

## ***From the Director***

### ***Baptism in the Spirit: Grace for personal & communal renewal***

The single greatest experience of my life for personal transformation was undoubtedly baptism in the Holy Spirit. I was a twenty-year old kid, longing to love God and be faithful to him and his Church but so often fell short. I didn't seem to have the power to live the type of Christian life that I believed God intended for me.

Romans 7 summed up my experience, why do I do things I don't want to, and can't do what I want. Baptism in the Spirit brought a grace that transformed my life. It brought me power, a greater love of Jesus, a more profound faith in his presence in the Blessed Sacrament, a deeper desire for prayer and study of the Word of God, and a clarity on the call to holiness that the Lord had placed on my life. After living in the grace of this encounter with the Spirit of God, my brother had an insight that was on the mark, "Dave is finally the person that he has always wanted to be."

Baptism in the Holy Spirit brought tangible renewal in my life. My priorities began to change and this was evidenced by how I used my time, how I spent my money, and with whom I spent time. I began to surround myself more with people who have the same desires, hopes and dreams as I have.

Jesus as the Lord of all my life, not just parts, became paramount.

John the Baptist stated that Jesus would baptize us in the Holy Spirit and fire. Fire obviously produces light which allows us to see more clearly. A grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit was that I was able to see things in my life that the Lord wanted to root out and heal. I came to understand that my image of God was not consistent with who he is. I also was able to see myself more clearly. I came to understand that I was blind to certain fears, hurts from events of the past, and patterns of sin. As God's Spirit was renewing me I was changing. I was becoming more patient, loving, kind and even had, at times, a greater self-control. Now, it's not like I never have challenges anymore but that God has done a mighty work in my life.

I believe the grace of renewal brought about by baptism in the Holy Spirit is a grace available for everyone. How we experience this grace is going to be varied but the change brought about from this encounter with God's Spirit is a grace of transformation, conversion and holiness.

These graces also have a profound impact on a community. I am often asked how we can bring about renewal and transformation in a prayer group, Bible study, or parish, and I believe that the answer is the same for any of these communities.

There can be no communal renewal if there is not authentic personal renewal. To the degree that individuals

in a particular community are experiencing renewal then the community will also experience this grace. And the opposite is also true. If we as individuals are static and apathetic in our faith, the community is going to have similar traits. If our speech is degrading and critical and if we gossip, how can we be surprised when we discover a spirit of disunity and suspicion in our communities. It is our behavior that has invited and fostered this disruptive spirit.

Pope Francis has spoken of the Renewal as a current of grace. For a moment imagine our communities as a type of lake or sea. Each individual in a community is a type of stream that flows into this body of water. What do we bring to this larger body of water? What is the source of our stream? Are we bringing fresh water of mercy and kindness or polluted water of anger and jealousy? Are we a current of grace? The purity of the water in the lake depends on each of us and the type of water we bring. Let us seek to be transformed by the Holy Spirit so that we can be a part of the transformations in our local communities. Come Holy Spirit.

*By Father Dave Pivoka, TOR*  
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***Fr. Dave Pivonka  
is now the president of  
Franciscan University of  
Steubenville***



***Catholic Charismatic Center  
in Albuquerque, New Mexico***

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*Come Holy Spirit,  
fill the hearts of  
Thy faithful and  
enkindle in them  
the fire of Thy love.  
Send forth Thy Spirit  
and they shall be  
created and Thou  
shall renew the face  
of the earth.  
AMEN*

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