

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**After Baptism in the Spirit Growth and Transformation in Christ Life in the Spirit Seminar Concluding Session** Message from Father Paul during his convalescence with a broken leg Monday, June 6, 2011 7:00 PM (God answers prayers)

Good evening. It was not my plan originally to talk to you in this way, but circumstances beyond my control have made it impossible to be with you physically this evening, but I want to be with you in prayer and in spirit.

Sometimes after Baptism in the Holy Spirit people ask the question, “**Where do we go from here?**” Well, that question really should be asked the Spirit. The Spirit is our teacher and our guide. It says in 1 John, “You have one teacher; it is the Spirit.” So we need to let the Spirit actually guide us. Now we have very similar experiences perhaps, but each of us is unique and we have to let the Spirit guide us and be our spiritual director in our unique journey, even though it may be very similar to someone else, but we may need certain things somebody else doesn’t need or they may need something we don’t need. So we don’t turn to others for our knowledge and guidance. We may let them help us, but we turn to the Spirit. “The Spirit,” St. Paul says, “knows what we need before we ask.” **So we need the Spirit to lead our prayer every day, each day. I cannot overestimate the importance of faithfulness to prayer. It is an absolutely essential component to life in the Spirit.**

Now in my own personal life, **Baptism in the Holy Spirit gave me a new and personal appreciation of traditional teachings.** Fortunately I had a very good education in Catholic theology, and I was very well aware of all kinds of doctrines and teachings, such as, the Trinity or the Incarnation. I knew what the Church taught and I had a very abstract idea what it meant. But through Baptism in the Holy Spirit, I started understanding those teachings, such as, the Holy Trinity or the Incarnation as God wanting to be part of our lives—Incarnation—and Trinity—bringing us into God’s life. And in the Trinity **we start to know the Father, the *Abba*, the way Jesus knew the *Abba*.** And we are actually **empowered to love with God’s own power to love**, that is, the Holy Spirit, and so it is a wonderful experience, and **we are loved as God is loved by himself. That’s actually what the Holy Spirit is too.**

So we have these wonderful experiences, and it’s important that not only we enjoy them and appreciate them, but that **we share** them with other people, not in the sense of telling them word for word everything that happens, but **encouraging them to open their hearts to God and to recognize how real God really is** and to realize that we really can have more than faith or belief in God. **Through the Spirit we actually come in a certain simple way to know God.** And I can say that I know God. I can’t tell you a lot about God, but then I know a lot of you, but I can’t tell you much about yourself either, but I know you; I’m familiar with you; I know who you are; I have a sense of what you are like—and I know God in that way and I know what God is like, and I can sense that God really is care and concern and love for everyone, for all of us, and that God has actually true anxiety for us, that **God really wants us to respond to all the**

**opportunities that he gives us, and we certainly can—we surely can. Nothing will stop us except our own indifference or unwillingness.**

I also know that God answers prayers. **Now I used to believe that God answered prayers; now I know God answers prayers.** Now sometimes these answers are astonishing and we rightly call them miracles. Other times they are not so astonishing; we don't call them miracles, but they are very subtle, perhaps hidden, but they are real answers to prayers. Now people sometimes think, Does God answer all prayers? I don't know—I don't know that. **I believe that God wants to answer all prayers in some way or another, but I don't know.** God has not told me that. But I do know he does answer many prayers, my prayers and the prayers of others. So I am led to believe that we need to encourage one another to pray and **to pray always and to ask for the things that God wants to give us.** Now why is this? I mentioned before, this is a great mystery to me why it is God wants us to pray for the things, the blessings, he wants to bestow upon us. And of course, the greatest blessing is himself, a relationship with himself. Why do we need to pray for this? Again, St. Augustine says to open our hearts. **We pray to open our hearts. And when we open our hearts, then God can fill them.**

**Now I would like to give you an example of how God has touched my life.** I don't know if I have told you this before, but when I was a young priest after I had Baptism in the Holy Spirit, in fact right at the very beginning I was diagnosed with gall bladder trouble. I went to Hinsdale Hospital to what they call the Family Practice. The gentlemen there—they were very nice doctors, and they examined me. They lined up all the symptoms that I was suffering from and they said, **“You really need to have your gall bladder taken out.** We want to make an appointment, set a time, for you to come in and we will perform this.” And I said, “Well, you know, **I just started going to this prayer group and I understand they pray for people who are sick, and I want to try that first.**” And the doctor, who was a very pleasant man, he smiled at me, and he said, “Well, you will be back, Father.” **Well, I never went back because the prayer group prayed for me and I was completely healed of gall bladder trouble, and I still have my gall bladder, and I have never had any more symptoms. So, praise the Lord!**

A few years later, I was diagnosed with esophagitis; it was inflammation of the esophagus. Now I had actually forgotten about this, but this happened, and again I went to the Family Practice at Hinsdale Hospital. I said, “Well, I have this burning pain in my chest here.” They studied it and they said, “Oh, **you have esophagitis.**” And I said okay, and I don't recall exactly what they recommended at the time, but I remember shortly after that I was in Steubenville, Ohio at a conference, at a charismatic priests' retreat, and **I met Father DiOrio.** In fact, Father DiOrio was the presider at the Eucharist one of the evenings. And I happened to be right in front of him, right before he went up the central aisle, if you want to call it that, in the tent. And I said, “Oh, Father, I was just diagnosed with esophagitis.” And so **he laid his hand on my chest for two seconds,** and then he proceeded up the aisle. **And I never had another symptom.**

So recently, for another reason, I had an endoscopy at Good Samaritan Hospital, and that's because I have a narrow esophagus. And in the process of widening the esophagus the doctor saw some questionable spots, or whatever you want to call them, and they sent

them to biopsy. They came back and he said, “You have esophagitis.” And I said, “I heard that name before, but I don’t remember what it was.” And then I said, “Well, I don’t have any symptoms.” And he said, “Are you sure you don’t have burning pain going up and down your esophagus?” I said, “No, I don’t have any burning pain.” And he said, “Well, you should.” And I said, “Well, I don’t.” And he said, “Well, you should have tests and we will find out what’s causing this; it’s a food allergy.” And I said, “Yeah, but I really don’t have any symptoms, so I really don’t want to go through all those tests.” And he said, “Oh, yeah, I guess you have a good point: if you don’t have any symptoms, I see why you don’t want all those tests.” Well, it was after I left his office that I remembered about Father DiOrio and the original diagnoses at the Hinsdale Family Practice. **And then I remember that, yes, indeed Father DiOrio prayed over me and I haven’t had any symptoms, but apparently still have the condition, but it doesn’t cause me any trouble.**

These are just two examples I want to share with you to know that **prayer is answered, not every time the way we might expect, but prayer is answered**, and I know that for sure. And I have other experiences, and I don’t know how long you want me to talk tonight, but I’ll give you **one more experience and that is about something totally secular and material in nature.** Years ago a dear friend of mine had given me a gold watch, and somehow I misplaced it. It really bothered me because it was actually very valuable, and I wondered what every happened to my gold watch. So after Communion one day I sat in the presiders’ chair and I asked the Lord. I said, “Well, Lord, please find that gold watch for me; I hate to lose something like that.” And this turquoise sweater flashed into my mind. Now I rarely have color in my imagination, but this was definitely a turquoise sweater, and I thought it was just some sort of silly distraction, so I ignored it and went on with the Mass, and finished Mass. Later on I was in my room and I prayed again. I said, “**Lord, please find that gold watch.**” **And the same picture of a turquoise sweater flashed into my mind.** And I thought, well, that’s twice now I prayed and that thing—that’s not a distraction—that’s a message. So I got up and I went into my bedroom and I opened the sweater drawer and **I pulled out the turquoise sweater and in the yoke was my gold watch.** Now how did it get there? Well, I had been traveling and both the gold watch and the sweater had been in the suitcase, so apparently it worked its way into the sweater in the suitcase, but I didn’t know that. So that’s a very simple answer to a prayer.

So I would say **we really need to pray and expect answers and realize that God really cares not only about important things like health, but even unimportant things like something that’s precious**, that means something to you, something very sentimental, that God really cares about that too **because God cares about us.** So I want to urge you to pray always and stay faithful to that, and God bless you.