

HEALING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Spirit plays a big role throughout the Bible, in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. An attentive reading of these materials shows his role prominent in the narrative of creation (Gen 1, 2), the re-creation of the universe after the flood (Gen 8, 1), the mission of the prophets toward Israel, etc. The action of the Holy Spirit is also manifest throughout the life of Jesus like in his incarnation (Mt 1, 18), his baptism (Mt 3, 16), his retreat in the desert (Mt 4, 1), in his passion, death and resurrection, etc.

As Jesus returned to the Father after his resurrection, the Holy Spirit continued to animate and strengthen the community of the disciples and the early Church as we can see in the Acts of Apostles. There is nothing that is done without the impulse of the Holy Spirit to the point that St Paul says in Romans 8, 9: “Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him”.

In this talk, I want to revisit with you this particular role of the Holy Spirit, especially with regard to the healing power of his action in the Church. My global aim is to provide you with some theological knowledge in the understanding of the healing power of the Holy Spirit. However, all that is partial and limited because the wind of the Spirit blows where it wills, and when it wills (John 3, 8); it cannot be constrained by a talk.

Here is the structure of what I have to say. First, I will present the biblical foundations of the healing in the Spirit. Second, I will show the healing in the Spirit as a result of the process of identification between Jesus and the disciple. Third, I will present the healing in the Spirit as a consequence of the eternal presence of Jesus in the Church. My last point is concrete and refers to some experience I have done in contact with a Charismatic priest, Fr Emilio Tardif.

1. The Biblical foundation of the healing in the Spirit

When the Gospel presents the mission-program of Jesus in St Luke 4, 18-19, it says this: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord”.

In this passage, Jesus is portrayed as a prophet whose ministry is compared to that of Elijah or another prophet. Any prophet, indeed, was anointed by God for a specific mission toward his people according to the circumstances of life and the problems the people of God were facing. The prophetic anointing was a mark of the presence of the Spirit of God on these people and legitimated their mission.

That is the reason why a prophet was considered in Israel as a man chosen and sent by God in order to be the mouth of God, his eyes and his ears in the midst of his people.

The divine call made him a special person who had to talk to the world with the words received from God, to feel for the world with the heart of God, and to act on it as God would do¹.

Luke 4, 18-19 which refers to the beginning of the mission of Jesus is a quotation from Isaiah 11, 1-9. If we understand this connection, it is clear that Jesus is not only the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, but at the same time everything of what he will do is what the people were expecting for so long, as had been announced by the prophets. Normally Isaiah's prophecy refers to the restoration of the Davidic dynasty that has to reign over Israel with a new order of things that will affect the people, the religion and the land. The activity of the divine Spirit will be full in the new king. The divine Spirit will operate in and through the king, not only to the exercise of wisdom and discernment, but also to maintain true religion.

By referring this vision to Jesus, it becomes absolutely clear that he is full of the Spirit of God. But he is full of the Spirit for what purpose? Of course, it is in order to do good and to heal human and spiritual sickness. This goal has been displayed throughout the mission of Jesus in Galilee and the surrounding villages as he went out curing the sick, casting out demons and announcing the good news of God's kingdom.

Presenting the beginning of the ministry of Jesus in his prologue, John says, "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1, 16). This is exactly what St Paul states in Colossians 2, 9 when he affirms of Christ that in him "dwells the whole fullness of deity" and that we share in his fullness.

The Greek word we translate into fullness is *pleroma*. **Pleroma** means totality and entirety. What St Paul would like to say here is that in Jesus there dwelt the totality of the wisdom, the power and the love of God. Fr Cantalamessa, who is the preacher to the papal house in the Vatican and one of the leading charismatics in the Church today, says that "The fathers of the Church understood these expressions in a very precise way: from *the fullness of Holy Spirit* of Jesus, we have received and receive grace upon grace! In him bodily, dwells all the fullness of the Holy Spirit and in him we share in this fullness"².

For instance St Irenaeus writes, "The Spirit of God descended on Jesus and anointed him, as he has promised in the prophets, so that we might draw on the fullness of his anointing and so be saved"³. In the same way another writer says exactly the same thing, although differently: "The Holy Spirit is he who came upon the Lord as a dove after He had been baptized and abode in Him. In Christ alone he dwells fully and

¹ *Prophet*, in Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, New York, The Seabury Press, 1973, p. 469.

² Raniero Cantalamessa, *The Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1994, p. 1.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 1

entirely, not wanting in any measure or part; but in all his overflowing abundance dispensed and sent forth, so that other people might receive from Christ a first outpouring, as it were, of his graces”⁴.

Once all this is clear, it becomes understandable, as the Acts of the Apostles put it, that the disciples will share abundantly in the Spirit of Jesus by continuing his mission as he himself did. So, what we call the healing in the Holy Spirit is a sharing and a continuation of the mission of Jesus. Mark 16, 14-18 shows that the work of the healing is already present in the commissioning of the apostles: “These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents [with their hands], and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover”.

That will become evident at Pentecost and throughout the whole of the Acts of the Apostles. There is change in the disciples and the apostles. They are no more afraid of bearing witness in the name of Jesus. They will accept persecution and rejection from families and the leading members of the Jewish society. Some of them will die like Stephen (Acts 7,) instead of renouncing to talk about Jesus or to heal people in his name. The beautiful case I can invoke in closing this section is about the healing through the hands of Peter:

“Now Peter and John were going in the temple area for the three o’clock hour of prayer. And a man crippled from birth was carried and placed at the gate of the temple called “the Beautiful Gate” every day to beg for alms from the people who entered the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. But Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us”. He paid attention to them, expecting to receive something from them. Peter said, “I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk”. Then, Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles grew strong. He leaped up, stood, and walked around, and went into the temple with them, walking and jumping and praising God” (Acts 3, 1-10).

2. The healing in the Spirit as a consequence of the identification between Jesus and the disciple

Before I enter into details of the biblical foundations of the healing in the Spirit, I need to make two important statements which can help grasp what we are talking about and how the Holy Spirit operates in the disciples. What I am saying is based on human reasoning and the way the Spirit helps me to understand the Scriptures. Of course, I cannot confine the Spirit to my vision of things, because the wind of the Spirit can blow

⁴ Ibidem, p. 1.

where it wills and when it wills (John 3, 8). However, I feel that this could be one of the ways of approaching the irresistible power of his strength that is manifest in the healing process.

As a matter of fact, I am convinced that, in order to understand the healing power of the Holy Spirit operating in the disciple, we need to be aware of the process of identification that Jesus wants to be established between him and the disciple. What do I mean by this?

Let me state that process of identification this way. We find in the Gospel, most of the time, that there is an intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father. He lives in union of heart and mind with the Father so that he is in the Father and the Father is in him. By using a Trinitarian language, we can say that he is equal to the Father without being dissolved in him. He lives in interdependence and reciprocity with him.

The traditional way of grasping this type of relationship as it is expressed in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity highlights the unity between the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. They are one God in three persons. The relationship of equality and reciprocity that ties the Father to the Son and the Holy Spirit, and vice versa, makes what Jesus says, thinks and does through the power of the Holy Spirit to be exactly what the Father says, thinks and does.

The Gospel of St John is full of episodes that show how the Trinitarian persons interact constantly. At this point, I want to stress most importantly the interaction between the Father and the Son and their impact on the life of the Church and the disciples. For instance in John 5, 19, in order to justify the unity of action between him and the Father, Jesus states, ***“Amen, Amen I say to you, a son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his Father doing; for what he does, his son will do also”***. Before the Jews, who were amazed about his knowledge of scriptures without having studied, in John 5, 24, *Jesus could just say, “My teaching is not my own but is from the one who sent me”. Whoever chooses to do his will shall know whether my teaching is from God or whether I speak on my own”* (John 7, 15-17).

At times, Jesus speaks about the unity between him and the Father that there is no ambiguity to understand that they are one. This is the case in John 8, 29, when he says, “The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him”. The same reasoning is found in John 10, 38: ***“The Father is in me and I am in the Father”***. The union between them goes sometimes to the assurance of seeing one in the other and vice versa: *“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father?” Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves”* (John 14, 9-11).

According to this vision, there is a unity of actions and words between Jesus and the Father. That unity is the basis of the process of identification I am talking about. What I mean with all this is that the kind of relationship that unites Jesus and the Father is what Jesus wants to be implemented between him and his disciples. In that sense, the unity of action and words goes from the Father to the Son, and from the Son to the disciples, so that the disciples are made capable of reproducing and continuing the gestures of Jesus in their own lives.

For instance, before the last supper when Jesus gives to the disciples the commandment of love, he highlights the union that has to exist between him and the disciple in this way: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (John 13, 34).

Another example is found in the periscope of the vine and the branches in John 15, 1-17. In this text, Jesus says to his disciples, "Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (verses 4-5).

According to these words, there is a strong relationship between Jesus and the disciple, to such an extent that without being connected to Jesus, the disciple has no life at all in him. The relationship of '*remaining in Jesus*' becomes the basis of the life of the disciple to the point that without it, the disciple is lost. In that sense, it is in the interest of the disciple to be connected to Jesus like a branch to the tree in order to live and to produce fruit. If the disciple remains in this intimate relationship, Jesus is in him and he is in Jesus.

That indwelling between Jesus and the disciple is the source of the strength of the disciple and the beginning of his identification with the Lord. Those who look at the disciple from the outside see just a simple and an ordinary man or woman they probably know very well, but internally, this is a transformed person because of the presence of Jesus who is in him/her. Because the individual is indwelled or inhabited by Jesus, the merits of Christ become his/her merits and Christ's blessings from the Father become his/her blessings. When this process of identification happens in an individual it is not the individual who lives, but Christ who lives in him. That is what makes St Paul say, "**I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; in so far as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me**" (Galatians 2, 20-21).

This is a brilliant insight that shows that the power of God that was operating in Jesus can be transferred, to some extent, in those who love him and who identify themselves with him. That has been true in the lives of many saints throughout the history of the Church. But that can be true again today when people live in faithfulness and total surrendering to Jesus and his Father. The power of the same Spirit who was operating

in Jesus and led him to perform signs, healings and miracles can do the same thing in the disciple.

3. The healing in the Spirit as a consequence of the ever Presence of Jesus

I want now to talk about the second statement relative to the presence of Jesus. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews in 13, 8 has an insight that shows the permanence of Jesus with regard to the changing face of human history and that of the world: “**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever**”.

As a matter of fact, the movement of human history encompasses the present, the past and the future. The existence of the line of time as it relates to the past, the present and the future determines the way we position ourselves in history as mortal human beings. We all have a past, a present and future. The past has to do with things that are already behind us and we cannot control anymore, even if for some their past can catch up with them. The present has to do with things that are happening now in our lives and we can control for the most of case, even if it is true that we cannot control all the circumstances of our life. With regard to the future, it is mostly unknown to us, even if it is also true that it depends on what we do today.

The invocation of the line of time, as it refers to the past, the present and the future, and as it summarizes the span of human history, shows that we are not eternal. We are situated in time and subjected to the vicissitudes of time with its precariousness and mortality. That is why the history of the world has memories, monuments and graves.

Only one person in human history is eternal, because his past is similar to his present and his future as well. That unique person in the history of whole humanity is Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus is the same today as he was yesterday and will be tomorrow, it means that there is no change in him neither in terms of his being or his action. He is perpetual and continually the same over the centuries of human history and the same Christ as the apostles knew him 2000 years ago.

The consequence that comes out of such a perception is that the same Christ that the early Church encountered many centuries ago and who was operating signs and miracles in their midst through the power of the Holy Spirit of God is eternally present today as he was in the past. The same things he has done in the past, he can do again today. If that is the case, then it makes sense that in the name of Jesus people can be healed through the power of the Holy Spirit. From Jesus side nothing has changed. The change is only from our side as human beings who are limited by the vicissitudes of time. The interesting question would be why is not that power now revealed in the disciples of Jesus in the same way it was at the time of the apostles. That is a mystery I

cannot resolve. What I know for sure, however, is that God has gifted some people in a very particular way with charisms like those St Paul is talking in 1 Corinthians 12, 1-11.

Even if we cannot take everything literally, at least there is a deep conviction that those who believe are filled with a power to cope with life that others do not possess. Moreover, there is an assurance that Jesus is with us through the power of his Holy Spirit.

4. Experience of healing in the Spirit in contact with Fr Emilien Tardif (June 6, 1928 – June 8, 1999)

I want now to finish by applying everything I said here to someone I encountered a couple of years ago in order to show how Jesus Christ is alive and heals through the power of his Holy Spirit. In fact, I would like to talk about Fr Emilio Tardif. Fr Emilien Tardif, known in Dominican Republic where he was missionary as Emilio Tardif, was born in Quebec, Canada, in 1928. He was a priest member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Order he entered in 1949.

In June 24, 1955, he was ordained priest and the following year, he went to Dominican Republic as missionary until the end of his life in 1999. From 1966 to 1973, he was elected provincial of his congregation and he distinguished himself through many projects involving building churches, seminaries and center for human promotion.

In 1973, he contracted a grave form of tuberculosis that led him back to Canada for a medical treatment. As he says himself, the disease was very acute and the treatment proposed very long. One day, he received in the hospital a visit of the members of a charismatic group to the number of which was his sister. They asked him if he believed that Jesus could heal today as he did in the past through the power of the Holy Spirit. Although he believed, he did not want more than that. When those members proposed to pray for him and to impose their hands on him, he was just embarrassed, but he allowed them to do it.

After three days following the praying, he was completely healed from tuberculosis in a miraculous way at the astonishment of the physicians who were in charge of him. From that time on, Fr Emilien undertook a serious study of the charismatic movement in order to deepen his understanding of its functioning and the operation of the power of the Holy Spirit.

God gifted him through that process with many gifts including the charisms of healing and the word of science so that Jesus could heal people through him and reveal through him the healings that were taking place in the assembly. It is in that context that Fr Emilio undertook many travels throughout the world, preaching the good news of the living Jesus and performing miracles in the name of Jesus.

When in 1985, Fr Tardif came to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my country, I had the privilege to be at the charismatic Mass he celebrated in Kinshasa and to be a witness of the many graces the Lord Jesus bestowed on the assembly that evening by healing the diseases of the people through the power of the Holy Spirit..

What I saw that evening convinced, and still convinces me, that Jesus Christ is alive and still the same today as he was yesterday. Even if we do not know why some people are miraculously healed and others are not, we have, however, to trust Jesus and to give him our confidence. One thing I learned that day was that even if Jesus does not heal us right now, he has a beautiful plan for us. We should never be discouraged to trust him and, most importantly, he wants us to unite our suffering to his suffering for the salvation of the world. That is the mystery of his love.

Fr Emilio died of heart complication in San Antonio de Arredondo, in the province of Cordoba, in Argentine, in June 8, 1999, where he was preaching a retreat. His body was transferred in Dominican Republic where he is buried in the crypt of the church of the School of Evangelization, John Paul II, in Santo Domingo. Cardinal Nicolas de Jesus Lopez Rodriguez announced June 11, 2007 that the Church has initiated the beatification process in order to place Fr Tardif in the way of sanctification.

Felicien I Mbala, PhD, STD

Foxfield, November 21, 2010.



©2010 Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD

All rights reserved.

Private use is granted; no other use, editing, etc. are granted

All other use, public, printed, electronic, etc., please contact Father Mbala. www.mbala.org for authorization.