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**In this issue:** *An article by Kees Slijkerman on the new book 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit'.*

## UNDERSTAND THE MOST CENTRAL THING IN THE RENEWAL

**This year the book 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit', written by the Doctrinal Commission of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS) finally appeared. You can order and pay a copy on [http://iccrs.org/en/index.php/blog/comments/book\\_bhs](http://iccrs.org/en/index.php/blog/comments/book_bhs).**

This book is a milestone in the history of Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR). It helps the leaders of CCR to understand and explain the most central thing in the CCR. It is a humble book. The authors are aware of their limits.

### Terminology

For good reasons the terminology-question is not solved. In the worldwide CCR different terms are used to describe the most central experience in the CCR. The book names the weakness and strength of the different terms: 'baptism in the Spirit', 'outpouring of the Spirit', 'release of the Spirit', 'effusion de l'Esprit', 'Geisttaufe' etcetera (page 63). These terms are from different languages, nations and cultures. A conclusion on page 64 is: 'Each of the terminological traditions has its own legitimacy and its own limitations, linked to different cultural and ecclesial contexts. The fact that different terms continue to be used is an indication of the richness of the reality, which cannot be fully captured in any single phrase.'

### Richness of reality described

The richness of this reality is described rather well, both in theological and more journalistic terms.

a. In *theological and biblical terms* like: 'To be baptized in the Holy Spirit is to be filled with the Love that eternally flows between Father and Son in the Holy Trinity, a love that changes people at the deepest level of their being and makes them capable of loving God in return. Christians thus experience Christ's paschal mystery as present source of grace and power (...). They cry out from their hearts, 'Abba, Father' (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor 12:3), and 'Come, Lord Jesus' (Rev 22:16, 20). There is deeper communion with the Persons of the Holy Trinity and experience of being raised up to our God-given

inheritance in Christ, an initial taste of the future resurrection. This is at the heart of the theological meaning of baptism as presented by Paul (...). These things are true in principle for every baptized Christian, but through baptism in the Spirit they become an experienced reality' (p.65).

b. In more *journalistic or phenomenological terms* like: 'People's actual experience of baptism in the Spirit varies widely, although there is a common core as described in Part I [p.15-28]. For some people, there is a sudden and dramatic change; for others, there is a more gradual change over time. For many, baptism in the Spirit constitutes their adult conversion - a personal encounter with Christ that radically transforms them and sets them on the path of discipleship for the first time. For others, conversion has already occurred and baptism in the Spirit constitutes a fuller release of the Spirit and his charisms, especially in preparation for a new mission or task to which God is calling them.' (p.72)

### Institutional and charismatic

To understand baptism in the Spirit, it is very helpful to read in this book about the institutional and charismatic dimension of the Church. 'The institutional (or hierarchical) dimension refers to all that was instituted by Jesus during his earthly life, including his choice of the Twelve apostles; his conferral of authority upon them; his command to preach the gospel, to baptize, and to celebrate the Eucharist "in memory of me"; the power to forgive sins; and other structural elements that belong to the deposit of faith. The charismatic dimension refers to the gift poured out spontaneously at Pentecost and afterward by the Holy Spirit, who freely distributes his graces when and where he wills. The institutional is passed down from generation to generation and belongs to the permanent

visible structure of the Church. The charismatic is given by the Lord in an unpredictable way and cannot be codified. Baptism in the Spirit, as a manifestation of the spontaneous working of the Spirit, belongs to the charismatic dimension, but at the same time it brings new life and dynamism to the institutional dimension grounded in the sacraments.'(p.68-69)

### **Two interpretations in harmony**

There are two well-known Catholic schools of theological interpretation of the baptism in the Spirit. The one describes it 'as an actualization of the grace of baptism and confirmation', the other 'as a new sending of the Spirit' (p.70).<sup>\*</sup> Did the book of the Doctrinal Commission bring this two schools of interpretation together in harmony? Yes, in the paragraph 'Is Baptism in the Spirit for Every Christian?' the book gives a kind of solution: 'Baptism in the Spirit is for all the baptized insofar as it is coming alive of sacramental baptism and confirmation. (...) Charisms as such are for the whole Church, (...) however, the particular forms that these gifts take in various times and settings cannot be made normative for any person or group. One cannot say that any one charism is for all Christians, since they are freely given as the Spirit wills.' (p.74)

### **What should we do?**

The final part of the book gives good instructions how to prepare people to receive or experience the baptism in the Spirit. This part can help all leaders in the CCR to do their primary task and to offer (anew) life in the Spirit seminars in all kinds of forms. 'The seminar is usually in the form of a six- or seven-week course but can also take place during a weekend or even a single day, or in a longer format (10 weeks or more) that includes further evangelization or catechesis. The Life in the Spirit Seminar works best for Catholics who already know the basics of the faith. For people who have little or no faith formation, it may be advisable to begin with an evangelistic program that proclaims the basic gospel message.' (p.79)

### **Our limits**

Aware of our limits the Doctrinal Commission finishes the section on preparation with: 'Those who lead preparation programs must remember that their task is not to produce but to assist the

work of the Spirit, who sovereignly acts in each person's life as he wills.' (p.87)

### **Another mile to go**

The book is a milestone in the history of theological reflection, but the theologians have another mile to go. And, maybe, one day it will be time for the pope to write about this subject a whole document.

The authors of the present book are aware of their own limits. 'Most of the content of this booklet is applicable to the whole Church (...), but the booklet is addressed primarily to leaders in the Renewal' (p.13). The focus is on 'baptism in the Spirit as it has been manifested in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal' (p.15). 'It is beyond the scope of this document to discuss the Spirit's charismatic activity in the Church from the end of the patristic era to our own times' (p.59).

Theologians will continue to work on it. March 2013 the Chemin Neuf community will, in collaboration with ICCRS, organize in Switzerland another conference on baptism in the Holy Spirit. In this conference also the ecumenical dimension of baptism in the Holy Spirit will be addressed.

### **Data**

Original title: *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*.

Author: ICCRS Doctrinal Commission.

Year: 2012.

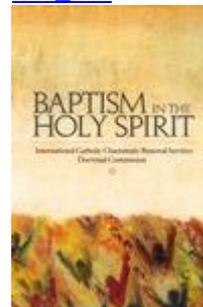
Pages: 116.

Language: English.

Price: USD 10.00.

You can order and pay a copy on

[http://iccrs.org/en/index.php/blog/comments/book\\_bhs](http://iccrs.org/en/index.php/blog/comments/book_bhs).



Several translations of this book are in process right now.

<sup>\*</sup>The two Catholic schools of theological interpretation of the baptism in the Spirit are discussed in the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue 1998-2006, with this conclusion: '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.' See

<http://www.stucom.nl/document/0228uk.pdf>

The report on the ICCRS-colloquium in Rome, April 2008 on baptism in the Holy Spirit and the charisms, was in EUCCRIL 204. See

<http://www.stucom.nl/document/0232uk.pdf>

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