

FULL GOSPEL BUSINESS MEN'S

# **VOICE**

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## **GENTLE REVOLUTION**

The Catholic Pentecostal Story  
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**The work of the  
Holy Spirit is in . . .**

# Power and Perfection

by **JAMES BYRNE**

Given at the South Bend, Indiana FGBMFI Chapter Rally, April 10, 1971.

**F**OUR YEARS AGO the Lord in His goodness and mercy reached out and touched me.

I was an undergraduate at Notre Dame, studying history and thinking I had pretty well figured out what to do with my life. If anyone had told me that four years from then I would be sharing with a group of full gospel business men, I would have told them flatly that they were crazy.

My background was nominally Catholic, but for myself personally God did not really make a difference. I knew about Christianity as a historical phenomenon and had studied my own church and other churches. You can't study history, especially medieval history, without studying about the church. But if anyone had said to me that God is real, it

wouldn't have made sense to me.

I *wanted* something that was real and true, but I thought maybe those things which were deepest within me—the hunger for truth, for peace, and for harmony among men—could come about through some kind of political or economic reform. I found myself trying to work for those things, yet it seemed that the effort always fell short. Gradually, I came to understand that all around me was the kind of increasing disorder that was in my own heart and my own life, and that there was apparently nothing anyone could do to change things in any basic way.

Finally I decided that I would be lucky if I somehow got through my life and died before something terrible happened. That sounds like a

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pretty bleak picture—and it really was. There were times of melancholia during which I couldn't live with myself nor with other people.

There was a group of students at Notre Dame who claimed to be Christians. I thought they were crazy. Some worked with me or lived just down the hall. They seemed to be fairly decent people when they weren't talking about God; the only trouble was that they were talking about Him most of the time and that simply infuriated me.

One day a student by the name of Bert Ghezzi, who had graduated from Duquesne and was now completing his doctoral studies in history, told me about some people who were speaking in tongues and experiencing prophecy, and that the Holy Spirit was moving in their midst. He related some incidents in his own life which were amazing, and which led me to believe that he had gotten hold of something real—yet I tried to explain it away by saying to myself, "This is what happens when you get too serious about God—you go off the deep end. Bert has flipped his lid."

However, there was no doubt that his story had touched a responsive chord within me, and I finally decided that if all this was true, I wanted to know about it. So Bert took me with another friend, Jim Cavnar, to the room of a Catholic priest whom I had never met—Ed-

ward D. O'Connor. They sat me down and said they were going to pray with me. I didn't altogether know what that meant, but there are times when suddenly you are brought to grips with a reality that seems bigger than life itself—your life—and that was one of those times.

My heart was trembling as Jim said, "We want you to surrender your life completely to Jesus Christ." I said, "Alright; I'll try to do that." They said, "We are going to pray along with you, and we may be praying in tongues."

Bert and Jim put their hands on me and began to pray, while Fr. O'Connor stood in the corner, praying. Soon my two friends were talking in languages I had never before heard. And although I was seriously trying to pray, I was also amused by the absurdity of the situation.

Nothing spectacular happened—that was outwardly noticeable, at least—but from that moment my life changed completely and totally. For as I sat there, I said with all the sincerity I could muster and with the grace of God touching my heart, "Jesus, something is happening to me that I don't understand, but if you really exist, and if it is you causing this to happen, then I want you to be the Lord of my life. I just give it to you. Take me and use me."

As I made that prayer, there descended on me a peace that was unlike any feeling I had ever experi-

enced. I know what psychological and emotional release is, but it wasn't like that. This peace surpassed anything I could ever imagine. A phrase came to my mind and into my heart: "This is the peace of God," and I knew immediately that it was a *gift* from Him, undeserved and unearned, because the only thing I had ever done to Jesus was to make fun and

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**"Much of the preaching and teaching in the Catholic Church today . . . changes no lives. It is only the . . . work of the Spirit that produces heart changes."**

Ralph Martin, in "Unless the Lord Build the House," Ave Maria Press.

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try to discourage anyone who took Him seriously. I decided then and there that I wanted to know Him more intimately—wanted to spend the rest of my life drawing closer to Him, to behold His face more and more clearly and to serve Him with every part of my being.

That was four years ago. A lot of things have happened to me since. We are now working on the campus of Notre Dame. The Lord has called me and others to a ministry there, especially among the undergraduate students, to attempt to share with them the same knowledge and experience of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His Spirit. Just in the last year I've seen the lives of at least twenty-five young people who were caught up in drugs, immorality and

drink, and in hopelessness, despair and emptiness, touched by the hand of Jesus Christ. He is remaking us in His own image—in His own likeness—by the power of His Spirit. The work He is doing is going deep down into our hearts and to the depths of our relationship with one another in the community.

The Holy Spirit is showing us that there are two kinds of work that He does. There is the work of power, a work of glory which is especially clear at first when He touches us and gets our attention. Then follows the work of sanctification, of making us into His own likeness. This is a work of holiness, a work of perfecting the believer.

What Jesus has put in our hearts is a deep longing to behold His face. If we have to be pure in heart to see Him, then we pray the Holy Spirit of God to come and purify our hearts—make us single-minded and single-hearted in seeking His will—and to teach us inner docility and inner obedience—the same kind of obedience that led Jesus to submit to the cross.

In our relationship to one another and to those around us, there is taking place a quiet, general work of grace that isn't concerned with results, but with the melting of our hearts into a common bond of fellowship and for a common purpose, and we praise and glorify God for the wonderful work He is doing among us. 