

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RENEWAL

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I cherish this moment to share with you some of my reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in renewal. A renewal of theological studies must help us find the way to effectively follow and serve the Lord. The Holy Spirit must be our source of light, for direction in this renewal.

I will present my paper in five areas. Firstly, I will clarify the meaning of the word “renewal”, as a process of change and growth. Secondly, I will speak of “the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing, and sustaining, renewal and growth”. Thirdly, I will try to answer the question, “Is renewal possible on a theological training campus? Fourthly, I will discuss some suggestions on ways to prepare for renewal, and, finally, I will end my paper with some concluding remarks.

It is important to know who the Holy Spirit really is, in order to understand His role in renewal. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the most-holy Trinity. He is the Spirit of God the Father, and of Jesus, the Son. He is the Spirit of Truth, and another advocate. Jesus calls Him the Counsellor, the Intercessor, or Advocate (John 14:16; 16:5-15).

What Do We Mean By Renewal?

Renewal is a process of bringing up to date, or revitalising spiritual life, according to the needs of the modern times. This same idea of renewal can be attributed to the renewal that must take place in our theological schools, according to the modern changes that are taking place in our local communities, and in the world at large.

Renewal also means an earnest desire “to make new again” one’s commitment in faith. This means there is a legitimate change of attitude in the life of a person towards new life, and growth in faith.

Renewal does not mean, primarily, a turning away from something, but a turning towards something. Jesus asks us to be turned around, to let the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit into our lives, to open ourselves to His

influence. We must let the Spirit well up from within us. This is an image used by St John. We are asked to let the life-giving waters in us rise, and bring us to life (John 4:14).

Renewal is a transformation of our spirituality. This means renewing our life, in conforming it, more and more, to the image of Christ. Then we will realise, gradually, the transformation of our society, by giving birth to the new humanity in Christ.

In this process of renewal, we work together in faith, and seek to discern the movements of the Spirit, fathoming the depth of love, and the demands of life, in the situation of pluralism.

In this renewal, we must share, and contribute, as a means of fellowship and solidarity. The special presence of Christ, in gathering us together, here gives us more strength. We must be determined that the Holy Spirit is illuminating, and guiding, us for a better change in our theological schools.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Bringing and Sustaining Renewal and Growth

Christ Himself has mentioned the role of the Holy Spirit, in bringing, and sustaining, renewal and growth. He presents the Holy Spirit as the Counsellor, who will teach, and bring to perfection, our life in the world. He said, "He will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13).

How does the Holy Spirit carry out this role? Through His action in our world, He sanctifies, and accomplishes, a process of true growth in humanity, both in individual and community life. He animates, purifies, and strengthens those noble longings, by which we strive to make life more human, through the modern progress of civilisation, culture, science, technology, and other areas of growth.

One of the hidden roles of the Holy Spirit, in bringing, and sustaining, renewal and growth, is that he constantly succeeds in penetrating into our innermost being: into that sanctuary of our conscience, where he continuously radiates the light and strength of new life, to be achieved in total freedom.

The role of the Holy Spirit, in bringing, and sustaining, renewal and growth, stems from the fruit He produces. The clearest description of the work of the Holy Spirit has been given by St Paul, who said that the Spirit produces

“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22). Qualities, such as these, are ideal in every walk of life, and in all circumstances; specifically at home (with parents, brothers, and sisters) and at school (with teachers and friends).

The prophet Isaiah has also attributed some special *gifts* to the Holy Spirit: “a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and fortitude, a Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord” (Is 11:2).

St Paul is right in saying: “Since the Spirit is in our life, let us be directed by the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). So, the role of the Holy Spirit, in bringing, and sustaining, renewal and growth, is ultimately associated with our lives. Part of this role is to ensure that we effectively preach the transmission and spreading of the good news of Christ. In one way or another, He will convince the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7).

Is Renewal Possible on a Theological Training Campus?

Renewal is possible on a theological training campus in three ways.

1. A theological training campus is to be an instrument of spiritual renewal, since it is the centre for the interpretation of the word of God.
2. Theological studies must reform the external life of the particular church, since the church is primarily made up of persons, who become, in time and space, what God intends them to become. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the church takes shape.
3. Theological decisions and methods, their renewal and reform, must correspond to the needs of the time. It should reflect the way its members live the gospel, in response to the signs and needs of the time.

Preparation for Renewal

We must have a vision for renewal in our theological schools. Unquestionably, the process of preparing for renewal is more important than the activities that follow it. The most effective preparatory stages for renewal must come from these areas: preparation through education; preparation through practical training; preparation through formation; preparation through

Bible schools; preparation through catechists; preparation through associations; and preparation in anticipation of the year 2000. It is then the wide and active participation, on the part of theological students, that renewal will occur.

This preparatory phase may extend over two or three years. It may open with sessions for listening and gathering ideas. For instance, renewal should be directed towards relationships, in our personal devotional life, and the college community. When this is done, it may extend to renewal in classrooms.

Conclusion

Finally, we must, once again, be assured that the Holy Spirit is enlightening us, along this process of renewal and growth. We must also be generously attentive to His call for change. Through this renewal, we must be assured that the Holy Spirit is encouraging us to reflect on the meaning of our faith, in the context of the whole fabric of our society, in which our churches, and we, exist. This renewal in our theological schools calls for an up-to-date change of heart in the interpretation of our faith, in relation to changes of human values that are taking place in our society.