

A new Pentecost for a new Evangelisation

This is an edited transcription of the workshop held in Rome on 1 June 2017 with this topic as part of the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal #ccrgoldenjubilee2017

The speakers were Dominique Ferry and Fr Dave Pivonka, with translations in English and Spanish. This is the link for the video recording: <https://youtu.be/kPVGz08xDnc>

Dominique Ferry is a Catholic deacon and member of the [Chemin Neuf Community](#). This [link](#) will give you more background information about him, but you will need to scroll a bit to find it.

[Fr Dave Pivonka](#) is a member of the Third Order Regular (TOR) Franciscans. He has served in ministry positions at Franciscan University Steubenville and is now on his [Wild Goose Project](#).

Dominique: My experience in the past 14 years has been mostly with students and parish life in the western world. So that is the place I will speak from.

If we want to bring the Gospel to the world outside we have first to open our eyes and see what the world outside looks like. Most of our fellow human beings live in large urban city areas and very far from their relatives without a sense of belonging, feeling lost in an anonymous environment and when the life becomes hard because of unemployment, divorce, or any hardship of life, illness, loss of dear ones, then there is very few people to support them and faith tends to be a very private thing. So you can live next to other Christians and not even know you are sharing the same faith.

And for the generation of the young adults, aged 20 to 30, either they have not been raised in the Christian faith or they have been raised in Christian faith in their family but the story is almost always the same: when they leave their family and go to university then things begin to dwindle down and more or less they lose contact with the faith – and so most of them have never had a chance to develop a personal relationship with Jesus. And in their world nevertheless the parish remains the place where you can knock on the door and just light a candle because your grandmother is very sick or after several years of living together with your partner you want to have a child and you think it is safer to be married in church or they want to have their child baptised or they bring a dear one to their last place on earth – but facing that most of the parishes are still living still as they were 50 or 70 or 80 years ago. So they are dealing with people within the walls and they are not worried about the great, great number of those outside the Church.

And today we should be like Jesus who said, 'I came to bring fire on earth and how I wish it would be already burning', and most of us, we are not burnt inside with that same desire Jesus had to make the kingdom of God known. And now there is such an urgent need for people to see our countries as places and fields of evangelization.

An interesting experience is the origin of the Alpha course in the Anglican Church. Years ago in a parish in the centre of London called Holy Trinity, Brompton, the vicar of the parish Sandy Millar and a team of his parishioners decided to set up a course for the members of the parish; a discipleship course to help people to deepen their faith and understanding of their faith. But then came a new curate in the parish called Nicky Gumbel, and Nicky Gumbel had not been brought up in any faith at all, he was a non-believer and didn't know anything about Jesus Christ until he went to Cambridge University and because of an experience of a friend of his who became Christian. His first reaction was, I will lose a friend because now he will become boring. Nevertheless, he wanted to keep some kind of friendship so he started reading the Gospel and through that he was touched by the Holy Spirit and became a Christian because he met Jesus alive. And since then, as a student first, he had the heart for those who were not church goers. So when he joined the team of Holy Trinity Brompton he found interesting the discipleship course but helped re-design the whole thing to help

people who had never heard of Jesus Christ. His heart and mind were turned to those in the street, outside of our church buildings, those who were not 'in the pews' as we say. The whole thing was redesigned with a purpose of helping people to have a real personal experience of the Holy Spirit, Who is the great evangelizer – and this is the important part – this became the vision of the whole team of the parish. So you can say that the parish was targeting people outside and that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was at the heart of their mission statement.

Now another experience would be the one that we have in our community- the Chemin Neuf – with the young people, teenagers and young adults. Because in the same way the Question is, How can we reach out to those people: all those young people that consider that God is an old fashioned thing? And so they knelt together and guidance from the Holy Spirit and the thing is – you have to keep going in your listening to the Spirit. Because in 1993 they founded something they called the Festival for Young People in France. And it was a success, but in 2003 things were going down and down and down. 10 years later the need was different. The young people were different. They were not ready to abide by the same rules as the ones 10 years before.

But the core of what has to be announced is the same. It is the kerygma, because the kerygma has a power in itself. Isaiah 55, 'My word does not come back to Me without having done the purpose for which I sent it'. And the kerygma is that powerful word that has the power to turn the heart of the people, to work the work of God which is that they recognise Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. And after that to accompany the people, you have to offer the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

For instance, last year at the World Youth Day there was a big gathering organized by the Chemin Neuf Community. And after a time of reconciliation where people can come before God as their Saviour, there was a call for those who wanted to give their life to the Lord, and in order to give their life – to receive His Holy Spirit, and more than 1000 young people moved forward to be prayed for at the same time. And they managed to pray one by one, because it is not a group thing, it is a personal commitment to Jesus and a personal encounter with the power of the Holy Spirit. And you could find many other examples in various denominations of the same kind of experience where a team is looking outside to bring the Gospel in the streets, but the need for these is for a new Pentecostal experience.

And maybe the difference between 50 years ago is that 50 years ago people were personally renewed by the baptism in the Holy Spirit they had, they would come together and be able to journey together as prayer groups, communities and other places. Whereas today my feeling is that there is a need for a Pentecostal experience of the whole community, in the parish, or in another place, because it is the whole community that has to change their mindset from maintenance mindset to an evangelising mindset.

If you look at the Acts of the Apostles, there is the first Pentecost that we all know and that we will celebrate in a few days' time. But then when there were threats from outside and they were facing opposition from the outside world and started to be persecuted they came again together in prayer and they said to the Lord, Acts 4:29-31, 'So Lord look at their threats and grant to Your servants to speak with all boldness while You stretch Your hand to heal through the name of Your servant Jesus. When they had prayed the place where they had gathered together was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.' They felt they needed a common infilling of the Spirit to get the new Pentecostal experience. So it is that Jesus' mission was overflowing from His loving Heart for the lost and the sinners. As we are His ambassadors, His envoys, we need of course to remain personally grafted to Jesus, but we have to share His Heart for the lost sheep. This is not only a personal conversion but a conversion of the community together; and that has to be of one heart and one soul as the Acts of the Apostles says.

And at the end of the day it is what we have seen and heard that we declare to others so that they may have fellowship with us. Thank you.

Fr Dave: I had an experience a number of years ago that surprised me. In the middle of a talk a woman jumped up, she interrupted me and she said, 'Why have I never heard this before? I've been a Catholic my whole life and I had never heard this before'. She became increasingly angry. What was I talking about that caused her to become angry? I was talking about how the Holy Spirit wanted to animate her life: how the Holy Spirit wanted to fill her: that the Holy Spirit wanted to come in power: that the Holy Spirit wanted to heal her: that the Spirit of Jesus wanted to breathe life into her. She said to me, 'I have never heard this before. Why has no one ever said this before? And she is not alone. There are a tremendous number of Catholics who do not understand what it is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Catholics hear us priests to tell them to love, to be patient, to be kind, to be forgiving. We invite them to share the Gospel. We invite them to live a life of purity, to follow the teachings of the Church, and for many of them they try to do that, and then they fail. So they make a decision, 'I am going to try harder'. And they try very hard, and then they fail. And this cycle happens time and time again. And it becomes a burden. What they hear from the pulpit, from the Church, becomes a burden for them. They don't feel they can live this life. They want to live a life of faith, but they fail. They get frustrated, they get angry, they despair, and they walk away. They try to live a dynamic faith, they try to live a life of faith, but it is impossible. There is the problem. We are asking them to do something, but we are not equipping them to do it.

I believe it is one of the reasons the new evangelization has perhaps not been as successful as we had hoped. Many people decided to follow a programme of evangelization, thinking that a programme would change a person's heart. Programmes do not change people's hearts. The only thing that can change a person's heart is Christ. There must be something more than a programme. The individual must encounter Jesus. They must encounter Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I am reminded what Pope Francis stated in his document *Evangelii Gaudium* 7,8. 'I never tire of repeating the words of Pope Benedict which takes us to the very heart of the Gospel. 'Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice, or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, with a person which gives a new horizon and a decisive direction.' Thanks solely to an encounter or a renewed encounter with God's love.' This encounter is key to the new evangelization. If St John Paul II spoke of a civilization of love, Pope Francis is speaking of a culture of encounter. As Dominique was saying, our parishes and our communities must create a culture where the possibility exists to encounter Jesus – in everything we do, everything.

The responsibility to facilitate/help with this encounter is not just my job as the priest. It is for all Catholics. This is a part of the new evangelization. No longer can we say, 'Father is going to do that' or 'Sister will do that', but you must do that. There is only one of me, and only one of our interpreter, but there are many of you – so the job is yours.

This proclamation of the Gospel, the sharing of the Gospel, is for the people that you are in Church with. It is not merely for some foreign country, but for the people around you: the people who work in the office next to you. It is the proclamation of the kerygma which draws people into a relationship with Jesus, into a relationship with the Church, and into a life of holiness. It is not merely obedience. It is not merely obeying, but that is a part of it.

Understanding what this evangelization is causes me to reflect that perhaps that we should have spoken of the new Pentecost before the new evangelization. It causes me to think of the disciples, who had every advantage. Who taught the disciples how to pray? Jesus. Who taught them how to forgive? Jesus. Who taught them how to heal? Jesus. They had every advantage. They spent time with Jesus. They saw everything that Jesus did, and yet it was not enough. That they needed more than an encounter with Jesus – they needed the Holy Spirit. The disciples were not able to evangelise until they had experienced Pentecost. I believe that we will not be able to evangelise until we experience Pentecost.

It is imperative that we share the message of the Holy Spirit. St John reminds us that it is the Spirit Who gives witness to Jesus. Pope Paul VI stated that it is the Holy Spirit Who is The Evangeliser. It is impossible to evangelise without the power of the Holy Spirit.

My father is a physician. If my father knew what was causing somebody's illness, and he did not give them a prescription he would be sued for malpractice. My fear is that we are doing the same thing in the Church. We know what the problem is: the people of God do not have power, and the prescription is the Holy Spirit.

To try to evangelise without the grace of the Holy Spirit is setting the Church up for failure. When the Holy Spirit is present in our evangelization we will see people filled with the love of God. Pope Francis has spoken about the connection between the love of God and the Holy Spirit: (Homily 9 Jan 2015) 'You can follow a 1000 catechism courses, 1000 spirituality courses, 1000 yoga or zen courses, and all of these, but none of this will be able to give you the freedom as a child of God. Only the Holy Spirit can prompt your heart to say 'Father'.' Only the Holy Spirit can open your heart to love.

So people who have experienced the Holy Spirit should also experience the love of God. And then they begin to share that love with other people. Romans 5:5 says, 'the love of God is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit'. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

Another mark of someone who received the Holy Spirit, is they give witness to Jesus. John 15:26 Jesus says He will send His Holy Spirit and His Spirit will give witness to Him. So the more we receive the Holy Spirit, we are compelled, we are forced, to give witness to Jesus.

When they experienced the Holy Spirit they become aware that we are children of God. Romans 8:15 says that the Spirit makes us cry out Abba Father. So when we experience the Holy Spirit we give witness to Jesus, we cry out 'Abba Father', the Spirit brings us into the Trinity, that we understand that we have a relationship with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in that we have relationship with God. We begin to discover what it is to have a relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit also convicts us of our sin. We live in a world that does not believe there is sin. Now it is important to understand that it is the Spirit that convicts us of our sin. The purpose of the Holy Spirit convicting us of our sin is in order to convert us, not to condemn us. The evil one wants to condemn us. The evil one wants to show us our sin so that we think we are horrible. We see our sin and the evil one tells us 'God will never forgive you', 'God does not love you anymore', 'He will not forgive you this time', 'Too many times you have committed this sin. That is the evil one. But the Spirit convicts us of our sin, and the Spirit tells us, 'You have a Father who loves you', 'That Jesus has looked for you', 'That He will always forgive you'. The Spirit wants to show us our sin so that we might be purified, so that we might be converted.

What are some barriers or stumbling blocks to allow us to experience the Holy Spirit? Fear. Fear is the enemy of the Holy Spirit. Do not be afraid to share the grace of the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Holy Spirit is essential to the work of the kingdom. Stand in the power of the Holy Spirit, boldly proclaim the power of the Holy Spirit. Ignorance of the Holy Spirit. We must become familiar with the Holy Spirit. I have a relationship with the Father, a relationship with the Son and we must have a relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is important to understand that God does not ration His Holy Spirit. There is always more of His Holy Spirit, much more of His Holy Spirit, and we need to stand under the grace of the Holy Spirit, stand under the Holy Spirit and ask for more.

The Holy Spirit does not show partiality. But He uses the entire Body more and more in my ministry. I invite the people to pray with one another and I ask them to pray for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is not just me as a priest, but it is the body of Christ. And I think too often we look to me, or to the bishop or to somebody else, but the grace of the Holy Spirit is in you. It is in the body. The Scripture tells us that God does not show

partiality. He doesn't love me more than you. He wants to give you the Holy Spirit, He wants to give the Holy Spirit to them and to me.

A couple of weeks ago I received an email from a parish I had been working in and he said to me, 'Our community continues to be blessed by the Holy Spirit. We have continued to have people experience healings that are miracles; people are free from past sin and addictions; there is a deep desire for holiness and the things of God!'

That's because the people of God prayed with one another and they experienced the Lord. I have seen the movement of God's grace. The Spirit of God is touching people's hearts and their lives. It looks different than it did 50 years ago. I think sometimes we expect God to do what He did 50 years ago and God is doing something new. When Pope Francis spoke at Olympic Stadium (2014) he said 'Do not try to tame the Holy Spirit, but let the Holy Spirit be free'. I think that's what we as a community must do. We must let the Holy Spirit be free. We should not control the Holy Spirit, we should not tame the Holy Spirit, we should let the Holy Spirit control me, and the Holy Spirit tame me, and with that, the grace of that, the fruit of that will be a new evangelization that will change the world. Amen.

A time of Questions and Answers followed:

Q. We have lots of difficulties seeking to live the experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church itself. The priests themselves have not lived that experience and we do not know how to transmit/convey them this new life, so that the whole community can be able to live what you are talking about. Can you give us any ideas?

Fr Dave: The first answer is to pray for your priest. Be willing to serve him and the community. Sometimes we approach the priest with our agenda, and we need to be able to ask the priest, 'What can we do for you?' Be a witness of the kingdom of God in your life that other people in the parish community are seeing you change and that is encouraging other people to convert. Oftentimes when the priest begins to see a person who is willing to serve, to help in areas that need help, perhaps they become more open. I would love to say there is an easy answer that says if you do this your pastor will do what you would like, but that is not always the case. So for this, Jesus said prayer and fasting.

Q. In a Church where everything is done with the Holy Spirit it seems that the Holy Spirit is in a little box, where we don't let it free. Those of us who believe in Him and who want to transmit it – even our fellow priests and fellow other Christians are just pushing us aside. How can we continue working and not get discouraged? How can we do that?

Fr Dave: We need to be able to present the Holy Spirit in a manner that is more inviting. The Holy Spirit cannot be tamed. But we try to tame it because it makes us nervous, particularly priests, it makes us nervous because a priest wants to make sure that everything in his parish is controlled, and that becomes very difficult. One of the things we need to do, is to try to present the Holy Spirit in a language and in an experience that can speak to the people today. Dominique mentioned that young people today are different from those of 15 years ago. So it is incumbent on us to be able to pray and say, 'Lord, what do You want to say today?' and respond to that. And finally, if our peace is dependent on success we will always be frustrated. My hope is in Jesus, and Jesus alone, and hope does not disappoint.

Dominique: The ground for everything to happen is a real sense of community which means brotherhood, where the priest and the parishioners are not the priest and the parishioners; they are brothers and sisters in Christ, and they are able to share their problems together, to pray for one another, because then, there is the one thing everyone wants, is love – and it is very good to be loved by God, it is essential, but it is quite nice to be loved by your fellow Christians and to find support in them and that is something people are well eager to receive.

Q. Many young women feel that they are in a cage within the Church, and feel that their gifts as women are not affirmed, but they have a great love for the Church. How do we open this cage so that they can fly free?

Dominique: How do you open the cage? Give it a try and see if the fire is just getting out and then let it burn and blow on it. Let the fire burn and blow on it.

Fr Dave: 2 Cor 3:17 'Where the Spirit of God is, there is freedom'. So to the degree that we encounter and experience the Spirit of God more, we personally experience freedom. Even in the midst of oppression we experience freedom. So freedom ultimately comes from the Spirit of God, not from outside and external things. The Holy Spirit shows no partiality; the Holy Spirit does not look at male or female as far as ministry is concerned, and anointing is concerned, obviously male and female we have different roles. So when I work with my staff, from a leadership position, with every conference we do, we ask how are we empowering women? How are we putting women in front, particularly young women. In the United States we have quite a few older women who have been involved for a long time, but not very many young women. And the other is for me as a leader, to ask young women and young men, Hispanics and Latinos 'What is God saying?' I believe that they can hear the Lord in a way that I am not able to.

Q. If someone comes to me and wants to receive the Holy Spirit and be baptised in the Holy Spirit for the first time, is there a particular prayer or way that you would pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit?

Dominique: Well the first thing is to be sure that the person understands that receiving the Holy Spirit means to hand over the direction of his whole life to God. Well now if the person already knows what that means, well there is one easy prayer, 'Come Holy Spirit'.

Fr Dave: First thing I would walk them through a prayer of commitment to Jesus, very quickly a time of repentance, a surrender like Dominique said and then 'Come Holy Spirit'. I have a small rosary, I say 'Come Holy Spirit' many, many times a day. It is that simple. Can we pray?

Let us stand. Come Holy Spirit. Lord Jesus we come before You this morning and ask that You would fill us with Your Holy Spirit. Breathe life into our dry bones. Come with Your fire and Your power that we might proclaim to the nations that Jesus Christ is Lord. May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dominique: And as I am a deacon, I have the last word. Go in the peace of Christ.