

What is Distinctive about the Spirituality of CCR?

CCR originated in 1967 when some Catholics experienced the presence and power of God working in a new and deeper way in their lives. This experience of God, which they described as being "baptised in the Spirit," drew them into a far deeper spiritual life than before. They wanted to give their lives more fully to God. They experienced his love more deeply, and appreciated even more deeply the spiritual riches to be found in the Catholic Church.

They discovered, in particular, that God was wanting to be far more active in their lives than they had previously understood. They experienced gifts of the Holy Spirit that enabled them to help and serve others, such as praying for healing, and teaching and preaching in more powerful ways. They found God to be vitally interested and involved in every aspect of their lives, no matter how seemingly minor. God worked in their lives in a powerful way and, through them, healed and transformed others.

Baptism in the Spirit

Although each person's experience of God is unique, the experience within CCR is that there is usually a moment of deeper conversion in each person's life which brings them into this deeper spiritual dimension. This is called "the Baptism in the Spirit," or "a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (as the person has usually already received the Spirit in many ways in their life). The word "baptism" is not to be confused with sacramental Baptism, but simply means immersion — immersion into God in a fuller way, and being immersed in the Holy Spirit. It is a grace of God that often brings with it new spiritual gifts, and sometimes a calling and enabling to move into new roles in serving others.

The receiving of this grace is pure gift, and the recipient does nothing to earn it, but must allow God to act, as he always respects our free will. It empowers the individual to serve others, and to move into a deeper spiritual awareness and longing to know God. It empowers the person to using the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are always for the benefit of others.

People who have experienced this grace speak of a new love of God, a desire to pray and to attend Mass, to join with other Christians in sharing their faith life, to serve others, to read Scripture and other spiritual reading, and to learn more about the ways of God. They have a new desire to praise God, and experience a deep peace and joy as they find a new awareness of the presence of God in their lives.

Typically, those coming into CCR attend a Life in the Spirit Seminar within a prayer group. The seminar lasts a number of weeks, and facilitates a process of openness to new graces that God might give that person. In one of those sessions, there is specific prayer for the Baptism in the Spirit.

Gifts of the Spirit

For the early Christians, the Holy Spirit was experienced as a real power in their lives. The Holy Spirit empowered them to continue the work of Jesus. When a person received the Holy Spirit, they experienced a very real difference in their lives — and others noticed it. That is still true today.

Although all Christians receive the Holy Spirit through Baptism, God's Spirit works in many ways in the world, in both Christians and non-Christians. Yet the experience of being 'baptised in the Spirit' is a time of entering a deeper spiritual dimension. Similarly, St Teresa of Avila describes a person entering her 'Fourth Mansion': "Supernatural experiences begin here" (Interior Castle 4.1.1).

Those who experience this deeper infilling, or new outpouring, of God's Spirit usually begin to discover new spiritual gifts. Some of these are:

- **The Gift of Prophecy:**
The ability to sense what God is saying to a group or an individual, and to pass on that message. This usually takes the form of encouragement, comfort, hope or exhortation.
- **The Gift of Praying in Tongues:**
This is a way of praying without words — a form of contemplative prayer that is very useful in personal prayer and in prayer ministry. It enables the person praying to focus on God without worrying about finding the right words.
- **Gifts of Healing:**
There seem to be a variety of gifts given by the Spirit to enable people to be instruments of God's healing through prayer.

Paul describes some of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12, but the Spirit works in many ways. The Spirit also empowers people to move into new roles of service and ministry to others. In all case, the gifts are given to serve others. God works through people, and these gifts help spread his goodness in the world.

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