

INSPIRED WORD

June 1, 2016

PRAYER

Lord, we come before You and we do respond to Your call. Dear Jesus, reveal Your Presence here in this place tonight. Send Your grace flowing down like the rains of yesterday and fill us with Your mercy. Draw us into the Holy of holies tonight so that we could meet You there. Amen.

SHARING

Tonight the teaching will be on the Current of Grace, which is a quote from Pope Francis which he gave to the Charismatic Renewal about our identity and our mission. Then we will talk about how the flow of our prayer meeting ties in to that same response to the current of grace.

IMAGE / SENSE / EXHORTATION

When we, the pastoral team, met in the back before this praise gathering started, there was a strong image which was received. It was about springtime, new birth, new life, flowers growing, and all of that. The sense that was given was that that is where we are called. We are called to have a new rebirth in our faith, in our joy and praise for God and to be exuberant about it, so that others will see it. After the image was given, I had the sense that this should not only be in our words, but should show in our actions as well. We can say 'I believe in God', or 'I praise God', but if we are not acting joyful or exuberant about it, then others see that in us. So our actions should reflect our words.

SCRIPTURE / EXHORTATION

Sirach 2: 1 – 6: "My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, undisturbed in time of adversity. Cling to Him, forsake Him not; thus will your future be great. Accept whatever befalls you, in crushing misfortune be patient; for in fire gold is tested, and worthy men in the crucible of humiliation. Trust God and He will help you; make straight your ways and hope in Him." How would you like to be tested because you are found acceptable by God, to be tested in the furnace of humiliation? When you are in the deep, deep mud of calamity, instead of complaining, it says to 'cling to Him'. The Lord has told us that we will be tested, and we will be persecuted. So yes, we do find ourselves in those hard times, but if you really do praise Him, then you are ready for **all** things, not just the joy.

EXHORTATION

The Lord is asking us to be new life tonight and to praise Him from our hearts and to listen to the words of the songs that we sing here and make them a prayer to Him. We need to tell the Lord that we want to follow Him, to be new life, and to praise Him from the depths of our hearts. But this can't be in words only, our actions have to show it as well. So the challenge for us tonight is to praise and pray the words that we sing to the Lord and to tell Him to use each of us here in whatever ways He wants to use us. Not for us, Lord, but for Your praise, Your honor and Your glory!

PRAYER

Lord, speak Your words into our hearts tonight. Fill our eyes with the images of Your love, and let us know the freedom of the Spirit – the freedom that is love.

EXHORTATION

Cece made a profound statement that we shouldn't pass over – that **freedom is love**. Our freedom is His love, and when we seem to be lost in the darkness of our society, we need to remember that **He is the Light, He is the Way, and He is the Truth! In His love is our freedom!!**

PRAYER

Thank You, Lord Jesus! Thank You, Lord, for Your mercy and Your grace! Lord, and come and reign in this place; come and reign in our hearts!

TEACHING / EXHORTATION / SCRIPTURE

Cece speaking: This teaching is going to be about the Current of Grace from Pope Francis. Next week we will talk about 'Where is God's Grace Leading Us?' which are reflections on the Inspired Words we have received in this community over the past few months. In other words, 'What has God been telling us and where is He inviting us to go?' Then in the third week, the teaching will be specifically about the 'Word Gifts – A Response to God's Grace' – how do we respond when we hear the word of God? It will be about the theology and practicals of the Holy Spirit's Word Gifts and it will be given by Deacon Chuck. In the fourth week the teaching will be about 'Overcoming Fear and Other Obstacles to Responding' – how focusing on courage, humility and love can help us move past spiritual fears. The fifth week is going to be a celebration of our **30th birthday as a community of praise!!** There is going to be praise and worship, sharing and telling stories, and fellowship time with a dessert potluck.

Tonight we are going to talk about the 'Current of Grace'. When we were talking about the current of grace, the image which kept coming back to me powerfully was of a school of fish. Think back to the National Geographic channel. It is just amazing to see the fish and how they all blend and the unity and diversity of all these fish as they move as a unit, for safety and security, and for adventure. We are called to that kind of freedom in moving in the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis met with a very large group of Charismatics in Rome – about 50 thousand of them in 2014. The leaders of the movement asked Pope Francis for his guidance. He is a big fan of 'Ecclesial Movements in the Church', which means all the different spiritualities and devotions that make up the Catholic faith – of people in the Catholic faith, and all of the different ways of ministering to people in the way that the Holy Spirit is moving. Because the Church is so large, the Church is also flexible enough to say "There are a lot of gifts from the same Spirit." The Charismatic Renewal is one of the movements of the Ecclesial Movements in the Church. Not only is Pope Francis a fan of the Renewal, but so is Pope Benedict. (Saint) Pope John Paul II, was also a fan of the Renewal. They understand that the Holy Spirit is working in the Charismatic Renewal movement for the good of the Church, and for the good of the people of the Church. So the leaders of the Renewal movement asked Pope Francis to give them his vision. So we are going to start with his vision tonight. The vision is, in his words, "You, Charismatic Renewal, have received a great gift from the Lord. You are born of the will of the Spirit and God willed this movement into being, as a current of grace in the Church and for the Church. This is your definition – 'a current of grace'". So this is the will of the Spirit and currents of grace are in the Church and for the Church! This is important information! Sometimes you will hear negative things about this movement from other people, but the Pope is saying **no** to that – it is in the Church and for the Church and is a current of grace! He didn't define what kind of current, because there is water current and there is an electrical current, but Pope Francis didn't define the kind. Tonight we are going to talk about the **water current**, but when we reflect on this, the electrical current works as well. So it could be the 'energizer bunny' for the Catholic Church, or it could also be the way that the Holy Spirit is moving within the body of the Church –

that is the one we are going to focus on tonight. Pope Francis continued to say a few more things. He said, “You, Charismatic Renewal, have received a great gift from the Lord. You were born of the Holy Spirit. What is the first gift of the Holy Spirit? It is the gift of Himself – that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is Love! This is what changes lives. You have received a great gift of the diversity of charisms; the diversity that leads to harmony in the Holy Spirit for the service of the Church. I think of a great orchestra where every instrument is different from one another and the voices are also different, but all are necessary for the harmony of music.” So this is what reminded me of that school of fish, the orchestra – one giant movement; it is not stagnant. Pope Francis says that we are not to get hung up in organization, let the freedom flow through the Holy Spirit. I am going to do a summary, so I don’t have to read everything Pope Francis had said. He says that we are not to cage the Holy Spirit; we are not to become ‘customs officers’ to the Holy Spirit who chooses what He can do and what He cannot do, or which way He will do it. The current of the Holy Spirit can be a wild ride, compared to what is going on around us. But when you are in the heart of it, you are moving with it and it is empowering everything you do. It is supercharging our every word, and every act of service that we give. That is the power of the current of grace! There are many people who were raised in the faith or have come to the faith, but who have never encountered the power of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus told us in scripture, it is better that I am not with you in person anymore, so that I can give you the Spirit to empower your lives, to rock your world. **(Reference: John 14: 15 – Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit)** This is huge! It is like He is saying, “I am going to give you more of God, which is the other part of the Trinity. He is going to go deep and He is going to transform you into those things that you can’t even imagine.” That is what the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is all about; it is part of the whole Renewal. When I first came into the Renewal I was young. My parents were involved in the Renewal when I was a young girl, but they moved and there wasn’t an active prayer group at that new place. So they fell out of the active spirituality of the Charismatic Renewal, but it was still in our home in music and in prayer. So it just saturated our family. Then later I got involved in a youth ministry where I was immersed in the Holy Spirit; you had to be immersed because you couldn’t do it on your own. There is no way you could lead retreats over and over and day after day without the Holy Spirit. I was living in community with eleven young adults – trust me, you can’t live in community without the Holy Spirit. Then I moved on to Steubenville and I learned the theology of the Renewal and translated it for people who had never experienced it. They didn’t understand how this fit in with their traditional spiritualities. I remember very vividly the first time that I heard someone talking about being baptized in the Holy Spirit, and I didn’t know if I had ever been. I was flowing in the current before I even realized that I was in the current. But I soon realized that I had been baptized in the Holy Spirit because I couldn’t be in the current without that – you can’t experience the Holy Spirit without the Holy Spirit doing it. Faith doesn’t happen without the Holy Spirit. So whichever experience was yours, it is okay. Pope Francis said, “I have been asked to tell the Renewal what the Pope expects from them. The first thing is the conversion to the love of Jesus – that is what I expect of you – **the conversion to the love of Jesus**, which changes lives and makes the Christian a witness to the love of God.” Are you witnessing the love of God? If not, then ask the Holy Spirit to make it happen in you. The Pope continues: “I expect you to share with **all in the Church** the grace of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is expressed in the **Acts of the Apostles**.” These gifts are real and they are now, and they are here; they are for our use, and for our edification, and our growing in holiness, and we can’t do it on our own power – we need the Holy Spirit to help us. The Pope continues: “I expect from you an evangelization of the Word of God that Jesus left for all people. I expect you to be witness to spiritual humanism with all the brothers and sisters of the churches in the Christian community who believe in Jesus as the Lord and Savior.” We have a special gift in this movement for reaching out in evangelization – telling all people about Jesus – and also for reaching out and

pulling people in, saying that we can pray together. We may have lots of differences, but what we have in common is the love of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is working there and He is working here. So let's recognize that and worship and rejoice together! The Pope continues: "I expect that you will remain united in the love that the Lord Jesus Christ asks of you for all who seek union in the name of Jesus."

The last piece that we are going to talk about is 'How do we apply this in our community here on Wednesday nights?' There are really two parts to that: It is the freedom to flow with the Holy Spirit and it is the power of the Holy Spirit. We are an evangelistic praise gathering; we are not just a prayer meeting. We have intentionally called ourselves a praise gathering, not a prayer meeting. The prayer meeting is wonderful and it is a good thing, lots of people do it, but a praise gathering is different. It taps into that power of the Holy Spirit – to pray, but also to rejoice. There is a phrase that is used a lot from a lady by the name of Ruth Ward Heflin – if you ever want to borrow this book, it is excellent. She has a phrase that I just really like, "You praise until the Spirit of worship comes, and then praise with boisterous songs and with open expression. You praise until the Spirit of worship comes, and then you worship until the glory comes. Then you stand in the glory!" That is what we try to do every Wednesday night here. We praise until the Spirit of worship comes, and at some point in the night we feel a click, you feel a shift, and the Holy Spirit's Presence is powerful – that is the Spirit of worship. Then we go from talking about God to talking with God, then as the songs change, the prayer changes and the Word changes, we stand in that glory, or we rest in that glory. We don't move on until we are there at that point, and then we go deep and we stay deep – that is the flow of the night. Another way to describe it is going up God's holy mountain. When we reach the top, we are in the Presence of the Lord where we take off our shoes and stay awhile because God is present. At that point, we pray for needs in that place of intercession, because intercession is one on one in talking with God and there is power in that gift of intercession for each other. Then we go out and proclaim what the Lord has done for us. This ends my talk and now we will go back into praise and worship. As it says in scripture, in **Psalms 100**: "We make a joyful noise to the Lord..."

REMINDER

Just a reminder that on the last Wednesday night of this month, the 29th, we will be celebrating our 30th birthday as a community of praise. It will be a time of sharing and fellowship with a dessert potluck. So bring your favorite desserts that night.

SENSE

I had a really strong sense that as we were singing that last song which was about preparing a throne for the Lord, someone here was really struggling with those words. You didn't think that you could prepare a throne in your soul for the Lord; that you just weren't worthy to do that. If that was you, we ask that you would come forward for prayers. That was an important thing tonight – we were asked to prepare the way and then to build that throne for the Lord. The Lord does not need a perfect throne; a wooden chair would do well in a weak soul. So if you were struggling with that, don't go home tonight without receiving prayers. Just ask for prayer!

(Praying for the needs of others in this praise community.)

