

ALIVE IN THE SPIRIT – Filled with all the fullness of God

In 2021, ADoRE (Alton Day of Renewal*) has been running a monthly “Life in the Spirit” programme dedicated to encouraging and enabling participants to find, recover, renew or deepen a genuine relationship with God through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The programme is run in a Catholic context but is open to Christians of any denomination.

Full programme details: <https://www.altonrenewal.com/2021.html>

Key Scripture: Mark 1:8 "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit..."

Background:

"I ask each and all of you that, as part of the current of grace of Charismatic Renewal, you organise seminars of Life in the Spirit in your parishes" - *Pope Francis*.

"I would ask you to share baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church...." - *Pope Francis*

In response to Pope Francis' appeal, our programme this year follows the stages of a classic “Life in the Spirit” seminar series, exploring how the Holy Spirit inspires and empowers us to be missionary disciples.

Overview:

Jesus instructed the Church to share his Good News with the world; but he knew that Christians would need supernatural power to enable them to do this, so he promised to baptize them in the Holy Spirit. The Church today needs to experience this power just as the first disciples did.

What is Baptism in the Holy Spirit?

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an action of God, invited by an individual through prayer, which brings about a deeper conversion to Christ, and which gives the Holy Spirit permission to work in that individual's life in a more powerful way.

It's not a sacrament, but it re-ignites the graces already given to Christians through the Sacraments. And it's also a new, fresh experience of the Holy Spirit which equips and inspires the individual for service, for mission, for discipleship and for life.

Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the Papal household explains that "Catholic theology recognizes the concept of a valid but tied sacrament. A sacrament is called tied if the fruit that should accompany it remains bound because of certain blocks that prevent its effectiveness." He goes on to say that sacraments are not magical rituals that act mechanically, without the person's knowledge or response. The individual's personal response and faith is needed in order for the grace and power of the sacraments to flow into their life

*What is Alton Day of Renewal?

We are a monthly meeting of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal formed in 1975 and blessed with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit ever since. We are now one of the longest continually running Catholic Charismatic Days of Renewal in Britain.

Our mission is the encouragement of a personal relationship with God, via his Son, Jesus Christ, and the charisms (gifts of grace) of his Holy Spirit. We provide spiritual refreshment to God's people through a monthly programme of: Prayer, Eucharist, Prophecy, Praise, Inspired Teaching, and Healing Ministry.

We currently meet online via Zoom once a month 10.00am – 1.00pm. To receive a registration link, please email adore@altonrenewal.com

Acknowledgement. *The following notes are adapted by Alastair Emblem from The Life in the Spirit Seminars Team Manual (Catholic Edition) by Stephen B Clark. Copyright © 1973, 1979 The Word of God. With an unrestricted license to The Sword of the Spirit. Free download from: <https://swordofthespirit.app.box.com/s/gr14ax8e9959z7tc5w44qi2xdtj8uyx3>*

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Session One: GOD'S LOVE Watch video of talk online: <https://youtu.be/qDALNhTxwLQ>

God is not beyond our contact, but someone who loves us and wants to be in a personal relationship with us, and who wants to give us a better life.

Our misconceptions of Christianity can be an obstacle to our finding this better life through Christ:

- We may have grown up with the idea that Christianity is all about a set of rules to keep so that we can go to heaven.
- Or that Christianity is only about loving your neighbour (“as long as I live a good life it doesn't matter what I believe”).
- Or that God is someone whom we cannot know or contact in any way, and who does not do anything that we can experience.

The truth is:

- God loves us unconditionally. There is nothing we can do that would make Him love us more or less.
- He wants to make contact with us and have a personal relationship with us.
- He wants to give us a new and better life.
- For this reason, he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ.

We can experience a better life through authentic Christianity:

- The knowledge of God and the power to live the Christian life.
- Happiness, peace and joy, better personal relationships, healing.
- Genuine community.

Whatever state your spiritual life is in at present, you can take steps which will allow Jesus Christ to establish or restore or deepen your relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- If you have been merely a nominal Catholic or have fallen away from the faith, Jesus offers you a whole new life—you can find or recover a genuine relationship with him (be baptized in the Spirit and experience spiritual gifts).
- If you have been trying to live the Christian life in some way but have found it difficult, or have not experienced much contact with God, Jesus will give you an experiential contact with him so that you will know that you know him, and he will give you new power to live the Christian life (he will baptize you in the Spirit, let you experience spiritual gifts).
- If you have already experienced personal contact with Christ, Jesus will give you a new and fuller relationship with himself (prayer “in the Spirit”, spiritual gifts).
- If you have already been baptized in the Spirit, the Lord will teach you more about what it means to be baptized in the Spirit and he will lead you into a deeper life in the Spirit.

You can begin right away to turn to the Lord

- The Lord will reach out to you, but you must reach out to him. “When you call to me and come to me, I will listen to you. When you seek me, you shall find me.” (Jeremiah 29:12-13)
- Starting today, pray every day to the Lord and meditate on his words in Scripture, e.g:

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” (Jeremiah 31:3)

You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. (Psalm 86:15)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:13)

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)

The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

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Session Two: SALVATION Watch video of talk online: <https://youtu.be/4pKqELAnnKE>

We need a Saviour because there is something seriously wrong with the world (with society as a whole and with individual lives) which cannot be resolved without God's help.

- God made the world to be a place of peace and justice and happiness, a place in which he would reign. He still wants the world to be that way (Isaiah 2:1-5).
- But everyone agrees that there is something seriously wrong with the way the world is now (war, poverty, riots, racial conflict, generation gap, exploitation).
- There is a growing realization that there is more than just a number of individual problems-- society as a whole has something wrong with it.
- Individuals suffer from the situation and from lack of help, and they experience many problems (loneliness, isolation, depression, anxieties, insecurities, lack of direction, meaninglessness, personal relationships characterized by fear, suspicion, mistrust, exploitation. Filling the emptiness with drugs, sexual immorality, pursuit of money or fame).

Since the cause of what is wrong (Satan, sin, and the dominion of darkness) is bigger than mankind can handle on our own. we need God to find the new life that is needed.

- Human efforts to improve the world are not succeeding. Even the most educated people and the most highly placed executives in business experience problems in their own lives, work, and relationships.
- Religions developed by mankind such as Buddhism, Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Scientology, Freemasonry, New Age etc. do not provide a solution.
- Even some forms of Christianity amount to being human efforts to find a good life and change the world. But these are based on human wisdom; God's wisdom is needed (Isaiah 55: 8-9).

God tells us in the Bible that we are not just confronted with particular wrongs in society or in ourselves; behind the particular things that are wrong there is something bigger than we can handle:

- The pervasive power of sin (Romans 3:9, 23)
- A kingdom, the dominion of darkness (Colossians 1:13)
- A force in rebellion against God, at enmity with him (Ephesians 6:12)
- Satan is behind it (I John 5:19)
- We are not free, nor is our society (people are in spiritual bondage, under the oppression of evil) (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Mankind was created to need God to achieve true peace, justice, and truth:

- The spiritual realm is not an optional extra. (John 15:5c)
- Only in God's kingdom (under his rule) are these things possible. (Isaiah 2:1-5, Isaiah 45:22)
- Under God's rule, life can be changed now. (Isaiah 48:17-18, Mark 1:14-15)
- There is a choice before us: to live under the dominion of darkness or in the kingdom of God.

God sent his son Jesus to break the hold of Satan and give us new life through his death and resurrection. Jesus is the Lord and Saviour, the Christ, the Messiah, the one God sent. (Colossians 1:13, John 11:21-27, Matthew 16:13-17).

- Jesus died to free us from our sins. (Isaiah 53:4-6, Hebrews 9:11-28)
- He rose to give us new life (Romans 4:25, Colossians 1:20, Titus 3:3-7):
- He broke the hold of Satan. (John 12:31, 1 John 4:4)
- Salvation is more than just going to heaven: it is a whole new way of life on earth as well. (John 10: 10b, John 4:14)
- Jesus is Lord: God gave him full power and authority to bring freedom and new life to those who accept him. (Matthew 28:18, Philippians 2:5-11). Jesus lives in his church and acts through it and in it to bring life to those who are his followers. (Ephesians. 2:17-22)

Next session: What the new life is and what a person can expect from being baptized in the Spirit.

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Session Three: NEW LIFE Watch video of talk online: <https://youtu.be/3q8eQHF6834>

“I came so that they may have life and have it in abundance.” (John 10:10)

The Father wants everyone to have new life. He sent his son Jesus into the world so that we could be given the source of new life, the Holy Spirit.

- Often the Christianity with which we have come in contact has not been spiritually alive, but God is continually renewing his Church by a fresh outpouring of his Spirit. Pope Francis has frequently commented that everyone should be “baptized in the Holy Spirit.”
- Jesus is Lord; if we accept his lordship, we can experience a new freedom and a new life.
- In him all our sins can be forgiven (no matter what we have done), and every barrier between us and the Father can be taken away.
- After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the Father, he sent the Holy Spirit to bring us new life. (Acts 1:1-5)

When the Holy Spirit comes to a person, they become a changed person. (Acts 2 or Acts 19:1-7) They are given the power to know God and to live a new life:

- Experiencing in a new way God as your Father who loves you and cares for you; who speaks in your heart, teaching and guiding you.
- Knowing in your heart that Jesus is your personal Lord and Saviour; putting him at the centre of your life so that his principles shape your life.
- Praying in a new way, more centered on God than yourself; more often prayer of praise and thanksgiving; discovering you can pray in tongues; the gift of tongues is a means of spiritual growth and of praising God; it allows the Holy Spirit to pray within you when you cannot pray adequately.
- Discovering that the Bible, the liturgy and the sacraments come to life. Noticing that the fruit of the Spirit develop within you (love, joy, peace, etc. Galatians 5).
- Understanding that you can receive the gifts of the Spirit to serve God (prophecy, healing, discernment of spirits, inspirations to speak etc. (I Corinthians 12).

There is no need for anyone to be the kind of Christian who is not in vital contact with God or who does not experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their life. Everyone, even beginners in the Christian life, can be baptized in the Spirit.

- For most of us, this is not our first reception of the Holy Spirit, but a release of his power that is already within us through baptism and confirmation.
- Different people see different changes happen to them: many may consciously experience the Holy Spirit in them for the first time. Others who have already consciously experienced something of the Spirit’s presence in their lives can receive a fuller experience, may become aware of new effects, new changes which the Spirit brings about in them. Everyone can experience a new presence and working of the Spirit.
- Those of us who have been Christians before will see that our years of Christian living have provided us with many resources that will be brought to life by the new presence of the Spirit in us.

Baptism in the Spirit is only the beginning of a new life.

- With the help of committed Christians as our brothers and sisters, we can grow to spiritual maturity; we can develop a daily dialogue and friendship with Christ; experience a new peace and joy, see ourselves being healed, becoming loving people, develop better relationships.

Next session: how to turn to Christ so that we can receive the fullness of the new life he is offering.

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Session 4: RECEIVING GOD’S GIFT Watch video of talk online: <https://youtu.be/L6M9fUKS0kc>

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ (John 7:37-38)

Introduction

Over the last three sessions we have looked at how God loves us; He freed us from darkness and the power of Satan through Jesus Christ; He wants to give us a new life through the Holy Spirit. God is offering us a relationship in which we can have new life. He will give us the gift of new life in the Spirit; he will change and heal us, make us new; he will join us to a Christian community or to other brothers and sisters who will help us grow in this new life. He invites us to turn to him to allow him to do what he is offering to do.

In order to receive the new life God is offering us, we must turn away from those things which block our relationship with God and accept Jesus as our Lord.

We need a change of direction, a reorientation of our lives:

- Away from those things which block our relationship with God and give Satan a hold on us, and towards God and obedience. Only when we follow him can he lead us to a new life.
- God does not want the obedience of slaves, who obey out of fear of punishment, or the obedience of employees, who obey because they are rewarded; he wants the obedience of sons who obey out of love and respect for their father. We must accept Jesus as our Lord.

The word “repentance” refers to this change of direction. Repentance involves:

- Honesty - the admission that there are things in our lives that are wrong and need changing
- Humility - the willingness to change; the awareness that we need God’s help
- Renunciation - turning away from wrongdoing; deciding not to do it again
- Asking forgiveness for what we have done wrong
- We must specifically turn away from non-Christian religions, spiritualism, witchcraft, occultism, sexual intercourse outside of marriage, adultery, homosexual acts, murder, robbery, shoplifting, cheating (business deals, on exams), lying, slander, drunkenness (not drinking), dependence on drugs.
- Those who have committed serious sins need sacramental confession in order to complete their process of reconciliation. Sacramental confession can also be very helpful for those who have not committed serious sins, but who are turning to the Lord in a new way.

In order to receive the new life God is offering to us, we must ask him for it in faith, expecting to receive it because he wants us to have it and he promised he would give it to us.

- Faith means relying on what God has said (Matthew 14:22-33). We know that everything God says is true, because he knows everything and does not lie. Our Christian lives are based on facts; we put faith in the facts, our feelings follow. We deal with feelings of doubt by looking at the facts. When we see the fact that God promised us something, we can expect that it will happen to us. We need more than doctrinal belief alone; we need to claim the promises of God.
- We can expect God to baptize us in the Spirit because he told us that he wants it for us (Luke 11:9-13), because he loves us and wants us to be united with him. We can have it because of what Jesus did for us, not because we can earn it or deserve it.
- Obstacles to receiving God’s gifts include: A feeling of unworthiness; The fear of making a fool of oneself; The fear of having our personalities taken over; Doubt, temptation by Satan to not believe or to reject God’s gifts; Pride—the feeling that we don’t need God’s gifts; The fear of what others think.

Next session: Praying for Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

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Session 5: PRAYING FOR BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT Watch video of talk online:

<https://youtu.be/KYpS3khSm7I>

The purpose of this session (indeed the purpose of the seminar series) is to claim Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit.

If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! (Luke 11:13)

This is the turning point of the seminars, the moment at which many begin a new life with Christ. It is not the culmination of a person's Christian life but a new beginning: it is the life in the Spirit, the life of following Christ, that is important, not the experience of being baptized in the Spirit.

We start by making a prayer of commitment to Christ.

This can be understood as a renewal of our baptismal vows. A definite clear verbal commitment confirms our decision to be a follower of Christ. *If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9).*

- Do you renounce Satan and all wrongdoing? **I do**
- Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died to free us from our sins, and that he rose to bring us new life? **I do**
- Will you follow Jesus as your Lord? **I will**

Lord Jesus Christ, I want to belong to you from now on. I want to be free from the dominion of darkness and the rule of Satan, and I want to enter into your kingdom and be part of your people. I will turn away from all wrongdoing, and I will avoid everything that leads me to wrongdoing. I ask you to forgive all the sins that I have committed. I offer my life to you, and I promise to obey you as my Lord. I ask you to baptize me in the Holy Spirit.

Individuals are then prayed over for Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

- Brief individual prayer over each person after the prayer of commitment. Invite the Holy Spirit to come, then relax with open arms and open heart, trusting in the Lord to do what He knows is best for the individual. The Lord is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit. Ask him to give what he promised and expect it. Thank Him for what He is doing
- Different things will happen to different people. Some people experience warmth, trembling, deep peace, tears, or nothing at all. Don't seek a particular kind of experience. Just turn to the Lord and receive a new life in the Holy Spirit from him.

Pray to receive the gift of tongues

When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:7)

- Everyone should want the gift of tongues, it is a gift of God. We would never say to the Lord, "I want what you have for me, except for this." Relax. The more relaxed we are, the easier it is to receive the Lord's gifts.
- The Lord loves you and wants you to experience his love in a new way.
- Do not expect the Holy Spirit to force you to speak in tongues, you have to yield to it. The Holy Spirit does not "take us over." He leaves us our freedom.
- We speak, the Spirit forms the speech. Ask for the gift of tongues, then yield to it. Begin by speaking out, if necessary, beginning by just making meaningless sounds. The Holy Spirit will form them. Don't pray in English or in any language you know.
- Don't be afraid that it is just you, and not the Spirit. Don't analyze the sounds. Don't worry if it seems like babble or baby talk. Don't worry about sounding foolish. Make the sounds an act of worship to God. Focus on him, not on the sounds.
- Some may also be given words of prophecy in English, a message or an inspired prayer. Yield to it and speak out.

Finally: Different people have different experiences. Feeling is not the important thing. Look for the new ways God is at work in you and respond to it: a new desire for prayer, for scripture, etc. If you did not speak in tongues today, don't worry about it! Expect it to come soon.

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Session 6: GROWTH Watch video of talk online: <https://youtu.be/s7bYvRnodOs>

Grow your life in the Spirit through prayer, study, service, and community.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

In order to grow in the life of the Spirit, we have to make use of the basic means of growth

- Being baptized in the Spirit is only a beginning; the power that comes from the Holy Spirit makes us grow, but we need to keep in contact with Christ in order for the Holy Spirit to keep strengthening us. Prayer, study, service and community are means to growth, ways of staying in contact with Christ.
- The Christian life is not something we live on our own, but with the rest of the Christian people. Among other things, this especially means regular participation in the liturgy of the church.



The Christian life can be pictured as a wheel. The rim of the wheel represents the Christian's daily life. The hub of a wheel is the source of power and direction for the whole wheel. It holds the wheel together. The hub of the Christian life is Christ himself (on the throne, the center). In order to transmit the power and direction from the hub to the rim, spokes are needed. Some spokes in the Christian life are prayer, study, service and community. These are means to put our whole life in contact with Christ, so that he can transform it with his power and directions.

We should spend time in prayer every day

- Personal relationships (friendships) don't grow without two people spending time together, so we have to spend time with the Lord to grow in our relationship with him. We can expect the Lord to speak to us and reveal himself to us if we give him a chance.
- Set aside time every day for prayer and scripture reading: decide on a particular time and place. The Church's Daily Office of prayer can be helpful

We should be part of a Christian community/prayer group

- We have to get together regularly with a group of Christians with whom we can grow in what we've found. Community is not an optional extra, it is essential to the life of the Spirit.
- God's plan is for us to come to him with others, in a body. The Holy Spirit works through others to build us up—this is what spiritual gifts are. The result of Pentecost was to create a community of Christians (Acts 2:41-47).
- Church life as it exists in most parishes is not enough. To grow in the life of the Spirit we need to get together with Christians who have experienced the same thing we have. The Lord does not want us to leave the Church, but to become more active, better members.
- Although Parish liturgies may leave much to be desired, we can have confidence that, as the church is renewed, the parish and the liturgy can become all that they are meant to be. We are not to become critical, but we should participate as servants, looking for the ways that the new life in us can be shared with others.

We should share with others what we have found

- One main form of service is to share with others what we have found ourselves.
- With our friends and family we should begin by showing them the kind of love that they can experience, by showing them the fruit of our changed lives.
- We should then share with them about the Lord as they seem open, not being too pushy or frightening them unnecessarily but not being unwilling to talk with them about the Lord.

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Session 7: TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST Watch video of talk online: <https://youtu.be/ouWvJXCr9nQ>

Not that I am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. (Philippians 3:12)

The Holy Spirit is at work in us to change us and make us holier.

- Jesus wants us to enter into a deeper relationship with him every day. He wants us to become more and more as he is—holy and perfect. But we can't make ourselves holy and perfect as God is holy and perfect: God himself must bring about our holiness and perfection, and he will if we let him. *"God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."* (Philippians 2:13)
- The Holy Spirit is working to draw us into a deeper union with God and one another, to give us a fuller experience of the new life.
- He is working to make us realize the need for us to turn away from wrongdoing, to reorder our priorities, to take away all those things that make us less loving.

We can expect to experience trials and difficulties as we grow: they can be a means of growth.

- Problems like doubts, fears, lack of trust, self-pity, temptation; difficulties like distractions and dryness in prayer, mistakes in following the leadings of the Spirit, and trials like persecution or misunderstandings are commonly experienced in these weeks.
- These problems, difficulties and trials are normal and to be expected. The Lord uses them for our growth. *"God works for the good in everything with those who love him."* (Romans 8:28)
- We now have a new power to deal with difficulties. The Lord will teach us things through overcoming difficulties. *"Rejoice always, pray continually"* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)
- Help is available from members of the community, especially those more mature in the life of the Spirit.

In order to grow, we need much more - the Life in the Spirit Seminar is only a beginning

- We need to learn a great deal more about the Christian life. It is important to take advantage of the teaching which is available in your Parish, Deanery, Pastoral area or Diocese.
- We need the strength and support of others, the sharing of experience, advice. A good way to put out a fire is to pull the logs apart; a good basis for starting a fire is to put them together in the right way.
- We need a situation in which we can learn how to serve the Lord. Appreciate the value of your church community and its importance for growth in the life of the Spirit.
- Find out about prayer groups, communities, conferences, training programmes

For more information about living in the power of the Holy Spirit, gifts of the Spirit etc. browse through the ADoRE website: www.altonrenewal.com

There are also additional video talks on YouTube supplementing this seminar series:

"Gifts of the Holy Spirit" – focusing on the charisms of miracles and tongues.

"Gifts of Healings" – focusing on the charisms of healing and deliverance.

"Guidance of the Holy Spirit" – focusing on the charisms of wisdom, prophecy and discernment

"Fruit of the Holy Spirit" – the Holy Spirit grows you to look more like Jesus

See full playlist HERE: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLT5NouSRf5aVou6o4j4v8e790XmPBQw5K>