

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT SEMINARS - Introduction

"The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said." Jn 14: 26

"I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth" Jn 14: 16

Introduction

At Pentecost the disciples experienced the transforming strength of the Holy Spirit in them. They received the gifts enabling them to proclaim Jesus as Lord. The Church today needs to experience this power just as the first disciples did.

"I ask each and all of you that you organise seminars of Life in the Spirit in your parishes" - Pope Francis.

In response to Pope Francis' appeal, we are running an online Life in the Spirit Seminar course including scripture, reflection, teaching, testimony and prayers so that all who open their heart to the Lord will experience the activation of graces and gifts received at Baptism.

Background

The Life in the Spirit Seminars originated in the Catholic Church in the 1960s and by the end of the 20th century it was estimated that over 60 million Catholics throughout the world had participated in the seminars, or variations of them. Christians of many denominations have also benefited from the seminars; and the hugely popular Alpha Course, which echoes many elements of the Life in the Spirit Seminars, has reached over 27 million people in over 100 countries worldwide.

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 baptise them in the Holy Spirit. The Church today needs to experience this power just as the first disciples did.

The Seminars are designed to proclaim the basic message of Christianity so that those who hear it can make a renewed commitment to the Lord, allowing them to experience a fuller life in the Holy Spirit. The Seminars are one answer to a need for renewal and evangelization, as the Church dwindles in size and in the level of participation.

Seminar participants are invited to open their lives to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, and a growing dedication to our loving Father God.

What is Baptism in the Holy Spirit?

Just before his Ascension, Jesus said to the Disciples: *"For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."* At the heart of the Seminars is prayer for participants to be 'baptised' in the Holy Spirit. This is not a sacrament, but a prayer to re-ignite the graces already given through the Sacraments. It brings about a deeper conversion to Christ; a renewed appreciation of Faith, Mass, the Sacraments, the Bible; and gives the Holy Spirit permission to work in the individual's life in a more powerful way, including equipping and inspiring 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.

Catholics baptised in the Spirit usually testify to their faith coming alive; the Mass and Sacraments having a new meaning and power in their lives; and a desire to pray, read Scripture and share their faith with others.

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Programme Outline

Participants should commit to following the whole programme, participating in all online sessions and setting aside daily prayer time between sessions. If a session is missed due to unavoidable circumstances, the recorded talk can be watched online.

SESSION 1: God's Love. God loves you; He wants to be in a personal relationship with you and to give you a better life.

SESSION 2: Salvation. God sent his son Jesus to give you new life through his death and resurrection. Jesus is your Lord and Saviour.

SESSION 3: New Life. Jesus came so that you could be given the source of new life, the Holy Spirit.

SESSION 4: Receiving God's Gift. To receive new life you must turn away from those things which block our relationship with God and accept Jesus as your Lord.

SESSION 5: Praying for Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Surrender to the Lord and expect to receive the new life in the Holy Spirit.

SESSION 6: Growth. Grow your Christian life in the Spirit through prayer, study, service and community.

SESSION 7: Transformation in Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work in you to change you and make you holier.

Seminar Format

Each weekly session will follow the following overall format, though the time allocated to each section will vary in some weeks.

1. Welcome and introduction (5-10 mins)
2. Worship (10-15 mins)
3. Testimony (5 mins)
4. Talk (20-25 mins)
5. Discussion groups (30 mins)
6. Closing comments and prayer (5 mins)

Session Follow-up

After each session, participants will be sent a summary sheet as a reminder of the teaching, plus a sheet of daily Scriptures and Reflections to help pray into the theme of each week. We would like to suggest you find a quiet place where you can be undisturbed for 10 mins or so, maybe even light a candle to help prepare yourself to be still with the Lord. Pray:

“Lord Jesus by Your Spirit please help me to understand this week’s theme more deeply and show me things You want me to understand about it as I read Your Word, Amen.”

Then just slowly read through the scripture for that day and the reflection which follows it and sit quietly and think about it for a moment before reading it again perhaps. What might God be wanting to say to you through it?

Acknowledgements. *The weekly 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.*

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