

Our charismatic life at Christ the King

#1: Introduction from the Pope: the co-essential nature.

As we begin to explore the charismatic life that is a constitutive element of our special call as a charismatic personal parish, let's begin by examining some of what John Paul II has shared about charismatic life within the Church herself. The Holy Father tends to relate his reflections to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. His approach to the charismatic renewal is no exception to this. In his address to the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, he states:

Whenever the Spirit intervenes, He leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; He radically changes persons and history. This was the unforgettable experience of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council during which, under the guidance of the same Spirit, the Church rediscovered the charismatic dimension as one of her constitutive elements: “It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the people, leads them and enriches them with His virtues. Allotting His gifts according as He wills (cf. 1 Cor 12:11), He also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank....” (*Lumen Gentium*, # 12) The institutional and charismatic aspects are co-essential, as it were, to the Church’s constitution.

What conclusions can we draw from his statements here? There are several items to note:

1. It was at the Council that the Church “rediscovered” the charismatic dimension. This is a clear admission that it had, in a sense, been missing.
2. This discovery is directly attributed by Pope John Paul to the specific intervention of God the Holy Spirit.
3. To call the charismatic dimension a “constitutive element” means that it is an absolutely essential element; it is an element in whose absence the Church must be less than what the Lord Jesus intended her to be.
4. Catholics tend to identify their spirituality exclusively with the sacramental life. The Holy Father addresses the inadequacy of that position by noting that the Spirit moves “not only” through that crucial aspect of the Church’s life, but also specifically by “allotting His gifts according as He wills” as He distributes “special graces.”
5. He uses the very significant term “co-essential” to describe the importance of the charismatic dimension of the Church. This also describes the nature of the relation between the charismatic and the institutional. To say that it is “co-essential” is a stronger statement than to simply have said, for example, that they are both essential. “Co-essential” has the additional connotation that they are intrinsically related to each other; they are mutually incomplete without each other.

Thoughts to ponder: 1. How essential is the charismatic life in my own life?
2. According to the Holy Father, how essential should it be?