different churches. Their efforts to combat erroneous interpretations of Scripture and deviant movements, to define acceptable boundaries, and to help the faithful understand the life and teachings of Jesus, and "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3), led the church to more precise expressions of the central Christian doctrines about the Trinity, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and salvation, doctrines approved by the early councils, and reflected in the ancient creeds.

13. The writings of these early Fathers also convey a close association between theology and pastoral concerns, and thus, they are aimed at doxology and devotion to God. They have interpreted the moral and ethical demands of discipleship. They assisted the church in the development of liturgical forms of worship. In these many ways their work has supported Christians as they have sought to live the Christian life. Their reflections on the various themes contributing to this study, have been valuable. Thus, while the Bible is the highest authority (cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint* 79) for knowing God's revelation in Jesus Christ, the patristic writings *may* be seen as having a privileged place in the post-biblical church.

### **C. The Dialogue**

14. At the first meeting in 1998 in Bolton (Ontario, Canada) the dialogue explored the question of whether the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as found in contemporary religious expression is reflected in biblical and patristic sources, especially in relationship to Christian Initiation. In subsequent years the dialogue treated the questions of "Faith" (1999, Venice, Italy), "Conversion" (2000, Vienna, Austria), "Experience" (2001, Celje, Slovenia), and "Discipleship and Formation" (2002, Sierra Madre, California, USA). Plenary drafting sessions were held in 2003 (Rottenburg, Germany), 2004 (Torhout, Belgium), 2005 (Prague, Czech Republic), and 2006 (Bose, Italy). In addition, three smaller drafting meetings were held (Amsterdam, Netherlands, February 2003; Springfield, Missouri, USA, February 2004 and Rome, Italy, November 2004). After the last plenary session, further drafting was required in order to finalize the report. It now presents this report to its readers for evaluation and discussion.
15. Some of the terms used in this study are more familiar to one partner than to the other. The term "Christian Initiation," for instance, is not found in the New Testament, nor is it normally used by Pentecostals. It is, however, commonly used by Catholics to refer to the process whereby one becomes a Christian. The term "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" is neither the precise wording found in the New Testament, (Mark 1:8 uses the expression "baptize you with the Holy Spirit") nor is it generally used in the Catholic Church, though it is commonly used by Classical Pentecostals and most Catholic Charismatics. Thus, one of the benefits during this phase of dialogue has been to achieve a better understanding of the way we use such terms.
16. We have sought to represent faithfully the positions held by our churches, though the positions presented and the conclusions reached here by members of both teams are the responsibility of those who took part in this dialogue. We have made no decisions for the churches since we have no authority to make such decisions. The diversity of the Pentecostal Movement mitigates against a single position on certain topics. When the Pentecostal participants speak as a single voice, they do so by gathering together what they believe to be the common consensus held by the vast majority of Pentecostals worldwide.

17. Within this context, as responsible persons representing our respective traditions, we have come together over a period of years to study the issues of evangelization, proselytism, and common witness and now, how we understand the ways one becomes a Christian. We hereby submit our findings to our respective churches for review, evaluation, correction and reception. We hope that this report will be studied and discussed widely by Catholics and Pentecostals within their communities, and especially together.
18. During our time together participants have repeatedly noted how important the reading of Scripture and of prayer together have been to the success of our work. Each day, both morning and evening, we have come together to read the Bible and pray, not only for our work together, but also for the churches which we represent. At the annual meetings we have worshipped in one or the other's churches.

#### **D. A New Time in History**

19. We are mindful, as well, that this phase of our dialogue has come at a unique time in history. The world has moved from the Twentieth to the Twenty-First Century, and from the second millennium following the birth of Christ, to the beginning of the third. This has given us an opportunity to deepen our relationship in other ways. The Pentecostal Co-Chair of this dialogue accepted several invitations from the Catholic Church to participate in various ecumenical celebrations in Rome during the Jubilee Year 2000. In addition he participated in the inauguration of Pope Benedict XVI. The new century and the new millennium give us new opportunities and impetus to continue our work of reconciliation, and to give witness together to the Gospel.
20. There is another significant development that roughly corresponds to the time period in which this fifth phase of dialogue has taken place. The international Pentecostal-Catholic dialogue from its beginning in 1972 until approximately the mid 1990s was the only international dialogue in which Classical Pentecostals took part. But over the past decade international dialogues and discussions have also been initiated between Classical Pentecostals with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches, and the Lutheran World Federation. Furthermore, the recent initiative in the USA called Christian Churches Together includes the Catholic Church and several Pentecostal churches along with Orthodox, Protestants and Anglicans in new contact with each other. Another recent initiative called the Global Christian Forum, which has held international conferences in the USA, Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America has served as a new instrument in which Pentecostals and Evangelicals in those regions have had contacts, often for the first time, with leaders of Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican and mainline Protestant churches. In different parts of the world Pentecostal communities have become members of National Councils of Churches.



21. These various encounters illustrate the growth of Pentecostal interest in ecumenism, and the interest of various Christian communions to engage in dialogue with Pentecostals. This development is helpful for the Pentecostal-Catholic International dialogue, as it enables us to see this dialogue in the broader context of the wider ecumenical movement. Looking back at all of these recent developments, including the continuing fruitfulness of this Pentecostal-Catholic dialogue, we cannot help but think that these are examples of grace bestowed by the Holy Spirit to continually foster reconciliation among the divided disciples of Christ, “so that the world may believe”. (John 17:21)
22. During this period, the dialogue has been co-sponsored by the Catholic Church (through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity) and by Classical Pentecostals, all of whom have support for their participation within their communities, and some of whom have been officially named as representatives of their churches. The Pentecostal churches that have sent official participants include the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, the Church of God of Prophecy, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Verenigde Pinkster en Evangeliegemeeten of the Netherlands, and the Open Bible Churches.
23. The Reverend Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. (Assemblies of God) served as Pentecostal Co-Chair. Father Kilian McDonnell OSB served as Catholic Co-Chair for the first three years of this phase, and after his retirement, was succeeded as Co-Chair by Msgr John A. Radano. Co-Secretaries have been, for the Pentecostal side, the Reverend Ronald A. N. Kydd (1998) and then the Reverend Steve Overman (1999-2006), and for the Catholic side, Msgr Juan Usma Gómez.
24. As we complete this fifth phase of dialogue we wish to recall the many important contributions made to these conversations by Father Kilian McDonnell. With the aid of David du Plessis, he helped to initiate these discussions in 1972. He served as Catholic chairman from that time through the beginning of this fifth phase, before he retired in the year 2000. We acknowledge with deep gratitude that both communities owe him a huge debt for his contributions to whatever success this dialogue has achieved over the years.

## I. Conversion and Christian Initiation

### A. Introduction

25. Catholics and Pentecostals both agree that conversion is essential to salvation in Christ, and that its ultimate purpose is a life of committed discipleship. At the same time, both within each tradition and between them there exists a diversity of understandings and approaches to conversion. Issues that illustrate this diversity include whether conversion is an event, a series of events or a process. The variety of experiences reflected in the biblical texts regarding conversion, and how we interpret these texts, underlie some of this diversity.
26. Catholics see conversion within the larger context of the process of Christian Initiation, which includes as essential elements “proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to eucharistic communion” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*[CCC] 1229).<sup>4</sup> Catholics link “the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit” with the sacrament of confirmation (CCC 1302). They affirm that such initiation is aimed at conversion, which is a profound existential change in life that naturally results in the urge to spread the Good News. Catholics see baptism as incorporation into Christ and into the church, while they also recognize the importance of the stages of the catechumenate.
27. Pentecostals understand conversion to include a reorientation of a person’s pattern of attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Pentecostals also link conversion to a process that includes proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel, profession of faith, repentance, a turning away from sin and turning to God, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9), as well as the incorporation of the individual into the Christian community. Since “Christian Initiation” is not a term commonly used by Pentecostals in discussing their understanding of conversion, Pentecostals do not generally express such concepts as conversion, its recognition by the church, sanctification, and Baptism in the Holy Spirit (see section V) together under the category of Christian Initiation. Most Pentecostals understand conversion to be distinct from Baptism in the Holy Spirit; also, for most Pentecostals a discussion of the beginning of the Christian life does not necessarily include water baptism as the *primary* basis for entry into the Christian life, although like Catholics, baptism is a rite that holds great importance for them.

### B. Biblical Perspectives on Conversion

28. In a biblical sense, conversion embraces all human faculties: rational, volitional and affective—“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within

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<sup>4</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] was published in 1992. All references are to its numbered paragraphs.

me....Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit” (Ps 51:10,12; cf. Jer 24:7, Ezek 18:30-31, Gal 2:20). It affects the whole person—“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new” (2 Cor 5:17).

29. An aspect of conversion unique to the New Testament is that it is intimately tied to the person of Jesus Christ, in whom the kingdom is brought to fulfillment—“...everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Conversion is related to a variety of biblical themes (including sin, forgiveness, repentance, salvation, justification, baptism, faith). The root notion of conversion in the Bible is change, that is, turning from sin, death and darkness to grace, new life, and light.
30. Conversion is often associated with acts reflecting a purification of mind and heart — “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” (Joel 2:12; cf. Joel 1:13-14, Ps 51:4,9). The Bible generally shows conversion to be both event and process (Acts 9:1-19; see also Jer 3:22, 8:4-5). For example, in the account of Paul’s conversion, he first had an encounter with the risen Christ: “...suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice...” (Acts 9:3-4). This dramatic event was followed by a process of formation over a period of time during which he was prayed for by Ananias (v. 12), was filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 17), and was baptized (v. 18). Paul further described the process, mentioning his journey to Arabia, return to Damascus for three years, and his time spent in Jerusalem with Peter (Gal. 1:13-24).
31. One prominent effect of conversion is the urge to give testimony to others and consequently to evangelize, particularly in response to the Lord’s command in the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). During the post-resurrection period, when Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin, their declaration was, “...we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20; cf. Lk. 24:33-35).
32. In the New Testament, several perspectives on conversion can be found as one looks at the Synoptic Gospels and the Johannine and Pauline writings. This theme occurs in a variety of contexts and with different emphases. Nevertheless, there are elements that are common to all of them, though not always highlighted in each one. Generally, conversion entails being embraced by God’s goodness, turning away from sin, and turning towards God. In the stories narrated by the New Testament authors, conversion occurs instantaneously or as an ongoing process. It can be a very dramatic event obvious to all spectators or a process of inner development that is largely hidden from the view of other people. For instance, the exchange between Jesus and the teacher of

the law was a seemingly quiet event, resulting in Jesus noting the change in the man and declaring, “You are not far from the kingdom of God” (Mk. 12:34).

33. In the synoptic Gospels of Matthew and Mark, conversion is linked to repentance. The definition of conversion as turning away from sin is rooted in these passages—“John the baptizer appeared...proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4; see also Mt 3:2, 8, 11); and also, Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming, “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news” (Mk 1:15). Later in Matthew repentance is described as changing one’s mind towards obedience (Mt 21:29). There it may reflect the need of an ongoing repentance as turning towards obedience to God, and be associated more with the general idea of discipleship than with conversion/initiation.
34. The parables in Luke 15 (the lost sheep, lost coin and prodigal son) illustrate the notion of being embraced by God’s goodness. This is contained in two motifs also emphasized elsewhere by Luke: first being brought back by God—“So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him” (v. 20); and second, repentance—“I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (v. 7). The repentance described in the lost sheep and coin parables emphasizes God’s initiative, while the prodigal son’s repentance demonstrates a more active human response. In all three parables there is a sense of restoration to community: being found, being carried home, being restored to the rest of the flock, being reinstated into the family.
35. Other Lucan passages also reflect the drama between the divine initiative and the sinner’s response in regard to repentance (Acts 5:31, 11:18, Luke 19:10). Luke 8:18 (“pay attention to how you listen”) implies an active listening, being actively involved in something that is happening within oneself, or to oneself. In Luke 19, Zaccheus experiences a conversion. He is restored to the fellowship of the community; the excluded one has been included by Jesus. This narrative is almost paradigmatic for many conversion stories in Luke-Acts: conversion is believing in the good news and allowing oneself to be embraced by God’s love and to be restored to the community of God’s people.
36. In a more active sense, Luke speaks of conversion as turning towards God . When John the Baptist and others preach repentance, the typical Lucan question is “What then should we do?” (Lk 3:10, 12, 14; Acts 2:37, 16:30, 22:10). John’s response to the question helps define what repentance means: share with those who do not have (Lk 3:11), do not defraud people in business (v. 14), do not accuse people falsely (v. 14), do not enrich yourself by use of power (v. 13). Thus conversion is not only a personal/spiritual experience, but it also affects all of life, including social, economic, political and cultural dimensions.

37. The Johannine perspective focuses more broadly on salvation, and not specifically on conversion. Two metaphors that John does emphasize are those of receiving life and receiving light. John 3:1-21 emphasizes the new birth as the work of God, although it does not take place apart from faith expressed by the person being born again. Here and elsewhere in John the emphasis is on Jesus coming so that this world and those who believe will have life—“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (3:16; cf. 3:36, 5:24, 6:35-40). Having life reflects accepting what has been offered, as depicted in Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman (4:10-15). The variety of “life” metaphors (birth, living water, bread) point to John’s interest in Jesus giving or bringing life. The same emphasis applies when considering John’s use of the metaphor of light: Jesus comes into this world, gives light, and people are to receive it and live in it—“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12; cf. 3:19, 12:46, I Jn. 1:7, 2:9). However, John also reports Jesus’ invitation to the thirsty that they should take action: “come to me, and...drink” (John 7:37).
38. Paul offers us a unique insight into the theme of conversion, by giving us a profound theological interpretation of his own conversion experience. While Acts 9 describes the conversion of Paul, Paul provides us with his personal understanding of it which sheds some light upon the mysterious interplay between the human and the divine (Gal. 1:13-17; Phil. 3:4-11).
39. Pauline writings reflect conversion as a radical, decisive event, expressed by a variety of descriptions. These include hearing and responding to the call—“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved’” (Rom 10:12-13). Paul also expresses the beginning of the Christian life either as a cry for help (Rom 7:24), the experience of being called, or other depictions that illustrate the newness of the existence. Most of these emphasize God’s initiative, with the person entering into experiences such as repentance, death of the old nature, or becoming a new creation. The one passage referring to repentance (Rom 2:4) depicts it as an encounter with God’s love and mercy. Other terms in Pauline writings that relate to conversion are used similarly: being purchased (1 Cor 6:20); being liberated (Rom 6:17-18); having received grace (Rom 3:21-26); being justified (Rom 6:7). As in the Gospels, this newness of life, while personal, is not merely an individualistic experience but that of a believer being reconciled with God and restored to community. It comprises a restoration to fellowship—“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility...that he might...reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross” (Eph 2:14-16). This new community is as radically different from the one experienced before, as is the individual’s inner transformation—“In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through

faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26-28).

40. The Bible presents various perspectives on conversion, and not just one definition. Catholics and Pentecostals find that they can agree on many characteristics of conversion found in Scripture. First, conversion involves establishing or reestablishing a personal relationship with God so that the sinner can cry out with confidence, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.” (Ps 51:1). It implies a mysterious interplay between the human and the divine, primarily the human response to divine initiative. Though conversion is a personal experience, the biblical understanding is that it is always relational (both vertical and horizontal). The biblical call to conversion is properly directed to whole communities as well as to individuals.

### C. Patristic Perspectives on Conversion

41. Some of the patristic writings which can speak eloquently to both Pentecostals and Catholics today are the joyful accounts by individuals of their own conversions. In one such personal testimony, Justin Martyr (c.165) tells how the witness of a believer sparked a wonderful change in his own life: “When he had spoken these and many other things, which there is no time for mentioning at present, he went away, bidding me to attend to them; and I have not seen him since. But straightway a flame was kindled in my soul; and a love of the prophets, and of those men who are friends of Christ, possessed me” (*Dialogue with Trypho* 8).<sup>5</sup> Nearly a hundred years later, Cyprian (c.250), the bishop of Carthage in Northern Africa, shared the change which occurred in his own life with these words: “I used to indulge my sins as if they were actually parts of me and indigenous to me. But after that, by the help of the water of new birth, the stain of former years had been washed away, and a light from above, serene and pure, had been infused into my reconciled heart. Then, by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth had restored me to a new man ... I was enabled to acknowledge that what had been previously living in the practice of sin, being born of the flesh, was of the earth and was earthly. But now it had begun to be of God and was

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<sup>5</sup> Because of their accessibility, the present report will make use of the English translations of patristic texts found in the following three collections: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A. D. 325*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1977-1979, 10 Volumes; *A Select Library of the Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series*, Philip Schaff, editor, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1978-1980, 14 Volumes; and *A Select Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, editors, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Company, reprinted 1975-1979, 14 Volumes. These collections are comprised of translations made by various scholars during the latter part of the 19th Century. As such, sometimes their language is archaic in comparison to contemporary usage and not entirely homogeneous (e.g. one translator may write “Holy Ghost” where another writes “Holy Spirit”). In the quotations appearing in the following report, we have taken the liberty to brush up the text slightly to render them more consistent and in line with contemporary English. Finally, not all the works cited in the following report are included in these three collections. For these other texts, we will provide a footnote indicating the translation used or the edition from which we are making our own translation.

enlivened by the Spirit of holiness” (*Letter I [To Donatus] 4*). A contemporary of Cyprian, from the eastern part of the Mediterranean world, Gregory Thaumaturgus (c.255), described becoming a Christian this way: “Like some spark lighting upon our inmost soul, love was kindled and burst into flame with us – a love for the holy Word, the most lovely object of all, who attracts everyone irresistibly toward Himself” (*The Oration and Panegyric to Origen VI*).

42. One of the most memorable patristic accounts of conversion is found in St. Augustine’s autobiography, which he entitled *The Confessions* (397-400) in order to acknowledge not only his own sins but also the great mercy and love of God toward him. “Too late did I love You,” he wrote, “O Beauty, so ancient, and yet so new!” He admitted that he had sought happiness in the created things around him, forgetting that they would never have existed at all, if not for God who had made them. “You called, and cried aloud, and forced open my deafness. You gleamed and shined, and chased away my blindness. You breathed out upon me and I drew in my breath and do pant for You. I tasted, and do hunger and thirst. You touched me and I burned for Your peace” (*Confessions X, 27*). Such patristic witnesses have the power to inspire and encourage both Pentecostals and Catholics, since both of our communities treasure and retell the stories of marvelous conversion and transformation which God has worked in the lives of his saints.
  
43. Augustine’s story includes some of the characteristics that both Catholics and Pentecostals recognize as part of the complex phenomenon of conversion. At times of crisis, a potential convert may seek order, meaning and purpose in life, leading to the search to encounter God. Augustine had moments of such encounter which were so vivid that he felt like St. Paul, who wrote of being “lifted up to the third heaven” (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2). But that this encounter should be more than simply a fleeting occurrence, Augustine chose to resume his participation in the catechumenate and to seek baptism (*Confessions VII, 11.17; IX, 4-6*). He believed that he could encounter Christ only as part of the community of believers Christ had founded. For Augustine, the way of entry into that community was through the rites of Christian Initiation, which provided access to a genuine encounter with God. The interaction of potential converts with the community and the development of their commitment formed a clear pattern in which instruction and ritual were woven closely together. Augustine was influenced by the preaching of Ambrose (*Confessions V, 13.23*), and the tears of his mother (*Confessions VI, 2.1*). Conversion was the result of ongoing interaction between those converts and those already initiated, who shared the new religious life they had found with these newcomers. The change at the root of conversion is nothing less than transformation of the person through the interaction of divine grace and human freedom. The patristic writers used a variety of images to describe this holistic change or transformation, such

as sanctification, enlightenment, and even deification;<sup>6</sup> but the dominant metaphor, as in Romans 6, was death and rebirth.

44. The Fathers described the change in behavior that results from conversion in various ways. Origen observed that the word of teaching and instruction “taking hold of those who are most intemperate and savage (if they follow her exhortation) effects a transformation, so that the alteration and change for the better is most extensive” (Origen, *On First Principles* III,1,5 [c.220-230]). He adds that “the name of Jesus ... produces a marvelous meekness of spirit and a complete change of character” (Origen, *Against Celsus* I, 67 [c.248]). So dramatic was this change that it often surprised the non-Christian acquaintances of the newly converted: “Some persons wonder that those whom they had known to be unsteady, worthless, or wicked before they bore this name [of Christian] have suddenly been converted to virtuous courses” (Tertullian, *To the Nations* 4 [c.191]).
45. The Fathers generally spoke of conversion in the context of baptism as the beginning of the Christian life. They were attentive to the role of grace and to a person’s free will in making a decision toward conversion. Origen noted that “no improvement ever takes place among men without divine help” (Origen, *Against Celsus* I, 26 [c.248]). Later the Council of Orange (529) taught: “We must with God’s help preach and believe the following: free will has been so distorted and weakened by the sin of the first parent, that thereafter no one could love God as was required, or believe in God, or perform for the sake of God what is good, unless first reached by the grace of divine mercy.”<sup>7</sup> At the same time, patristic writers also emphasized the responsibility of the person, as expressed, for example, by Augustine’s saying: “He who created you without you does not justify you without you” (*Sermon* 169, 11.13)<sup>8</sup>
46. Some of the Fathers associated conversion with new birth and interpreted the new birth about which Jesus speaks in John 3:1-8 as referring to baptism. This new birth was described by means of metaphors such as “seeing the light” and “marriage to the Holy Spirit”: “When the soul embraces the faith, being renewed in its second birth by water and the power from above, then the veil of its former corruption is taken away. And it sees the light in all its brightness. It is also taken up (in its second birth) by the Holy Spirit, just as in its first birth it is embraced by the unholy spirit. The flesh follows the soul now wedded to the Spirit, as a part of the bridal portion – no longer the servant of the soul, but of the Spirit” (Tertullian, *On the Soul* 41 [c.210]). The newness of life in Jesus was like becoming a child again so as to be made according to a new pattern: “Having renewed us by the remission of our sins, He has made us after another pattern, that we should possess the souls of children, inasmuch as He has created us anew by

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<sup>6</sup> Deification is a word used by Christians of the East to express what the Holy Spirit does in the lives of those who have been baptized. It refers to the transformation of the human person by divine grace.

<sup>7</sup> English taken from *The Christian Faith*, Jacques Dupuis, editor, Seventh Revised and Enlarged Edition, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2001, 803.

<sup>8</sup> Translated from the Latin text found in Migne’s *Patrologia Latina* 38, 923.



His Spirit” (*Letter of Barnabas* 6 [70-130]). Clement of Alexandria describes the transformation of the Christian in terms drawn from the creation of human beings at the dawn of time. “He himself formed man of the dust, regenerated him by water, made him grow by his Spirit, and trained him by His word to adoption and salvation, directing him by sacred precepts; in order that, transforming earth-born man into a holy and heavenly being by His advent, He might fulfill to the utmost that divine utterance, ‘Let Us make man in Our own image and likeness’” (*The Instructor* I, 12 [prior to 215]).

47. Pentecostals and Catholics sometimes differ in their interpretation of biblical texts upon which the Fathers expounded. For example, Pentecostals read John 3:1-8 as referring more generally to conversion, and not explicitly to baptism, as Catholics would tend to read it. Nevertheless, the way patristic authors associate new birth with conversion and baptism speaks to both our communities, recalling something of the perennial qualities of Christian conversion which we both recognize and rejoice in and illustrating the diverse ways in which early writers attempted to describe what is essential to it.

#### **D. Contemporary Reflections on Conversion**

48. How might the biblical and patristic material deepen agreement between the dialogue participants about conversion, and about becoming a Christian? Catholics and Pentecostals used their discussions concerning this material as a basis on which to consider current practices in both communities. *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), retrieved from biblical and patristic sources and adapted for use by the Catholic Church in 1972, offers possibilities for an agreed expression of our theological understanding and practice. The RCIA was introduced into the Catholic Church as part of the liturgical renewal mandated by Vatican II. It resulted from a revision of the rite of baptism in light of studies of liturgical history drawn from scriptural and patristic texts, especially that of the early centuries. As its name implies, this rite is for the full initiation of a person into the church. The previously existing *Rite of Baptism*, that came into effect in 1614 as a rite of baptism only, was an abbreviated version of the ancient rite for the initiation of adults and had been used for the most part in the modified form suitable for the baptism of infants. The *Rite of the Baptism of Infants*, introduced in 1969 to answer the need of a rite suited to infants, follows the practice of the previous rite in being for baptism alone, rather than one of full initiation. The limited scope of this *Rite* brings into prominence, by way of contrast, the comprehensive nature of the RCIA
49. In the texts and rituals of the RCIA, the various elements of Christian conversion on which Pentecostals and Catholics are agreed can be readily discerned. It may be noted too that though it is based on practice developed in the patristic era, the rite shares the perspective already outlined in the survey of biblical texts earlier in this section. The text uses language of hearing, following and answering to express a conviction that

conversion comes about in response to God's initiative. This reflects the agreement between Pentecostals and Catholics that conversion is understood as entrance into a covenant involving a mysterious interplay between the divine and human. The baptismal event itself, the culmination of the catechumens' journey, is presented in the rite as an immersion into and identification with the mystery of Christ's dying and rising (cf. Rm. 6:3-4). The rite is therefore radically Christocentric. It situates the act of personal commitment to Christ in the context of the liturgical assembly and through the ministry of various members of the community. Seen from this latter perspective, the conversion celebrated by the rite entails also an enrichment of the ecclesial reality.

50. As a rite of initiation, RCIA consequently involves liturgical actions as well as spiritual event. While Pentecostals and Catholics both recognize that the Christian life in community is aptly expressed and enhanced in acts of worship, they differ on the relationship between the visible and invisible aspects of the rite of entry to the community. Catholics believe that the rite is a visible sign of invisible grace, a sacrament. Among Pentecostals, views on baptism vary between considering it a public affirmation of faith in Christ to speaking of it as having a substantial effect, a strengthening of faith. In the Catholic understanding, the effects of the RCIA have a wider scope, in that baptism, confirmation and eucharist are all contained within it to complete the act of initiation. The initiation can be regarded as beginning and fostering a process of conversion in which there is remission of sin, regeneration, reception of the Spirit, and incorporation into Christ and his church, culminating in union with the crucified and risen Christ through the reception of his Body and Blood. Catholic belief is that in the rite of initiation, the reality of being clothed with Christ is most profoundly effected and expressed.
51. The RCIA may be prolonged over a period of a year or more and it assumes that conversion may develop gradually. This is indicated in the distinct ritual steps prescribed, in recognition that there are certain moments in the process when the conversion experience is deepened and demands a corresponding ritual expression. This implies that the conversion process may be quite diversified experientially. These stages of growth have as their end a transformation of the whole person in the areas of cognitive development, affective growth and behavioral change. Pentecostals agree with Catholics on the necessity of this transformation but see it as an expression of discipleship following after conversion.
52. Pentecostals and Catholics agree on the necessity of conversion as a key component of Christian Initiation, but continue to discuss the significance and relative normativity of both sacramental and non-sacramental approaches to initiation, including conversion. The Pentecostal team resonates so well with the RCIA that they would encourage its adoption by Catholics on a much wider scale. Pentecostals identify more readily with such an approach, as opposed to one which begins with the baptism of infants and catechizing of children. Pentecostals perceive this latter approach to leave Catholic

adults without the benefit of the strong teaching found in the RCIA, and think the RCIA could be an excellent resource for addressing pastoral problems related to the nominal practice of the faith and the ongoing need for evangelization.

53. The Catholic Church, however, proposes a model of initiation which recognizes a link between baptism, faith and conversion, but understands that link differently in relation to the baptism of adults or of infants. In both cases there must be growth in faith and conversion, but baptism itself creates an adoptive relationship as a child of God. Sacraments, including baptism, whether of an adult or of an infant, are not only subjective professions of faith but also objective realities, because they incorporate the recipient into Christ and into God's people. At baptism a child begins to share divine life and becomes part of the communion of saints, and this has meaning for the child's spiritual development. Thus Catholics would find it inconceivable to deny this grace to an infant, and through the priority of grace see a fundamental identity between infant and adult baptism. In both cases Christ is the door, even though the lives of individual Christians follow differing paths and are realized in diverse moments. The *Rite of the Baptism of Infants* also advises pastors to delay baptism in those cases where there is need for evangelization of the parents, and no reasonable expectation that an infant will be brought up in the practice of the faith without such evangelization. Thus, while Catholics view the RCIA as the fullest articulation of the process of initiation, they would not allow that affirmation to discount the importance of infant baptism.
54. For both Pentecostals and Catholics, baptism should be an ecclesial event, a faith experience for the worshipping community. In a mutually enriching exercise, teachers and catechists as well as parents must accept their mission to help children elicit acts of personal faith both in day-to-day living and at further stages of spiritual growth. For Catholics, these opportunities include confirmation, first penance and first eucharist. Pentecostals, whether they practice the dedication or the baptism of infants and young children, likewise involve children and families in growth experiences through graded Sunday School and catechism programs, and gradual integration of children into the worship life of the community.
55. Both Catholics and Pentecostals reject as inadequate a simply nominal adherence to the Christian life. Thus, the discussion surrounding the emergence of the RCIA included the question of whether the Rite offers a corrective to nominal practice of Christian life, or to a merely cultural Christianity. On the one hand, Catholics would affirm the positive influence which a Catholic culture that is clearly influenced by the gospel can have, in supporting the continuing practice by Catholics of an authentic Christian life. They distinguished that, on the other hand, from what might be described as a merely "cultural Catholicism", on the part of those who might only superficially observe the Catholic faith. An example of the latter includes pastoral situations in which individuals with no discernible faith, virtually no connection to the church, and no commitment to active practice, approach the church requesting sacraments merely for extrinsic reasons.

While Catholics acknowledge the existence of such nominal practice both in previous centuries and the present day, they also wish to emphasize the concurrent presence of ongoing genuine conversion and vital Catholic life. In current Christian Initiation praxis they seek to avoid any divorce between faith and sacrament, committed discipleship and Catholic identity. Likewise Pentecostals recognize the problems associated with a small but growing nominal or cultural Pentecostalism, and both sides see the need for evangelization, pastoral discernment and the call to committed discipleship in such contexts. With regard to Christian culture, Catholics and Pentecostals alike acknowledge the impact of a Gospel vision upon and transformation of pagan and secular society over the centuries, so that society itself has at times embodied a profoundly Christian worldview. In our current pluralistic society, both sides continue to strive to establish a Christian culture within the larger society and thus to be instruments in God's hands for the kingdom.

56. Contemporary experiences of conversion often follow the New Testament emphasis on repentance, embracing the good news, and receiving the goodness of God experienced in healing, deliverance or other forms of help. Stories or testimonies about conversion to Christ frequently involve elements of restoration to active participation in the Christian community, to the deeper experience of family and a sense of belonging, regardless of social, gender or ethnic differences (cf. Gal. 3:28). Those who have been marginalized identify with the experience of being called and thus being known by God (cf. Eph. 1:3-14). This transition from alienation to belonging is associated with an awareness of the restoration of one's dignity. Hence, Catholics and Pentecostals tend to understand conversion and initiation, first of all, in terms of the kinds of testimonies reflected in the New Testament rather than in abstract concepts. For both groups conversion experiences are diverse, and all these experiences are something to be narrated and celebrated.
57. Catholics and Pentecostals generally agree that conversion involves both event and process, and recognize the need for ongoing formation. Both hold to a diversity of ways in which one is converted. Conversions may express varying characteristics, some more affectively oriented than others, some more cognitive, dramatic or volitional. Both recognize different levels of conversion, and conversion in stages (i.e., second and third conversions in the spiritual life for Catholics, or personal re-dedications for Pentecostals), as examples of the ongoing process. Manifestations of conversions are also recognized in their diversity. One may give evidence of conversion through either word or service, depending upon gifts and calling. Catholics and Pentecostals also recognize diversity in the ways evangelization takes place.
58. Catholics are evangelized for life-changing conversions in parish missions, through spiritual retreats and exercises, and through liturgical rites such as renewal of baptismal vows. At the same time, Catholics see the retrieved RCIA as an example of the church's growth in its understanding of initiation, evangelization and mission. They see

this as reflecting the pattern of Acts 2:37-39 by including in one rite the process of conversion (the catechumenate), baptism (regeneration), confirmation (the gift of the Holy Spirit) and eucharistic communion (Acts 2:42). Pentecostals, likewise, take the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) seriously by calling people to a personal response to the Gospel, and incorporating them into the life of the community through opportunities for ongoing growth and discipleship. Thus Pentecostals and Catholics share in common a strong commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel, through various forms of witnessing and evangelism, including both missions and personal relationships.

59. Both Pentecostals and Catholics recognize conversion as the gift of God, although they may not always agree about what constitutes a valid experience of conversion. They join together in calling for the genuine conversion of people to Jesus Christ.

## **II. Faith and Christian Initiation**

### **A. Introduction**

60. Pentecostals and Catholics fully agree that becoming a Christian is not comprehensible apart from faith. The Letter to the Hebrews teaches that “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). In the Gospels, faith is depicted as trusting acceptance of God’s revelation (e.g. Mary in Lk. 1:38,45), accepting the Gospel as proclaimed by Jesus (Mk. 1:15), belief in the person of Jesus as the source of life (Jn. 3:16; 6:35, 7:38; 20:30-31); and trust in and initiative toward the healing power of Jesus (Mk. 2:5; 10:52). Faith is a gifted response to God’s revelation, involving an opening of the heart, an assent of the mind and actions which express our trust.

### **B. New Testament Perspectives on Faith and Christian Initiation**

61. While Jesus’ call to saving faith is found in the synoptic gospels (e.g., Mk 1:15; 10:52 par.), it is especially John’s gospel that presents Jesus as repeatedly calling people to believe in him in order to receive “eternal life” (Jn 3:16-17; 5:24; 6:35 et al.; cf. Jn 1:12; 20:31). The letter to the Ephesians makes clear that it is through faith, freely given by God, that we are saved: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9). Again, Paul clearly links the necessity of faith with salvation: “‘The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved” (Rom 10:8-10).

62. Christian Initiation cannot be fully appreciated without reference to the practice of baptism within the Jewish community at the time of Jesus. Not only was a ritual bath administered to Gentile proselytes who wanted to become Jews, but also those who were already Jews could receive a ‘baptism of repentance’, such as that administered by John the Baptist in the Jordan river and received by Jesus at John’s hands. Scripture contrasts the baptism of John, who baptized “with water” with that of Jesus, who “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Mt 3:11; cf. Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:26; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 19:3-6). The mention of the baptism of John in the sermons of Peter and Paul (Acts 10:37 and 13:24-25) and in other passages of the Acts of the Apostles (18:25 and 19:3) suggests how important it was in the memory of the early church. The accounts of John’s baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:31-34) include rich insights into the identity of Jesus as Messiah, servant and Son of the Father, and also provide clues to the meaning of discipleship for those who would later be baptized as Christians.
63. While the four gospels articulate the nature of Jesus’ call to all who would become his disciples, the first actual accounts of people becoming Christians are contained in the Acts of the Apostles, beginning with the account in Acts 2, of those who first responded to the Apostles’ message on the day of Pentecost. After the descent or outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Peter went out and preached about Jesus, crucified and risen (Acts 2:22-23), who had been foretold by the prophets (Acts 2:24-28), and who now had sent the Holy Spirit to empower him and the other disciples to witness boldly to God’s saving action in Christ. Those who heard the proclamation were “cut to the heart,” and said to Peter and the other apostles, “What should we do?” To which Peter responded: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37-38). The sequence of events is: the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the preaching about Jesus Christ, the response of faith, conversion, baptism for the forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit.
64. After noting that three thousand had accepted the message that day, Acts 2:42 goes on to state that “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Their community was marked by signs and wonders, by the sharing of material goods and by regular gathering in the temple for prayer and in their homes for the breaking of bread (cf. Acts 2:43-47). Thus the account of the conversion of these three thousand concludes with their integration into a *koinonia*, a community of faith (personal adherence to Christ and to the truths asserted in the proclamation about Christ and in the subsequent teaching of the apostles) and of celebration (baptism and the breaking of the bread). The statement that the new community was devoted to the apostles’ instruction (cf. Acts 2:42) suggests that the proclamation on Pentecost was followed by continuing formation, which would provide the believers with a more complete understanding of the faith and of the practice of discipleship.

65. Acts 8:12-17 reports the conversion of Samaritans, which took place in two distinct moments with different persons ministering: “But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. [...] Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two men went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” Here the pattern of initiation seems to be the preaching of the good news, faith, baptism, prayer for the reception of the Holy Spirit, the imposition of hands by apostles from Jerusalem and the reception of the Spirit. Catholics have seen the prayer for the Holy Spirit and the imposition of hands by the apostles as a basis for the sacrament of confirmation. Pentecostals see in the two moments of this account evidence that once one comes to personal faith and has been baptized, there is also a need for the coming of the Spirit upon an individual (8:17), often accompanied by the laying on of hands. This is an example of how Catholics and Pentecostals view a text from different perspectives. Further on, in Acts 8:26-40, where we read of the Ethiopian eunuch who became a Christian, we find again a partially similar pattern: proclamation, personal profession of faith, and baptism.
66. Paul’s vision of Jesus, his conversion and call, baptism and reception of the Spirit are recorded in Acts 9. Following his experience on the way to Damascus and his subsequent three day stay in that city, Ananias arrives to lay hands upon Paul, that he might recover his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul’s sight then returns and he is baptized (Acts 9:17-18). The elements of proclamation and personal faith are not explicit in this account (nor when Paul retells it in Acts 22:1-21 and 26:2-23), although the encounter with the living Jesus Himself could be seen as a singularly vivid proclamation that the Jesus who had been crucified is alive, and Paul’s faith may be supposed since, without it, he would not have accepted baptism. The aspect of divine initiative, so clear in the process by which Paul became a Christian, is also dominant in the next account of Christian Initiation, that of Cornelius and of all the other Gentiles who were listening to Peter’s message (Acts 10:34-43). As Peter preaches, the Holy Spirit rushes upon his listeners, who began to speak in tongues and to glorify God (Acts 10:46). Peter ordered that they be baptized, later explaining “If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?” (Acts 11:17). This emphasis upon the divine initiative is also evident in the fact that Cornelius and his companions do not seem to have had the chance to profess their faith in response to Peter’s message; before he finishes they begin to speak in tongues and to glorify God. Nor do they request baptism; Peter “ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ,” after saying “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (Acts 10:47-48). There are clearly elements of proclamation and of a

response of faith present in this account; at the same time, because of its importance for seeing God's design in the acceptance of Gentiles as part of the Christian community, the accent upon the powerful divine initiative is very strong.

67. Acts 16 contains the account of Lydia, whose heart was opened by the Lord to heed what Paul said and who was baptized with her household (Acts 16:14-15), and of the jailer who was converted after the earthquake which occurred as Paul and Silas were praying and singing in prison. "The jailer called for lights [...] and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay" (Acts 16:29-32). Another account appears in Acts 18:8: "Crispus, the official of the synagogue, became a believer in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers and were baptized." In all three of these accounts the elements of proclaiming the word, faith and baptism are present, while the Holy Spirit is not explicitly mentioned. A striking peculiarity is the baptism of the household or the whole family. Given the cohesive nature of the family at that time, it is possible that the events recounted here included also the baptism of infants who were part of the family. On the other hand, the mention of faith could also suggest that only those who could understand and personally confess faith upon hearing Paul's message would have been baptized.
68. The last account in Acts of people becoming Christians appears in 19:1-7, when Paul discovers some baptized disciples in Ephesus who had never heard of the Holy Spirit, having been baptized only with John's baptism. On hearing Paul's explanation of how John was preparing the way for Jesus, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied – altogether there were about twelve of them" (Acts 19:5-7). Here the pattern seems quite close to that of the Samaritan converts in Acts 8: proclamation, faith, baptism, laying on of hands and the receiving of the Holy Spirit.
69. In several of Paul's letters we find reference to the time when his readers first became Christians (e.g., Gal 1; Col 1:1-9; 1 Thess 1:3-10; 2:13-14). He also recounts some of the activities of his initial evangelization of these communities (e.g., 1 Cor 2:1-5; 1 Thess 2:1-12). In these records we typically see the proclamation of the Gospel, the 'calling' of the people by God through Paul and their attentive response in faith, sometimes with reference to their baptism (1 Cor 1:15-17; Gal 3:26-27) and receiving of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:12; Gal 3:2). In other New Testament letters, such as Hebrews (Heb 4:2; 10:32-35, et al.) or 1 Peter (1 Pet 1:1-3, 22-23, et al.) we find similar elements of Christian Initiation.



70. Thus, in addition to the foundational testimonies of the four gospels and the references in various New Testament letters, these nine accounts from Acts – the three thousand on Pentecost, the Samaritans, the Ethiopian eunuch, Paul, Cornelius and companions, Lydia and her household, the jailer and his family, Crispus along with his household and many Corinthians, and the twelve Ephesians – offer us insight into the way one became a Christian in New Testament times. The pattern among these accounts is rather similar, but clearly not always the same, and the details are often sparse. Usually there is a proclamation of the message about Jesus Christ, its acceptance in faith, baptism, the laying on of hands, the gift of the Holy Spirit and entrance into the community. The community worships together with the distinctive practice of the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42,46; 20:7). Catholics have traditionally seen this in eucharistic terms indicating that sharing in the eucharist is a sign of the full integration into the community. While Acts does not tie the breaking of bread to initiation so strongly, further development toward a fuller eucharistic theology can be seen in Justin's *First Apology* (61, c.156), Tertullian's *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* (8, c.208) and Hippolytus's *Apostolic Tradition* (21, c.215). Pentecostals do see in the Last Supper and the "breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42) Jesus' institution of an ongoing rite and communal celebration that, in the fullest sense of the Greek work *anamnesis*, 'remembers' him and his death on the Cross and even an ordained means for God's communication of redemptive life, as reflected in the practice in many Pentecostal churches of praying for the sick during the celebration of the Lord's supper. But they do not see these accounts as necessarily implying the more fully developed sacramental, eucharistic theology embraced by Catholics.<sup>9</sup>
71. In the Acts of the Apostles, becoming a Christian is described within the context of a church fervently engaged in the apostolic mission of proclaiming the gospel to those who do not yet know Christ. Such a mission obviously could only be addressed to those old enough to understand the proclamation. Moreover, this earliest missionary stage seems not to have required a lengthy and detailed process of initiation prior to baptism. In fact there are several different approaches found in the Acts of the Apostles. It seems that persons and groups became Christian suddenly, with much of the further explanation of the requirements of faith and discipleship only following later. But sometimes teaching precedes conversion, as in Acts 4:2, where Peter and John were "teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead," or in 5:20, where the apostles "entered the temple at daybreak and went on with their teaching." Often, teaching seems to have followed initiation, as in Acts 2:42. Clearly faith is central to Christian Initiation in the New Testament accounts here considered. The missionary, especially Peter and Paul in Acts, is the member of the church most engaged in introducing neophytes into the community's faith. But various texts suggest that the whole church was involved in supporting their mission, by encouragement (Acts 18:27; Phil 1,5), or by prayer (Acts 4:24-31; 13:1-3) or by offering financial support (Acts 4:34-37; Phil 4:14-20). The whole church was also involved in discerning

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<sup>9</sup> See *Perspectives on Koinonia* 1985–1989, C) "Koinonia", Sacraments and Church Order, 81–89.

the solution to what was the most difficult challenge emerging from the initiation of new believers – the question about the observance of the law (Acts 15:1-35), so crucial both for the meaning of the Gospel (cf. Gal 1:6-9) and for the spread of the faith among the Gentiles. Acts 18:26 reports that Priscilla and Aquila took aside the eloquent preacher Apollos and “explained the Way of God to him more accurately.” All of this suggests that the task of initiation was not restricted to the missionary apostle but more widely shared by the whole community.

72. Christian Initiation may also be seen in the many instances of teaching in the Acts of the Apostles, as well as the accounts of Jesus’ earlier teaching in the Gospels. According to the Scriptures, becoming a mature Christian entails a process of growing in faith. This requires teaching. Acts 13:1 mentions the presence of “prophets and teachers” in the church at Antioch, reminding one that Paul’s lists of ministries include “teachers” (1 Cor 12:28; Rom 12:7; Eph 4:11). Various individuals are described by Acts as engaged in teaching: Peter and John (4:2), the apostles (5:21,42), Saul and Barnabas (11:26; 15:35), Paul (18:11; 20:20; 21:21; 28:31), Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos (18:24-26). Some of these passages indicate a ministry of teaching which extended over a long period of time: “a whole year” in Antioch (11:26), “a year and six months” in Corinth (18:11), “two whole years” in Rome (28:30-31). Acts also knows of the danger of being misled by false teachings. In his moving farewell to the leaders of the church at Ephesus, called *presbyteroi* (“presbyters” or “elders”) in 20:17, and *episkopoi* (“overseers”) in 20:28, Paul warns of “fierce wolves” who will come after his departure, to draw disciples away from the admonitions which Paul taught for three years night and day with tears (Acts 20:28-31). Acts presents a teaching church in which the formation in faith which occurs after initiation may, in fact, be more extensive and more important than the seemingly short instruction which precedes baptism.
73. All of the New Testament books imply that the church was active not only in the initial proclamation of the Gospel but also in the ongoing formation of faith. While the individual books, except for Acts, do not tell the story of the initial mission of the church, they are all instructions in faith. Naturally the different groups of writings have distinctive emphases. The Pastoral letters (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) emphasize the need to preserve sound doctrine in the face of false teachings (1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3; Titus 2:1) and the special role of ordained ministry in such vigilance (1 Tim 3:2; 6:20-21; 2 Tim 1:5-6; Titus 1:9). Written to a group of believers who were tempted to turn back from their conversion to Christ, the letter to the Hebrews makes much of the need for Christians to receive further teaching following their initial response to the Gospel (Heb 5:11-6:3). The Johannine literature highlights the role of the Holy Spirit leading the church into all truth (Jn 14:26; 16:13) and the fact that discipleship entails an intimate union with and love for Jesus (Jn 15:4-11; 17:20-26). Much of the New Testament material about teaching shows that formation in faith was not reserved to baptismal candidates alone. Paul suggests that maturing in faith is a long process (1 Cor

2:6-13; 3:1-2) which never completely outgrows that seeing “in a mirror, dimly” which is part of our earthly state (1 Cor 13:9-12).

74. The activity of the Christian community in welcoming new members and in helping them mature as faithful disciples clearly shows that faith and Christian Initiation are closely tied together. Additional insights can be gained by briefly looking at the place of faith within the New Testament's reflection about baptism.<sup>10</sup>
75. The accounts in Acts, starting with Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:37-38), make clear that, in order to become a Christian, one is called to be baptized. Furthermore, throughout the New Testament baptism is associated with a powerful and dynamic transformation of the believer. Baptism is tied to the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). It is linked to salvation: “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk 16:16). It is even said to “save” us (“And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...” 1 Pet 3:21). In two extended sections of his letter to the Romans, Paul develops the themes that we are saved from the “penalty” of sins through faith in the blood of Jesus (Rom 1:18-5:9), but are then delivered from the “power” of sin through inclusion in the death and resurrection of Jesus and the new indwelling life of the Spirit (Rom 5:10-8:13). This inclusion in the death and resurrection of Jesus frees us from “the body of sin.” According to Paul, when persons are baptized they are not only giving public testimony to their faith in and allegiance toward Jesus and signifying the burial of an old life and entry into the new; they are participating in or entering into the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Rom 6:4; Col.2:11-12). Baptism means adoption as children of God: “For in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God, through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:26-27). Those who have believed and are baptized have been formed into the messianic people: “There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave nor free, there is no longer male nor female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:28-29). Because of the profound link which the New Testament makes between faith and baptism, it is not surprising that some verses actually juxtapose the two realities (cf. Mk 16:16; Gal 3:27).
76. In the New Testament becoming a Christian entails a communal dimension. Baptized into Christ, we are also baptized into Christ's Body, the church. Christian Initiation establishes communion among all who are transformed in Christ: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). It should be noted that most Pentecostals understand Gal 3:26-28 and 1 Cor 12:13 as referring to a “spiritual” baptism into the Body of Christ, to which public witness is given through baptism in water. Nevertheless, like other Christians they do believe that baptism in water carries a communal dimension. This link between Christ's death, baptism and the unity of the

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<sup>10</sup> For a fuller discussion of Pentecostal and Catholic views on baptism, see *Perspectives on Koinonia 1985–1989*, III. Koinonia and Baptism, 39–69.

church helps to explain Paul's passion as he pleads with the Corinthian church to see and honor their oneness in the Lord: "Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor 1:10-17, at v. 13). Clearly for Paul, a baptized person is now a member of the New Community and as such has the obligation to actively maintain its unity (cf. Eph 4:1-3).

77. In summary, the teaching of the New Testament and the several accounts in Acts of individuals or groups becoming Christians, clearly show that faith plays a critical and necessary role in Christian Initiation. Faith is a gift of God without which one cannot become a Christian. Likewise, faith and baptism are linked. All who would become Christians are called to a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and a reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). At the same time, Pentecostals and Catholics need to explore further the different perspectives they bring to the precise nature of Christian Initiation. Catholics generally understand texts such as Jn 3:3-6 about being born anew in water and the Spirit, Titus 3:5 about the washing of regeneration, and Jn 6 about eating Jesus' body and blood in a sacramental way. In texts such as Rom 6:1-7, which speaks of being united with Christ in a death like his, that is, by baptism, or Col 2:11-12, being "buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead", Catholics see a real participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecostals, on the other hand, see in the New Testament a primary emphasis on faith and confession, which also includes baptism, engendered by the received Word through the power of the Spirit. This public confession of faith and obedience is powerfully attended by God's Spirit, who also imparts the very realities signified by baptism.
78. Regarding the timing of baptism, many of the accounts of baptism in the New Testament suggest that a personal, explicit profession of faith was a prerequisite, an act which an infant would not seem capable of performing. At the same time, the household baptisms recorded in Acts 16 and 18 allow for the possibility that infants were baptized. Of the nine accounts of baptism in Acts, only those of the Ethiopian eunuch and of Paul are reported as the baptism of a single individual; all of the others were administered to groups of persons. Furthermore, aside from the issue of infant baptism, a single pattern is not so easy to discern in the New Testament. Generally, it seems that a pattern such as proclamation of the message about Christ, faith and conversion, baptism, the laying on of hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit, evidenced in signs, seems to be the norm, with the presumption that the new Christians eventually shared in the "breaking of bread." But there are instances which do not seem to fit the pattern, such as the delay of the coming of the Spirit until the Samaritans receive the laying on of hands by the apostles in Acts 8, or the Spirit coming upon Cornelius and his household prior to their baptism in Acts 10-11. Also it is clear that the whole church was involved in the initial and continuing formation of its members. Yet while the entire community is active in the formation of disciples, in the end it cannot do for individuals what they must do themselves: each one is called to believe. At the same

time, the accounts of baptism in Acts of the Apostles show people being baptized immediately after having heard the proclamation about Jesus Christ for the very first time. Presumably they would have much more to hear about him and, to that extent their faith would need to grow with the passage of time through the grace of the Holy Spirit and with the help of instruction and encouragement by other members of the community. In this sense, their faith could not and need not have been fully mature at the precise moment of initiation. There are also accounts in the New Testament involving physical healing, where the faith of the community is operative in a way that brings benefit to the one in need (for example, Mk 2:5 where Jesus responds to the faith of the four men who brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus, Acts 3:16 where the faith of Peter and John in the name of Jesus made the paralyzed man well, or Acts 9:36-43 where Tabitha is raised from the dead). It is on the basis of such accounts that Catholics can envision the community supplying faith in the baptism of an infant, until that infant can confess faith personally at a later time, a profession of faith which is sacramentally sealed at confirmation.

### C. Patristic Perspectives on Faith and Christian Initiation

79. From the Second Century relatively few patristic texts have survived concerning the explicit theme of becoming a Christian. One of the oldest that did is the *Didache* (prior to 120), which describes the ‘two ways’ of life available to human beings – the way of light and the way of darkness. The author exhorts his readers to follow the Christian way (of light), which entails living according to Jesus’ twofold commandment of love, abiding by the golden rule and avoiding the major sins that offend the law of God. Then, in paragraph 7, the *Didache* speaks about the initiation rite involved in becoming a Christian: “Concerning baptism do as follows. Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,’ in running water. [...] But before the baptism, let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whatever others; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.” Even though these brief words do not explicitly mention a profession of faith or develop its doctrinal content, becoming a Christian naturally implied such, as suggested by the Trinitarian formula indicated in the text. Not long afterwards, Justin Martyr’s *Apology* I, 61, 65 (c. 150), gives a slightly more elaborate account of Christian Initiation, in which he develops the ideas that baptism entails regeneration, new birth, and “illumination” and adds that the newly initiated also participates in the celebration of the eucharist. Another reference to the rite of initiation from this earliest century of the post-New Testament period is found in the *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* (190), by Irenaeus of Lyon, who repeats the details of the *Didache* and Justin Martyr, but adds: “this baptism is the seal of eternal life and is rebirth unto God, that we be no more children of mortal men, but of the eternal and everlasting God.”<sup>11</sup> Here the word “seal” stands out in comparison with the texts from *Didache* or Justin; Scripture associates this word

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<sup>11</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, Joseph P. Smith, S.J., translator, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952, paragraph 3, page 49.

precisely with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). That this last book, along with other writings of Irenaeus, are directed against various heresies, is a witness to the fact that conflicting doctrines divided Christians from one another at this time. Becoming a Christian involved sharing the same faith. It would make no sense to be baptized into a community, if one did not accept its 'rule of faith,' as Irenaeus would say, or its 'symbol' or 'creed,' according to other authors; nor would it be sensible for a community to accept as new members individuals who did not share their faith.

80. The Third Century opens with two writings that provide much more information about the process of becoming a Christian than the sources considered above. Tertullian's short treatise *On Baptism* (c. 198-200) explains the creative and healing effects of baptism by reference to the Spirit over the waters at the creation of the world (Gen 1:2) and of the angel stirring the water at the pool of Bethesda (Jn 5:1-9; *On Baptism*, 3-5). He next mentions the anointing with chrism, a consecrated oil whose name derives from the Greek verb 'to anoint' and which is related to the words 'Christ' (the anointed) and 'Christian.' This anointing occurs after the newly baptized has risen from the font and, according to Tertullian, recalls the anointing of Aaron as high priest (Ex 29:7; *On Baptism*, 7). The imposition of hands and prayer for the presence of the Holy Spirit come next in the rite (*On Baptism*, 8). Old Testament types of baptism are seen in the great flood and the crossing of the Red Sea (*On Baptism* 8-9). Its necessity is rooted in Jesus' words from Matt 28:19 and John 3:5 (*On Baptism*, 13), although there is a 'second font,' baptism by martyrdom, about which Jesus spoke in Lk 12:50 ("I have a baptism to be baptized with and how I am constrained until it is accomplished" *On Baptism*, 16). The proper minister of initiation is the bishop, or the presbyters and deacons acting on his authority (*On Baptism*, 17). One should not be too hasty to baptize, particularly little children (*On Baptism*, 18). Children should become Christians only after "they have become able to know Christ" (*On Baptism*, 19). All of this suggests that explicit, personal faith is a prerequisite for baptism.
81. The *Apostolic Tradition*, attributed to Hippolytus and written in Rome around the year 215, not only includes an outline of the steps involved in becoming a Christian but also, because of its wide diffusion, helped to shape the practice of initiation in many parts of the church of that time. Chapters 15-22 present five steps in the path of becoming a Christian: 1) the presentation of the candidates (15-16), 2) the catechumenate, from the Greek word for the 'one being instructed' and thus the time of instruction prior to initiation (17-19); 3) the final weeks of preparation for baptism (20); 4) the rites of initiation themselves (21); and 5) the mystagogical catechesis, occurring during the week after initiation (22). The 'mystagogical' catechetical instructions explained the rites of baptism, confirmation and eucharist, that were and still are called "the mysteries" in the Greek-speaking portion of the church (hence the adjective "mystagogical"). Special emphasis is given during this process to the examination of the motivation and moral character of the candidates. The period of instruction usually lasted for three years. Only at the end of that period could one enter the stage of final

preparations during the weeks prior to Easter. The three rites of baptism, confirmation (or anointing with oil and prayer for the imparting of the gifts of the Holy Spirit) and eucharist took place on the morning of Easter Sunday. During the rite of baptism, the recipient responded three times “I believe” to questions asking about his or her faith in the Triune God; after each response the person was then immersed in water. Parents or family members of children too young to respond answered on their behalf. Afterwards those baptized were anointed with oil in the name of Christ and the bishop imposed hands upon them. Finally, after a greeting of peace, the newly baptized and confirmed shared the eucharist with the whole community for the first time.

82. In general, the pattern of a long catechumenate, followed by a more intense preparation in the weeks before the celebration of baptism, confirmation and eucharist at Easter seems to reflect the practice throughout the early church during the Third Century. How was faith related to becoming a Christian? In the *Apostolic Tradition*, the rigor of the pre-baptismal instruction and the interrogatory aspect of the rite itself called for an understanding and profession of faith. And yet, this same text is the first unambiguous and positive affirmation of the baptism of infants. Fifteen years earlier, Tertullian’s words against infant baptism imply that infants were being baptized already then, but Tertullian argued against this practice. In contrast to his view, the second section of Cyprian of Carthage’s Letter Sixty-four (c.253) tells of a synod of sixty-seven bishops, held shortly after 250, which condemned the opinion that baptism be celebrated on the eighth day after birth, following the biblical pattern for circumcision. In the decision of the synod, baptism should not be put off beyond the second or third day, since infants too need to be freed from original sin. During this period, the personal expression of faith was obviously bound to the process of becoming a Christian, both in the way in which the rites of preparation and initiation are celebrated (*The Apostolic Tradition*) and in the theology of baptism (Tertullian). Yet, at the very same time, positive evidence of and support for the baptism of infants first appears and continues to grow.
83. While Tertullian saw in this a contradiction between theology and practice, his view did not prove convincing to the church as a whole. This may be in part because even some who greatly admired him, such as Cyprian, believed that baptism provided the benefits of release from the state of original sin, birth into new life in Christ and the possibility of entering the kingdom of God, which should not be denied to infants. This conviction seems related to how many early Christians understood Jesus’ words to Nicodemus (“Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” [Jn 3:5]), and his missionary mandate to the disciples (“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [Mt 28:19]). “As nothing else is effected when infants are baptized except that they are incorporated into the church, in other words that they are united with the body and members of Christ,” Augustine saw their baptism as a reflection of Christian faith that they too needed to be so incorporated and thereby freed from original sin and protected from its effects (see Augustine’s *On Merits and*

*Forgiveness of Sinners and on the Baptism of Infants*, III,4,7 [c.412; ]). The same writer also affirmed that the practice of baptizing infants went back to the apostles themselves (*On Merits and Forgiveness of Sinners and on the Baptism of Infants*, I,26,39)

84. During the Fourth Century, there is abundant literature about the event of becoming a Christian and how believers understood the meaning of that change. The stages leading to full admission into the community generally followed the pattern sketched out earlier in *The Apostolic Tradition*. Particularly inspirational and illuminating for us today are the various courses of instructions prepared by bishops and other pastors for the purpose of introducing aspirants into the faith and life of the church. This material will be mentioned later in our report when we discuss the topics of discipleship and formation (Section 4). It may suffice to note here that these instructions were global in scope. They dealt in depth with matters of faith, especially in recalling the principal doctrines of the Bible and in explaining the various articles of the Creed. But they also addressed the moral and spiritual life expected of a Christian, commenting on the commandments and other principles of good behavior and explaining the virtues of faith, hope and charity, as well as the fundamentals of Christian prayer.
85. All of this illustrates that the church during the patristic period fully accepted and tried to put into practice the biblical teaching about the importance of faith in the process of becoming a Christian. It is not surprising that many writers, from Tertullian to Augustine, call baptism the sacrament of faith: *sacramentum fidei*. It is also clear that the development of the catechumenate highlighted the communal nature of the process by which people became Christians. The bishop and many other members of the community were very much involved in the preparation of the candidates for initiation at Easter. There was such a deep connection between the celebration of initiation and the life of the community that the creeds as we know them can be said to have developed in order to satisfy the need of having a short, global profession of faith at baptism. The way in which the sequence of liturgical celebrations each year came to be structured owes much to the development of the rites of initiation.

#### **D. Contemporary Reflections on Faith and Christian Initiation**

86. Both the Bible and the patristic literature affirm a deep relation between faith and the series of events by which one becomes a Christian. We have examined what these sources say about this theme in the hope of deepening our agreement about it and bringing into greater clarity what may still divide us.
87. As regards Scripture, we can rejoice in the fact that the New Testament provides much data that reinforces what we hold in common concerning entry into the Christian life. At the same time, our shared exploration has revealed differences in the way we interpret some biblical texts. Catholics see implied references to baptism in certain texts that Pentecostals may not. One example, already mentioned above in par. 47 and 77, is



John 3:5-6: “Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.’” Catholics see this text as tying the new birth to baptism, whereas many Pentecostals see its reference to birth “by water” as speaking only of natural birth, its purpose being to highlight the need for a second, spiritual birth. Because of such interpretations, Catholics identify baptism as absolutely central to Christian Initiation, since they believe it to be implied in many New Testament references to the whole conversion complex and therefore see the whole dynamic process of redemption as intimately related to baptism itself. They see baptism specifically implied in such passages as 1 Cor 6:11 (“But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God”) or Titus 3:5 (“he saved us... according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit”). Pentecostals see these passages as certainly referring to conversion, the washing as a reference to the blood of Christ, but not necessarily focusing specifically on baptism.

88. Our communities also differ on the implications we draw from our interpretations of New Testament language regarding baptism. For Catholics, baptism is seen as actually bringing about the realities it signifies. Pentecostals embrace the necessity of baptism as a point of obedience to the command of Jesus (Mk 16:16; Matt 28:19). For some Pentecostals baptism is only an outward but necessary sign, carried out in obedience to Jesus as a public testimony of a transformation that has already occurred by grace through faith. Other Pentecostals attribute more effectiveness to the baptism itself, seeing it not only as a sign or testimony but also as an ordained means for the communication of forgiving grace, delivering power and saving life, effected by the power of the Spirit. But most Pentecostals do not see baptism as the means of regeneration. Regeneration is effected when, through faith, the Word and Spirit beget new life within a believer. Baptism apart from this dynamic cannot effect new birth. In light of the fact that some Pentecostals may neglect baptism, the Pentecostal members of the dialogue team want to encourage all Pentecostals to consider the clear Scriptural call for all to be baptized (cf. Acts 2:38). In addition, while water baptism itself cannot save apart from faith, in the New Testament it is closely linked to the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), to effective deliverance from the power of sin (Rom 6:1-7) and to salvation itself (Mk 16:16; 1 Pet 3:21).
89. Clearly, our study of the biblical texts has not resolved all of the disagreements which still divide us concerning the nature, timing, stages and communal dimensions of becoming a Christian. Some texts about baptism suggest to many that it is an effective rite, the transformative power of which actually changes the person who is baptized. “And baptism, which this [Noah's ark] prefigured, now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...” (1 Pet 3:20-21). “...When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised

him from the dead” (Col 2:12). Or again, “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:26). This might support a sacramental interpretation of baptism, which acknowledges both its efficacy and its necessity for salvation, as believed by Catholics. On the other hand, other verses speak about salvation in Christ without mentioning baptism: “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe with the heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with his heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the lips and so is saved” (Rom 10:8-10). This might support a view which sees baptism less as an efficacious “sacrament” and more as an ordinance of the Lord which is to be obeyed and which confirms the more fundamental saving event, which is belief and a profession of faith, as believed by most Pentecostals. In light of such examples, it is possible that some of the diversity of our focus and emphasis simply reflects the diversity of focus and emphasis present within the New Testament itself, a healthy tension that ought not to be artificially or otherwise inappropriately resolved.

90. But it is likely more than such a biblically warranted diversity. Catholics and Pentecostals both read Scripture in the light of faith under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But we also bring different presuppositions to our interpretation of individual passages. For example, some passages, such as 1 Cor 12:13 (“For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were made to drink of one Spirit”; see also Gal 3:26-28 or Titus 3:5-7), could be interpreted in a variety of ways. Is it not possible that a concern to avoid a supposed formal or mechanical approach to salvation may make some less open to see a possible reference to water baptism in such texts? Or, on the other hand, might not a concern to affirm a sacramental understanding of salvation make others less open to consider the possibility that such texts may not be referring to water baptism? Because we have not yet explicitly identified the nature, number and function of our presuppositions, a valuable result of the present phase of dialogue is that of earmarking hermeneutics as a topic for serious consideration in a future phase of Pentecostal-Catholic conversations. Even at this preliminary stage, we recognize that Catholics interpret Scripture within the broad framework outlined by Vatican II’s Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei verbum*, which places the interpretation of any individual text within the context of its origins and subsequent understanding within the Christian Tradition throughout the ages. The official teaching of bishops in apostolic succession or “magisterium” exercises a decisive role in discerning the legitimacy of the interpretations of the Scripture that emerge from the reflection of exegetes, theologians and the entire people of God. For Pentecostals, the Bible, as illuminated by the Holy Spirit, is considered to be authoritative for serving as the guide for Christian belief and practice. At the same time, there exists both a kind of Pentecostal “tradition” as well as an authority of discernment exercised by competent ministers and decision-making bodies that serve to differentiate legitimate from illegitimate interpretations of the Bible. Our common

consideration of scriptural texts relative to becoming a Christian has placed in relief the need to explore together the similarities and differences of our hermeneutical presuppositions.

91. What might the patristic data contribute to our project of deepening agreement and clarifying differences between Pentecostals and Catholics concerning how faith is related to becoming a Christian? First of all, with regard to the role and nature of baptism, the patristic witness tends to build upon those Scripture passages that came to be interpreted as emphasizing the effectiveness of baptism. The catechetical instructions speak of the new birth that occurs when one is baptized. Nevertheless, some Christian parents chose not to have their children baptized, including parents of some children who would eventually become very prominent church leaders. This seems to be not because Christians had doubts about the benefit of receiving the rites of initiation, but rather because they wanted their children to be prepared to persevere in the effects of those rites. The efficacy of the sacraments was seen very much as a result of the working of the Holy Spirit who, through the rites, touched the lives of those who received these sacraments. In this patristic understanding of the activity of the Holy Spirit as the basis of the saving power of baptism and the eucharist, Pentecostals and Catholics may discover a common resource for greater reflection about how Christ could use the rites which came to be called 'sacraments' as means for his powerful salvific action in the lives of people. In particular, the linkage between sacraments and the Spirit could allow both Pentecostals and Catholics to profess together that, through the reception of baptism, a significant action of God occurs in the life of the one who is baptized. Becoming a Christian required a transformation of life, which meant also a serious effort to cooperate with God's grace in such a way that one truly lived a good and holy life.
92. On the timing of the reception of baptism, the development of the catechumenate would seem to favor the baptism of those capable of making a personal profession of faith and old enough to undergo a strenuous ascetical and intellectually engaging process. Furthermore, the developments in the rites of Christian Initiation during the Fourth Century should not be considered in isolation from the very pressing need of responding to the many formerly pagan adults who now wished to become Christians and to be received into the church. In such a situation, the fashioning of those rites in a way suitable to the initiation of adults was imperative. That being said, there is, nonetheless, also clear evidence of the baptism of infants during the same period.
93. The stages involved in becoming a Christian are more sharply delineated in the patristic period than they are in the New Testament. The pattern of professing Trinitarian faith and triple immersion during baptism, followed by an imposition of hands for the imparting of the Holy Spirit, and culminating in the celebration of the eucharist, seems firmly established by the time of the catechetical instructions of the Fourth Century. The Bible does not provide detailed information about such a process nor about the

place of the eucharist in it. Since the New Testament presents the Christian community as one which celebrates the “breaking of bread” one could infer that, were a Christian not participating in the Lord’s supper (cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7; 1 Cor 10:14-11:1; 11:17-34), which Catholics understand to be the eucharist, he or she would not be integrated fully into the life of the church. While both of our communities would make such an inference, Catholics would link the partaking of the table of the Lord precisely with Christian Initiation, as an essential culminating moment of the process of becoming a Christian, while Pentecostals tend not to do so.

94. Regarding the church’s role when new members became Christians, the patristic data suggests that the post-apostolic community built upon and further developed the initial witness to the communal nature of becoming Christian already seen in the New Testament. Instead of missionary apostles like Peter and Paul who, supported by their fellow Christians, took the lead in inviting listeners to faith and baptism, now every local church is organized, from its pastor-bishop to the other members of the community, to participate in the preparation and initiation of new members. The relation between community and initiation is so strong that the church’s very creed and ordering of worship throughout the year are to some degree determined by the initiation of new members.
95. These observations suggest that the patristic material, on its own, does not resolve all differences between Pentecostals and Catholics about the place of faith in the series of events by which a person becomes a Christian. On the one hand, it seems that most Fathers understood this process in a sacramental way. Becoming a Christian involved baptism, the imparting of the Spirit and the reception of the eucharist as essential parts of the process. At the same time, faith was essential to Christian Initiation. The fact that the faith of the whole community was involved in the preparation, acceptance and ongoing formation of new members, along with the conviction that the saving effects of baptism should not be denied to the children of believers, were reasons supporting the practice of baptizing infants. All of these points could serve to support the Catholic understanding of becoming a Christian and the way that faith is related to that event and process. At the same time, the fundamental orientation of the catechumenate toward the profession of one’s faith before being baptized, along with the facts that many individuals postponed their own baptism and that the children of Christian parents were not always baptized, all could be cited in support of a Pentecostal view of becoming a Christian and the way that faith relates to that event or sequence of events, particularly to their conviction that some transformation needs to occur prior to baptism. For Pentecostals, baptism is a symbolic enactment of the divine drama, which makes the saving deeds of Christ present; it is an identification with the dying and rising of Christ. Thus, they acknowledge its power, without using language such as that of ‘effectiveness’ to describe it. Catholics acknowledge the development of such language over time but see it rooted already in the biblical teaching about becoming a Christian.

Today the more evocative language of symbol and mystery is also used to describe the efficacy of the sacraments.

96. How might the biblical and patristic material we have considered deepen our agreement about the role of faith in becoming a Christian? Certainly it confirms that the two cannot and should not be separated. There is biblical and patristic material that can be interpreted either in favor of the view that becoming a Christian is primarily an event or in favor of the view that it is primarily a series of events comprising a long process. In either case it is by divine grace that the human being is saved and sanctified. Faith, which is the very heart of discipleship, is God's gift. The individual must receive this gift and believe in order to become a Christian. At the same time, the faith of the individual is related in various ways to the community of believers. Much of the biblical and patristic evidence can be interpreted as suggesting that God uses the church as an instrument for proclaiming Christ and thereby inviting individuals to faith. Both the New Testament and the patristic writings show the believing community as assisting those who accept this proclamation with an open heart to understand more fully the message, to cooperate with God's grace of conversion and to begin to live the new life of Gospel discipleship. In both the New Testament and the Fathers, the believing community not only shares its faith with those becoming Christians but also celebrates with them the rites of baptism, the laying on of hands and the breaking of bread. One does not initiate oneself. Faith in Christ and belonging to the community that he founded and constituted as his Body go together. In that sense, while becoming a Christian clearly includes a personal dimension, there could never be a radically individualized Christianity comprised of believers who isolate themselves from one another. Furthermore, becoming a Christian requires both the ongoing response of the individual believer to the grace of God as well as his or her commitment to join with the whole community in sharing its faith with yet other persons by means of evangelistic and missionary outreach. Reflecting upon biblical and patristic perspectives about the relation of faith to becoming a Christian could allow Pentecostals and Catholics to affirm together that the church is a communion in faith whose nature is essentially missionary, impelling it to foster the profession of faith by each of its members and to invite into this communion of faith others who do not yet know the joy of believing in Jesus Christ. Our dialogue about the relation of faith to becoming a Christian has allowed us to see in new ways the essential nature of the church as communion (cf. *Perspectives on Koinonia*) and mission (cf. *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness*).

### **III. Christian Formation and Discipleship**

#### **A. Introduction**

97. Discipleship and Christian formation are related terms and are employed in both of our traditions. They are closely connected with faith, conversion and experience. Together

they constitute the foundation of the Christian life; the following of Jesus is at the heart of all Christian discipleship and formation. *Discipleship*, as a category of relationship, expresses more explicitly and directly the personal relationship with Christ. *Christian formation* is intended to convey a dynamic process in the power of the Holy Spirit as it extends to the whole of our existence in Christ and therefore to the transformation of all dimensions of human life. Both take place in a communal context: in the church, both in congregational or parish life, in ecclesial or church-related movements, and in Christian family life.

98. As Catholics and Pentecostals we have found a good measure of convergence in our understanding of discipleship. In the present context both traditions actively engage in practices of discipleship. These have taken shape in our respective programs of ongoing Christian formation and are related to conversion and faith as reviewed in the previous sections. Formation is an on-going process that embraces the whole life of a believer. It begins at the earliest contact with Christian faith, is enhanced in the growing experience of conversion and regeneration, and continues as new believers are called to live a mature Christian life in the community of faith, as empowered by the Holy Spirit.
99. In our dialogue we have discovered that looking together at the biblical and patristic sources on these matters is helpful for a renewed sense of Christian discipleship as we share together our historical and present practices. We hope we may respond more generously to the invitations of the Holy Spirit to follow Christ which our conversations on the Christian life have engendered.

### **B. Biblical Perspectives on Christian Formation and Discipleship**

100. The making of disciples characterized the public ministry of Jesus as it did the Judaism of his day. Even though the relationship between Jesus and his disciples was similar to that between rabbis and their disciples, nevertheless, something new and unique emerges during his ministry. Among the rabbis the common practice was for disciples or students to approach the teacher and to learn from him in study and prayer. For his part, Jesus often took the initiative and called those who became his disciples to follow him. Jesus led the disciples and they followed him in response to his call (Mk1:17-29; Mt 4:19), despite their weakness and failures. They were “to be with him” and “to be sent out” by him on mission. A disciple of Jesus is one who abides with Jesus. The relationship between Jesus and his disciples may be described as one of fellowship or communion. Not all disciples in the gospels leave everything and literally follow him during his itinerant ministry of preaching, teaching and healing. However, the model of the disciple who follows Jesus wherever he may go remains an ideal model for Christians who attempt to follow the risen Lord amid the various circumstances, contexts and commitments of their present life. Communion (“to be with him”) is the foundation of the disciples’ mission (“to be sent out”) and the bond of their communion among themselves. Discipleship therefore embraces not only the recognition of Jesus’

true identity (“Who do you say that I am?” Mk 8:29) but also the identity of the community of disciples as they are formed by Jesus. Jesus embraced as family those who responded to his call since they did God’s will (“Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” Mt 12:49-50). In their journey with him the initial call and lifelong vocation to discipleship deepened and became more costly as Jesus laid before them the challenge of the cross (“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross, and follow me” Mk 8:34) and the attitude of service (“Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all” Mk 9:35) as he himself approached the fulfilment of the Father’s will on Golgotha.

101. The Synoptic Gospels clearly communicate the importance of discipleship as essential to the faith response to Jesus’ proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The images of ‘going with Jesus’, ‘following Jesus’, ‘being with Jesus’ (cf Mk 1:17.20; Mt 4:19), have been very fruitful in the life of the church; they have inspired various forms of spirituality and movements of renewal, and have always exerted an irresistible attraction on Christians. Discipleship is something vital and dynamic; it is ongoing and lived out in many ways by believers of all generations. The disciples follow a Master who fills them with awe (cf. Mk 10:32-34), who always walks ahead of them. The “going behind him” or “following him” of the disciples corresponds to the “preceding them” of the Master. Towards the end of the way, “he went on ahead [of them], going up to Jerusalem” (Lk 19:28; Mk 10:32), where the culminating event of his mission took place. But the cross and the death are not the end of that journey, for on the eve of his death he promises: “But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee” (Mk 14:28; cf. 16:7). Therefore, “to follow” Jesus goes beyond his historical existence.
102. In the synoptic gospels the call to discipleship also takes form in the call to holiness. This requires forsaking all and immediately following Jesus as in the call of the first disciples (Mt 4:18-22). It is also not incidental that in the Gospel of Matthew with its many discourses the call to holiness is communicated in the teaching of Jesus. After the disciples are called and begin to follow Jesus in his tour of preaching and healing throughout Galilee, Jesus gathers them on the mountain and instructs them in the way of life that the kingdom requires. This ‘Sermon on the Mount’ combines beatitude—blessedness in the presence of God—with moral transformation and maturity—“you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48).
103. The Gospel of John likewise presents Christian discipleship as communion or fellowship with Jesus. The first disciples are invited to “come and see,” to stay with Jesus (Jn 1:35-51). They will be present wherever their master is present (“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also” Jn 12:26) and leads to the profound teaching that abiding in Christ is the source of discipleship (Jn 15:1-8). To abide in Christ is also to grow and bear fruit. In this way the Father is glorified by the life of the disciple (Jn 15:8). Consistent with this deep spiritual reality

of “abiding” is the revelation of our participation in the life of the triune God (for Son and Father mutually abide in one another – Jn 17:21). It is also the manifestation of Christian community as a communion of love (“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34-35, cf. Jn 15:12).

104. The revelation and promise of the Paraclete, as Jesus calls Him in this Gospel (Jn 14-16), ensures that this model of discipleship will continue to be the norm for all Christians. The Spirit not only teaches and leads into all truth but witnesses to Jesus (Jn 15:26), and convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn 16:8-12). “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you” (Jn 14:26). The Spirit will abide with and in the disciples as they had abided with Jesus (Jn 14:17). Jesus who possessed the Spirit without measure (Jn 4:34) invites all to drink of the Spirit (Jn 7:37-39) as he passes into his own glorification through death and resurrection (Jn 17:1). Both Catholics and Pentecostals deeply value the presence of the Holy Spirit as the key to their ongoing discipleship to Jesus.
105. Discipleship in the Acts of the Apostles entails an active faith response to the Christian proclamation. A multiplicity of expressions are used to describe this, which is the beginning of discipleship, including: (1) listening to and receiving the Word of the Lord in preaching and teaching (Acts 11:26, 13:14; 15:17, 17:11-12; 18:11, 28:28), (2) believing in the person of Jesus, the Lord, the Christ (cf. Acts 10:43, 11:17, 19:4, 20:21), (3) conversion and repentance (cf. Acts 3:19, 26:20). This faith response to the announcement of Jesus Christ changes one’s life and praxis. Luke’s portrait of the early community presents the interrelated dimensions of Christian discipleship and formation. According to Luke, the community of disciples “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...[with] many wonders and signs...done by the apostles” and those “who believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:42-44). The church in the power of the Spirit attracted many people as they were drawn to Christ. They enjoyed “the goodwill of all the people” (Acts 2:47), “the people held them in high esteem” (Acts 5:13) and “great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33). Therefore, the church life of the disciples was the visible and powerful sign of the saving power of the risen Lord.
106. The Acts of the Apostles also strongly reveals the intimate association of the Holy Spirit with Christian discipleship, a theme that can be said to be characteristic of the entire New Testament. The Spirit who filled and anointed Jesus is the same Spirit that the risen Lord sends from the Father on Pentecost to his disciples gathered in prayer. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit empowers the disciples to be constituted as church in missionary witness “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of



the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Day of Pentecost itself is an event which initiates and shows the profound link between the church and evangelization. The coming of the Holy Spirit is essential for the disciples to be church, a church in mission. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in power attracts Jews from all nations (the first step of the gathering of all nations) into this new community. Three thousand respond to Peter’s sermon and are joined to the community through repentance, baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-41). The Holy Spirit continues to guide and empower the missionary task throughout the narrative. Decisive movements in missionary expansion are often marked by additional outpourings of the Spirit (Acts 8, the Samaritans, Acts 10, the Gentile Cornelius and his house). The spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Paul’s preaching without hindrance in Rome (Acts 28:31) is the work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables the spread of the Gospel through a variety of methods. The Spirit’s works include opening doors for evangelization, guiding the apostles, calling Gentiles, empowering witness under persecution and establishing new churches. There are prophecies, signs and wonders, healing and speaking in tongues. The disciples are “filled with”, “baptized in” – totally immersed in – the Spirit.

107. In the New Testament epistles, the Christians are never called “disciples” of Jesus, but “brethren” (Rom 8:29), “saints” (1 Cor 1:2), and “chosen” (2 Jn 1). This does not indicate a rupture, but rather a necessary evolution based on the new situation. But even without using that term, the concept or the ideal of Christian discipleship has by no means been lost.
108. Paul presents what we have called Christian discipleship and formation in a dynamic sense that embraces Christ, the Holy Spirit and the church. Christian formation takes place in the present day of salvation while at the same time it looks in hope to its future fulfilment; between the first coming of Jesus, who has renewed humanity and creation by the power of the Spirit, and his second advent, when all things shall be transformed into the image of his glory. It is present and yet future not only in the history of salvation that extends to the entire cosmos, but of every person individually, of every Christian reached by the good news of salvation, who received it and has set out to follow Christ. Christian existence is characterized by this tension between the first encounter with Christ and full conformity to him (cf. Phil 3:21; Rom 8:29); to describe the relationship of Christians with Christ, Paul uses profound expressions such as “to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29; Phil 3:10), to “bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor 15:49), to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; cf. Col 3:10; Eph 4:24). Christians live between the indicative (what they *are*), and the imperative (what they *should become*).
109. Paul understands the Christian life as new life in Christ. He contrasts the “old humanity” (Romans 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9) and “old things” (2 Cor 5:17) with that which is new. That deep transformation, which has already taken place, and tends at the same time to full maturity, is often described by Paul through expressions that

emphasize the new: “newness of life” (Rom 6:4), “new creation” (Gal 6:15); “new self” (Col 3:9-10). “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), you “have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator” (Col 3:10), “You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, ... and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:22-24). “In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:26). Paul himself had this experience of transformation. What happened to him on the road to Damascus and his subsequent entry into the city (cf. Acts 9:3-18), happens in a sense to every believer who encounters the risen Christ through faith and baptism.

110. For Paul transformation is wrought by the Holy Spirit. “All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). The indwelling of the Spirit (Rom 8:9, 11; 2 Cor 3:15; 2 Tim 1:14) enables a radical following of Christ, to the point that Paul can testify that in being grasped by Christ he considers everything else as rubbish in light of the surpassing knowledge of Christ (Phil 3:7-11). Such a transformative identification with Christ is not only an attitude of faith—“May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 6:14)—but is lived out in daily life and apostolic work and ministry, the context of the pursuit of holiness (1 Thess 5:22-23; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Cor 7:1)—“Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies” (2 Cor 4:10).
111. Paul’s view of discipleship does not only concern individual Christians as they grow in newness of life, but also focuses on the growth of the whole church community, the “building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). The church, the body of Christ, is in a process of constant maturation: it tends to fullness, when all things will be “gather[ed] up in Him” (Eph 1:10) and when God will be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). As the disciples were chosen by Jesus from varied backgrounds, so the church of all times is characterized by the diversity of her members. The church exists and grows with a variety and multiplicity of gifts. Paul’s teaching on the gifts includes notions of both gift and ministry (1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12; Eph 4). In the life of the church, the Spirit distributes his gifts to everyone. “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7). “All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (1 Cor 12:11). This spiritual growth which the gifts promote is not linked to the extraordinary character of the charismata one has received or exercised, but to the love (*agape*) with which they are exercised, the love that the Holy Spirit has poured into the heart of every Christian (cf. Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 13). Gifts and ministries are for the purpose of edification, building up the church and inviting its members to greater maturity in conformity to the image of

Christ. Christian formation in this context presents a model of unity in plurality keeping in mind that the diversity of gifts, ministries and works is consistent with the same Spirit and Lord for it is “the same God who activates all of them in everyone” (1 Cor 12:4-6).

### C. Patristic Perspectives on Christian Formation and Discipleship

112. Over the centuries the context changed and the church grew and developed. Reflection on and witness to the Christological and pneumatological dimensions of Christian discipleship continued in the early church in the period subsequent to the era of the apostles. “The boundless riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8) are the source for the life of discipleship. All persons, all life journeys find their model and perfection in Christ. The descriptions of discipleship were varied during the patristic era.

#### 1. Diverse Ways of Following Christ

113. The first centuries of the church were times of persecution, so *following Christ in the way of martyrdom* was not unusual for the early Christian community. Many Christians offered a witness of faith and love at the cost of their lives. Christ was present to the martyrs in their witness to the point of death both as example and as the very strength of their perseverance. Therefore, they fulfilled in their martyrdom his exhortation to follow him by carrying the cross. The first record in the post-apostolic period is found in Ignatius of Antioch. According to him, the perfect disciple of Christ is one who follows him to the very end even to death. On the way to Rome he reflected about his imminent martyrdom: “now I begin to be a disciple” (Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans* 5,3 [written prior to 108]) and when the world shall no longer see his body, he will then “truly be a disciple of Christ” (*Letter to the Romans* 4,2). This is also seen in the first *Acts of Martyrdom*. Origen, who dedicated an *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, about 235, to one of his disciples, Ambrose of Caesarea, and who suffered greatly during the persecution, described the future martyr as one who walks behind Christ, the *archmartus* (archmartyr), who precedes and suffers together with the martyr (Origen, *Exhortation to Martyrdom* 42). Cyprian, in addition to the texts of the Gospels, quotes 1 Pet 2:21: “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps”, by which he presents martyrdom as the most perfect form of following Christ. In a letter written prior to 249 to some confessors that were in prison, Cyprian writes: “To all of whom the Lord also in Himself has appointed an example, teaching that none shall attain to His kingdom but those who have followed Him in His own way, saying, ‘He that loveth his life in this world shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.’ And again: ‘Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.’” (*Letter* 80 ).

114. The love of Christ nurtures a deep missionary desire and a commitment to make him known, so that to *follow Christ in missionary commitment* results also in an effort to find new followers of Christ; disciples make other disciples. This sense of mission is well known in the texts of the Apologists. About the year 150, Justin writes: “We have now, through Jesus Christ, learned to despise those who are called gods. ... Those who believe these things we pity....” (Justin, *Apology* I.25.1). “We endeavor to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the ruler of all” (*Apology* I. 14.7). About 248, Origen writes: “Christians do not neglect, as far as in them lies, to take measures to disseminate their doctrine throughout the whole world. Some of them, accordingly, have made it their business to travel not only through cities, but even villages and countrysides, that they might make converts to God” (Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.9). Not a few Fathers tell the story of their own conversion so as to invite others to do the same. Missionary commitment is not limited to activities of evangelization only, but it includes also prayer and the witness of a holy life. Prior to 108, Ignatius of Antioch exhorts the Christians of Ephesus: “And pray without ceasing in behalf of other men. For there is in them hope of repentance that they may attain to God. See, then, that they be instructed by your works, if in no other way” (Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 10:1).
115. The Alexandrian Fathers, influenced by the philosophy and ethics of their time, especially by the stoic ideal of *apatheia*, already saw true disciples of Jesus in those who endeavour to resist both sin and the tendency to sin, and who desire perfection of charity. *Following Christ in ascetic and monastic life* also emerged as a way of radical discipleship. Asceticism was a strong ideal within the context of monastic life although it could also inform the lives of all Christians. Human perfection from a Christian perspective consists of the imitation of Christ, who is the *paradeioma* (type) and *prototupos* (model) for every human being. This idea will then develop further in the Cappadocian Fathers, particularly in Gregory of Nyssa. The motivation to follow Christ and to live more intensely the life of discipleship gave rise to monasticism which flourished throughout the ancient church, in the east first and then in the west. For example, prior to 379 Basil, one of the founders of monasticism in the east, writes: “For, we must deny ourselves and take up the cross of Christ and thus follow him. Now, self-denial involves the entire forgetfulness of the past and surrender of one’s will [...]. Readiness to die for Christ, the mortification of one’s members on this earth, preparedness for every danger which might befall us on behalf of Christ’s name, detachment from this life – this is to take up one’s cross” (*Longer Rule* 6).<sup>12</sup> In the west, about 530, Benedict similarly exhorts his monks to “prefer nothing whatever to Christ” (*Rule of Benedict* 72,11).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> English from St. Basil, *Ascetical Works*, Sister M. Monica Wagner, C.S.C, translator, New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1950, 246-247.

<sup>13</sup> English from *The Rule of St. Benedict*, Timothy Fry et alii, editors, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1981, 295.

116. *Following Christ in daily life* as his disciple meant living one's whole life in the imitation of Jesus through the sanctification of daily life. The prospect of walking every day in his footsteps had an eschatological perspective as well; one follows him now in order to follow him through death into heavenly glory. Various themes of the Johannine tradition are often quoted to underline the eschatological aspect: "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also" (Jn 12:26), "These follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Rev 14:4). Many patristic texts on that subject are found in Greek Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen and John Chrysostom, as well as in Latin Fathers, such as Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine.

## 2. The Holy Spirit and Discipleship

117. As in the New Testament early Christian writings also recognize a strong pneumatological dimension in their understanding of discipleship. They used a variety of concepts and images to describe the work of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of persons, some important ones being (1) regeneration; (2) sanctification; (3) empowerment.
118. One comprehensive image associated with the Holy Spirit and Christian transformation was that of new life or regeneration. It was a definite event for believers in the liturgical life of the church and can only be understood as part of the mystery of salvation. It was generally associated with water baptism and the forgiveness of sins. About 215, Hippolytus referred to baptism as the "bath of regeneration by the Holy Spirit" by which sins were remitted (Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 21). It was the Spirit according to Novatian, writing before 250, "who effects with water the second birth, as a certain seed of divine generation..." (Novatian, *Treatise concerning the Trinity*, 29). Likewise Cyprian rejected the baptism of schismatics because they should "consider and understand that spiritual birth cannot be without the Spirit..." (Cyprian, *Letters* 74, 8; [prior to 249]). So with Irenaeus, writing about 180, the individual who "receives the quickening Spirit, shall find life" (Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 5,12,2). The new life associated with the Spirit permeated the inner and outer realms of the individual affecting both soul and body. Hence, about 166, Pseudo-Clement spoke of the life given to the flesh, "Such life and incorruption this flesh can partake of, when the Holy Spirit is joined to it" (*The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 14).
119. A second image of transformation closely associated with the Holy Spirit by the early church was sanctification. In early Christian thought the Holy Spirit was the agent whereby the individual was sanctified (Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 5,11, Origen, *On First Principles* 1,3,5 and 1,1,3 [c.220–230]; and Tertullian, *On Baptism* 4 [c.198–200]). It was the Spirit who gave believers "an insatiable desire for doing good" (Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians* 2 [c. 96]), having remitted their sins (Tertullian, *On Baptism* 4) and returned them to the pristine nature for which they were created, refashioning them into the very likeness of God (Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*

5. 10; Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, [16, 73-74]; Tertullian, *On Baptism* 5). In the words of Irenaeus, those who live by the Spirit of God “shall be properly called both ‘pure’ and ‘spiritual,’ and ‘those living to God,’ because they possess the Spirit of the Father, who purifies man, and raises him up to the life of God” (*Against the Heresies* 5,9,2). By the Holy Spirit the individual was understood to participate in the very holiness of God (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7,14 [prior to 215]). Origen wrote: “On this account, therefore, is the grace of the Holy Spirit present, that those beings which are not holy in their essence may be rendered holy by participating in it” (*On First Principles* 1,3,8 [c.220–230]). For Clement of Alexandria, writing prior to 215, this was actualized in the eucharist for “they who by faith partake of it are sanctified both in body and soul” (*The Instructor* 2,2). But most often the discussion of sanctification was associated with baptism, “the mark of complete purification” (Origen, *Against Celsus* 3,51 [c.248]).

120. The patristic writers of the pre-Nicene period reflected both Pauline and Lucan priorities in their description of the Holy Spirit’s empowering work in discipleship and formation. For example, in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, written prior to 160, the Spirit’s empowerment was seen to involve both the more internal working of the Spirit in regeneration and sanctification, and a more externally observable aspect of the Spirit’s empowering work.

### 3. Christian Formation in Catechesis and Catechumenate

121. In the first centuries, Christian formation took place primarily through catechesis in a broad sense. From the third century on, the developing catechumenate becomes the privileged place of formation.

#### a. Catechesis: Educating in the Faith

122. The verb *katécheō*, like the substantive *katéchésis*, has been used in the New Testament to signify both the act of teaching and its content. After the first generations passed, during the recognition and reception of the canon of the New Testament, catechesis was primarily a commentary on the Bible with application to life, in conjunction with homilies of instruction during liturgical gatherings. Catechesis was, therefore, a full pastoral activity, based on verbal communication and touching deeply on various aspects of Christian existence: reflection on the content of the faith, its vital realization, liturgical celebrations, witness, and ecclesial communion.
123. There is a rich production of catechetical works in the patristic literature. A brief survey of this literature points to a variety of emphases adapted to the different historical, cultural and pastoral contexts. When the first heresies began to threaten the church, Christian formation stressed especially the **doctrinal aspect** of faith. For example, in his *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* written about 190, Irenaeus sought to preserve the

integrity of the faith derived from its sources and proclaimed and taught as the history of salvation. In the third century when Bible study and theological schools flourished catechesis became more **Bible focused**. For Origen, who was the first to give a catechesis through the systematic interpretation of entire Books of the Scripture, Christian formation consists of an ever deeper knowledge of the Scripture, a knowledge that is not intellectual in a detached sense, but leading to union with God. In his *On First Principles* (c.220–230), Origen presents not only the fundamental themes of the Christian faith but also a method of spiritual exegesis that serves as the basis for the knowledge of faith and for the perfection of life. This approach to formation is continued in the Alexandrian school and in all those Fathers who were influenced by Origen. Special **attention to praxis** is a constant accent in the Christian formation of the early church. This moral accent can be seen already in the catechesis of the two ways presented in the *Didache* (prior to 120), in Clement of Alexandria's *The Instructor* (prior to 215), and later on in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the writings of John Chrysostom in the East and Ambrose in the West. Even with many differences of style and cultural background, these catechetical instructions aimed at orienting and motivating the choices and practical behaviour in life. They sought to move the heart, not only the mind, and to lead to liturgy, to the sacraments, and to service in the ecclesial community as well as in the world.

124. A special area of catechesis is linked to the instruction and **preparation for the sacraments**. Typical of this approach are the *Catechetical Lectures* of Cyril of Jerusalem (c.350), aimed at accompanying the faithful during the phase before and after the initiates receive the sacraments of initiation – baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist. They explain the symbol of the faith, the rite, and the deep meaning of the initiation. Tertullian's *On Baptism* (c. 198-200), Ambrose's *On the Sacraments* (387) and *On the Mysteries* (387), and Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Catechetical Homilies* (c. 347-348) are similar in focus. Besides a systematic pre-baptismal instruction, Cyril of Jerusalem offers a unique model of “**mystagogical catechesis**”. This catechesis, given immediately after baptism, was designed to lead the neophytes to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the celebrated mystery. It assisted believers to enter more deeply into communion with God, to penetrate into the spiritual and mystical depth of faith, to progress in what many Eastern Fathers referred to as “*deification*” in Christ through the Spirit.
125. Unique in the patristic literature is Augustine's *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed* (c.399), a small manual for the catechesis of simple people that not only focuses on the contents of the faith, but also indicates a **method** by which to give the teaching. He recommends the narrative way to present the history of salvation so that it becomes attractive and accessible to all. The transmission of the faith must engender hope. The catechist is one who brings joy, precisely because he announces the good news. When he speaks, he seeks “not to be ponderous, but to express himself in a pleasant manner” (2,3). In addition, Augustine notes that there is a sharing of faith and love between the

catechist and those being catechized, and he declares: “those being catechized say through our mouth the things they listen to, and we learn from them the things that we teach them” (12,17).

## **b. Catechumenate: Bringing Candidates into Full Communion in the Church**

126. Following his command to “make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19), Jesus’ disciples preached and instructed new believers in the faith from the very beginning. Aware that discipleship is a gradual process that transforms the entire person, they sought to develop a more structured itinerary for Christian formation. The threats of persecution and the presence of heresies since the second century made this more necessary. Later because of the influx of new followers and the need to discern over time the authenticity of the faith and perseverance of the candidates, the church gave a more stable structure to the pattern of formation that would come to be called catechumenate.
127. Among the witnesses who have emphasized the need for a period of formation for those wanting to become Christian, we find Tertullian and Origen. For Tertullian, writing about 192, baptism is “a sealing of the faith”; that is, the culmination of a process which is preceded by “approaching to the faith” and “entering into the faith” (cf *On Penance*, 6). Origen insists on the inner preparation. Baptism is certainly a gift of God, but it becomes effective only if there is a true change in the life of the person: “Baptism for the remission of sins is received by those who cease to sin. But if anyone came to the bath of baptism while persisting in sin, for him or her there is no remission of sins. Therefore, I beseech you: do not come to the baptism without a careful preparation and without a deeper reflection; first show ‘works that are worthy of the conversion’” (*Homily on the Gospel of Luke*, 21,4 [233-234]).<sup>14</sup>
128. The Fourth Century has been called the “golden age” of the catechumenate. This can be attributed in part to the toleration and gradual adoption of Christianity by the Roman Empire after 313. Such a large number of former adherents to the old Roman religion now sought entrance into the Christian Church that, during the Easter vigil in some large cities, thousands of people were baptized each year. The fundamental stages outlined in Hippolytus’ *Apostolic Tradition* (c. 215), continued to be followed: enrollment after being examined for motivation and uprightness of life; a two to three year catechumenate in which the candidates were called *auditores* (listeners) and gradually learned the Christian faith; enrollment for baptism at the beginning of Lent, from which point the catechumens were called *competentes* (competent) or *electi* (elected or chosen) and began the intensive period of preparation; the celebration of the rites of initiation at Easter; and the explanation of the sacraments during the week following Easter.

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<sup>14</sup> Our English version of this text is based on the following critical edition and French translation: Origène, *Homélie sur S. Luc*, H. Crouzel, F. Fournier and P. Périchon, translators, “Sources Chrétiennes 87,” Paris: Cerf, 1998, 294-295.



129. A peculiarity of this century was a tendency to prolong the catechumenate for a long period. This reflects both the church's high esteem of baptism and the catechumen's deep respect for the calling to discipleship. During the Fourth Century, quite a number of illustrious Fathers of the church, born into Christian families, were not baptized until they reached adulthood, including Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose, Jerome, Rufinus, Paulinus of Nola and Augustine. One clear explanation of why baptism was postponed in the cases of these famous church leaders is that given by Augustine in Chapter 11 of Book I of his *Confessions*, where he states that his mother, Monica, felt it better that he receive baptism only after the "waves of temptation", which she foresaw would assail her son in his youth, had passed.
130. The fact that there was a more intense period of preparation for the rites of initiation in the final weeks before Easter led to the writing of catechetical lectures by some of the greatest patristic authors: Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechetical Lectures* (c.350); Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Catechetical Homilies* (c.347-348); John Chrysostom's *Baptismal Instructions* (c.390); Ambrose' *On the Sacraments* (387) and *On the Mysteries* (387); Gregory of Nyssa's *Catechetical Discourse* (385); and Augustine's *On the Catechizing of the Uninstructed* (399). These voices represent a wide geographical range where Christians were known to be, suggesting a wide-spread usage of the following approach to the practice of becoming a Christian in these early centuries. The *Diary of a Pilgrimage* by Egeria, a wealthy lady who visited the holy land in the early 400's, offers a scenario of Christian Initiation at that time. Catechetical instruction was given to the candidates for baptism three hours a day during the seven weeks before Easter! This instruction began with an overview of the events of salvation history as recounted in the Scriptures. The final two weeks before baptism at Easter were devoted to the explanation of the creed, which was handed over to the candidates (*traditio symboli* was the expression used for the presentation and explanation of the creed to those soon to be admitted to the church) and then "given back" to the bishop before undergoing the rites of initiation (*redditio symboli*, an expression which suggests that those becoming Christians had to be able to recite and to explain the fundamental meaning of the creed). Finally, during the week after Easter, the bishop explained the meaning of the sacraments which had just been received. Scripture, creed and sacrament were the overall topics covered in the baptismal instruction. But the instruction was far from simply "doctrinal"; it included a strong spiritual dimension, with such features as discussion of prayer, especially the "Our Father" also known as "The Lord's Prayer", and instruction about the moral obligations of living as a Christian.
131. The concrete structure of the catechumenate is mainly determined by the theological reflection on baptism. Three theological currents concur to form a platform on which will then develop the concrete structure of the catechumenate: The first current is shown in the *Didache*: through baptism, one commits oneself to follow the way of life. A second current is expressed by Pseudo-Clement (*The Second Letter to the*

*Corinthians* 6,9; 7,6; 8,6); baptism is presented as “illumination” and “seal”. The third current is the one constituted by the Apologists: baptism is considered as the point of arrival of conversion. These theological currents were in the biblical tradition. They can be related to the Johannine images of “new birth” (cf. Jn 3:5) and “coming to see” (Jn 9), the synoptic material on conversion (Lk 3:10-14; Mk 1:15; Mt 21:29) as well as the Pauline concepts of “seal” (Eph 1:13; 4:30), and of assimilation to the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Rom 6:4 ff.). The biblical and theological foundation of the catechumenate is solid. This institutionalized modality of Christian formation is built on a pluralistic richness linked to the theology of baptism and on a pastoral balance corresponding to the needs of the situations at a given time. It is important to note that a theology of baptism is not limited to the reflection on this sacrament only, but it implies a deep understanding of God, man, salvation in Christ through the Holy Spirit, communication through the symbols, liturgy and communion of the church.

132. Even if the catechumenate, in its organization and structure, is centred on the initial stage of Christian existence, in its significance and objectives it intends to be a “pedagogy of the faith”, which continues throughout the whole of life. The catechumenate is followed by an “on-going formation” performed in various manners and adapted to the historical, cultural, and pastoral context. The objectives of the catechumenate during the patristic period, which may still inform the life of the church of today, may be summarized as follows: maturation of conversion and faith, a radical relationship with Jesus Christ, experience of the Spirit and immersion in the mystery of salvation, a closer bond with the church and community experience, and responsible acceptance of Christian commitments and mission.

#### **D. Contemporary Reflections on Christian Formation and Discipleship**

133. Many aspects of Christian formation that we have reviewed are presently practiced in different ways in our respective churches. For example, we have already reviewed the RCIA process in the Catholic tradition, itself a revival of an ancient church practice. The instruction that follows baptism is intended as a further initiation into the mystery of Christ and continues through life long spiritual formation and ongoing catechesis. Religious or Christian education (including adult formation and education), days of prayer, retreats, discipleship programs both congregationally oriented and through para-church organizations, opportunities for Christian service and mission, revivals and renewal services, parish missions and many other activities inform contemporary Catholic and Pentecostal life. Most importantly, we desire to follow Jesus and hope that our experience in this dialogue may assist our fellow believers so that they may recognize God’s gifts and grace in both of our traditions. In our concluding reflections in this section we choose to share our commitment to Christian formation and discipleship jointly, utilizing the Acts 2:42 paradigm: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” We also note what is distinctive to each of our traditions.

134. **The Apostle's Instruction:** "Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (Heb 13:7). Formation in and by the Word of God is essential for Catholics and Pentecostals. Preaching, teaching, Bible study, doctrinal instruction and catechesis, pastoral exhortation, spiritual conversation with friends in the Lord, are all ways in which God speaks to us through his Word. Pentecostals have a long standing tradition of group Bible Study and personal devotions utilizing the scriptures. Much contemporary Pentecostal preaching has taken the form of biblical exposition and teaching. Scripture study has been newly encouraged in the Catholic Church at all levels, since the Second Vatican Council. The publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* demonstrates Catholic concerns for the faithful to know their faith in order to live it. Many other examples could be provided. With the New Testament and ancient church, Catholics and Pentecostals today affirm fidelity to the apostolic faith by being renewed in our minds so that we might know "the will of God - what is good, acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2).
135. **The Communal Life:** "Let mutual love continue" (Heb 13:1) between your fellow Christians. Fellowship with our brothers and sisters is essential to our communion in the life of the Triune God. A vibrant congregational and parish life as well as other opportunities for Christian fellowship contribute to the life of Christian discipleship. Sometimes this takes on a formal structure as in many communities of Catholic consecrated life (those who live in celibate communities) or lay ecclesial movements. Short term and long term programs of discipleship have been used in many Pentecostal churches including small prayer or discipleship groups within the larger congregation. Practical spiritual formation takes place in these and other contexts. The Communal life also takes up the *diakonia* of Christian service and the social life of believers at the human level of friendship and recreation. Catholics and Pentecostals today affirm that all of these, especially the service of charity and evangelistic witness are essential for growth in Christian discipleship and for the edification or building up of Christ's Body. Christian communal life, the life of *koinonia/communio* is always a life in mission. "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have" (Heb 13:16).
136. **The Breaking of Bread:** The "breaking of bread" has several meanings. We use the expression here in reference to the worship life of the church. We should not neglect "to meet together" (Heb 10:25a). The doxological praise of God is at the heart of both Catholic and Pentecostal life. Corporate praise in a Pentecostal congregation and sacramental and liturgical worship in Catholic churches are indeed the source and summit of our spiritual lives. It not only expresses our thanksgiving and praise to God but shapes our very being as disciples and communities. The divine presence itself, whether in the eucharist or in the high praises of God's people, is transformative—"into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18). Pentecostals and Catholics are especially aware of this. Living the liturgical year and participating in the

eucharist shapes the Catholic ethos. The Pentecostal imagination is formed by the manifestation of spiritual gifts amid the jubilant praise of those upon whom the Spirit has fallen. Yet many Catholics also have come to know the charismatic presence of the Spirit and Pentecostals are formed by their devout celebration of the Lord's Supper. We affirm together that we desire to be a People who reflect God's presence to the world by being in his presence. "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe" (Heb 12:28).

137. **The Prayers:** "For indeed our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29). "For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy." This witness of St. Theresa of Lisieux quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* introduces the fourth and final section of the Catechism entitled "Christian Prayer." The previous three parts of the Catechism reviewed the mystery of faith as professed in the Apostles' Creed (Part One), the sacramental liturgy (Part Two), and life in Christ concerning grace and morality (Part Three). The Catechism then states: "This mystery [of the faith], then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer" (CCC 2558). Catholics and Pentecostals agree that it is this "vital and personal relationship with the living God" that is the reason for Christian formation and discipleship. To walk with God, seeking the city which is to come (Heb 13:14), sometimes needing to strengthen our drooping hands and weak knees (Heb 12:12), oftentimes in a "battle of prayer" that is inseparable from the spiritual battle of the Christian's new life (CCC 2725): such is the way forward together in the path of Christian discipleship. It is only through many tribulations that we will enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Reflecting together on discipleship in the biblical and patristic periods helps Catholics and Pentecostals to encourage one another.

## IV. Experience in Christian Life

### A. Introduction

138. Dialogue between Pentecostals and Catholics naturally evokes reflection upon religious experience. In our discussions together, it became apparent that Pentecostals and Catholics share many important aspects of spiritual experiences including the presence and power of the Spirit as well as contemplation, and mystical and active spiritualities. Where they differ is often a matter of emphasis.
139. Within the context of the dialogue we are very aware of the importance of experience in contemporary thought, as evidenced by the increased attention given to the subject of experience in recent Catholic and Pentecostal theologies. This embraces at least two dimensions of the religious experience of encountering the Lord. One focuses on more

explicitly religious affections (the manner in which one experiences the movement of the Spirit in one's desires, feelings and heart). The other concerns the religious dimension of all experience, including various levels of human experience, joys and tragedies and even mundane affairs of daily life. Both of these dimensions may take the form either of event or process.

140. We agree that when the grace of the Holy Spirit touches the heart and mind, feelings and will of the individual in such a way that a person consciously encounters the Lord an authentic experience of God comes about. The report of the second phase of our dialogue acknowledged that "experience is a process or event by which one comes to a personal awareness of God." This includes both the experience of God's 'presence' or 'absence' while "at a deeper level, there remains the constant abiding faith-conviction that God's loving presence is revealed in the person of the Son, through the Holy Spirit" (*Second Final Report 1977-1982* §12). Catholics and Pentecostals do not consider religious experience as an end in itself, but as a means through which we encounter God. As such God comes to us in our various experiences and we seek to discern the divine will and how we might grow in our union with God.
141. **Experience** is a theme relevant to each section of our current report. Our reception of God's saving grace gives rise to faith, conversion and discipleship. **Faith** is God's gift and our human response. Both of our traditions acknowledge the experiential dimension to faith although we affirm that faith is not limited to experience. "Faith gives birth to experience; faith norms experience. But experience gives another dimension of actuality and firmness to faith. Experience is another way of knowing. What is given to experience is not taken away from faith, because experience exists only in faith."<sup>15</sup> Something similar can be said about the relation of experience to conversion and to discipleship. If **conversion** is understood as a change by which a person turns away from sin and to God, it has a strong experiential quality which sometimes occurs more as an event and at other times more as a process. **Discipleship** is a relationship to Jesus in which a believer seeks to pattern his or her life according to the Gospel. Experience in discipleship includes the practice of Christian disciplines such as prayer, study of the Bible, meditation and the various ways and contexts in which, led by the Spirit, one follows Jesus. Discipleship includes the daily process of experiencing Christ in our service to God and neighbour, as well as more eventful moments of his presence and power. Finally, our current phase of dialogue has dedicated particular attention to the experience of Pentecost and the **Baptism in the Holy Spirit**. The paragraphs which follow will first look at the religious experience of our forebears by means of biblical and patristic examples. Then we will consider the role of experience both in becoming a Christian and in the ongoing life of the community. This section will end with some convergences and areas for further dialogue.

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<sup>15</sup> Kilian McDonnell, OSB, "Spirit and Experience in Bernard of Clairvaux," *Theological Studies* 58 (1997),16.

142. In turning to the Bible and the church Fathers for examples of religious experience, we acknowledge the possibility that contemporary concern about, or even understanding of, experience may be different from that of our forebears in the faith. However, despite such possible differences, what believers over the centuries have in common is that, at its heart, this experience involves an awareness of encountering the living God. The examples we mention here may therefore shed light on our reflections on experience.

### **B. Biblical Perspectives on Experience in the Christian Life**

143. Throughout the Bible, religious experience figures prominently in both communal and individual settings. A few examples serve to illustrate this. The people of Israel experienced God when they contemplated nature and acknowledged him as its Creator (cf. Gen 1:1-2:4a; Ps 19 and 104) and when they remembered his saving activity in the events of history (cf. Ex 15: 1-18; Ps 78 and 105). Abraham, our father in faith (cf. Rom 4:16; Gal 3:7-29), is portrayed as entering into a covenant with God in a dramatic experience in which the Lord invited him to count the stars of the heavens and promised that his descendants would be as numerous. The experience concluded with the appearance of a smoking firepot and a blazing torch which passed between the pieces of the sacrificial animals which Abraham had slaughtered (cf. Gen 15). Moses was called to lead the people of Israel out of slavery during his encounter with God in the burning bush high atop Mount Horeb (cf. Ex 3); subsequently, the entire people experienced the Lord in their liberation from Egypt and they believed in him (Ex 14:30-31). The establishment of the covenant at Sinai (Ex 19:7-21) and the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle (Ex 40:34-38) are described in dramatic experiential terms, while the consecration of the temple (2 Chr 7:1-4) and, in a later era, the rediscovery of the law (Neh 8:1-12) were profound communal experiences of faith. In the year of King Uzziah's death, the prophet Isaiah received his calling during a vision of the throne of God, surrounded by angels whose voices shook the doorposts of the temple. This experience at first unsettled him as he felt his own unworthiness before God's holiness, but was followed by the realization or recognition that he was being cleansed when an angel touched his lips with a burning coal. Thereafter Isaiah was commissioned to speak forth God's word to the people (cf. Isa 6:1-8). Finally, one can see the regular celebration of feasts and sabbaths which made up the cycle of worship either in the temple at Jerusalem each year or in the local synagogue each week, as testimonies to the communal religious experience of the people of Israel. In light of this, it is hardly surprising that the whole of Hebrews 11 recounts the experience of many Old Testament men and women of faith.
144. As we turn to the New Testament, Mary had a profound religious experience when encountering the archangel Gabriel who announced to her that she would become the mother of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. This set her on a journey of faith that included experiencing both joy and suffering (cf. Lk 1:26-38, 46-56; 2:34-35). Paul stands out as a particularly strong example of a believer with intense religious

experiences. Apart from his own conversion which we discussed earlier in this Report, Paul both mentions his more mystical experience of being “caught up to Paradise” (2 Cor 12:2-5), and recounts at some length his sufferings in service of the risen Lord (cf. 2 Cor 11:16-33). Throughout his writings Paul depicts the radical transformation of life that came about when God revealed his Son to him (cf. Gal 1:15). He states the same thing in a more general way when he exclaims that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor 5: 17). In Philippians 3:4-11 Paul looks back upon his former way of life, rejecting it as refuse in comparison with the surpassing worth of knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection. In the same passage, he also refers to sharing in Christ’s sufferings – an experience which would affect a person’s life in a deeply existential way.

145. The Book of Acts recounts the beginning of the church with the personal and communal experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:1-21), followed by reports of other groups of people also being filled with the Spirit (cf. Acts 4:31; 8:17; 10:44-48; 13:2). Paul’s converts typically had a life changing experience. In his very first letter he writes: “You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit”. He then relates to them that others have told him how these converts from Thessalonica “turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God” (1 Thess 1:6, 8-10). The Acts of the Apostles offers many more instances of Gentiles becoming Christians. For example, 11:19-24 tells the story of Barnabas who saw the evidence of the grace of God at work in the lives of the new believers at Antioch. Another example is found in Acts 16:27-34, where the jailer in Philippi, together with his whole household, is converted after an earthquake shook the prison in which Paul and Barnabas were praising the Lord while they were held in custody. In Acts 19:18-19 we read of converts who openly confess their evil deeds and even of some who had practiced magic burning the books of their trade. To these examples we may add some passages from Paul’s letters which speak about the faith experience of the communities to which he wrote. In 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 we read about a variety of manifestations of the Spirit which include the gifts of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, the ability to distinguish between spirits, the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. The fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 is so closely tied to everyday life that it inevitably affects the believer’s experience on a day to day basis. The early Christian community regularly experienced God’s presence in worship (cf. Acts 2:42; 13:2; 20:7; 1 Cor 11:17-29) and left us, as a precious heritage, what many biblical scholars consider to be hymns used during these moments of communal prayer (cf. Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20; Eph 1:3-10; cf. 5:18-20).
146. Finally, the Johannine literature corroborates the evidence found thus far. The Fourth Gospel includes a whole series of personal encounters between Jesus and individuals in search of meaning, fulfillment, and life - Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, the man born blind and others (cf. Jn 3:1-15; 4:4-42;

5:1-15; 9:1-41). The First Letter of John typifies the ministry of the church in very experiential terms: “We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life” (1 Jn 1:1). Toward the beginning of the Book of Revelation, John the Seer describes his experience of being in the Spirit on the day of the Lord on the Island of Patmos, where he encounters the risen Christ. This experience is so intense that he fell at Christ’s feet “as though dead” (cf. Rev 1:9-20).

### C. Patristic Perspectives on Experience in the Christian Life

147. In patristic times many church Fathers testify to the experiential dimension of the lives of believers. Justin Martyr (c.100-165) writes that those who became Christians received gifts of illumination and understanding, counsel and strength, healing and foreknowledge, teaching and fear of the Lord (cf. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 39,2; commenting on Is. 11:2-3). Irenaeus (c.130-200) compares the experience of becoming a Christian to that change which occurs when a wild olive tree is pruned and grafted in such a way as to become a fruit-bearing olive tree: “when man is grafted in by faith and receives the Spirit of God, he certainly does not lose the substance of flesh, but changes the quality of the fruit of his works, and receives another name, showing that he has become changed for the better, being now not [mere] flesh and blood, but a spiritual man, and is called such” (*Against the Heresies*, 5,10,1-2). Clement of Alexandria (d. circa 215) underscores the intellectual dimension of this experience: “...in illumination what we receive is knowledge, and the end of knowledge is rest...” (*The Instructor*, 1,6). Hippolytus’ *Apostolic Tradition*, 21, from the early Third Century, conveys something of the powerful experience which constituted entrance into the Christian community when he describes how the candidates for baptism entered the font undressed and were plunged three times under the water after their threefold profession of faith in the Trinity. A late Fourth Century diary of the Spanish noblewoman Egeria describes in great detail how the entire Christian community at Jerusalem participated actively in the various liturgical celebrations during the week following Palm Sunday and in the introduction of new members during the moving rites of the Easter vigil. Some quite personal accounts of experiences can also be found. The prominent biblical scholar Jerome (349?-420), for instance, relates that, although he was reared in a Christian home, it was only as a young man that a profound change of life brought him to full surrender to the will of God. This conversion took place in the wake of a very serious illness, during which he dreamed that he was before the judgment seat. Though he professed to be a Christian, he was repudiated as a follower of the rhetorician Cicero rather than of Christ. This led him to take an oath never to read a worldly book again. Thus, he forsook the world and devoted himself to expounding the scriptures.

148. Jerome’s influential contemporary Augustine (354-430 AD) relates the long story of his conversion in *The Confessions*. Stories of the conversions of others spoke to his heart and awakened in him the desire to dedicate himself fully to God. His frustration at



feeling unable to let go of his sins culminated in the well-known scene in which, while weeping in his garden over his inability to change, he suddenly heard the voice of a child who repeated the words: “take and read; take and read”. He immediately opened the book lying on the table and his eyes fell on the passage in Romans 13:13-14 about leaving behind the things of the flesh and putting on Christ. A great peace swept over him and he now felt that he was able to live as a Christian. This experience became the decisive turn in his life (cf. *The Confessions*, Book VIII,12). Augustine recounts another powerful religious experience when he tells the story of talking with his dying mother, who was preparing to return home from the Roman port of Ostia to spend her final days and to be buried in her native city in Northern Africa. As they talked together about the verse from 1 Cor 2:9, where Paul states that “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,” the two were caught up in an experience of wonder at how great the joys of heaven must be, an experience which they had no words to describe. His mother Monica told him afterwards that she no longer felt any need to return home before she died, for her true home was with the Lord (cf. *The Confessions*, Book IX, 10).

149. The Cappadocians noted the role of all three persons of the Trinity in Christian experience and the particular association of the Holy Spirit with sanctification. Concerning the Trinity, Basil of Caesarea (d. 379) writes: “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit alike hallow, quicken, enlighten, and comfort [...] by the Father, and by the Son and by the Holy Spirit, every grace and virtue, guidance, life, consolation, change into the immortal, the passage into freedom and all other good things which come down to man” (*Letters*, No. 189:7). In his book *On the Holy Spirit*, the same author writes that the Holy Spirit is “endowed with supreme power of sanctification” (Chapter 18,45). Of those Fathers who reflected explicitly upon the nature of religious experience, perhaps the one who focused greatest attention upon it was Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335- c. 395). Reflecting upon some of the passages in which St. Paul speaks of his own spiritual journey and extraordinary experiences (2 Cor 12: 2-5), Gregory conceives of Christian experience as a continual progression and advance. He writes: “Thus though the new grace we may obtain is greater than what we had before, it does not put a limit on our final goal; rather, for those who are rising in perfection, the limit of the good that is attained becomes the beginning of the discovery of higher goods. Thus they never stop rising, moving from one new beginning to the next, and the beginning of ever greater graces is never limited of itself. For the desire of those who thus rise never rests in what they can already understand; but by an ever greater and greater desire, the soul keeps rising constantly to another that lies ahead, and thus it makes its way through ever higher regions towards the Transcendent,”<sup>16</sup> who in his essence is beyond all experience.

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<sup>16</sup> *Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*, edited and translated by Herbert Mursillo, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979, poem no. 2800.

150. Some texts affirm that the Spirit's work embraces both the interior life of the believer and the sacramental life of the church (cf. Tertullian, *On Baptism*, Chap. 4 [c. 198-200]). Pentecostals and Catholics may differ about whether certain rites should be understood as sacraments or ordinances, but they both appreciate the emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian life that the Fathers recognized and tried to describe. One patristic example of this may suffice. Cyril of Jerusalem (d.386) in his *Catechetical Lectures* spoke of the Holy Spirit in strongly experiential terms: "[...] his coming is gentle; the awareness of him is fragrant; his burden is most light; beams of light and knowledge shine forth before his coming" (17,15). The same experiential quality informs his understanding of baptism: "The water however flows round the outside only, but the Spirit baptizes the soul within, and that completely [...] why are you so amazed that the Holy Spirit enters into the very recesses of the soul?" (17,14).
151. Both Catholics and Pentecostals appreciate the experiential dimension of faith found in the writings of the church Fathers. The way they do so is affected by their theological perspectives. For example, Cyril of Jerusalem offers a text which Pentecostals and Catholics could both find meaningful, in spite of the fact that they might glean different implications from it. "Yet [the Holy Spirit] tests the soul. He does not cast his pearls before swine. If you play the hypocrite, though a human minister may baptize you now, the Holy Spirit will not baptize you. If you approach with faith, however, though humans minister in what is seen, the Holy Spirit bestows what is unseen" (*Catechetical Lectures*, 36). Catholics appreciate in such a text the continuities of church order and sacramental life, and the bestowal of grace by the Holy Spirit through baptism. Pentecostals appreciate especially the charismatic dimensions evident in this passage, as well as the freedom and sovereignty of the Spirit evidenced in this and in many other texts from the ancient church.

#### **D. Contemporary Reflections on Experience in the Christian Life**

152. With this biblical and patristic account as background, we turn now to describing ways in which Pentecostals and Catholics today understand experience. In particular we reflect on the role of experience in becoming a Christian, then on experiencing Christian life in community, after which we outline some convergences and challenges to be faced. While we initially developed our contemporary reflections on experience separately, our subsequent conversations pointed us increasingly to the fact that we share much more in common than we originally imagined. For clarity, we chose to keep these reflections separate; however, it is our hope that what we have in common will quickly become apparent to our readers as well.

## **1. The Role of Experience in Becoming a Christian**

### **a. A Pentecostal Perspective**

153. When an adult becomes a Christian the process begins within the heart of the person who is drawn to God in any number of ways. The inquirer is welcomed with the assumption that the Holy Spirit has created a thirst for salvation that can only be satisfied by the waters of eternal life. While Pentecostals generally speak of conversion and repentance as taking place at the beginning of a process, inquiry into what is required to become a Christian is typically met by an invitation to respond to the Gospel, hospitality, and instruction. These factors are intended to start the candidate on the way through a deeper process of conversion, faith, and sanctification by nurturing an awareness of God's love and the good news of redemption leading to newness of life. It involves turning from sin and deliverance from evil as the candidate is introduced to the demands of the Gospel.
154. Pentecostals would normally regard repentance and conversion as having strong experiential dimensions. For them, conversion entails a decisive break brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit. There is, or should be, a clear 'before' and 'after' in the biography of the convert. Many Pentecostal believers can pinpoint the moment when and where they were converted and typically have a vivid recollection of their baptism in water. Ideally, these elements of Christian Initiation are consciously experienced and remembered as highly significant events in the life of the believer. Pentecostals argue that a mere intellectual assent even when manifested in a memorized form on a regular basis such as the repetition of the Creed, may give inadequate expression to Christian faith in light of the New Testament where conversion is seen as a life changing experience. Such a confession must also be enabled or quickened by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3).
155. Affective experiences in conversion are highly valued and expected by Pentecostals, but they are not regarded as necessary for salvation. Pentecostal preachers often encourage the people in the pew to 'stand on the Word' or to 'take it by faith' that they are saved. Even if there are no feelings or manifestations, the individual is being encouraged to assume a posture of faith in the promise of God: "Whoever believes [in me] has eternal life" (Jn 6:47). Salvation is not dependent upon what the convert experiences at the moment of conversion. It is rooted in the will of God, who has the express will that people come to him by trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness and remission of sins, and are thereby saved (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-7). To this end Christ came into the world as 1 Timothy 1:15 teaches. In the verses preceding this text it becomes clear that Paul's conversion is a matter of God showing him mercy and grace that "overflowed...with faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 1:14). For Pentecostals the experiential dimension of conversion is very important. However, it is

more important that there be a profound change in the way the new believer lives his or her life. (cf. Jn 15:5; Col 1:3-6, Gal 5:22-23).

156. In comparison to the early period of the Pentecostal movement, it is now much more common that people come to faith in Christ through a gradual process. Often this is the case with children or young people who have grown up in Pentecostal churches. Such a gradual development of faith in Christ is also generally recognized as a valid conversion even though its experiential dimension might be less dramatic. Yet, it is expected that a believer will at some point profess his or her faith openly and declare his or her readiness to follow Jesus. Often this is expressed within the context of discipleship in preparation for water baptism.
157. The example of the conversion of the household of Cornelius in Acts 10 is part of the Pentecostal global experience. Conversions of entire families or communities are not uncommon in many parts of the world. However, Pentecostals maintain a concern that such group conversions include at some point a personal profession of faith. Appreciation of contemporary parallels to household conversions as reported in Acts 10 may be hindered by individualistic tendencies in the wider culture. Nevertheless Pentecostals are attentive to the work of the Spirit in social networks beyond the individualized self, recognizing that personal decisions are often assisted by relations with friends, family, and other persons.

#### **b. A Catholic Perspective**

158. In Catholic understanding conversion to Christ and incorporation into his church entail a rich variety of experiences manifested both by the inner workings of God's grace in a person and the ecclesial mediation of grace in the preparation for, and the administration and reception of the sacraments of initiation—baptism, confirmation and eucharist.
159. When an adult becomes a Christian the process begins within the heart of the person who is drawn to God in any number of ways. From the church's perspective the inquirer is welcomed with the assumption that the Holy Spirit has created a thirst for salvation that can only be satisfied by the waters of eternal life. Inquiry is met by hospitality and instruction in the faith that becomes ritually formalized when one enters the catechumenate, which is intended to take the person deeper into the process of conversion and faith by nurturing an awareness of God's love and the good news of redemption leading to newness of life. This also involves turning from sin and deliverance from evil as the candidate undergoes the scrutinies (questions directed to the motivations of the candidate) in order to prepare him or her to fully profess the faith by reception of the creed. This journey constitutes an existential introduction to the faith and life of the church in the companionship of the catechumens with their sponsors and catechists. Catholics understand this process as essential preparation for

baptism. The Catholic Church takes its responsibility in the conversion process very seriously. This is reflected in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which we cite because it is the fruit of a worldwide reflection of bishops, theologians and faithful, which officially describes the understanding of the faith as implemented in pastoral practices all around the world. It notes that “catechumens should be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and the practice of the evangelical virtues, and they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy, and charity of the People of God by successive sacred rites” (CCC 1248).

160. For the majority of Catholics, Christian Initiation begins with infant baptism. As for adults, baptism is the beginning of new life since, being “[b]orn with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have a need of the new birth in baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God”. In this respect infant baptism manifests the “sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation” (CCC 1250). Therefore, Catholic parents are encouraged to have their children baptized shortly after birth. The new life in Christ received in baptism must be nourished and developed through the religious example, formation, and education provided by their parents, godparents, families and church community. This constitutes a post-baptismal catechumenate that is required for the “necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth” (CCC 1231). The normal pattern entails the eventual preparation necessary for the initial reception of the sacraments of reconciliation, eucharist and confirmation at the appropriate ages. Many Catholics will testify that their first holy communion during childhood was a very important and moving event as well as a personal religious experience. By late adolescence most Catholics will have completed their full Christian Initiation through the reception of the sacrament of confirmation. This is the norm for Catholics who observe the Latin or Roman Rite. Eastern Catholics who follow the Byzantine or other Eastern Rites receive the sacraments of confirmation or chrismation and eucharist together with baptism, their formation being subsequent to the reception of the sacraments of initiation as infants.
161. Since Catholics experience sacraments as mediating the presence and power of God, so too, in Christian Initiation the new converts experience the opening of their hearts and imagination through the rite of baptism that entails words, gestures, actions, and the use of the signs and symbols of the cosmos and social life. Thus water, oil, fire, light, white garments, and the laying on of hands all contribute to the beauty of entering into the joy of salvation. Furthermore the experience of new life in Christ and in the church is deepened by the gathered assembly’s prayerful participation in the liturgical rite and by their welcoming of the baptized into the fellowship and family of the faith community. Most adult catechumens receive the sacraments of initiation during the Easter vigil following the final stages of the conversion process that took place during the season of Lent. This is a graced period for Catholic parishes since Lenten penance and the preparation for Easter invites an intense spiritual engagement by Catholics culminating

in the renewal of their baptismal promises on Easter Sunday. In other words, Catholics are called to relive and deepen their Christian conversion every year during these liturgical seasons.

162. In baptism one receives the grace of justification, that is, sanctifying grace that inwardly transforms the person. The church nurtures the inward transformation of the newly baptized in the instruction that follows baptism. This “mystagogy” entails a rich program of further doctrinal formation and introduction to the spiritual and liturgical life of the Christian community that is given during the period after one has received the sacraments of initiation. The renewed *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, drawn from the tradition of the ancient church, is intended to guide the person as “a new creature, an adopted [child] of God, who has become a partaker of the divine nature, member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1265). Baptismal experience helps a person to grow in faith, hope and love towards God, to live under the prompting of the Holy Spirit and to mature in holiness. Adults also receive the sacrament of confirmation during their initiation, that is, “the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (CCC 1302). This increases the grace of baptism such that their sense of divine filiation or adoption is deepened, their union with Christ is more firm, the gifts of the Holy Spirit increase, the bond with the church is more perfect, and by the special strength of the Holy Spirit they are enabled to witness to Christ by word and action (cf. CCC 1303). Reception of the eucharist in ‘first communion’ is a sharing in the sacrament of intimate union with Christ that “preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at baptism.” As “the bread for our pilgrimage until the moment of death” (CCC 1392), the eucharist grants the necessary nourishment for continued growth in Christian life.
163. The spiritual, affective, and aesthetic dimensions of Christian Initiation therefore communicate the wonder and awe of communion with God, who is all holy and yet shares the divine glory with us. These serve as a gateway into Christian discipleship, the pursuit of holiness and “a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God” (CCC 2558).

## **2. Experiencing Christian Life in Community**

### **a. A Pentecostal Perspective**

164. For Pentecostals the experiential aspect of faith is not limited to the beginning of the Christian life. New Christians are taught to seek the Lord daily in prayer and Scripture reading, and for guidance in their lives. They also are invited to pray fervently in times of need with their brothers and sisters in the assembled community. They are encouraged to participate as often as possible in the activities of the congregation and to be involved in some form of ministry to those who are in need. Since the initiation of

the movement a century ago, Pentecostals have been socially active throughout the world with orphanages, distribution of food and clothing, sheltering the homeless and other forms of alleviating social need. Increasingly they are engaging in government by creating awareness as well as serving in office where this is possible, endeavoring to address ethical and social issues. There is an increasing recognition among Pentecostals as they grow in numbers that they have a political responsibility as Christians to use their influence for the good of society. Coming to Christ in faith should be demonstrated or practiced in all aspects of the daily life.

165. Pentecostals understand grace as penetrating the whole of the Christian life in such a way that God actively transforms the individual believer. This infusion of grace enables the Christian to be open to the things of God, to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-25), and to give an enthusiastic response to all of the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This transformation comes about when an openness toward the things of God and a readiness to respond to God's call becomes apparent. It comes when an individual approaches God as a result of the wooing or striving of the Holy Spirit described well in the gospel hymn, "Just as I Am without One Plea." God takes people just as they are, in all their humanity and sinfulness, with all of their strengths and all of their weaknesses, and begins to develop them step by step into the people they have been called to become. Along the way, through the enablement and power of the Holy Spirit, of which the very fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-25) are evidence, they are transformed into the image of the Lord (2 Cor 3:18).
166. Pentecostals speak openly about the role that experience plays within their lives as Christians. They frequently speak of sensing the presence of the Lord, and of experiencing both personal and corporate encounters with God. They do not take these experiences lightly, but recognize the gracious character of all manifestations of the Divine – human encounter. At times these experiences may lead them to periods of profound reverence, of reflective silence, times when a "holy hush" might descend upon them as God comes into their midst. On other occasions, they may shout, or cry, or dance, or sing, or speak in a tongue, or be moved to exhibit some other manifestation. Always, however, they are mindful of the fact that their response depends first and foremost upon God's presence among them, a manifestation of His grace extended toward them unilaterally.
167. For Pentecostals, spiritual experience may give way to both individual and ecclesial expressions. Public confession of sin, prayer, and the anointing of the sick, as well as charismatic manifestations intended to edify the people of God are all examples of this within the corporate setting. So, too, do marriage and ordination, when celebrated within and by the community of faith, suggest manifestations of grace that point toward this life together. They also recognize the various gifts that are given to individuals who bring them to the body as it is gathered or take them to the world around them. For most Pentecostals, the willingness of God to use them for His glory is clear evidence

that God is working in their lives. For some, it provides an assurance of their salvation. Pentecostals recognize the limits of such reasoning, but readily acknowledge that God is always gracious, often generous, and eagerly forgiving in the everyday realities of life.

168. Pentecostal life is not confined to time spent together in common prayer, fellowship, and worship. Through the way each person lives the gospel, as representatives of the Christian community, they extend the impact of the Christian community into the secular world. Pentecostals typically offer this service without public fanfare, often, but not always, preferring to work for such benefits as human dignity, health and welfare, and the common good, behind the scenes. In recent years, the impact they are having, particularly in the developing world, has gained growing recognition.<sup>17</sup> As a result, it can be said that not only do they share with Catholics the call to evangelize individuals, but they are also interested in evangelizing culture and pursuing peace and justice.
169. Given their Restorationist view of history, eschatology has played a significant role within Pentecostalism. Their belief that they are participating in the “Latter Rain” prophesied in Joel 2:23 and that they are living in “the last days” (Acts 2:17), has led them to place mission and evangelism at the center of their existence. Their view of the Kingdom of God as both present and yet coming has led them to view the Holy Spirit not only as the Comforter sent from above (Jn 14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26; 16:7-14), the One who sanctifies them (Rom 15:16), or even the One who empowers them through the distribution of various charisms (1 Cor 12:11), but also as a “down payment” or “guarantee” (2 Cor 1:22) of its future blessings, while providing power necessary for them to fulfill their calling between the times (Acts 1:8). They look forward, with hope, to the consummation, when “every knee shall bow” and “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10-11).
170. Pentecostals are convinced that it is important for believers to seek the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. For some this event is preceded by an experience of sanctification, a breakthrough or definite work of God to enable them to live a holy life and prepare them for Baptism in the Holy Spirit. While most Pentecostal denominations do not teach that there is a separate experience of sanctification, all of them agree that growth in holiness is an important life-long process. The Holy Spirit gives the power by which the believer can mature in holiness and the strength for ministry. Most Pentecostals testify of the wonderful experience of speaking in tongues when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. All believers are admonished to give witness both to the assembled believers as well as to those outside the fellowship concerning what the Lord has done in their lives. To the congregation these testimonies are edifying to their personal faith. The manifestations of the Spirit, as mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, are understood to be spontaneous workings of the Spirit of God in the community using

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<sup>17</sup> The recent study, “Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals,” conducted by the Pew Forum, may be accessed online at <http://pewforum.org/publications/surveys/pentecostals-06.pdf>; Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.



individual believers as He wills for the edification of the whole community. In Pentecostal churches believers often have spiritual mentors who guide them in their spiritual life. They believe that the Gospel touches all of human existence, and therefore there is an increasing attention given to psychological problems, as well as psycho-social problems and medical needs. Thus while they continue to believe and practice divine healing without hesitation, Pentecostal churches are increasingly adding psychological and health care professionals to their staffs to help with such matters.

171. Pentecostal gatherings take place in a variety of forms, including large worship and celebration services, evangelistic services, prayer and testimony meetings, Bible studies, and small groups. Within the growing diversity of a century old movement there are varieties of worship styles representing the whole spectrum from very demonstrative to more contemplative and quiet forms of worship. An interesting aspect of the movement is the inclusion of cultural elements that promote the spread of the Gospel. This is especially clear on the mission field. While they remain uncompromising as to the content of the Christian message and the moral convictions it engenders, they have often included cultural elements such as rhythmic dancing in worship and indigenous forms of music. Many Pentecostals throughout the world embrace new styles of music, new techniques of communication and generally employ new technical aides as soon as they become available to them. In addition there is a growing openness to the work of the Spirit among churches outside Pentecostal circles, for example literary works from other Christian traditions are read and cherished. Not only traditional hymns and gospel songs but other genres of music are incorporated into their worship services and spirituality. While recognizing this openness, there is however, a strong resistance to anything that is perceived as harmful for Christian life, identity and mission. This particularly concerns those developments in society and culture that are detrimental to spiritual and moral life. Pentecostals are cautious in regards to ecumenism. Although they recognize the work of the Spirit in other Christian traditions, and enter into fellowship with them, they are hesitant to embrace these movements wholeheartedly for fear of losing their own ecclesial identity or compromising their traditional positions.
172. The communal participation, expectation, and openness for God's manifest presence in Pentecostal worship allows for spontaneous expressions and actions not clearly part of a traditional practice. Past and present examples include 'shaking', 'rolling', 'falling', 'dancing', and 'resting' in the Spirit. Experiences such as these may be found in the Bible. They are openly embraced by some Pentecostals and rejected by others. Most Pentecostals accept such experiences, but stress the importance of a life of faith that is not overly dependent on them. In every case there is a need for careful discernment recognizing that what is exceptional should not be declared the rule. Such experiences are not to be sought after as if they were goals in themselves. Their purpose is to bring the believer closer to God. The Christian life should thrive on faith, trust in God and in the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ.

173. To partake in practices which nurture the faith of both the individual and the believing community is a standard part of the life of Pentecostal believers. In their meetings there is an inherent hunger to experience together the presence and power of God. Pentecostal services provide an opportunity for the whole congregation to participate. They are often marked with lively worship; sometimes loud simultaneous prayer, personal testimony, giving, and passionate preaching of the Word of God. All of this is accompanied by frequent songs of heartfelt music, the style of which varies from culture to culture. It is common in Pentecostal meetings to give an “altar call,” a time for people to come forward for repentance, for healing, deliverance, prayer for special needs, or to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Participation in the charismata is open to all members of the congregation. This is one way Pentecostals exercise the priesthood of all believers (cf. 1 Pet 2:9-10). They believe that all members of the congregation have something to contribute and no one is excluded from doing the Lord’s work.
174. Other aspects of communal worship include partaking of the Lord’s Supper, baptism and, in some denominations, the washing of feet. Special services are held to ordain ministers, to send out missionaries, to dedicate buildings, and to celebrate weddings and to conduct funerals. Church services often include special ceremonies where infants or children are dedicated to God with special prayers of blessing. The joyful celebration of the dedication of children is not viewed as effecting regeneration, but as an expression of the faith of the parents and the congregation it is a word of blessing spoken over the child’s life, an apprehension of the promised, special consecration of the child (1 Cor 7:14) as well as the commitment of the entire congregation to help rear children in such a way as to enable them also to embrace the faith. An important dimension to each meeting is the time of fellowship, often including refreshments or a meal. All of this testifies to the interpersonal and communal dimension of the Pentecostal faith.

#### **b. A Catholic Perspective**

175. Religious experience has been cherished in the church throughout her history. In the earliest centuries, the church Fathers not only witness to the presence of experience in worship, everyday discipleship, prayer and mysticism but also provide the earliest theological reflection about it. The various and venerated traditions of spirituality which appeared over the course of the ages often began with the charisms of the founders of religious orders and lay spiritual movements. In general, such movements were welcomed and encouraged as expressions of the vitality of life in the Spirit. At the same time, precisely because of their importance as potential responses to a genuine experience of God’s grace, the church always sought prudently to “test everything” (cf. 1 Thess 5:21) in order to discern the authenticity of new movements and popular devotions. Such testing led to the resistance or correction of some initiatives, especially those which themselves resisted integration into the life of the wider community, with its visible order of sacraments and ministry in apostolic succession. At times, such caution proved overly zealous and developments that were eventually recognized as

genuine responses to the initiatives of the Spirit were at first resisted, gaining acceptance only when their authenticity was proven after a period of patient endurance. As the Catholic Church was entering the period of modernity, vigilance about the potential danger of subjective experience sometimes took a rather exaggerated form in the neo-scholastic theology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which ventured the position that grace was not a matter of psychological awareness at all. Nevertheless, popular devotions, by which the faithful either individually or communally gave more focused attention to one or another aspect of Christian faith or practice, continued to flourish, as was the case early on in Christian history.

176. Recent decades have seen a renewed emphasis upon the importance of experience in Catholic theology that helped initiate and has flowed from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Additionally, many new ecclesial movements including recent movements of spiritual and charismatic renewal have emphasized the role of experience in Christian life. A Catholic understanding of experience will be informed by this long history as well as by the distinctive Catholic theology of grace.
177. The Catholic understanding of grace in fact lends itself to a holistic accounting of God's work in the believer throughout the Christian life. This means that God is present and active in a person's life resulting in his or her actual transformation. This transformation includes a disposition, an ongoing process in one's life, as well as the readiness to respond to God's call in particular moments. The fruit of grace is evident through growth in virtue, i.e., "the habitual and firm disposition to do good" (CCC 1803). The theological virtues of faith, hope and love enable ongoing communion with God and can be exercised in prayer and service to the Lord and love for one's neighbor. The moral life is also enabled by the development and practice of what are known as the four cardinal virtues—prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. The principle of grace perfecting nature is very important in Catholic understanding. God takes us where we are with our own temperaments and talents and perfects them at a supernatural level by both healing the effects of sin in one's life and elevating one to participate in the divine life such that Christian virtue exceeds what is possible at the natural level alone—for example, not only to love one's friends but one's enemies as well. The gifts of the Holy Spirit—both those that sanctify the person and those that edify the community (*charismata*)—remind us that the call to Christian perfection, understood as the fullness of charity, requires the power of the Holy Spirit to be present in the Christian life for both holiness and mission.
178. The rich experiential tone of the Christian life has always been evident in the spiritual traditions of the church. Experiences of spiritual consolation such as an awareness of God's presence that increases faith, hope and love are interpreted not as the assurance of salvation but as evidence that God is at work in one's life. Such experiences can be quite powerful, even moving the recipient to tears and ecstasy. Catholics also believe that "grace escapes our experience and cannot be known except by faith" (CCC 2005).

This means that God's grace exceeds our experience of it and is present even when we may not be aware of it, in both the consolations and desolations of the spiritual life, in the raptures of exaltation and in the wilderness of what is called the dark night of the soul, and most of all in the everyday realities of life.

179. The communal dimension of experience informs all aspects of Catholic spiritual life. Spiritual experience has a distinct ecclesial shape to it. The sacramental and liturgical life of the church is the primary way in which all Catholics are formed in the Christian life. Sacraments mediate grace within the context of the church's liturgy, that is, the community at prayer. The social dimension of human life is intrinsic to the sacraments in that they always entail celebrations with others. We have already discussed the sacraments of initiation of which the eucharist continues as the ongoing nourishment of the Christian community. The sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick minister to the believer in need. Reconciliation or penance is especially important as the ongoing sacrament of Christian conversion whereby the believer discovers the wonders of God's healing grace as one comes to more deeply recognize the poverty of one's sinfulness and experiences the joy of being a holy penitent. The sacraments of matrimony and holy orders grace one for a state in life.
180. The sacraments are the foundation of communal life and experience within Catholicism. However, a rich variety of popular devotions has developed, diverse in content and style, both reflecting the wealth of the socio-cultural sensibilities of believers and requiring guidance by leaders at local, regional and universal levels so as to ensure their conformity to the one Gospel and the one faith which unites the whole community. Common life and spiritual friendship, including the profound relationships some Catholics have with their confessors and spiritual directors, highlight the fact that the Christian journey is undertaken with others. Religious congregations comprised of those who vow to live according to the Gospel counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience after the example of Jesus (poverty: Mt 8:20; 19:21; 2 Cor 8:9; chastity: Mt 19:12; cf. 1 Cor 7:32-35; obedience: Jn 4,34; 5:30; Heb 10:7, Phil 2:8) constitute yet another common way of life undertaken together as disciples of the Lord. Discipleship, however, is not limited to such forms of consecrated life.
181. The life of the laity in Catholic families and parishes as well as their vocation to live the gospel in the secular world underscores the presence of Christian community in the domestic sphere, in the parish congregation, and in the engagement of the people of God in society. Indeed "the world thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation because the world itself is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ" (John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful* 15). Hence, for the laity, who comprise the vast majority of Catholics, discipleship in community is intended to permeate all the dimensions of their spiritual lives. It is experienced in marriage, which the church proclaims as "an efficacious sign of Christ's presence" (CCC 1613), and in the family as the "domestic

church” and “the primary place of ‘humanization’ for the person and society” (*Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful* 40). It is lived in the parish where the laity’s ecclesial participation manifests itself in common prayer, fellowship, service and mission. Due to the varieties of charisms that the Spirit bestows this may also take the form of lay ecclesial movements beyond parish structures based upon a particular spirituality and/or mission. It also extends into society where “charity gives life and sustains the works of solidarity that looks to the total needs of the human being” (*Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful* 41), where the dignity of the person is upheld, and where public life based upon the common good is intended to be for everyone and by everyone (cf. *Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful* 42). Therefore, Catholics are called to evangelize culture and pursue justice and peace as signs of the kingdom to come.

182. Because Catholics see the church as a communion called into being by word and sacrament, all personal spiritual experience is a sharing in this communion, and is therefore profoundly ecclesial in nature. Moreover, this communion proceeds from the life and self-giving of the triune God and is also experienced by Catholics in the communion of saints that embraces both the living and the dead—that “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1). The presence of Mary and the saints in the church’s life, together with the church’s prayer for the faithful departed, call to one’s awareness their presence with us and for us, as Catholics seek to be with each other in service to the Lord. By exemplifying the Christian life and assisting us with intercession, the saints enrich and shape our communal experience. Most of all “Church communion is a gift, a great gift of the Holy Spirit to be gratefully accepted by the lay faithful, and at the same time to be lived with a deep sense of responsibility” (*Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful* 20).
183. Eschatology or the “Last Things” also shapes Catholic experience in a fundamental way. All the sacraments and our earthly liturgies are celebrated until the coming of the Lord. Christians exist between the times with the gift of the Holy Spirit as a “down payment” of what is to come (2 Cor 1:22, Eph 1:13-14). We hope for what we do not see and wait for it with patience (Rom 8:24-25). This extends to our personal mortality which for Catholics becomes the subject of spiritual desire as traditionally expressed in the prayer of the “Hail Mary” —“pray for us now and at the hour of our death.” Also, one’s suffering in sickness is united with the passion and death of Christ through prayer and the sacrament of the anointing of the sick (CCC 1521-1522) including one’s final sufferings in death when reception of the body and blood of Christ in that final holy communion known as the “*viaticum*” has “particular significance and importance” as one “passes over” to the Father (CCC 1524). All of these are important dimensions of the spiritual life. It also makes us realize that we still await a “new heaven and new earth where God’s righteousness will dwell” (2 Pet 3:13), where sin and death will be overcome, and “every tear will be wiped away” (Rev 21:4). Living in the time between Pentecost and the Parousia we experience the graced realities of Christian life imperfectly even as Catholics acknowledge that “[A]ll Christians in any state or walk of

life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity” (*Lumen gentium* 40, CCC 2013) until the consummation of salvation is brought to completion.

### **3. Convergences and Challenges Regarding Experience in the Christian Life**

184. Through our dialogue on the role of experience in Christian faith and community we Pentecostals and Catholics are grateful to God for the mutually illuminating insights that our conversations have provided. We have seen, as in the section just completed (paras 164-183), that there are significant convergences between Pentecostals and Catholics on important matters; there is much that we can say together. And we quickly discovered that some standard stereotypes of each of our traditions are too simplistic for any members of our communities to hold. For example, the superficial observation that Pentecostals largely live in their hearts and emotions while Catholic life is solely determined by theological abstractions and outward rituals belies the profound way in which religious experience is important for us, both in regard to the common Christian faith that we share and the differences that do distinguish us. We hope that our reflections will benefit our respective communities.
185. Pentecostals and Catholics identify the source of their experience in God’s action in our lives as known in the present but witnessed in the sources of divine revelation. Primarily this refers to the biblical witness which has formed each of our communions in a foundational way. We also see that witness being lived by subsequent generations of Christians. In this dialogue we have given particular attention to the church Fathers because of their proximity to the biblical witness and the richness of their spiritual experience. While Catholics and Pentecostals differ on the authority of the church Fathers for their ecclesial life we have found common ground in our desire to imitate their manner of integrating doctrine and life. Their example of the connection between understanding the faith, spirituality, and holiness of life is an encouragement to us. For Catholics the “sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of ...Tradition,” which along with Sacred Scripture is a distinct mode of transmission for the Word of God (CCC 78). The church Fathers occupy a privileged place within Tradition. As a servant of the Word of God the Magisterium, or teaching office in the church, (i.e., the bishops in communion with the Pope), is entrusted with the authority to interpret the Word of God especially in the matter of defining dogmas of the faith and teaching doctrine. Pentecostals do not hold to this same view of Tradition nor do they possess a teaching office although doctrinal standards are maintained. Different Pentecostal denominations have developed various procedures to adjudicate doctrinal disputes. But they do not exclude the witness of the church Fathers and to the extent that this witness is authentically governed by the biblical norm, it can serve as an example for Christian life today. Therefore while our respective understandings of the manner in which divine revelation is communicated still differ we have discovered that a focus on Christian experience in the Fathers has enriched both of us. Catholics can rejoice in the biblical ethos that so much informs the Fathers and Pentecostals

appreciate how the life of the ancient church was a journey on the part of the Christian community to live in the Holy Spirit.

186. By reading Scripture and the writings of the church Fathers *together* we have also discovered a common depth to the contemporary faith experience of Catholics and Pentecostals. It has been important to realize that the affective dimension of experience is intrinsic to both of our traditions even if the shape and manner of that affectivity may differ amid many common experiences as well. This embraces several levels of experience and our evaluation of it. We agree that affective experience is not an end in itself but a means through which we encounter God. We resist outward formal expression alone. Pentecostals clearly distinguish between “going through the motions” and authentic faith, while Catholics speak of the proper inner dispositions for liturgical prayer and the reception of the sacraments. The main purpose of spiritual experience is transformative which means that feelings alone are not the measure of experience but the faith that it engenders and the moral life that it nourishes. In the absence of the felt presence of God one needs to persevere in faith. God intends that the gift of experiencing his presence and power is to transform us into the image of Christ and enable us carry out his mission.
187. The discernment of experiences is a necessary and present dimension of our contemporary church life even as we are mindful of the need to grow in the mature exercise of this gift. Certain experiences are meaningful for faith because they stir holy desires and passions and through the grace of God present in and through them we grow in the Christian life. We also agree that religious experiences enhance our sense of God’s presence in daily life—what we earlier described as the religious dimension of all experience—so that life is intended to be sanctified in all its aspects. Nothing less is to be expected as the fruit of the incarnation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Discernment also concerns the ecclesial or corporate recognition of the presence and operation of spiritual gifts and of new spiritual movements in the church at large. There are many examples of this such as discerning the charism of a new movement or religious order, the ministry of a healing evangelist, a new site of pilgrimage, the start of new devotion, a new revival that attracts multitudes, a new prophetic claim or biblical interpretation, and many other pastoral situations.
188. We have also come to the insight that our religious experiences overcome an unwarranted dichotomy between the personal and social or individual and communal dimensions of experience. The experiences to which we have borne witness in our reading and sharing with each other often embrace both dimensions. A Christian, either Catholic or Pentecostal, is deeply touched by God eliciting a profound existential response to his presence and will. At the same time the experience is influenced by the ecclesial community whether it takes place in the worship assembly, in one’s private prayer, or even in daily life. The nature of the community including its particular culture gives shape and texture to experience. Therefore, it is no surprise that Catholic

experience is informed by sacramental symbolism, devotional imagery and expressions, and contemplation and silence. Pentecostals are shaped by the vibrant praise of their gatherings, biblical preaching and study, expectation of signs, wonders and charismatic manifestations, and their commitment to evangelism and missionary work.

189. It is true that in worship Catholics are more oriented toward liturgical rites while Pentecostals emphasize the charismatic dimensions of the worshipping assembly. Also, our respective doctrines and theologies of grace inform our interpretation of our religious experiences. For example, we differ on our understanding of the assurance of salvation and its relation to experience. Pentecostals testify to the certainty of the salvation that God freely offers in Christ and Catholics envision that assurance as a matter of hope and prayer. One recurrent theme throughout this phase of dialogue has been the relationship between event and process in conversion, faith, discipleship/formation and, now, in experience. Our dialogue has alerted us to the fact that both dimensions are present in each of our traditions although with different levels of expectation and evaluation. Pentecostals can usually point to the event (perhaps even crisis) experience of conversion, sanctification (if they are also Wesleyan-Holiness), and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. But they also testify to many other experiences, some with a punctiliar sense of event and crisis, and others more processive in nature because they are extended over a period of time. These will entail assurances not necessarily of the distinct works of grace mentioned above but simply of some new thing God is doing in their lives. Catholics likewise can point to both types of experience. The 'event' type of experience may include distinct moments of God's working as a conversion experience—a 'first conversion' of coming to faith or a 'second conversion' to live a holy life. Or, it may simply be a consolation in prayer—a lively and peaceful sense of God's presence that increases one's awareness of divine grace at work. But 'event' types of experiences will also include sacramental and liturgical elements. An example of this is the experience of many a daily communicant who will witness to the steady, habitual, and serene sense of being nourished spiritually by the event of receiving the Lord Jesus in the eucharist in the same sacramental rite day after day. Both Catholics and Pentecostals also recognize that pastoral ministry plays an essential role in conversion and the formation in discipleship of the believing community. Pastoral wisdom and planning are not detrimental to experience, but should foster it.
190. In the course of our dialogue we have come to realize that we have much more in common in our experience of the spiritual life than we expected. Mutual sharing and prayer have brought us to a deep appreciation of our common Christian experience. This includes both the affective and aesthetic dimensions of becoming a Christian as vital, personal, and transformative. Catholics and Pentecostals recognize that the thirst for salvation is at the same time a work of the Spirit and a human response. This level of experience continues after conversion in areas as diverse as family life, work, civic life, and the promotion of justice and peace in society. Our traditions encourage lay



witness and participation in the mission of the church. We agree that all of this is grounded in the pursuit of holiness and in active congregational and parish life. Moreover, we emphasize the need for discernment embracing deep personal consciousness of what God is doing as well as the necessity to test new manifestations of spirituality. In all this we are aware that God leads us in a wide range of spiritual experiences, extraordinary and ordinary, joyous and sad, and those which make us aware of our spiritual riches or poverty, where we share in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, we confess together with Paul: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3: 10-11). We are united in hope that despite our sin, weaknesses, and divisions God will bring to perfection what he has begun in us until the day of Christ Jesus (cf. Phil 1:6).

191. Still there are differences between us. Charismatic manifestations like glossolalia and sacramentally-oriented devotions such as the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may seem worlds apart to some. Our experiences will vary. As we have noted charismatic experiences have been present in the Catholic Church and Pentecostals are not averse to order and ritual in their services. Yet, we have discovered that in hearing each other, and in witnessing each other's faith, hope, and love we are drawn more deeply to Christ. We hope through the power of the Spirit that our mutual recognitions will enhance our communion with each other and strengthen our common witness to the world.

## **V. Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation**

### **A. Introduction**

#### **1. Why Reflect on Baptism in the Holy Spirit?**

192. It is our intention to treat this section on Baptism in the Holy Spirit as we have the other sections of this report, that is, within the context of Christian Initiation. We are fully aware that there are differences among us regarding the meaning, significance, and timing of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is not our desire to prejudice the discussion in one direction or the other, but because the experience known as Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a cornerstone in Pentecostal life and spirituality and because the experience has been so significant in the spiritual life and formation also of Catholic Charismatics, we believe that it would be fruitful to look together at various biblical and patristic texts in order to discern what insights they might bring to our understanding of this experience and its place in Christian Initiation.
193. Catholics and Pentecostals both acknowledge the importance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. We share the conviction that the Holy Spirit has always been present in the church with grace, signs, and gifts. We affirm and embrace charisms as an important dimension in the life of the church.

194. Both of our traditions identify two principal moments for the reception of the Spirit. For Pentecostals these moments come in conversion and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. For Catholics they come in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.
195. Both Catholics and Pentecostals affirm the grace present in the Charismatic renewal. The warm reception given to it by the leaders in the Catholic Church is a sign of official recognition of this grace. In addition, many (though not all) Pentecostals would join Catholics in recognizing that grace in the commitment of Catholic Charismatics to remain loyal to their Catholic faith. The Pentecostal doctrine of Baptism in the Holy Spirit has led to internal discussions for Catholics through the Charismatic renewal's reception of that experience and through the diverse theological interpretations given to it. It is the conviction of the members of this Dialogue that the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit need not be a divisive issue among our communities. On the contrary, it may provide a meaningful bridge to greater understanding and mutual appreciation.
196. The Catholic renewal as well as the existence of this dialogue underscores the positive significance of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements for the whole church. These movements are one of the signs of the Spirit's enduring presence in the church and the world. It is for these reasons that we turn our attention to the subject of Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

## **2. Earlier Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue On Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

197. The subject of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit was first taken up in the initial round of this dialogue (1972-1976). At that time Pentecostals described Baptism in the Holy Spirit as follows: "In the Pentecostal movement 'being baptised in the Spirit', 'being filled with the Holy Spirit', and 'receiving the Holy Spirit' are understood as occurring in a decisive experience distinct from conversion whereby the Holy Spirit manifests himself, empowers, and transforms one's life, and enlightens one as to the whole reality of the Christian mystery (Acts 2:4; 8:17; 10:44; 19:6)" (*Final Report 1972-1976*, §12).
198. While the *Final Report 1972-1976* used the expression "receiving the Holy Spirit" as a description of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, it was clear to all participants that those Christians who have not had such an experience have received the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit dwells in all Christians (Rom 8:9), and not just in those 'baptised in the Holy Spirit'. The difference between a committed Christian without such a Pentecostal experience and one with such an experience is generally not only a matter of theological focus, but also that of expanded openness and expectancy with regard to the Holy Spirit and his gifts. Because the Holy Spirit apportions as he wills in freedom and sovereignty, the religious experiences of persons can differ. 'He blows where he wills' (Jn 3:8). Though the Holy Spirit never ceased manifesting himself throughout the entire

history of the church, the manner of the manifestations has differed according to the times and cultures. However, in the Pentecostal Movement, the manifestation of tongues has had, and continues to have, particular importance” (*Final Report 1972-1976*, §16).

199. In referring to the use of the expression Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the *Final Report 1972-1976* also stated that “in the New Testament the expression ‘to baptise in the Holy Spirit’ (Mk 1:8) is used to express, in contrast to the baptism of John (Jn 1:33), the baptism by Jesus who gives the Spirit to the new eschatological people of God, the church (Acts 1:5). All men are called to enter into this community through faith in Jesus Christ who makes them disciples through baptism and sharers of his Spirit (Acts 2:38:39)” (*Final Report 1972-1976*, §11).
200. That Report did not arrive at a joint statement on the understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit and its charismatic manifestations. Ambiguity remained in the Dialogue, for example, about the precise relationship between Baptism in the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and the exercise of ministry in the other, as reflected in the following passage: “In some manner, all ministry is a demonstration of the power of the Spirit. It is not agreed whether there is a further imparting of the Spirit with a view to charismatic ministry, or whether Baptism in the Holy Spirit is, rather, a kind of release of a certain aspect of the Spirit already given” (*Final Report 1972-1976*, §18). In order to further the discussion on Baptism in the Holy Spirit, we offer the following observations.

### **B. Biblical Perspectives on Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

201. All Christians believe that the sending of the Holy Spirit is essential to God’s plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament the prophets announced a day when God’s people would receive the Spirit. Ezekiel proclaimed, “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you: and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes, and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek 36:26-27; cf. 11:19). In addition, Joel prophesied a “pouring out” of the Spirit upon “all flesh” – old and young, sons and daughters, and even male and female slaves – an announcement from which Peter draws to explain the observed prophetic phenomenon of Pentecost (Acts 2:7-8; cf. Joel 2:28-29) .
202. In the New Testament, Jesus assures His followers that God wants to give the good gift of the Spirit to His children (cf. Lk 11:13). Prior to His ascension, Jesus promised His disciples that when the Spirit was sent, He would not only be with them but also in them (cf. Jn 14:17). A number of Apostolic letters mention the fact that believers receive the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9, 15; Gal 3:2; Titus 3:4-7). Through this reception, believers are born again (cf. Jn 3:5-6), assured of Divine love (cf. Rom 5:5), and

baptized into one body (cf. 1 Cor 12:13), which introduces spiritual communion with God and one another (cf. 2 Cor 13:13; 1 Cor 1:9).

203. While one can find a foundation for understanding Baptism in the Holy Spirit in the beginning of all four Gospels, scripture nowhere mentions the phrase “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” in its nominal (noun) form. It uses the verbal form or it employs different verbs altogether. When he announced the coming of the One whose way he was preparing, John the Baptist declared to the multitudes, “I have baptised you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mk 1:8; cf. Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33). Prior to his ascension, Jesus promised His disciples “...wait there [in Jerusalem] for the promise of the Father. ‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me; for John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now’” (Acts 1:4-5 cf. 1:8). Catholics and Pentecostals both believe that Acts 2:4 is the obvious fulfillment of this promise, “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them ability”. While Christians agree with the foregoing comments about the Holy Spirit, the interpretation of such biblical texts becomes more complex when Scripture is explored to account for the experience referred to as Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
204. On the Day of Pentecost, the questions that arose among those who witnessed the pouring out of the Spirit (Acts 2:7-8, 12), led the Apostle Peter to address them. Peter appealed to the prophet Joel (2:28-32; cf. Acts 2:16-18) as providing precedent for what these people were seeing, a promise fulfilled before their eyes. “...This is what was spoken through the prophet, Joel: ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.’” Peter tied that promise to the coming of Jesus, His death, resurrection and ascension, and His promise of the outpouring of the Spirit. “When they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’” Peter’s response was to call them to repentance, followed by baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. But he concluded by promising that if they did as instructed, they would “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” “The promise,” he pointed out, would apply not only to them and to their children, but to “all who are far away ... everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:38-39).
205. Additional biblical evidence of this promise is found in Peter’s invitation to preach at the home of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, who had been identified as “a devout man who feared God” (Acts 10:2; 11:16). This phrase identified Gentiles who, while not converting to Judaism, nevertheless worshipped the God of Israel. Here again, the language used to describe the experience of the household of Cornelius differed from the words that Jesus used when He promised that His followers would be baptised in the Spirit. The text says simply that “the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word”

while “the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on these Gentiles” (Acts 10:44-45). Indeed, Peter noted that the experience of these Gentiles paralleled his own experience on the Day of Pentecost, when he sought to justify Christian baptism of these Gentiles in water (cf. Acts 10:46-48) to the Jewish Christians who were present. Later, when Paul and Barnabas were summoned to the Jerusalem Council, Peter again appealed to the experience of Cornelius as being parallel to that of the apostles (cf. Acts 15:8).

206. Yet again, in Acts 19:6, Paul laid hands on those he found in Ephesus who had received the baptism of repentance preached by John the Baptist, and “the Holy Spirit came upon them.” In three cases when the Holy Spirit came upon the individuals there were charismatic manifestations, namely they “spoke in other tongues” (Acts 2:4), they were heard “speaking in tongues and praising God” (Acts 10:45), or “they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6). In Acts 9:17-18, Paul received the Spirit through the laying on of hands and was healed from his blindness. While there is no explicit mention that he spoke in tongues, Paul later wrote, “I speak in tongues more than all of you” (1 Cor 14:18). In Acts 8:9-19, while the text is not explicit about the presence of any charismatic phenomena when Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritans and the Spirit comes upon them, it seems apparent that something dramatic happened that caused Simon, the magician, to desire the ability to bestow the Spirit through the laying on of hands. In the Acts of the Apostles there were charismatic manifestations at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
207. In summary, to be baptised with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:5), to be filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:4) or to receive the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38) is seen as a gift of God rooted in Jesus’ own promise of Acts 1:8 and Peter’s claim in Acts 2:38-39. It is through the reception of this gift or grace from God that God reveals Himself in a personal and life-transforming way to the believer. The result is that the believer is empowered by the Holy Spirit, and becomes aware in a new and powerful way, of the presence of the risen and glorified Christ (cf. Jn 16:14). This encounter enables the believer to become a stronger witness for Christ (Acts 1:8) and to experience a deeper dimension of prayer and worship (1 Cor 12-14).

### **C. Patristic Perspectives on Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

208. The following patristic statements underscore the strong pneumatological dimension to the early church’s understanding and practice of Christian Initiation. At the outset, it should be asked, whether or not these patristic sources describe what today is known as “Baptism in the Holy Spirit”. While some scholars interpret these texts in ways that suggest that they do, others are convinced that they do not. It is not our intention to attempt to resolve this debate. What we would like to point out, however, is that these texts demonstrate quite clearly the keen awareness that the Fathers of the church had regarding the decisive role of the Holy Spirit and his gifts in the transformation that

took place when a person becomes a Christian. Those who expressed this view came from various parts of the Christian world, representing Latin, Greek, and Syriac traditions.<sup>18</sup>

209. One of the earliest books written in Latin about baptism was by Tertullian (c.160-225), who included a passage indicating that prayer and charismatic gifts accompanied the “new birth” of one who became a Christian. He exhorts: “Therefore, blessed ones, whom the grace of God awaits, when you ascend from that most sacred font of your new birth, and spread your hands for the first time in the house of your mother, together with your brethren, ask from the Father, ask from the Lord, that His own riches of grace and distributions of charisms (*peculia gratiae distributiones charismatum subiacere*) may be supplied to you. ‘Ask,’ he says, ‘and you shall receive’. Well, you have asked, and have received; you have knocked, and it has been opened to you” (Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 20 [c. 198-200]).<sup>19</sup> According to Tertullian, the receiving of the Holy Spirit is among the essential fruits of baptism, along with the remission of sins, deliverance from death, and regeneration (cf. *Against Marcion* 1, 28). Several other passages also suggest that one receives the Spirit in the sacrament of baptism (*On Modesty* IX, 9; and *On the Soul* I,4).
210. About the same time, another Western author, Hippolytus (c.170-235), preserves a prayer in his *Apostolic Tradition* to be pronounced over the newly baptised: “The bishop, imposing hands on them, shall make this invocation – ‘Lord God, who has made them worthy to obtain the remission of sins by the bath of regeneration of the Holy Spirit, confer on them your grace so that they may serve you according to your will’” (*Apostolic Tradition* 22).<sup>20</sup> Here the invocation indicates that the baptised have been regenerated in the Holy Spirit and that the gift of grace is aimed at serving the will of the Father.
211. For Origen (c.185-254), an Alexandrian who wrote in Greek, baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit are intimately related: baptism with water is “the principle and source of the divine charisms” (*Commentary on John* 6:17). To argue that the various charismatic gifts manifest themselves in powerful ways, Origen refers to the passage from the Acts of the Apostles about Simon the magician, who was so impressed by what occurred when the Spirit descended upon the newly baptised that he wanted to buy from Peter the power to bring about the same effect (cf. Acts 8:9-24). Origen goes

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<sup>18</sup> For patristic passages that speak of the role of the Holy Spirit in a way that might possibly reflect Baptism in the Holy Spirit our dialogue team is especially indebted to the work of Kilian McDonnell OSB. He was responsible for the section devoted to the Fathers of the church in a book co-authored with George T. Montague and entitled *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, Second Revised Edition, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994. McDonnell summarized some of his findings during the first meeting of the present phase of our dialogue, held at Bolton, Ontario, on June 23-30, 1998, in his paper “The Experience of Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Early Church.”

<sup>19</sup> Slight alterations to the English translation found in our usual source, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, have been made in light of McDonnell’s discussion of the Latin words which appear in the above quotation.

<sup>20</sup> Our English translation is based upon the critical edition found in Hippolyte de Rome, *La tradition apostolique*, “Sources Chrétiennes 11,” B. Botte, editor, Paris: Cerf, 1946, p. 52.

on to explain the difference between the baptism of John the Baptist and that of Jesus and his disciples (cf. Acts 19:2-7), stating that the latter is a bath of new birth and of renewal in the Spirit. Gifts of the Spirit such as “the word of wisdom” or “the word of knowledge,” mentioned by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:8, are bestowed either through baptism or through the grace of the Spirit (cf. *On First Principles* 2, 10, 7 [c.220–230]).

212. In the Latin tradition, Hilary of Poitiers (c. 314-367) also points out some of the charismatic gifts that new Christians receive from the Holy Spirit: “We who have been reborn through the sacrament of baptism experience intense joy when we feel within us the first stirrings of the Holy Spirit, [...] when we begin to have insight into the mysteries of faith, to prophesy and to speak with wisdom, become steadfast in hope and receive the gifts of healing and domination over demons” (*Tract on the Psalms* 64:15).<sup>21</sup> Hilary uses the imagery of water and intoxication to describe the Spirit’s powerful effect on believers: “We become inebriated when we receive the Holy Spirit, who is called a river. The prophet prays that the Lord will inebriate us, so that out of us various streams of grace might flow” (*Tract on the Psalms* 64:15).<sup>22</sup> Hilary further states that, after they have been filled with the power of divine gifts, Christians may sow the seed of the Gospel on good soil, producing fruit of thirty, sixty and a hundredfold (cf. Mt 13:8 and 23). In another place, Hilary turns to the theme of experience and affirms: “Among us there is no one who, from time to time, does not feel the gift of the grace of the Spirit” (*Tract on the Psalms* 118 12,4). He insists that the charisms are “profitable gifts” (*On the Trinity* 8:30), exhorting his readers: “Let us, therefore, make use of this great benefit” (*On the Trinity* 2:35).
213. The instructions preserved from Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386), which he delivered to those preparing to enter the church during the rites celebrated at Easter, evoke what it was like to become a Christian many centuries ago. Pronounced in the very church built over the places of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, Cyril recalls the charismatic gifts about which Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (cf. *Catechetical Lectures* 16:12) and relates the Holy Spirit to those gifts, which would soon be poured out upon the newly initiated: “Great indeed, and all-powerful in gifts, and wonderful, is the Holy Spirit” (*Catechetical Lectures* 16:22). According to Cyril, the grace given to the apostles “was not partial but [the Spirit’s] power was in full perfection; for just as one who plunges into the waters and is baptised is encompassed on all sides by the waters, so were they also baptised completely by the Holy Spirit” (*Catechetical Lectures* 17:14).

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<sup>21</sup> Our English translations of this work are based upon the critical edition: S. Hilarii Episcopi Pictaviensis, *Tractatus super Psalmos*, “CSEL 22,” Prague / Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1891, page 246.

<sup>22</sup> Here Hilary is commenting on the following passages: Psalm 46:5 (“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High”); John 4:14 (“The water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”) and John 7:38-39 (“‘He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”). For a testimony to the powerful transformation worked in the believer by the Holy Spirit see: Gregory of Nazianzus, *Fifth Theological Discourse*, 28 (380).

214. Basil of Caesarea (c.330-379) affirms that the Holy Spirit is the unifying principle holding together the body of the church which is blessed with such a diversity of charisms: “Again, the Spirit is conceived of, in relation to the distribution of gifts, as a whole in parts. For we are all ‘members one of another, having gifts differing according to the grace that is given us’.” This unity in the Holy Spirit is related to baptism: “And as parts in the whole so are we individually in the Spirit, because we all ‘were baptized in one body into one spirit’” (*On the Holy Spirit*, 26:61). Basil adds that the power of the Spirit breaks into action according to the needs of particular situations: “For as art is potentially in the artist, but only in operation when he is working in accordance with it, so also the Spirit is ever present with those that are worthy, but works, as need requires, in prophecies, or in healings, or in some other actual carrying into effect of His potential action”.
215. John Chrysostom (354-407), a famous preacher in the city of Antioch and later bishop of Constantinople, commented upon the verse in which John the Baptist says of the one coming after him that “He will baptise you in the Holy Spirit” (Mt 3:11), giving the following list of the graces received by those who became Christians: “remission of sins, removing of punishment, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, adoption, brotherhood, a partaking of the inheritance and an abundant supply of the Holy Spirit” (*On Matthew* 11). In contrast to Basil of Caesarea, however, who, as we just noted, affirmed that the charisms continue to be distributed and exercised in the Christian community, John Chrysostom finds the discussion of them in 1 Corinthians 12 “obscure” because of “our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place” (*On 1 Corinthians* 29). In another commentary concerning Romans 8:26 (“but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words”), he writes: “This statement is not clear, owing to the cessation of many of the wonders which then used to take place” (*On Romans* 14). Chrysostom goes on to suggest that some of the gifts referred to in the Scripture were given because of the special needs of the early community, while others continue today in an institutionalized form.
216. One of the patristic testimonies, a prominent figure from the Syriac tradition, Philoxenus (c. 440-528) gives us a somewhat contrasting position. He writes, “Now again, the Holy Spirit is given by baptism to those who are baptized and they really receive the Spirit, like the first believers. However in none of them, does it manifest its work visibly. Even though the Spirit is in them, it remains hidden there. Unless one leaves the world to enter into the way of the rules of the spiritual life, observing all the commandments Jesus has given, walking with wisdom and perseverance in the narrow way of the Gospel, the work of the Spirit received in baptism does not reveal itself”



(*Letter to Patricius* 120).<sup>23</sup> Obviously Philoxenus made a strong connection between baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit. Here the visible manifestation of the activity of the Holy Spirit is revealed in that spiritual path followed by those who “leave the world” to follow “the narrow way of the Gospel,” an apparent reference to the vocation of monks and nuns which is so highly prized in this early period, first developing in the East but later also appearing in the West. That being noted, still Philoxenus clearly holds to a hidden presence of the Spirit at work in all who have been baptized. This hidden presence can break out into visible manifestation long after the actual initiation of the believer into the Christian community.

217. Every one of the statements included in this brief sample of patristic texts unambiguously witnesses to the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the transformation by which a person became a Christian, often in ways which suggest the bestowal of powerful graces and charismatic gifts. Such graces and gifts include: prayer with outstretched hands, receiving the inheritance and deliverance from death (Tertullian); regeneration by the Holy Spirit and receiving grace (Hippolytus); cleansing, power and gifts of wisdom and knowledge (Origen); joy, prophecy and spiritual inebriation (Hilary); spiritual power in its fullness (Cyril of Jerusalem); diversity of charisms and healing (Basil); sanctification (Gregory of Nazianzen); forgiveness, remission of sin, holiness, adoption as a child of God and abundant outpouring of the Spirit (John Chrysostom) and hidden effectiveness with subsequent manifestations (Philoxenus). Both of our communities rejoice that we can report this evidence about the power of the Holy Spirit at work in Christians from the early centuries of church history.

## **D. Contemporary Reflections on Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

### **1. A Catholic Perspective**

#### **a. Some Doctrinal Observations**

218. It must be recognized that there is no official Catholic doctrine on Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Its reception in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has sparked an intense theological investigation of the matter but this can only be understood in the light of Catholic teaching on the reception of the Holy Spirit. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes reference to the baptism that Christ will bring that distinguishes it from the baptism for repentance administered by John the Baptist. Referring to John 3:5—“Jesus answered, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.’ ”—the Catechism describes the baptism that Christ institutes as a “baptism in water and the Spirit [that] will be a new birth.” (CCC 720). Certainly this does not directly implicate what Catholic Charismatics have meant by being ‘baptized in the Spirit.’ Within a Catholic context it means that the

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<sup>23</sup> Our English translation is based upon “La lettre à Patricius,” Édition critique du texte syriaque et traduction française par René Lavenant, in *Patrologia orientalis*, vol. 30, fasc. 5, Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1963, pp. 861 and 863.

charismatic ‘Baptism in the Holy Spirit’ cannot be considered as an additional sacrament, or that it communicates sacramental grace that those who have not received it would not possess. For example, Catholics cannot affirm that those who have been baptized and confirmed would be lacking in the grace of those two sacraments if they did not also receive the charismatic ‘Baptism in the Holy Spirit.’

219. The Holy Spirit is invoked and imparted in the celebration of every sacrament. Although the work of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the grace received in the sacraments—the sovereign distribution of graces, gifts, and charismata are affirmed in Catholic theology—the initial reception of the Holy Spirit is mediated through the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation, and eucharist). At the same time Catholics identify the action of the Holy Spirit in a way that parallels the Pentecostal understanding of conversion, where the Holy Spirit is given and regeneration takes place, and of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, where empowerment is given.
220. The Holy Spirit acts in baptism through regeneration, a “birth into the new life in Christ” (CCC 1277), “enabling [the baptized]...to believe in God, to hope in him...” (CCC 1266). They are incorporated into the church and in being anointed with sacred chrism (perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop and used within the baptismal rite) they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and are “incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king” (CCC 1241).
221. It is in the sacrament of confirmation that the “special strength of the Holy Spirit” is imparted (CCC 1285). Indeed, “the effect of confirmation is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (CCC 1302). Through confirmation grace received in baptism is increased and deepened, resulting in a deeper sense of being a child of God (divine filiation by which we cry “Abba! Father!”), a more firm union with Christ, an increase of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a more perfect bond with the church, and special strength to witness to Christ including bearing the shame of the cross (cf. CCC 1303).
222. In confirmation, Jesus Christ marks “a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness” (CCC 1304). In the Catholic tradition, both baptism and confirmation imprint an “indelible spiritual mark” or “character” on the soul. Therefore it is through these two sacraments that Catholics are given new life, and the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, to grow in holiness and engage in mission with all the gifts and charisms that the Spirit imparts.

### **b. The Birth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal**

223. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal came into being as one among several different manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. Already, on the eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Leo XIII, taking up proposals made to him, wrote an Apostolic

Exhortation (1895) and an Encyclical Letter (1897) in which he called for devotion to the Holy Spirit and recommended the nine days before Pentecost as a Novena of Prayer for the Holy Spirit: “for the renewal of the church, reunification of Christianity, renewal of society, and for a renewal of the face of the earth”. On 1 January 1901, Pope Leo XIII prayed the hymn to the Holy Spirit in the name of the whole church.

224. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the decisive influences in the growth of the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church included liturgical renewal, a renewed emphasis on the biblical and patristic sources, new concern for Christian unity, shared responsibility of all the faithful for the church’s mission to the world, new theological and pastoral reflection on the working of the Holy Spirit, and a fresh appreciation of the church’s charismatic treasures (cf. *Charismatic Community Renewal in the Catholic Church in the Federal Republic of Germany: The Spirit Gives Life, A Theological Guide*, pp. 10-11).
225. In this context of the new awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit, the witness of classical Pentecostals and their teaching on Baptism in the Holy Spirit contributed to the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 1967 in the United States. The early leaders of the renewal prayed for the experience of Baptism in the Holy Spirit and received it with many also speaking in tongues. Subsequently they reflected theologically on both their own experience and the Pentecostal doctrine of Baptism in the Holy Spirit and submitted their renewal movement to the guidance of the church’s pastors.
226. Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II, along with many individual bishops and Episcopal conferences, acknowledged the signs of grace present in the Renewal, at times expressing caution about certain practices that required spiritual discernment, and teaching that might not be consistent with that of the Catholic Church. Consequently the classical Pentecostal doctrine of Baptism in the Holy Spirit was not embraced as a whole without qualification. Since its beginning, the Charismatic Renewal has been warmly welcomed by the church’s leaders and more recently has received formal ecclesial recognition from Rome.<sup>24</sup>

### **c. Two Schools of Theological Interpretation**

227. Two major schools of theological interpretation emerged among Catholic charismatics concerning Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Some exchanged that term for others such as ‘release of the Spirit’ or “renewal in the Spirit’ in order to maintain a clear distinction between this aspect of the renewal and the sacrament of baptism.

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<sup>24</sup> With a Decree of 14 September 1993, the Pontifical Council for Laity gave formal recognition to the *International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS)*, as a body for the promotion of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and approved their Statutes.

228. The Malines Document (1974), an important Catholic statement on the Charismatic Movement, underlined the importance of experience: “When the Spirit given at initiation emerges into consciousness, there is frequently a perception of concrete presence” (III G 4). It established a fundamental relation between Christian Initiation and receiving the Holy Spirit: “The decisive coming of the Spirit by virtue of which one becomes a Christian is related to the celebration of Christian Initiation (baptism, confirmation, and eucharist). Christian Initiation is the effective sign of the Spirit’s bestowal” (III F I). It pointed to the insights of early Christian communities with respect to the reception of the Holy Spirit: “There is evidence that in many of the early Christian communities, persons not only asked for and received the Spirit during the celebration of initiation, but they expected that the Spirit would demonstrate his power by the transformation he would effect in their lives” (III F 1).
229. The document went on to indicate the view of early Christian communities in regard to charisms: “Further, the early Christian Churches expected that the power of the Spirit would come to visibility along the full spectrum of his charisms in the community, which included, but by no means was limited to, such charisms as helping, administration, prophecy, and tongues (1 Cor 12:28; cf. Rom 12:6-8)” (III F I).
230. For the Malines text, therefore, Baptism in the Holy Spirit is integral to Christian Initiation. It is to be understood as part of the fullness of Christian Initiation, as one expression of the total reality of initiation. Baptism in the Holy Spirit belongs to the church at a fundamental level.
231. This approach has two advantages: First, Baptism in the Holy Spirit is placed within a sacramental context; as part of Christian Initiation, it can be understood as a fundamental category of Christian life. Second, linking Baptism in the Holy Spirit with initiation relates the sacraments of initiation to the fullness of Christian life, which is based on spiritual experience and the openness to receive more gifts through the Holy Spirit. In this sense, Baptism in the Holy Spirit is “integral” and “normative”. But another question is raised as a result of taking this position. Is the specific character of Baptism in the Holy Spirit sufficiently recognised as a particular form of spiritual experience?
232. Another interpretation, one of those expounded in *The Spirit Gives Life*, a paper approved by the German Bishops’ Conference in 1987, indicated that: “A Christian does not possess God’s Spirit in a static manner. Rather, the person lives in the continuous ‘sending forth’ of the Spirit by the love of God. That is why we can always go on praying, ‘Send forth your Spirit’. A new kind of experience of the Spirit can therefore be understood as a new ‘outpouring’ of the Spirit by God.” In this sense, “alongside the continuous indwelling of the Spirit through baptism and confirmation – occasional renewals, or new sendings forth of the Spirit [occur] by which a Christian ‘is enabled to perform some action of grace or is placed in a new state of grace’” (Thomas

Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.q 43 a.6). In this sense, experiences of the Spirit can be explained as a new receiving of the Holy Spirit without denying reference to the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

233. The advantage of this approach is that it clearly emphasizes the particularity of God's guidance and his gifts. This approach has sacramental aspects, since all spiritual life has its roots in the sacraments. The individual sacraments give shape to the church, which Catholics consider to be "the universal sacrament of salvation" (LG 48). In this context, the sacraments of initiation certainly are of fundamental significance. But God's bestowal of grace and of charismatic gifts need not be restricted only to the sacraments. As the New Testament points out, "the wind [Spirit] blows where it chooses" (Jn 3:7-8), distributing freely a variety of gifts for the building up of the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:4-13; Eph 4:11-17).
234. Both positions agree on the essentials of a dedicated Christian life and what here can be said to be "integral" and "normative", and on the fundamental meaning of the sacraments, especially those of Christian Initiation. Both agree on the importance of being open to the Holy Spirit and his gifts, "whether extraordinary or simple and humble". Both agree on the importance of openness to the charismatic dimension of the church, to the transformative and life changing power of the Holy Spirit and to the fullness of Christian life. Both agree on the importance of spiritual experience and, at the same time, that Christian life, as often had been said, is in no way "a progress from peak experience to peak experience" or is "dominated by unusual experiences" but that, on the contrary, "life is lived mostly in the valleys. Often in the desert".<sup>25</sup> In that sense both agree that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is part of ecclesial life. Thus, the two different approaches or positions do not appear to be irreconcilable. However, they clearly disagree on the understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, especially concerning whether this term should be used to specify a particular spiritual experience in the Pentecostal Movement and in the Charismatic Renewal, or whether this should be understood as normative for Christian initiation.
235. Both interpretations attempt to be faithful to Catholic tradition and both complement the charismatic experience with the church's theological and spiritual traditions. They both emphasize that the charismatic dimension is integral to the building up of the church and to the fullness of Christian life. Charisms, free gifts of the Holy Spirit, "whatever their character – sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues – ... are oriented toward sanctifying grace, and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church" (CCC 2003).

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, Collegeville, Minnesota 1994, p. 360.

236. Catholics are grateful for the enrichment of their spiritual experience by their historic interaction with classical Pentecostals, their experience and doctrine. In the meantime, Catholics, while witnessing to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the church, continue to pray for a 'New Pentecost' following the lead of Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council,. They also renew faith in the Holy Spirit as traditionally expressed in the beautiful Pentecost Sequence hymn *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (Come Holy Spirit) and the Litany of the Holy Spirit.
237. We believe that it is fitting in this dialogue to conclude this section on Catholic understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the prayers lifted up to God on the morning before Pentecost and the evening of Pentecost in the Liturgy of the Hours. Respectively they are: "We have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. With all who are baptized, let us give glory to the Lord, and ask him: Lord Jesus, give us your Spirit to make us holy." "You [God the Father] desire the unity of all Christians through one Baptism in the Holy Spirit, make all who believe one in heart and soul. Send your Holy Spirit into the Church."

## 2. A Pentecostal Perspective

238. Classical Pentecostals first attracted public attention on January 1, 1901 when a young woman named Agnes Ozman spoke in tongues under the ministry of Charles Fox Parham. Several years later the three-year revival (1906-1909) at the Apostolic Faith Mission, 312 Azusa Street, in Los Angeles, led by the African-American, William Joseph Seymour, became the center of the Pentecostal Movement. From "Azusa Street" the message of salvation, holiness, and power was rapidly dispersed around the world by a host of evangelists and missionaries where it took root and developed. It is for this reason that so many Pentecostal and Charismatic believers look to the "Azusa Street" mission as the fountainhead of Pentecostalism.
239. Through the years Pentecostalism has taken many forms. It includes the classical Pentecostal denominations and many independent or non-denominational Pentecostal and charismatic fellowships. While many will choose the name "Pentecostal" to describe themselves, others would use different terms such as "Charismatic," "Third Wave," "New Apostolic," "African Indigenous", or "Word of Faith." In addition, many within the historic churches have called themselves Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal, or charismatic, acknowledging the fact that they are in some way related to Classical Pentecostalism both historically and theologically. In the course of these developments some groups do not identify with the Pentecostal doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit but they have maintained many elements of the Pentecostal experience, e.g., being filled with the Spirit, empowerment, signs, wonders, spiritual gifts and

charismatic praise. All together, those who in some way share a Pentecostal identity have been estimated to number nearly 600,000,000.<sup>26</sup>

240. Baptism in the Holy Spirit has been a central feature of the Pentecostal Movement. Classical Pentecostals hold to a distinctive doctrine of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals believe that in this Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Christian encounters the Holy Spirit in such a way that one is empowered to become the compelling witness that Jesus proclaimed in Acts 1:8. Pentecostals also believe that without such an encounter with the Holy Spirit, the life and witness of the Christian is greatly impoverished.
241. Several streams of American religious life which gained momentum in the nineteenth century clearly influenced the emergence of Pentecostalism. The revivalist stream took root in colonial America with the Great Awakening in the eighteenth century and continued along the expanding frontier of the new Republic of the United States. Through evangelistic preaching including the use of camp meetings many were brought to Christian conversion through the drama of crisis experiences and the expectation that God was at work in the assembled community in the power of his Word and Spirit. Powerful experiences of the religious affections were not uncommon in these circles. Within this stream many sought a deeper life of holiness in their desire to be free from the domination of sin and to witness for Christ through an empowered life. By the mid-nineteenth century this took form in the Wesleyan-Holiness movement that taught a second experience of grace subsequent to conversion. Whereas in conversion one was saved through forgiveness and justification and regenerated into new life in Christ, the second work of grace, identified as “entire sanctification” freed one from the power of sin by the eradication of one’s sinful nature. Being filled with divine love one was therefore enabled to grow in Christian perfection. Many began to identify this experience as a “Baptism in/with the Holy Spirit.”
242. The Holiness movement also included a non-Wesleyan wing which was influenced by the Keswick Movement from England. Its adherents sought holiness as the “Higher Christian Life” but believed that sanctification was an ongoing process that began in conversion and continued throughout one’s Christian life. Many in that movement too, however, believed in a subsequent experience, that is, a baptism with the Holy Spirit that empowered them for witness and mission and was the basis for the “overcoming life” they desired.
243. Developments in church and society also influenced the early Pentecostal Movement. Many evangelical and holiness Protestants became disenchanted with the state of the church as it was represented both in the proliferation of denominations with their

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<sup>26</sup> David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, “Global Table A. 50 Shared Goals: status of global mission, AD 1900 to AD 2025, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30:1 (2006), 28. We are aware of the limitations that such estimates pose. For a helpful critique in this regard, see, Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10-14.

competing claims for supremacy, and in the basic optimism exuded by many in the historic Protestant churches that came to be identified with the Social Gospel. Their experience of the church in their day led these Christians, including many of the forebears of Pentecostalism, to conclude that the clerical life was overly professionalized, church structures had become too rigid, ecclesial practice had become routinized, moral laxity was being tolerated, syncretism was compromising historic doctrinal positions, and biblical truth was being undermined by the new “higher criticism.” Darwinism became ascendant not only in science but in society at large. From their perspective all of this had led to a decline of genuine Christian spirituality. As a result, many came to believe that the historic churches around them did not reflect the vision of the church that was outlined in the Bible.

244. Restorationist currents in the understanding of the church were widely present at the birth of Pentecostalism. Already influential in some sectors of Protestantism it typically envisioned the history of the church as a process of decline and restoration. In the opinion of some, as early as the post-apostolic period, the church began to depart from the spiritual authenticity of the primitive Christian community of the New Testament. Compounded by the growth of Christianity into the very structures of ancient society and its legal recognition by the emperor Constantine, the subsequent emergence of Christian society, culture and empire, in other words, European Christendom, was viewed from the perspective of spiritual compromise rather than growth and development. Sometimes the vision of what the church should be was presented as a return to the simplicity and purity of the New Testament community.
245. Convinced that the church had declined and biblical Christianity had been lost, early Pentecostals adopted a schema of restoration and renewal in light of the judgment and restoration motif in Joel 1:4 and 2:25. Many anticipated that the restoration of the church would come only through Divine intervention manifested in a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:23, 28-32; cf. Acts 2:16-21). When an outpouring of the Holy Spirit came with the Azusa Street Revival, they concluded that the promised “last days” restoration was being fulfilled. The title of the earliest history published by Pentecostals expresses their vision of what they believed was taking place: *The Apostolic Faith Restored*.
246. Restorationism involved an eschatological vision of the People of God which held profound implications for Christian mission. Pentecostals came to believe that this restoration would include the charisms of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 that many denominations had declared were no longer necessary or available. Some contended that the “gift of tongues” would be restored to further the missionary enterprise resulting in a global revival. Pentecostals believed that their very existence was an eschatological harbinger.



247. In spite of their Restorationist convictions, and their emphasis upon getting “back to the Bible,” many early Pentecostals called attention to the ongoing role that the Holy Spirit had played among those whom in their judgment were remnants of the true church. In distributing the works of the Pre-Nicene Fathers they were acknowledging their contribution to the life the church. They drew attention to earlier Christian prophetic, monastic and *millenarian* movements as forerunners to their own Movement.<sup>27</sup> They produced selective litanies that included such persons as Martin Luther, John Wesley, Edward Irving, William Booth and others they believed had contributed elements of restoration already in place – justification, sanctification, social concern and tongues. Their continuity with the historic church is best demonstrated with a review of the pedigree of *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission*. In 1563, through an act of Parliament, the Anglican Church adopted the “Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.” John Wesley, always an Anglican priest, incorporated nearly verbatim, twenty-five of the “Thirty-Nine Articles” to form the backbone of the *Doctrines and Discipline* that came to be used in the Methodist Episcopal Church. William J. Seymour drew heavily from Wesley’s version when he authored the “Azusa Street” text.

#### **a. Pentecostals and the Reception of the Holy Spirit**

248. The earliest Pentecostals were typically not new converts, but rather already well established Christians. Many of them stood within the Anglican – Methodist – Wesleyan-Holiness tradition and taught the doctrine of entire sanctification. Others adhered to the Keswick Movement and their call to the “overcoming life”. Regardless of their starting points, they all claimed that they had placed their faith in Jesus Christ. They had been converted and justified. They had received the Holy Spirit at the time of their Christian conversion, and pointed to Romans 8:9b, “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ, does not belong to him,” to support their claim. They all took holy living seriously, often producing catalogues of things to avoid, intended to help the believer to live a holy life aided by the Holy Spirit.

249. While Pentecostals believed that they received the Holy Spirit at conversion, sometimes the language they employed was vague and confusing. They might ask a fellow Christian if he or she had received the Holy Spirit in much the same way that Paul asked the Ephesians in Acts 19:2. Their question, however, was not about the initial reception of the Holy Spirit at the time of Christian conversion; it was a question about whether or not this Christian had received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Those who did not understand the question within the context of Pentecostalism were often

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<sup>27</sup> The official organ of the Assemblies of God, *The Weekly Evangel*, which later became *The Pentecostal Evangel*, carried advertisements for the complete set of the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers as early as March 4, 1916. See, “Ante-Nicene Fathers,” *The Weekly Evangel* 129 (March 4, 1916), 9. These volumes were advertised frequently in many subsequent issues of the *Evangel*. Similarly, A. J. Tomlinson repeatedly lifted up the role of the Fathers in his publication, *The Faithful Standard*.

convinced that these early Pentecostals held to an erroneous position that even confessing Christians were without the Spirit.

250. Other Pentecostals, especially Oneness Pentecostals, contributed to the confusion because they linked salvation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit together theologically. One cannot participate in “full salvation” apart from a confession of faith, baptism in water and the coming of the Spirit being evidenced by speaking in other tongues. Thus, the elements of faith, repentance, water baptism by immersion in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, reception of the Holy Spirit and Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues all came together in such a way as to offer some support for those who advocated baptismal regeneration. They believed that the words of Jesus to Nicodemus that “no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5), united what most other Pentecostals viewed as distinct actions of God in justification and Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

#### **b. The Relationship of Baptism in the Holy Spirit to Sanctification**

251. The two holiness streams, associated respectively with Wesley and the Keswick Convention, influenced early Pentecostal developments and led to the first division in the movement. The teaching of the Azusa Street Mission was clearly Wesleyan in inspiration. First, the new believer was justified as an act of God’s free grace, and upon a confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ the new believer was baptized in water. Second, the young convert was encouraged to pursue the sanctification of the Holy Spirit (John 17: 15, 17; 1 Thess. 5:23; Hebrews 12:14). This second “work of grace” (now no longer called baptism with the Holy Spirit) was then followed by further encouragement to seek a Baptism in the Holy Spirit to empower all sanctified Christians for ministry according to what was believed to be the scriptural pattern. This meant, once again, waiting before God, but this time it was in anticipation that God would pour forth the Holy Spirit in fullness upon the candidate. This “baptism” or “pouring out of the Spirit” or “immersion in the Spirit” by Christ would be accompanied by the “Bible evidence,” the same evidence that they understood to be present in the biblical account of Acts 2, the ability to speak in other tongues.
252. Whether one took the classical Wesleyan-Holiness position in which sanctification was a second work of grace, or adhered to the more classical Protestant position on sanctification influenced in Pentecostal circles by the Keswick Movement, in which one entered into a positional and progressive form of sanctification when one was placed “in Christ,” advocates agreed that personal sanctification and lives of holiness were serious matters. Almost all of them further agreed that when one received Baptism in the Holy Spirit, one received the “Bible evidence” of that encounter. Their differences over their understandings of sanctification initially led to temporary breaks in communion between some groups that took variant views on these two subjects. Condemnations often ran high as individuals chose sides. In recent years, these breaks

have been overcome to such an extent that adherents of both perspectives recognize the water baptism of one another, they participate in the Lord's supper together, and in most cases, they enjoy the mutual recognition of ministry.

253. With the exception of Oneness Pentecostals, most Pentecostals taught that Baptism in the Holy Spirit was subsequent to conversion—in the case of Wesleyan-Holiness Pentecostals subsequent to conversion and entire sanctification. While Pentecostals generally expect this to be the sequence of events that leads one into the fullness of Pentecostal life, they also accept the fact that people are sometimes baptized in the Spirit at the same time they are converted if the appropriate evidence of Baptism in the Holy Spirit is present. If it is not received at that time, Pentecostals contend that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is so critical to the fullness of Christian life that it should be pursued immediately.

### **c. Receiving Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

254. It should be reiterated that Pentecostals do not normally equate Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the reception of the Holy Spirit at conversion. Pentecostals believe that at conversion the Holy Spirit baptizes the believer into Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3) and subsequently Christ baptizes the believer in the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:4). Both are part of the initial experiences of someone who has become a Christian (cf. Ephesians 1:13-14; Titus 3:4-6). To become a Christian in all its fullness implies among other things, coming to faith, undergoing baptism in water, and in openness and expectation, receiving Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the attendant evidence. Thus, Pentecostals contend that a person will receive this Baptism in the Holy Spirit when she or he believes the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 10:44-46), comes to God in childlike faith, and in an attitude of love and trust (cf. Luke 11:11-13), which suggests that the candidate is open to God's work in his or her life.
255. In response to the preaching of the Word, candidates for Baptism in the Holy Spirit often participate in what may be described as a "liturgical act," though Pentecostals would not normally use that language. They are invited to pray around the altar in the local congregation, sometimes for extended periods of time. Generally this invitation is given at the close of the service. One or more individuals, often the pastor, elders, or other mature Christian leaders *may* lay hands upon the candidate. For some, this act is viewed instrumentally, that is, as the point of impartation of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. For others this act of "laying on of hands" provides a sense of solidarity between the candidate and those who were praying with him or her. In some Pentecostal churches, the "laying on of hands" has become more formalized. While at times Baptism in the Holy Spirit may come at the moment hands have been laid on the candidate (Acts 8:17; 19:6), Pentecostals do not presume that Baptism in the Holy Spirit comes either necessarily or only through the act of "laying on of hands". Indeed, many Pentecostals testify that they received this baptism alone, in their homes, in their kitchens, and even

without asking for it. Thus, most Pentecostals believe that Baptism in the Holy Spirit does not require another person to give, impart, or transmit it.

#### **d. Evidence of Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

256. The expectation that all who receive baptism in the Holy Spirit would be able to give some evidence of that fact other than a personal testimony, is deeply ingrained within Pentecostal theology. The purpose of this “Bible evidence” was understood to be both missionary and evangelistic. The Holy Spirit, in an instant of time, could grant a missionary call, point in the direction of a field of service, and equip one with the language necessary to fulfill that call, in short, the recipient would be empowered to engage in missionary evangelism, just as the 120 on the Day of Pentecost were empowered to “go into all the world” (Mk 16:15). From Parham’s perspective, this is what the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2:4 meant, and it was now necessary to be restored because of the imminent return of Jesus Christ.
257. Not all Pentecostals have agreed with this notion of the evidential aspect of the doctrine. Even from the beginning, some debated whether it was a human language, a manifestation of ecstatic speech, or even an angelic tongue (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1). While most classical Pentecostal denominations continue to hold one or another of these positions, some of the earliest Pentecostal groups, most notably those that emerged in Chile around 1910, and a number of other Pentecostal denominations came to believe that one could provide evidence of his or her Baptism in the Holy Spirit by demonstrating that he or she had received one of several different manifestations. These would include “speaking in other tongues, dancing [in the Spirit], having visions, prophesying, or engaging in any manifestations that are consistent with the Word of God (Scripture).”<sup>28</sup>
258. In recent years, a smaller percentage of believers within Pentecostal denominations in the United States are receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues than did in earlier years. This has raised profound pastoral and theological questions within these groups. The discussion of these matters continues in the Pentecostal community.

#### **e. The Relationship between Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Charism of Speaking in Tongues**

259. The Apostle, Paul, raised a related question when he asked “Do all speak in tongues (*me pantes glossais lalousin*)?” in 1 Corinthians 12:30. The Apostle’s question clearly anticipated a negative response as was signaled by his use of the Greek negative, “*me*”.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. C. Alvarez, P. Correa, M. Poblete, P. Guell, *Historia de la Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Rehue Ltda, n.d.), 54, which includes the affirmation from the *Declaración de Fe de la Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile*. It reads: [Sección 11] *Que: el hablar en otras lenguas, danzar, tener visiones, profetizar o culaquier manifestación conforme a la palabra de Dios, son una evidencia del bautismo en el Espiritu Santo.*”

It also led Pentecostals to differentiate between the tongues received at the time of Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the charism or gift of tongues about which Paul wrote.<sup>29</sup> Thus, in many Pentecostal churches, the distinction is made between “evidential tongues” and the “gift of tongues”. They may be “the same in essence, but different in their purpose.” Some contend that the “evidential tongues” constitute a continuing “prayer language,” giving it a “devotional” quality, which may be undertaken privately and does not need interpretation while the “gift of tongues” is intended for public usage and, thus, requires interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:5, 13-17, 27-28). Another way to express this would be to say that phenomenologically these manifestations appear to be the same thing, but the purposes they serve, the ways they are exercised, and the way that they are discerned by the believing community are quite different. These are important discussions that have not yet been completely resolved in the Pentecostal community.

### **3. Convergences and Challenges**

260. The most fundamental convergence concerning the theme treated in the present section, about which we can rejoice, is the common conviction within both our communities that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a powerful action of grace bestowed by God upon believers within the church. This dialogue, which began in 1972, is the oldest and most continuous bilateral dialogue in which Pentecostals and Catholics engaged one another. It owes its origins in no small part to the climate of openness and trust created between us as a result of the beginnings of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the late 1960’s. That this Renewal spread widely to a significant percentage of the Catholic population, now numbering in excess of 120,000,000, and was discerned by Catholic bishops and popes to be a welcome work of the Holy Spirit, allowed Pentecostals to see Catholics in a new and more positive light. Catholics too were opened to recognize the genuine and authentic work of God in their Pentecostal brothers and sisters. During the last century, the lifting up of Baptism in the Holy Spirit as part of the reality of Christ’s community has been a gift to the church. The present section represents a sustained effort by Catholics and Pentecostals to explore Scripture and the patristic literature in a common search for greater illumination about Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is already a step that is of no little significance, especially considering the fact that our two communities together make up such a large portion of the worldwide Christian family. The fact that we conclude this report in the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the Azusa Street Mission, one of the commonly acknowledged foundational events which led to the birth of various classical Pentecostal churches, is particularly felicitous.
261. At the same time, one striking conclusion to emerge from our common consideration of biblical and patristic material in the hope of illuminating the phenomenon of Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the uncovering of substantial diversity, not simply between our two

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<sup>29</sup> The sentence might better be rendered, “Not all speak in tongues, do they?” or “All do not speak in tongues, do they?” In such a case, it is clear that the anticipated response is, “No”.

communities but within each community. One example of this plurality of opinion concerns whether or not all of the patristic passages we have considered may be credibly identified as expressive of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. But this is also evident in our contemporary reflection on this issue. Here one finds that the substantial theological discussion of Baptism in the Holy Spirit which emerged after the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has not by any means arrived at a consensus regarding whether it should be considered fundamentally in relation to the celebration of the sacraments or whether it should be considered as an “extra-sacramental” outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For their part, the extensive number of denominational and independent Pentecostal churches and movements often are distinguished on the basis of differences related to their understanding of the nature and role of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Even from their very beginnings, differences among Pentecostals can be verified regarding the relation of Baptism in the Holy Spirit to conversion, salvation (Oneness Pentecostals) or sanctification, or regarding the necessity of various kinds of evidence, such as speaking in tongues, to attest that one has truly received this baptism. Our common consideration of this material could not, nor did it aim at, trying to discern whether this diversity is compatible with a fundamental unity in faith concerning Baptism in the Holy Spirit, much less to identify whether such diversities may be incompatible divergences, either within our respective communities or between us. While the experience of Baptism in the Holy Spirit seems to have a certain degree of similarity among its recipients, the understanding of it and its place within the series of events by which one becomes a Christian are matters of substantial difference of opinion.

262. Nevertheless, there is much that we can say together about the Holy Spirit’s role when one becomes a Christian. We have acknowledged together the importance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. We share the conviction that the Holy Spirit has always been present in the church with grace, signs and gifts. We affirm together and embrace the presence and exercise of charisms as an important dimension in the life of the church.

## **VI. Conclusion**

### **A. Introduction**

263. In this fifth round of dialogue between Pentecostals and Catholics at the international level, we have come to appreciate each other in new ways.
264. We have explored together different aspects of what is involved in becoming a Christian. We have studied and been able to appreciate together the powerful insights of Scripture, the witness of the patristic sources to the Gospel, and the ways in which the Gospel instructs us about conversion, faith, discipleship, experience and the receiving of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The scriptures are foundational for both of us. We can

appreciate, although in different ways, the Fathers of the church as early witnesses and interpreters to faith in Jesus Christ, and to the dimensions of life in Christ.

### **B. The Witness of the Bible**

265. Together we have learned that in our reading of the Holy Scripture we both interpret the Bible within the horizon of our respective traditions. Both of us, even if in different ways, would acknowledge being governed by the Word of God. Pentecostals tend to hold to the classical Protestant doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. Both Catholics and Pentecostals honor the authority of Scripture, and both look for ways in which Tradition carries biblical truth. Future discussion should focus not only on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, but also on our respective understandings of the relationship of both Scripture and Tradition to the Word of God. This might be profitable for our dialogue especially since Pentecostal scholars have sought to identify a distinctive Pentecostal biblical hermeneutic and Catholics have been renewed in their approach to Scripture since the Second Vatican Council.

### **C. The Witness of the Fathers**

266. This phase of dialogue was the first in which Pentecostals and Catholics jointly studied the teaching and witness of the early post-biblical Christian writings, the Fathers of the church. What benefits have we gained from this? In many ways we can see the same challenges facing us today, in their personal struggles and in their efforts to ensure that the apostolic faith is properly taught and handed on. In them we witness the great work of ensuring the handing on of the Christian faith, from biblical times and cultures to new centuries and different cultures.

267. We have seen their own personal struggles and crises as they seek to follow Christ, and even the role of family in fostering life and faith (Augustine, *The Confessions*). We have seen the reflections of some facing and welcoming martyrdom for the sake of Christ (Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans*). We have heard them speaking even poetically of the way the faith took hold of them (“a flame kindled in my soul” Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*). Hilary of Poitiers spoke of the experience of intense joy “when we feel within us the final stirrings of the Holy Spirit” (*Tract on the Psalms*). We see them celebrating the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*).

268. As the church grew, the patristic writings illustrate the missionary spirit of the Fathers against the ideologies of their time (Justin, *Apology*) similar to struggles we have today. We see them, through their writings, preparing people to celebrate the great seasons of Lent (Cyril of Jerusalem) and Easter (Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*). We hear their teaching on the proper celebration and understanding of the sacrament of baptism (*Didache* 7, Irenaeus of Lyon, *Proof of the Apostolic Teaching*). We see their writing

on the intimate relations between baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit (Origin, *Commentary on John* 6:33). They wrote, of course, on many other aspects of the spiritual gifts and the life of the church.

269. In summary we have seen that there are patristic texts which can cast light on each of the issues we considered (conversion, faith, Christian experience in community, discipleship and formation, and Baptism in the Holy Spirit). These texts arise from the Fathers' reflections on the Scriptures and frequently provide insight and wisdom to contemporary questions and situations. Moreover, they remain relevant to contemporary experience. The writings of the Fathers are not *library* treasures from centuries ago. Their words are vibrant witnesses to Christians of today, and of every time. Through this dialogue, Pentecostals and Catholics have seen together the richness of that witness and can share it with their respective communities today.
270. This study of the early post-biblical Christian writings, many of which were written in those early centuries, which some call the Constantinian era, can be an initial step in dialogue between us on historical questions which are at the root of the Pentecostal views of Restorationism. This important issue awaits another phase of international dialogue.

#### **D. What We Have Learned from Our Contemporary Reflections**

271. In the course of our discussion, we have noted a fascinating parallel in the different ways our respective communities have experienced the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century. Pentecostals report that on January 1, 1901 baptism in the Holy Spirit and praying in tongues broke through in Topeka, Kansas and spread in increasing measure. In Rome, on that same day, Pope Leo XIII entrusted the new century to the Holy Spirit (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*). Responding to prophetic requests from within the Catholic Church, Pope Leo had already written an Apostolic Exhortation in 1895 and an Encyclical in 1897 in which he called for devotion to the Holy Spirit and recommended the nine days before Pentecost as a novena of prayer for the Holy Spirit aimed at the renewal of the church and of society, the reunification of Christianity and a "renewal of the face of the earth".
272. For Pentecostals an outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Azusa Street (Los Angeles) in 1906 marks a significant beginning of the Pentecostal movement which has grown throughout the century, affecting millions of believers. Within the Catholic Church signs of the Holy Spirit are seen in various movements: biblical, liturgical, theological, ecumenical, and charismatic, which have developed during the twentieth century fostering renewal in basic aspects of Christian faith and life. A certain culmination of these movements resulted in the Second Vatican Council which Catholics believe was inspired by the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of the Council, Pope John XXIII prayed that it be a new Pentecost. The Council fostered renewal in faith, prayer, spiritual life,



Christian unity – signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit. In 1989 the new awareness of the Holy Spirit was fostered by Pope John Paul II with his Encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem* on the Holy Spirit. At the vigil of Pentecost in 1998 in Rome, the acknowledgment of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit led Pope John Paul II, meeting 400,000 members of Catholic spiritual movements, to declare that: “We could say, what happened in Jerusalem 2000 years ago is renewed in this square tonight. As the apostles then, so we find ourselves together in this Upper Room, full of longing and praying for the out-pouring of the Spirit”.

273. At one critical point these parallel impulses found in two different communities began to interrelate and converge. In 1967, the witness of the Pentecostal Movement fostered the initiation of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. The Catholic Church and the Pentecostal Movement have had contact ever since. The influence of the new ecumenical commitment of the Catholics, as part of the ecumenical movement which the Second Vatican Council insisted is “fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit” (*UR* 1), helped open the way to a dialogue for mutual respect and reconciliation between Pentecostals and Catholics. First running parallel to and separate from one another, the Pentecostal movement and the Catholic Church have had more contact than previously. They are no longer entirely separated. They have begun to interrelate through dialogue, friendship and co-operation; they have engaged each other in partnership for nearly thirty-five years.
274. In acknowledging the work of the Holy Spirit in each of our traditions, we have been better able to learn from each other. Therefore, we are grateful that the renewal and outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century has opened our hearts and minds to one another. In God’s providence we believe that the emergence of Pentecostal / Charismatic movements along with the Ecumenical movement in the twentieth century calls us to a dialogue between our communions that is spiritual as well as theological. Much of our theological engagement with one another focused on the implications of our respective views of faith, conversion and discipleship for the Christian life. This is as it should be and we believe that the recognition of this is vital for practical ecumenism at the local level between Catholic parishes and Pentecostal congregations.
275. As we have read and studied the church Fathers together we have become even more mindful of our contemporary theological responsibilities. Inspired by their example of combining pastoral care with theological insight, the praise of God with the knowledge of God, and holiness of life with doctrinal orthodoxy, we too seek to serve our respective communities in the same spirit. It is particularly in regard to evangelization, discipleship and Christian formation, and openness to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that we desire to exercise our theological and pastoral tasks.
276. Our discussions on the nature of Christian conversion in the ancient church, and especially on the relationship between event and process, have illuminated our own

understanding of what transpires in our churches today. We are cautioned against being too quick to judge what has or has not taken place in the various testimonies and narratives of conversion that we have witnessed in our communities. Most importantly, we see the need for a clear call to conversion, a conversion to Jesus Christ that should be at the heart of our proclamation and witness to the world. We are well aware that even in our churches believers need to hear this message so that Christian profession may be authentic and may lead to maturity and growth in the Christian life.

277. Likewise we are impressed by the ongoing life of conversion and discipleship in the ancient church. For all the topics and themes we discussed we attempted to reflect on their significance for our ecclesial communions today. It was clear that the writings of the church Fathers reflect a vibrant exercise of the faith in their churches and a profound apprehension of the depths of the Christian life. Although we differed on the importance of the sacramental mediation of grace we can only consider their witness as an incentive for our own churches today to grow in maturity and holiness. We also agree that ongoing Christian formation must be an intentional process in our churches, mindful that for the seed of God's Word to bear fruit requires openness to that Word and a willingness to respond obediently to it in Christian and ecclesial life.
278. Since both of our traditions value the experience of grace as an important dimension of faith and spirituality we have come to appreciate the respective charismatic, mystical and liturgical emphasis of the Pentecostal and Catholic communities. We have also learned that one cannot simply oppose these two modalities of Christian experience. Each has some experience of what has traditionally been prized by the other. This affords us another way forward in our dialogue, as "spiritual ecumenism" becomes more and more the basis for theological conversations. Most of all spiritual discernment alerts us to the providential possibilities that God offers in his freedom and grace towards us.
279. Finally, we return to our appreciation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century which Pentecostals believe is a gift for the whole church. Our discussion of "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" focused on this distinctive trait of Pentecostal spirituality which is also experienced within the Catholic Church. While we did not arrive at a theological consensus concerning Baptism in the Holy Spirit, we do recognize that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, including the charismata, was not unfamiliar to the ancient church and is a source of renewal for the contemporary church. We have learned that while theological evaluation and judgement is necessary, this can only be in service of the Spirit's work, never to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). Together we desire to hold fast to what is good (1 Thess 5:21) and follow the Spirit's lead (Gal 5:25) in the days and years to come.

### **E. Proposals for Future Dialogue**

280. Underlying these results of our dialogue emerge various issues which we have not yet been able to address with the attention they deserve and which could serve as promising points of departure for future dialogue. For example, one theme dear to the first leaders of the various Pentecostal churches and movements was that the recovery of Baptism in the Holy Spirit signaled a restoration of the church of the time of the apostles. This explanation is premised upon the judgment that, at a certain point in history after the apostolic age, the original and authentic apostolic community fell into decay and eventually ceased to exist. Catholics and Pentecostals disagree about such an assessment of history. Future dialogue should take up this crucial question of how we read history in different ways and explore why we do so.
281. A second topic which has emerged from our consideration of Baptism in the Holy Spirit within the context of becoming a Christian concerns the nature and role of water baptism, to which could be added those other ritual actions which Catholics call sacraments and some of which Pentecostals call ordinances. The present phase of dialogue has recorded some degree of convergence about the need for water baptism and for participation in the Lord's Supper as part of the full meaning of becoming a Christian. In light of this, the clarification of what is normative for becoming a Christian and/or for Christian Initiation should be a matter for future dialogue.
282. Third, we have considered the evidence attesting that one has truly received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Such evidence is addressed to the Christian community and raises the question of how the church is equipped by God to discern authentic graced experience and, by way of extension, also authentic orthodox doctrine. The need for discernment concerning experience and doctrine naturally raises the question of the role of authority within the church.
283. Such issues as these – a restorationist view of Christian history, the nature of sacraments or ordinances, and the exercise of authority within the church, in addition to our varying principles for interpreting Scripture– are all significant issues raised by our discussion of the five dimensions of becoming a Christian treated in this phase of dialogue. They remain “unresolved” issues between us which still need further serious reflection. Whether they can be “resolved” in the sense of becoming matters about which we can arrive at consensus can only come to light through further dialogue and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. But we clearly have much more to talk about as we seek to obey the sentiment expressed in Jesus' prayer “that they all may be one.”

### **F. A Final Word**

284. Finally, each of us has learned a great deal about the ways in which the other fosters faith, conversion, discipleship and formation, understands experience, and the Baptism

in the Holy Spirit. As we reflected on the scriptures and to the witness of the early church writers, and as we heard the way our partners in this dialogue engage in fostering the Christian life in those who come to the faith, we recognize in each other a deep commitment to Christ. Although Pentecostals and Catholics may give different emphases on aspects of becoming a Christian, each fosters the Christian life for the glory of God. Knowing this helps overcome misunderstandings or stereotypes we may have had about each other. It follows that this calls Catholics and Pentecostals to examine their conscience about the way they have sometimes described one another in the past, for example calling the other a “non-Christian” or a member of a “sect”. We have found much that we share together. Although we have significant differences still on some questions, we are able because of our study in this dialogue, to call one another brothers and sisters in Christ.

285. We hope that this phase of dialogue has helped this relationship to grow. We ask God’s blessing on our continuing dialogue that it will be for the glory of His name.

## **Appendix 1: PARTICIPANTS**<sup>30</sup>

### **Catholic Participants**

Rev. Fr. Kilian MCDONNELL (Co-chair 1998-2000, USA) (S [1998-2000]; P [1998])  
Msgr. John A. RADANO (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity / USA) (1998-2006) (Co-chair 2001-2006) (S [1998-2006]; D [2003, February and November 2004, 2006])  
Dr. Ralph DEL COLLE (Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, USA) (1998-2006) (D [November 2004, 2006]; P [2001])  
Rev. Robert DUGGAN (USA) (P [2000])  
Mr. Hans GASPER (German Bishops’ Conference, Bonn, Germany) (1998-2006) (D [November 2004])  
Rev. Fr. William HENN, O.F.M. Cap. (Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome/USA) (1998-2006) (D [February and November 2004, 2006]; P [1999])  
Sr. Maria KO, F.M.A. (Holy Spirit Seminary, Hong Kong, China/Rome) (1998-2006); (P [2002])  
Rev. Fr. Patrick LYONS, O.S.B. (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland) (1998-2006)  
Rev. Luis RAMOS, O.P. (Centro de Estudios Filosóficos Tomás de Aquino, León, Mexico) (1998-2006)  
Msgr. Juan USMA GÓMEZ, (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican/Colombia) (Co-Secretary 1998-2006) (S [1998-2006]; D [2003, February and November 2004, 2006])

### **Pentecostal Participants**

Rev. Cecil M. ROBECK, Jr. (Co-chair 1998-2006, Assemblies of God, USA) S (1998-2006) D [2003, November 2004, 2006]  
Rev. David COLE (Open Bible Church, USA) (1998, 2000-2006) S (2003-2006) D [2003, February 2004, and 2006]  
Rev. Clayton ENDICOTT (Church of God of Prophecy, USA/Germany) O (2001) (2003-2006)

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<sup>30</sup> S: Steering Committee Member; D: Drafting Committee; P: Paper given; O: Observer

Rev. Harold D. HUNTER (International Pentecostal Holiness Church, USA) P [1999]  
Rev. Ronald KYDD (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Canada) (Co-Secretary, 1998) S  
(1998) P [1998]  
Rev. Philip HILLIARD (Assemblies of God), O (2002)  
Dr. Cheryl BRIDGES JOHNS (Church of God [Cleveland, TN], USA) (1998-1999)  
Rev. Jackie David JOHNS (Church of God [Cleveland, TN] USA) O (1998) P [2002]  
Rev. Gary MATSDORF (International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, USA) O (1999)  
Rev. Gary B. MCGEE (Assemblies of God, USA) (1998-2002) D (February 2004)  
Rev. Francois MÖLLER (Apostolic Faith Mission, Republic of South Africa) (1998-2001,  
2003, 2005)  
Rev. Steve OVERMAN, (International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, USA) (Co-Secretary  
1999-2006)  
Ms. Marta PALMA (*Iglesia Mision Pentecostal*, Chile) (1999)  
Rev. Stephen PARKER (Church of God of Prophecy, USA) (2002-2006)  
Rev. Thomas D. PRATT (Assemblies of God, USA) (1999) P [1999]  
Rev. Raymond M. PRUITT (Church of God of Prophecy, USA) (1998-2001)  
Rev. Russell P. SPITTLER (Assemblies of God, USA) (2002)  
Rev. Matthias WENK (*Bewegung Plus*, Switzerland) P [2000]  
Rev. Huibert ZEGWAART, (*Verenigde Pinkster - en Evangeliegemeenten*, Netherlands)  
(2001, 2003-2006) P [2001]

## Appendix 2: PAPERS

### 1998 Bolton (Canada)

Dr. Ronald KYDD, *Christian Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective*  
Fr. Kilian McDONNELL, O.S.B., *The Experience of Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Early Church*

### 1999 Venice (Italy)

Dr. Harold HUNTER, *Faith and Christian Initiation: Patristic Literature. A Pentecostal Perspective.*  
Dr. Thomas D. PRATT, *A Pentecostal Perspective of Faith and Christian Initiation.*  
Fr. William HENN, O.F.M. Cap., *Faith and Christian Initiation: Biblical and Patristic Perspectives*

### 2000 Vienna (Austria)

Dr. Mattias WENK, *Conversion and Christian Initiation: Biblical and Patristic Perspectives.*  
Fr. Robert D. DUGGAN, *Conversion and Christian Initiation: Biblical and Patristic Perspectives*

### 2001 Celje (Slovenia)

Rev. Huibert ZEGWAART, *Christian Experience in Community: Biblical and Patristic Perspectives*  
Dr. Ralph DEL COLLE, *Christian Experience in Community: Catholic Perspectives*

### 2002 Sierra Madre, CA (USA)

Dr. Jackie David JOHNS, *Christian Formation and Discipleship: Biblical and Patristic Perspectives*  
Sister Maria KO HA FONG, F.M.A., *Christian Formation and Discipleship: Biblical and Patristic Perspectives*

**More documents in English on this Dialogue:**

0205 on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl)

Cecil Mel Robeck on the dialogue. Lecture November 2007, Amsterdam

0002 on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl)

EVANGELIZATION, PROSELYTISM AND COMMON WITNESS, The Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue 1990 - 1997 Between the Roman Catholic Church and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders

0192 on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl)

PERSPECTIVES ON KOINONIA, Report from the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders 1985 - 1989.

This is document 0203 on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl)