

IS THE GIFT OF TONGUES NECESSARY?

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I have just finished Julia Duin's new book "*Days of Fire and Glory*" published by Crossland Press (ISBN 978-0-9790279-0.1) which tells the story of the charismatic movement and community formation at Redeemer Episcopal Church in Houston TX. Graham Pulkingham was the instrumental leader who revitalized that church and gave leadership to the charismatic movement and community formation in the mid-1960s and 1970s. Miss Duin does not hide anything. All the abuses, sexual sins, control, pride, as well as the positive are recorded. Her narrative is heart-breaking as you read about a church that was for a long time an example of renewal only to go through crisis after crises, ending with Father Pulkingham disgraced, deposed, and dying from a heart attack in a grocery store at a time when an armed man came in and shot some of the clerks.

Redeemer Houston contributed much to the charismatic movement through its music contribution, liturgical dance as well as community living. But like many in the charismatic movement back in the 1960s and 1970s SPIRITUAL PRIDE crept into the movement and today not much is preached about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit or teachings done regarding the place in ministry of the "gifts" or manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

We need (we must) to recover that zeal and enthusiasm brought on through the charismatic movement, but being very much aware of the pitfalls, allow the Spirit to bring forth an awakening in the church that glorifies and exalts Jesus Christ.

(I want to insert here that regardless of how you may interpret what is reported in Miss Duin's book, Redeemer was not entirely about Graham Pulkingham. It was about a community of people, functional and dysfunctional, whom God brought together in a sincere desire to witness to the transforming and healing love of Jesus, and the Power of the Holy Spirit. Once Fr. Pulkingham, his sister-in-law, Mimi Armstrong and Bill Farah led a weekend retreat I sponsored for the Diocese of West Virginia. It was powerful. It was there that the Holy Spirit gave Mimi the words and music for "Alleluia". Twice Graham shared with our people at Holy Comforter Episcopal Church in Miami. We must remember that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and those He uses most powerfully are more

subject to the attacks of the Devil than those who do nothing for the Kingdom. I know personally that regardless of what is reported of Father Pulkingham's downfall, he died in a "state of grace". I need say no more.)

The early years of Redeemer's history was marked with constant teaching on the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and praying for people to be so baptized.

Throngs of people flocked to Redeemer to experience the unique presence of God. I remember controversy over Dennis Bennett's insistence that one must "speak in tongues" and from Miss Duin's book it seemed to have been also the first expected manifestation in Houston. My personal testimony would begin on April 25, 1969 when I was up against a spiritual problem with a lady who had come to me for counseling. It was obvious that either she was possessed or she was being demonized by a demon and exorcism was the recommended remedy. I suppose I missed the day when demonology and exorcism were taught in seminary because I was helpless as to what I should do. The night before she was to come to the church for ministry I prayed for HELP. A former seminary classmate, Fr David Suellau, had coached me on what to do; he was charismatic and more experienced in these things than I, and had a few weeks prior completed a three-day healing mission in my church. On the morning of April 25, 1969 (Feast of St Mark) upon arrival at the church I went into the Sanctuary and reminded the Lord of my need. A man whom I did not know came to the church that morning to see me. He was an American Baptist minister and I really had no time for him because I was busy studying the notes I had taken when my classmate coached me over the phone on how to pray for this lady. To get rid of him I told him I had a troublesome appointment and asked him to pray for me.

We went into the church sanctuary where I had knelt at the altar rail the night before and he prayed for me. The prayer was nothing extraordinary; a simple telling God (in a loud voice, of course) that I had a need and asked for His help. The man's hand was hot as if on fire. I thought he was going to burn my scalp. I began to weep from deep down in my soul and body, and my teeth began to chatter. It was a cold day and the heat was on but still my teeth chattered. Perhaps if he had told me to make sounds along with the chattering teeth, I would have spoken audible syllables. I did not! When I got up I felt I had been plugged into a power source. It was an incredible feeling that in fourteen years of ministry I had never experienced. The lady came with her former husband. I prayed the way I was coached to do.

Apparently it worked. At the time she was one of the Cristy Minstrels

singers, left the group, became a recording artist in Christian music and married a Presbyterian minister.

That morning's prayer by the American Baptist minister had positive affects on me, and my ministry. We began to see miraculous healings. People in the Thursday morning Bible study and Eucharist began to change and the attendance grew. We began a Monday night group of eight or ten listening to tapes by Bob Mumford that eventually grew to several hundred each Monday night.

Major General John Bruce Medaris had been with my classmate when we had the healing mission and he was now retired from military and was going to be ordained to the priesthood. I was invited to the ordination and my senior warden provided the money for the flight from Charleston WV to Orlando FL. Some one gave me a copy of Don Basham's book (*Deliver Us From Evil*) and I devoured it before reaching Orlando. When Father David met me at the airport, I told him I thought I had come for more than just the ordination; I had come to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. He had been the one to witness to me about this earlier in the year when we were roommates at the College of Preachers in Washington DC. We went from the airport to a house prayer meeting already in progress, and from there to his home for the night. The next morning was the ordination followed by a luncheon. My friend, without my knowledge, had asked two other priests (Father Al Durrance and Father Jim Radebaugh) to remain and the four of us went into the chapel where they prayed for me to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Nothing happened! I felt nothing. I said nothing.

It was interesting because earlier in my church following one of those Monday night meetings I had prayed silently for the gifts of wisdom and knowledge but told the Lord I was not interested in tongues and interpretation. The next morning one of the men phoned and said he had a vision of three priests praying for me. Here on June 19, 1969 that vision became reality. After some time of praying one of the men asked me to tell them what had been happening. I told them about the April 25 experience to which he said "Philip, you have already received the baptism in the Holy Spirit; you need some manifestation." I said, "at this point I am ready for whatever the Lord wants to give me, including tongues and interpretation." They prayed again and it was as if I saw these foreign looking words in my mind and vocalized them; one after the other. I felt as if I had been picked up and held in the arms of God. The overwhelming feeling of love was

incredible. I don't know how long I prayed; when I stopped only my friend was with me; the other two priests had left. He said I had a big grin on my face. I later learned some called the Baptism the "order of the silly grin" reflecting one's encounter with the Holy Spirit. I returned to Charleston and when June met me at the airport she knew something was different. A few days later at our Thursday Eucharist she was in prayer proxy for a relative and had knelt at the altar rail with 18 other women for our prayer time. I prayed her request but could not remove my hands from her head. I knew what to do and say somehow. "Come on Holy Spirit" I said, and June burst into audible tongues to which later some one in the congregation said "the preacher's wife got religion."

David duPlessis, some time later upon visiting our church, assured me that on April 25 I received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit but it was not until I surrendered to the gift of praying in tongues on June 19 that I accepted the fact and began to minister in the Spirit. I will not say that praying or speaking in tongues is absolutely the sign of the Baptism; classical Pentecostals do say that, but for me it was necessary in order for me to accept and minister in the Power of the Holy Spirit. Praying in tongues (praying in the Spirit, as St Paul calls it) became and still is most helpful in ministry when I do not know how I ought to pray. The Holy Spirit gives me the words that reaches the mind of God. (Romans 8:26) "Tongues" is only one of the manifestations (1 Cor 12: 8-11). One of my parishioners came to the altar to pray for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. He did not speak in tongues but left his crutch at the altar because his crippled leg was instantly healed; yet he never accepted the fact that Jesus baptized him because he did not speak in tongues. Some call it the least of the gifts. If that be the case, then take the least and the Lord will increase the greater!

Perhaps the question I should be asking is "Is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit essential"? It is not necessary for salvation, but the early church considered it essential (Acts 8, 19) and early Methodists called it a "second blessing".

This encounter with the Holy Spirit has a definite affect on the believer's life and when a church moves in the Power of the Holy Spirit marvelous things happen. This was so evident in Julia's book. The Most Reverend Craig Bates, Patriarch of the Charismatic Episcopal Church, said "we run an Alpha Course as our new members class and every new member is baptized with the Holy Spirit. We have a once a month old fashioned prayer and praise service in which we experience the manifestations of the Spirit. We have prophetic words on Sunday morning and offer anointing and prayer for

healing." The Charismatic Episcopal Church recognizes the power of the Holy Spirit when the priest prays over the bread and wine and asks Him to make it be the Body and Blood (*epiclesis*) of Jesus. Nothing can be more "charismatic". As a Three Stream communion (evangelical, charismatic, catholic: liturgical/sacramental) we must never forget that the Holy Spirit is part of each stream.

We are in a time of spiritual decline with churches approving same sex unions, homosexual ordinations, and succumbing to the dictates of society rather than changing society to reflect the Kingdom of God. "Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven" is no longer the prayer of many mainline denominations. There is the form without the power. I am praying that 2010 will be the year of revival and renewal, and a new Pentecost marked by people coming into a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised Him (Acts 1: 5, 8) and without Him the church is powerless and we are helpless. Please join with me praying for restoration of likeness to the church in the Acts of the Apostles.

Thank you for taking time to read this long "epistle". I share the burden of my heart with you on this day of Epiphany, the 44th anniversary of my ordination to the Priesthood. May Jesus be revealed to us as He was to the Magi.