

Pentecost 2006
“Preparing for the 40th anniversary of CCR”
Pentecost Day Celebration
“My soul magnifies the Lord”
Marino, Palaghiaccio – Sunday 4 June 2006

“The power of the Holy Spirit in our life”

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As I travel around the world and have opportunities like this, I often start my talk with the same word and this word is: WOW!!! What an experience! What a joy to be in Italy with thousands of crazy charismatics; with thousands of Italian charismatics.

But we have to get to work!

In his encyclical on the Holy Spirit in the Church and the world Pope John Paul II uses one word more than 65 times. The word that he uses is “power”. Do you think that he was trying to tell us something? Do you think that he might have been saying that the Church is suffering from a power failure? Do you think he was telling us that every single one of us must be plugged in to the power; must have the power of the Holy Spirit turned on in our lives?

How does the dictionary define “power”? It is defined as a great, an exceptional, ability to do something, to perform an action. When a person is referred to as “a power”, the dictionary says that such a person has an ability to influence others. In physics power is described as an energy, a force, a momentum that gets things moving. No matter how you describe it, you must have it!

Could this possibly be the biggest problem in the Church today? Jesus Christ, who commissioned us and sent us forth to live as saints and to be missionaries, carrying the good news all the way to the ends of the Earth, at the same time promised us all of the power that we would need for living that life of holiness, to realize to perfection the job he gave us. And then we go out and try to do the job and live the life without connecting with the power that he promised us.

Now we are living in a technological age; an age of computers and modems, televisions, aeroplanes and satellites, of cellphones and iPods. Could we have the tendency in this highly technical age of ours to be depending only on our natural human power rather than on the power of God, the power that the Son of God promised us? Could we have the tendency to be using only human power even when we are setting out to serve the purposes of God? Jesus might have had that thought in mind when he gave us this instruction: “*Jesus summoned the Twelve and gave them power and He sent them to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick*” (cf. Matthew 10). “*He said to them: Take nothing with you for the journey, neither a walking stick, or a sack, or food, or money and let no one take a second tunic*” (cf. Luke 9). If He was giving this instruction today, He might have said: take neither an iPod nor Internet and let no one have even a single credit card in their pocket!

Luke 9 goes on to say “*and they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the Good News and healing everywhere*” (Luke 9:6). AIDS would not have a chance if we did this today. Jesus was telling his disciples: “*Do not put your confidence in human power, in your own talent, or even in your money, even if you have millions of it*”. We need enormous power. Gasoline is needed to move a car; electricity is needed to turn the lights on and to spin the motor; fire is needed to cook

the food and warm the house; a jet motor is needed to fly the aeroplanes; and even more than all of these, every one of us needs the Holy Spirit!

Two thousand years ago Jesus Christ gave us the biggest job of all: the job of building the Kingdom of God on earth, the job of carrying the Good News of Jesus Christ to the ends of the Earth. We have had that job for two thousands years. It is not even one third completed and the third that is completed is not completed well enough. Could the problem be that we never realised how gigantic the job is, how humanly impossible the job is?

Years ago I heard a story about a group of men who came from a very arid desert area in Africa. They were led by a guide to a great waterfall and they could not believe what they were seeing: millions and millions of gallons of water just flooding over that waterfall. The guide couldn't get them to leave. When he finally got them away he asked them "why wouldn't you leave?" They answered "we were waiting to see it stop flowing." He said to them "but it never stops flowing!" They asked him "for how many years has it been flowing?" and he told them "for millions and millions of years!" They couldn't understand what they were hearing. That waterfall was a reservoir of power. It made dry lands fertile. It illuminated cities. It gave power to great factories.

Jesus Christ has given us a reservoir of power that surpasses any waterfall, any power plant. He said to us: "*in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit and you will receive power when the Spirit comes* (cf. Acts 1:5-8); *behold, I am sending you the promise of the Father, so stay in the city until you are vested with power*" (cf. Luke 24:48-49). In other words: **don't try to do the job without the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Why do we need that power? I have said this all over the world and I'm going to keep saying it: we need the power of the Holy Spirit for one reason: everyone in the world is excused if something proves to be impossible to do, except for Christians. There are all kinds of impossible things that Christians must do: love one another in the way God the Father loves God the Son, and God the Son loves us by dying on the cross for our sins. This is the command of Christ. We must become great saints. Our whole life must be converted into prayer. Paul tells us we must pray always, but how do you do it? It only takes three words and the three words are: **Come Holy Spirit!**

I want to briefly give you five examples from Scripture of people commanded by God to do the impossible. First example: a young girl, sixteen years old. The impossible job: remain forever a virgin, and as a virgin give birth to the Saviour of the world. The little girl called Mary said "Ok, you are God. If you want me to do it I will do it, but I'm a little curious as to how?" And the angel told her how: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you!"

Second example: John the Baptist. His job: announce the arrival of the Messiah in the moment that he arrives. The Messiah arrives at John's house and John has to announce him, but there is a little problem: John hasn't been born yet! No problem for God. Scriptures tells us in two places that John received the power of the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb and so he did the job!

Third example: St. Peter apostle, an illiterate fisherman. Peter experienced Pentecost. He needed the Holy Spirit before he could preach to the people. With every word that he speaks in the power of the Holy Spirit six people are converted into believers (cf. Acts 11:12). Two words – twelve people; three words – eighteen people; five hundreds words – three thousand people (cf. Acts 2:41). Today we give three thousand talks in our own power and convert no one because we don't know that we must be speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth example: the apostle Paul, a righteous Hebrew who doesn't talk with gentiles, never enters the home of a gentile. When Peter enters the home of a gentile all the other apostles attack him.

Now Paul the Hebrew gets a job: you will be the apostle of the Gentiles. How is he going to do that? Don't worry, the God who gives you the job gives you the power. A man called Ananias is sent to Paul and he tells him "*Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me to you that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit*" (cf. Acts 9:17). A secular magazine, "National Geographic", wrote about Paul that he changed the direction of Christianity and with it he changed the direction of the world! Wouldn't you like to do that? Don't wait until Bush does it!

Fifth and final example: Jesus. He lives on Earth for 30 years; the only thing famous about him, the only way people know him, is as "the carpenter's son." But then Jesus has a Pentecost and everything changes in his life! He explained to us why he needed a Pentecost. He said "*the Spirit anointed me, so that I could bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed*" (cf. Luke 4:18). *I needed a power to do that and so I was anointed with the Holy Spirit.*" And then what happened? The words of Scripture tell us: from that time on people were all amazed and kept saying to one another: "*What kind of an utterance is this? For with authority and power he commands unclean spirits and they come out. And the report about him spread through the whole region*" (cf. Luke 4,36-37).

I have just mentioned the five greatest figures in the history of Christianity. Is one greater than Jesus? His immaculate mother? John the Baptist, greatest born of women? Peter and Paul, the greatest apostles? They all absolutely needed the power of the Holy Spirit!

Now I come along and I look up and I say to God: "Take a rest, now you have me! Take a few weeks off, go to Hawaii, rest up, I will do it for you!" We couldn't say anything more stupid. We need God to be able to do God's work; we need the power of God to be able to do God's work.

Take a look at the changes that Pentecost brought in the life of that little girl; making of that Simon Peter prince of the apostles; making of the Saul of Tarsus the great Saint Paul. The same can happen to us. That power can flow through us. I have an ambition: I would like to be a little piece of plastic tube in the hands of God. Not gold, not silver, that could attract attention to itself. A little piece of plastic tube, open and clean, through which the waters of life can flow. This is God's plan for all of us. He wants to use us to do something great in the world. "*When you open your hands they will be filled, when you send forth your breath they will be created and you will renew the face of the Earth.*" (Psalm 104:28-30)

Three little words: Come Holy Spirit! That is the cry of Pentecost, and today is Pentecost!