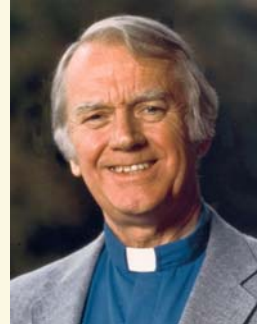


## The Rev. Dennis J. Bennett

10/28/17 - 11/1/91



Father Dennis Bennett was the Episcopal priest who verbally fired the shot that was heard around the world. On April 3, 1960, he spoke from his pulpit at the thriving St. Mark's Church, Van Nuys, California and shared with his congregation that he had received a personal Pentecost or Baptism with the Spirit. And as with the original Pentecost in Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years before, scripture says, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4 NKJV). Now Dennis shared that he, and then many of his congregation, had this empowering experience. This was his flock and he wanted them to know that God had more in store for them, so he told them, to his own disadvantage.

As the saying goes, "Sometimes the devil comes to Church on Sunday." Truly the warfare between good and evil began at those three Sunday morning services, escalating as the morning went on. Dennis was asked to resign by some of the vestry and not being used to such heavy spiritual battles at church, he decided that his experience was too valuable to fight over. As Rector and chief pastor he did not have to resign, but decided it was the best action to take.

After this explosion in his church the story was carried in the local newspapers, various wire services picked it up, and the news swept the country. Dennis was not a person who sought to be in the public eye and in fact did not enjoy it. But there was no way to escape it, especially when Time carried the story, and then Newsweek.

**Moving to the Northwest** - A short time later Dennis left Van Nuys to pastor a church in the Northwest, St. Luke's in Seattle. He, his wife and three children accepted the call and began a new life with a new loving congregation. A few years later, in 1963, his beloved wife, Elberta, died. He dedicated his book *Nine O'clock in the Morning* to her, calling her "One of God's great ones' and a true soldier of Christ."

After three years of being a widower, Dennis and Rita Reed were married. He was forty-eight and she was thirty-two. They traveled much of the world together in their ministry and wrote books and newsletters together. In 1973 the Encyclopedia Britannica said, "When, in 1960, Father Dennis Bennett announced to his congregation, St. Mark's Episcopal in Van Nuys, CA, that he had experienced a new outpouring of God's Spirit, the recent movement can be said to have begun."

Dennis's proposal to Rita had started with a biblical quote, "Two are better than one." Now she too is back to being "one." From her prayer ministry in Edmonds, she continues to honor Dennis for his faithful walk with God and to support his valuable contributions.

Being an early leader in what became known as the Charismatic Renewal was not an easy task and certainly not a contest one would enter if one wanted to be voted most politically correct. But Dennis set his heart on living for God and did that to the last day of his life, November 1, 1991.

**From Jerusalem to Africa** - At Dennis's funeral service, The Rev. Dick O'Driscoll, D.Min. reminisced about him in his sermon. "In 1978 I sat with my wife and six children in the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. An Ethiopian brother sat down next to me and we got to talking with him . . . and his eyes lit up like Christmas trees as he exclaimed, 'I received the baptism with the Holy Spirit when I read *Nine O'clock in the Morning*.'

"Later that summer we were hiking up the mountainside in Switzerland near Francis Schaeffer's center at L'Abri and a car pulled up with two missionaries who were on vacation. They asked, 'Where are you from?' and I said, 'Well, we're from St. Luke's in Seattle, Washington.' And then said, 'Oh, we've got to have lunch with you; we both received the baptism with the Holy Spirit through Dennis and Rita Bennett's writings.'

"This summer we were worshipping in Holy Trinity Parish in Eastbourne near the English Channel. Derek, one of the wardens befriended us and said 'I was in Africa on this immense lake . . . crossing the lake a man sat down beside me

wardens, beckoned us and said, 'I was in Africa on this immense lake . . . crossing the lake, a man sat down beside me and said, 'I've got to tell you about this wonderful book I've just read.'

And Derek said, 'What is it?' The man told him and Derek said, 'Well, I just read that book myself! Let's kneel and pray right here.' The next day, somewhere out in the middle of Africa, these two fellows received Jesus into their hearts and were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit."

And so inspiration from The Rev. Canon Bennett's life goes on. His inspiring influence continues through his books, through lives he touched, through his personal family, and through the organization of Christian Renewal Association, Inc.

Read Dennis' own account in this article entitled "God's Strength for This Generation"

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