

You the Holy Spirit

but do you really 'get' the third person of the Trinity?

BY CHRIS HODGES

I remember the first time I heard about "it." I was probably 12 years old, and our church was having a business meeting to discuss it. I really wasn't clear what "it" was, but it sure was causing a stir.

Years later, I discovered that our church was fighting about (uh, I mean discussing) a doctrinal issue concerning the "Holy Ghost." At the time, it was all very confusing because lots of people were saying that we had to stay away from other people who had "received the Holy Ghost."

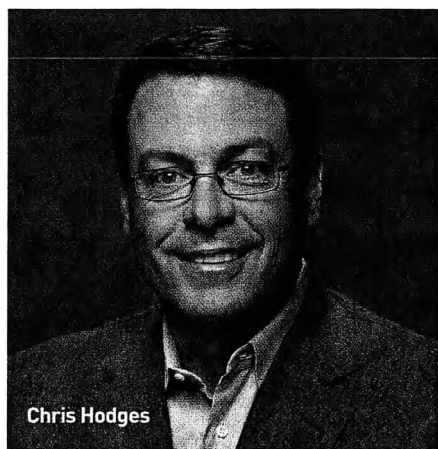
It made sense to me. I mean, who wants to be around people who are hanging around with ghosts, right? From that moment, I was wary whenever I heard about people who were gullible enough to believe in the Holy Ghost. I thought they must be in some kind of hypnotic trance or belong to some crazy church.

As the years passed, I learned to dismantle my misconceptions and inherited prejudices about the Holy Spirit. One of the main reasons was because my own Christian experience—fueled mostly by my own efforts—ended up being a failure, to say the least. When I finally invited the Holy Spirit to fill me, my prayer was a mixed bag of double messages—something like this: "Holy Spirit, I want to receive You, but at the same time I don't want to lose control. I want You to come in on my terms. I'll receive You, but I still have some concerns about You and Your ways. If You can behave Yourself, then You're welcome to come in and stay awhile."

If it sounds like a halfhearted contract with an unruly tenant instead of a commitment of love with the God of the universe, you're right. Like so many people,

I'd let my religious prejudices taint my beliefs and color my perceptions. Finally, though, I said, "I want You and everything You have to offer—all of me for all of You."

It changed everything. I went from being a weak, milk-fed Christian to a radical, on-fire believer who couldn't stop reading his Bible and inserting Christ into conversations with my friends. The



Chris Hodges

The Holy Spirit can't be seen, but He can be observed in action.

best part is I wasn't trying to be a "good Christian"! I was simply being myself and allowing the Spirit into my heart, my mind and my life. I surrendered all I'd heard about the Spirit so that I could experience the adventure of God's presence in my life.

I'm concerned that many people today are in the same place I was in—they misunderstand and misperceive God's gift to us of the Holy Spirit. Most of us understand God the Father because we all have an earthly father. We know what a father is like or what a good father should be like.

It's pretty easy to understand Jesus the Son, too. God with us in the flesh, Emmanuel, came to earth as a baby in a manger, died as a sinless man on a cross and returned to life as the radiant Son who made it possible for us to know His Father. Most of us have some understanding of Jesus because we've seen pictures and movies that depict Him, even if they're not close to being accurate.

But what's up with this Holy Ghost? If you're like I was for years, it may seem easier to stay away and avoid the topic altogether. We don't have a positive

association with "ghosts" and all the spooky, supernatural mystery that surrounds them—who wants that? As it turns out, He's not a ghost at all.

Instead of some kind of spooky apparition, we need to go back to the Bible and look closely at what God tells us about this part of Himself. The word *spirit* is mentioned more than 800 times in Scripture. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word is *ruwach*, which literally means "a violent exhalation, a blast of breath, a strong wind." In the New Testament, the Greek word for this same kind of breath is *pneuma*, which translates "a breath or wind, a current of air, a strong breeze"—not a ghost.

If the Holy Spirit is like breath or wind, then let's think through the characteristics of wind and perhaps we can gain a clearer, more concrete idea of who the Spirit is and His role in our lives.

Invisible Wind

Wind is something we feel and experience but don't see. While we can observe its effects and see its impact on leaves and trees, kites and windmills, we never actually see the wind itself. But the fact that we can't see it doesn't keep us from acknowledging it as a reality.

Similarly, we must realize that while the Spirit can't be seen, He can be felt, experienced and observed in action. When our church was still meeting at a high school, I was shaking hands and talking with people as they left after one particular Sunday morning service when a man said something I'll never forget. When I asked this first-time visitor if he enjoyed the service, he got a funny look on his face and said, "Preacher, there was something in that room today ... something *different*."

He didn't know what it was—he couldn't see it—but it drew him back the next week. Simply put, it was the presence of God. The Spirit is undeniable and real.

We get frustrated sometimes because we can't quantify and objectify the Spirit; we can't catch Him and take Him apart

and study Him in a scientific way. Instead, we must rely on faith. The Bible defines faith this way: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb. 11:1, NIV).

Unpredictable Wind

From the cool summer breeze that caresses us on a front porch swing to the furious tornado whipping at more than 100 miles per hour, we know that wind changes speed and direction frequently. Despite the best efforts of our weather satellites and Doppler-radar reporters, we still experience the unpredictability of the wind. It goes where it wants.

The Holy Spirit moves in different ways as well. In fact, there's one instance in Scripture where English translators use the word *wind* instead of *spirit*. Jesus told the Pharisee Nicodemus, "The wind (*pneuma*) blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Jesus made it explicitly clear that the Holy Spirit moves like the wind—a seemingly unknowable way.

This unpredictability makes a lot of us uncomfortable. Most people like everything orderly and in its place. Yet the Spirit wind can blow through and quickly change that order. If this quality makes us so uncomfortable, then why does it seem to be a key part of the Spirit's essence?

I suspect if He were predictable, then we'd put our trust in a system—the structure, the kind of cause-and-effect behavior that leads to legalism rather than relationship. If we could consistently predict the Spirit's movement, then we would figure out a way to accomplish things without Him. God wants us to depend on Him and interact with Him on a daily, ongoing basis.

To receive all He has for you, you'll have to get comfortable with the unexpected and unpredictable. You'll have to rely on Him instead of just what your senses, scientific method or research experts tell you. You'll have to accept mystery as part of the relationship.

Powerful Wind

Wind can generate electricity, sail a ship or destroy an entire city. Wind has power. At the heart of it all, the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, is about

power—supernatural power. This kind of divine, unseen, unpredictable power has been part of our faith since Pentecost.

In 19th-century America, revivalist Charles Finney, whose ministry reportedly led more than half a million people to Christ, was a major leader in the Second Great Awakening. While training to be a lawyer, Finney became intellectually curious about Christ but resisted turning his life over to God for a long time.

However, he eventually felt so drawn to the Spirit he could no longer resist.

He later described his first encounter with God's Spirit like this: "The Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love; for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very

breath of God."

All of us want that kind of power in our lives, even if we think it's easier to serve God on a merely intellectual level. If we can contain something in our thoughts, understand and analyze it, then we feel like we have at least some control over it. If we truly want to experience a breath of fresh air in every area of our lives, we have to allow God's breath to resuscitate us.

If I've learned anything in my 34 years with God, it's the importance of not holding back, of going all in. As Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." It can't be halfway. It must be total and beyond your control.

As you consider how to let go of your own fears and misperceptions of God's Spirit, imagine that you're wading away from the shore of self into the open water of God's love (see Ezek. 47:3-5). God calls us to let go of our attempts to control and find the place where He directs us. In the shallow water, we tend to feel in control because we can touch the bottom. But in the middle, God invites us to swim, to immerse ourselves in all that He has for us.

Many of us prefer just to wade in the river, experiencing some of God's mystery while staying in control by keeping our feet firmly on the river bottom. Yet the Spirit of God invites us to go from an ankle-deep faith to one that's knee-deep, then waist-deep, and finally to one in which we can no longer touch the bottom at all. It's a faith where we dive into the middle and swim in the powerful current of God's love and joy.

So many people are afraid to jump in because they want to stay in control. But the truth is none of us can ultimately control our lives, nor do we really want to try. We long for the safety of our Father's arms and the intimate friendship of His Spirit. I dare you to go for what you long for most. I challenge you to put yourself on a spiritual adventure where you experience the breath of God's Spirit filling your sails. ◀

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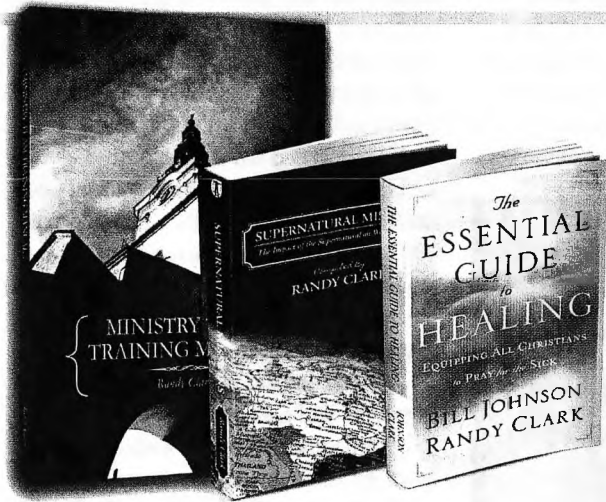


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Much has changed since the massive renewal in the late 1960s, yet Catholic charismatics still comprise one of the largest groups of Spirit-filled believers on the planet. So how is this once-thriving movement fairing in America today?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Throughout 2012, we're celebrating what we call "The 12 Communities of Charisma" and highlighting groups that have made up this magazine's readership for more than 37 years. This month we asked two leaders representing mainline denominational charismatics (in this case, Catholic and Methodist) to examine how the Holy Spirit continues to move within their respective communities.

Katrina was a wake-up call. I think these record-breaking fires and some of the other things happening are warnings God is giving us, and if we don't heed these warnings, then something more severe will happen."

This summer, evangelist Billy Graham, who has preached to more people than any Protestant in history (2.2 billion), issued a letter calling America to repentance. In it, Graham wondered what his late wife, Ruth, would think of the country today, where "self-centered indulgence, pride and a lack of shame over sin are now emblems of the American lifestyle."

"My heart aches for America and its deceived people," wrote Graham, 94. "The wonderful news is that our Lord is a God of mercy, and He responds to repentance. In Jonah's day, Nineveh was the lone world superpower—wealthy, unconcerned and self-centered. When the prophet Jonah finally traveled to Nineveh and proclaimed God's warning, people heard and repented. I believe the same thing can happen once again, this time in our nation."

Hope for a Turnaround

Seeking to ignite such a revival, Graham is asking millions of Christians to participate in the My Hope with Billy Graham evangelistic outreach set for Nov. 7, 2013—his 95th birthday. Graham hopes Christians will invite family, friends and neighbors to their homes to watch the "Living Room Crusade" on their TVs, tablets or smartphones. His association hopes to mobilize millions of believers to undergo training to share their faith with others during the event.

The good news, Rosenberg says, is that America has experienced two great spiritual awakenings in the past and could experience another one, based on 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God says: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

"We desperately need a Third Great Awakening," Rosenberg says. "We need to beg and plead with God to pour out his Holy Spirit and save us, to turn our hearts away from sin and back to our faith in Jesus Christ. If we don't have a Third

Great Awakening soon, this country will implode. I can't say when. I can't even say how. But I'm laying out a number of possible scenarios."

Franklin Graham says the church has been asleep for far too long—more interested in trying to be "relevant to the culture" than teaching and preparing Christians for Jesus' return.

"I would encourage pastors in churches to begin to preach and to prepare and

to warn their congregations that God is going to judge sin," Graham says. "We as a nation need to repent and we need the churches calling for repentance." ◀

An award-winning reporter and editorial writer at the Los Angeles Daily News, The Press-Enterprise and other newspapers for two decades, TROY ANDERSON writes for Reuters, Newsmax, Charisma and many other media outlets. He lives in Irvine, Calif.

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Whatever Happened to the Catholic Renewal?

BY DOROTHY GARRITY RANAGHAN

According to a new document titled *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, published in Rome by the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), more than 120 million Catholics in 238 countries have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Though that may be a conservative figure, it indicates the Pentecostal/charismatic movement remains alive in the modern Catholic Church. And the demographics of the movement are changing.

I spoke at the 45th annual national conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal held in Philadelphia this summer. Of the approximately 2,500 attendees, 800 were Haitians, 800 were Hispanics, 700 were Anglos and 200 were Filipinos—an accurate depiction of the Catholic renewal in America. For example, there are about 60 prayer groups in the diocese of Orlando, Fla., with nearly 50 percent a combination of Filipino, Haitian and Hispanic. In the Archdiocese of Washington, about 5,000 Hispanic Catholics worship regularly at charismatic services in 16 parishes.

For many years there has been a decentralization of the renewal in the U.S. The large national conferences of the 1970s and '80s have yielded to many regional and diocesan conferences and a variety of different language and ethnic groups, communities and ministries. These groups join forces for events with the encouragement of the National Service Committee.

Worldwide Renewal

There are signs that the renewal continues to grow rapidly in Latin America, Africa, Australia, Brazil and Asia. South Korea held an open rally in 2009, drawing

more than 50,000. In 2011 about 32 countries were represented at the second Pan-African Congress of the Catholic Renewal in Cameroon, with more than 400 delegates from Nigeria alone.

According to statistics compiled in 2000 by ICCRS, there were 13,631 prayer groups in Asia, where 15 percent of Catholics are involved in the renewal. In August, a regional conference in Osaka, Japan, sported 300 delegates. Asia is second only to Latin America, where 16 percent of Catholics officially claim to be part of the renewal (though this percentage is likely higher given the ongoing revivals there).

As of press time, we believe that 12 million people have been baptized in the Holy Spirit in Brazil, a country with about 21,800 prayer groups. National gatherings there can attract approximately 350,000 people, and charismatic covenant communities like Canção Nova and Shalom run evangelistic radio and television stations. The Catholic renewal is also flourishing in places such as the Dominican Republic, Australia, the Philippines and Malaysia.

Sister Nancy Kellar, a Sister of Charity (N.Y.) who was a member of the first charismatic house of prayer in the U.S., has written a hopeful perspective on the movement around the world: "A somewhat newer trend that I rejoice in is the increasing activity on the part of the Catholic charismatics in the social and political arena. In Argentina, the national team for Catholic Charismatic Renewal held the first National Meeting of Social Promoters, attended by 117 brothers and sisters working in politics, trade unions, economics and social promotion. In Lithuania, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has been involved in evangelization in the army, organizing charismatic meetings in

several military bases. In the Congo and Zaire, renewal participants are working on a great rally for peace. Charismatics in Pakistan utilized prayer and fasting for the release of two Christians wrongly imprisoned."

Age Gap in the West

Except for the membership of some of the covenant communities and other occasional bursts that reengage youth, the Anglo renewal in North America and Western Europe is composed largely of older people. It is often referred to as "graying" of the renewal. The earliest apostles, pastors, teachers and evangelists of Pentecost among Catholics in the late 1960s were graduate and undergraduate students. With much work to do, the Lord found an army of youth to serve Him.

With many Spirit-filled youth today—our true future hope—enthusiastic for the gospel, it is our duty to mentor and teach them, to allow the Holy Spirit to fire their imagination. It is our task to help them discover new ideas, and to channel their energy to help future generations know the power of God. Part of this mentoring involves an understanding of our history.

Retracing the Roots

The Catholic renewal sprang from a retreat held in February 1967 in Pittsburgh with some faculty members and students from Duquesne University. It quickly spread and was, in time, almost universally accepted by church authorities. The United States Bishops Ad Hoc Committee on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal noted, "It is our conviction that baptism in the Holy Spirit ... is part of the normal Christian life."

In 1975 Pope Paul VI said, "The church and the world need more than ever that

the 'miracle of Pentecost should continue in history.' ... How could this spiritual renewal not be a chance for the church and the world?" In 1979 Pope John Paul II followed this up by saying, "I am convinced that this movement is a sign of the Spirit's action."

Looking to the future, we must understand that the Catholic Church environment is changing. When Roman Catholics began experiencing the baptism of the Holy Spirit in large numbers in 1967, society as a whole experienced a great spirit of openness—particularly the Catholic Church. Great excitement stemmed from the Second Vatican Council about the renewal of the liturgy, the exercise of the priesthood of all the baptized, full participation in the life and mission of the church by lay people, openness to charismatic gifts and the rediscovery of Protestant and Orthodox Christians as our genuine brothers and sisters in Christ.

One of the greatest areas of both optimism and caution from the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal was its

strongly ecumenical dimension. Classic Pentecostals, as well as Protestant and non-denominational charismatics, provided us with a practical understanding of what we were experiencing and helped to sustain the movement. The alliance proved mutually beneficial. For example, the 1977 Kansas City Conference, which brought together 50,000 Pentecostals, Catholic and mainline Protestants and nondenominational charismatics in a genuinely ecumenical context, was a milestone moment for many and should, like other similar moments, remain integral to our story.

Reasons for Decline

Though many have worked hard to keep this ecumenical dimension of the renewal alive, openness to ecumenical engagement appears to be diminishing. Why have we experienced this decline? While discovering great possibilities for mutual fellowship, cooperation and even outreach, we also found that sustaining mutual respect and understanding is hard work.

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Organizing large ecumenical events became increasingly difficult not only for financial and logistical reasons, but also because despite our best efforts, we encountered difficulties maintaining ecumenical sensitivity while working together—mostly through some public doctrinal and pastoral confusion.

Meanwhile, on the local level of prayer groups and congregations, the ecumenical vision wasn't reaching people's hearts. It soon became easier for many to put effort into cultivating their own garden. It is clear to me, however, that the initial strong ecumenical dimension of the renewal must be recovered. We are all descendants of Azusa Street.

How should we proceed in an atmosphere that may be less open and perhaps more suspicious about what we consider the graces of the Pentecostal outpouring? Surely we Catholic charismatics love the church and are called to live in fidelity

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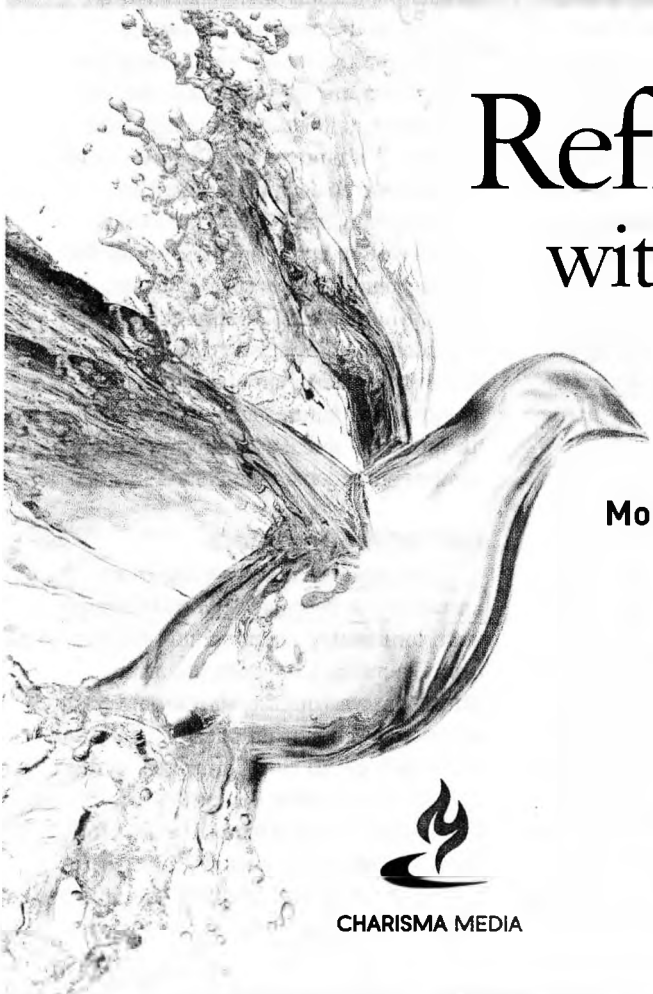
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and obedience to the church. In this changing Catholic culture, we sense a fresh prophetic call upon the renewal to reemphasize the importance of living life baptized in the Spirit, accepting and using the charisms, preaching and witnessing in power, stretching out our hands in effective healing, interceding with problem-solving faith and engaging the enemy in victorious spiritual warfare. The fact that our church culture may appear to be less receptive to this Spirit-led work than in the past is not an excuse for our inconstancy.

Pressing Forward

If you look for the fruit after 45 years of renewal, you will find that many people who are involved in parish ministry have at one time or another experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Those who serve as Eucharistic ministers, lectors, visitors to the sick, on parish councils, in religious education programs—many of whom will say that they were baptized in the Spirit and remain open to the gifts of the Spirit—are now ministering in the Catholic Church.

Moreover, there is ongoing participation of Catholic charismatic leaders in Vatican-sponsored meetings on healing, charisms, deliverance and ecumenism. Overall, the church has formed new charismatic religious orders of men and women, nurtured vocations to the priesthood and to the diaconate, launched more houses of prayer, paved the way for worship music to flourish, and continued to serve the poor.

For example, Lay Apostolic Ministries with the Poor (LAMP), founded by Tom and Lyn Scheuring, has been serving in New York for more than 30 years. Jim Cavnar's Cross International serves those in extreme poverty in Haiti. Our Lady's Youth Center in El Paso, Texas, continues to serve the underprivileged. These are only a few of many examples.

Our 45-year journey hasn't always been a series of high points. We didn't always "fly through the air with the greatest of ease." There have been times when it felt more like traveling over mountains and through deserts in a Conestoga wagon, hitting pothole after pothole. There have been problems and bumps in the road—squabbles among leaders (often about power), persecution from within and from without. Some have withdrawn from the ecumenical imperative of the

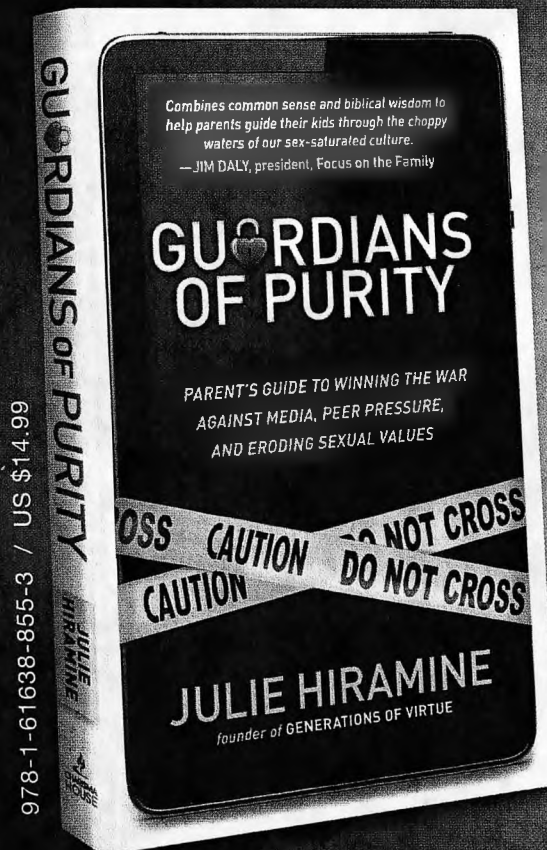
renewal; some have wandered into New Age practices or withdrawn from witness into private piety, forgetting the primary entrustment of the renewal is the charisms—the gifts of the Spirit.

But God isn't done with His purposes for the renewal. Despite our weaknesses and failures, any opportunity to think about where we've been and what God has done leaves us all dumbfounded. We believe that if our focus remains on the

basic entrustment of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the charisms, we can trust in the Lord for an even greater future. ◀

DOROTHY GARRITY RANAGHAN and her husband, Kevin Ranaghan, co-authored the 1969 Catholic Pentecostals. They are founding members of the People of Praise, a charismatic, ecumenical covenant community. Dorothy's latest book is *Blind Spot: War and Christian Identity*.

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