

Publication of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

# PENTECOST *Today*

April/May/June 2008

*Our Lady  
of Lourdes  
150 years*



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ERA  
IMMACULADA CONCEPTION

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Photos: CNS

*Renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church.*





### Chairman's Corner

by Aggie Neck

## Hope fulfilled

“Rejoice, O highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women” (Luke 1:28). A footnote to this verse of scripture says: “Highly favored daughter—Mary is to be the recipient of the divine favor, i.e. of the sanctifying power of God in view of her office of mother of the Messiah, which the angel announces to her.”

Before the creation, before her birth, God knew the one he could choose, the one who would say “yes.” Mary becomes for all of us the God-Bearer. Mary has said yes. She who was highly favored and full of grace, said yes. She spoke for the whole human race not only a yes to God, but also a yes to redemption, to salvation. Mary’s yes comes because of her great and deep faith: Faith in the scriptures that spoke of God sending a Messiah, and faith that what the angel said was true even though she did not understand how this could or would happen.

“The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined Mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 488).

“The Annunciation to Mary inaugurates ‘the fullness of time,’ the time of fulfillment of God’s promises and preparations. Mary was invited to conceive him in whom ‘the fullness of deity’ would dwell ‘bodily’” (CCC Par. 484).

The first Ark of the Covenant was overshadowed by God’s glory and became a dwelling place for God. Mary was overshadowed by the power of the Most High by the Holy Spirit coming upon her. Everything in the Ark of the Covenant *pointed to Christ*. Mary as the second Ark of the Covenant *contained Christ*.

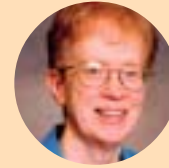
A footnote to Luke 1:35 compares these two events. The overshadowing of Mary recalls the cloud that covered with glory both the meeting tent (Ex. 40) and the temple of the Lord (1 Kings 8:10). The descent of the Holy Spirit upon her, the designation of her child as Son of God are further signs of God’s favor.

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Mother of the Redeemer* said, “Standing at the foot of the cross, Mary is the witness, humanly speaking, of the complete negation of the angels’ words. Yet, how completely she abandons herself to God without reserve.”

“While her mother’s heart was pierced with anguish at her son’s death, she never once cursed God or abandoned her calling. Even as she held her son’s dead body, Mary knew that it must be this way, and that his death brought about the greatest of all miracles: humanity’s reconciliation with God. Finally, the kingdom she longed for had come. She had only to wait for Easter Sunday to see all her hopes fulfilled and her sorrow reversed” (*The Word Among Us*, October 2006).

This and so much more is Mary: Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of the Church, our Mother. Thank God for our holy, spiritual Mother. ♦

*Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee.*



### Editor's Desk

by Sr. Martha Jean McGarry

*“The Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is his name” Luke 1:49.*

The Church and the world are celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the appearances of our Blessed Mother at Lourdes. **Pentecost Today** joins in honoring Mary with this issue. The variety of articles give witness to our love for her, Mary’s unique role in drawing us to Jesus, and our own belief that his mercy is indeed from age to age.

In our two lead articles **Fr. Bob Hogan** and **Fr. John Randall** describe for us the wholesome relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.

Would you like to grow in your relationship with Mary? **Barbara Ryan** shares some suggestions that she found meaningful on her spiritual journey.

Strengthening the mission of prayer groups through proclaiming the Holy Spirit through Love, Unity, and Evangelization are keys of wisdom shared by **Sister Nancy Kellar** in her article.

**Veronica Murphy** shares with us her call to service. If you want to know what is necessary to respond to Jesus’ call to serve you won’t want to miss this article on the *charism of service*.

The witnesses shared on page 3 and the messages of our columnists reiterate that we indeed have been blessed with the gift of an awesome MOTHER and a model of a Spirit-filled servant. Yes, we can join along with Mary in saying: *“The Mighty One has done great things for me.”* ♦

# Mother

by Mark Nehrbas

I came back to the Lord through the charismatic renewal 37 years ago, when I was 19. Shortly after my “reversion” experience, (I was brought up Catholic but left the Church in my early teen years), my friends in the renewal began discussing Mary and her role in our lives. Since I was surrounded by many cradle Catholics it was very natural for us to accept the teachings of the Church regarding her as the Mother of God, ever-virgin and a powerful intercessor.

I remember attending an early national conference at Notre Dame and someone sharing a prophetic sense from Mary. That caused an interesting discussion among a group of us as not everyone in the early days was immediately accepting of Mary and her role in our lives. Some feared it may harm the ecumenical work that the Spirit was doing.

It wasn't a struggle for me, though. I needed the presence of a mother in my life. And, God provided Mary for me. I can recall one evening shortly after I was baptized in the Spirit, when I was praying. I experienced an overwhelming love of Mary for me. I sensed that she wanted to provide a maternal love for me that had been missing in my life.

The reason that love was missing is because my parents separated when I was 13. It was the early 60s and my mother, due to her own difficult upbringing, didn't know quite how to respond. My three brothers and I went through our high school years without receiving much care and devotion from her. She wasn't around the home much. As a result, I needed significant inner healing. The Lord would provide that healing through a personal relationship with his own mother, Mary.

I am grateful to God for the gift of his mother who he gave us from the cross. She has walked with my family and me over the years revealing herself as a companion, guide, intercessor, healer and protector. I don't know where we would be today without her. Thank you, Jesus for the gift of Mary!

From the day I experienced Mary's personal love for me, I began to ask a lot of questions to priests that I met in the renewal. One of them, Fr. George Kosicki, taught me at length. He shared a prayer with me that I have prayed daily ever since. It is: “Mary, I consecrate my family to your Im-

maculate Heart for your intercession, that all our worldly needs would be provided for so that we would be free to advance the kingdom of your son.” I also pray a daily personal prayer of consecration to Mary. I found this prayer in our family bible. So, I have added it to our family rosary time: “Mary I give myself to you. In order to show my devotion to you, I consecrate to you my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart, and my entire self. Wherefore O loving Mother as I am your own keep me and protect me as your property and possession, Amen.”

by Jackie Morgan

When I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade I sung in the choir and loved it especially when I would get out of a class to sing for something in church. Many times it was a funeral. At nine and ten years old, I didn't realize what harm I was doing to myself, and how I would feel years later about death, especially a death in my own family. I still have some trouble over the death of my father 42 years ago. I came very close to committing suicide over the death of a fiancé in 1984. (That was before I joined the Charismatic Renewal).

About 1991 I was a member of a small church community that my parish was sponsoring and a couple, Bob and Mary, were also members of my group. They were very dedicated to Our Lady and prayed to her every night. One night they asked her who to pray for and my name kept coming up. They actually argued with her saying that I was fine and I didn't need any prayers as far as they knew. Our Lady told them again to pray for me. So they did, in a general way. Two days later at our small group meeting, Bob related this story to me and it made me very nervous. I didn't know what was going to happen but I knew something would—and soon.

Soon happened within a few weeks. Five people, very close to me, died—one right after another. I was upset, of course, but not devastated. Then I remembered Our Lady asking for intercession for me. She protected me and because of that she became very, very real to me. She did what she always does for her children. She showed me her love and then pointed me toward her Son. He became more real to me than ever. My faith increased by leaps and bounds because of that experience. Thank you Mom! ♦



## *Mary's Motherhood in the Spirit*

by Fr. Bob Hogan

**T**he Catholic Church is celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the apparitions of Mary, the mother of Jesus, at Lourdes, France. Lourdes is known as a place of many conversions and healings. Many people in Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) appreciate that Lourdes has helped to foster openness to healing prayer in the Church. Also, many Renewal participants in the 1980's became interested in the reported apparitions of Mary in Medjugorje. A number of significant Renewal leaders spoke positively about these reported apparitions, which led to a greater devotion to Mary for many in CCR.

### **Has Marian devotion helped or hindered CCR?**

However, there has not been complete agreement about the effect of increased Marian devotion on CCR. Some people would affirm Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens' statement at the 1973 Notre Dame Charismatic Conference: "Just to conclude, I want to confide in you a little secret which you may tell to everyone, about how to receive the Holy Spirit in the best way. Unity in the Spirit is in our unity with Mary, the mother of God. Christ was born out of the Spirit by the cooperation of Mary. On the day of Pentecost the Church was born in the same way. Mary was there helping the apostles to receive the Spirit of God. May we be simple children of Mary, the woman, and open all that we are to the fullness of the Spirit of God." These people believe that their devotion to Mary has strengthened their spiritual life.

At the same time other people in CCR protest that too many charismatic prayer groups have become devotional groups. The groups sing a few songs, pray the rosary and/or the chaplet of divine mercy or other novena prayers, and finish with intercessions. These groups have little active time of praise and worship, and there is not much sharing of prophetic inspirations (scriptures, prophecies, prayers, words of wisdom and knowledge, images, etc.). Is this a good or bad development? How are we to discern God's call to us in this issue?

### **How can devotion to Mary support the focus of CCR?**

Devotional prayers have an important place in the Church, but they cannot be the dominant focus in CCR. The Renewal is called to be a reminder in the Church of the role of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of Catholic life. We cannot lose this primary focus on the gift of the Spirit because this is the

grace we have been given by God to share in the Church. There are many other important gifts in the Church, but this is our special calling. How can CCR understand the role of Mary within our predominant focus on the Holy Spirit? I believe that Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter, *Mother of the Redeemer* (1987), has given us some helpful insights.

**T**he Catholic Church has commonly spoken of Mary's "spiritual motherhood." At the cross in John's gospel Jesus gives Mary to the beloved disciple (and all disciples) as his mother. The difficulty with the term "spiritual mother" is that it can be understood as the opposite of being a "physical mother." Mary was Jesus' physical mother and now she is our non-physical (spiritual) mother. People lose the connection that the word "spiritual" is related to the Holy Spirit, not mainly to the fact that she is not our "physical mother."

Pope John Paul II wants us to understand that Mary is intimately connected to the Holy Spirit. Mary is not divine. She cannot influence people around the world and through the centuries except through the Holy Spirit: "(Mary's) influence is sustained by the Holy Spirit, who, just as he overshadowed the Virgin Mary when he began in her the divine motherhood, in a similar way constantly sustains her solicitude for the brothers and sisters of her Son" (#38). John Paul describes Mary's ongoing role as "motherhood in the Spirit" (#44-47). The Church is always on a "pilgrimage in the Holy Spirit" (#25). He writes: "And so, in the redemptive economy of grace, brought about through the action of the Holy Spirit, there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who

links these moments is Mary... In both cases her discreet yet essential presence indicates the path of 'birth from the Holy Spirit'" (#24).

**God has used her as an evangelist, prophet and healer through the apparitions at Lourdes and elsewhere.**

### **Charismatic Marian devotion**

As persons involved in CCR we should always prayerfully be asking the question, "How does the Holy Spirit influence this aspect of daily life and my Catholic beliefs?" How can the power, love, prophetic inspiration and wisdom of the Spirit enhance every aspect of my life and the life of the Church? What do we find when we seek ways that the Holy Spirit relates to Marian devotion?

**1) Spirit-inspired prayer, praise and worship:** Mary's prayer during her visit with Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56) is a Spirit-inspired prayer of praise and prophecy. She "proclaims the greatness of the Lord" and "rejoices in God my Savior." She announces and proclaims God's faithfulness to his people, and what great things he is now doing in their midst.

**2) Mary prays in tongues:** Mary is among the 120 at Pentecost who all are filled with the Spirit and proclaim God's mighty deeds with the gift of praying in tongues (Acts 1:14; 2:1-11).

**3) Mary's prophetic inspiration and expectant faith:** At the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-11) Mary is inspired to intercede with her Son for a miracle. She tells the servants to "Do whatever he tells you." Her Spirit-inspired expectant faith leads to Jesus' first miracle. The abundant, better, new wine is also a symbol of the age of the outpouring of the Spirit.

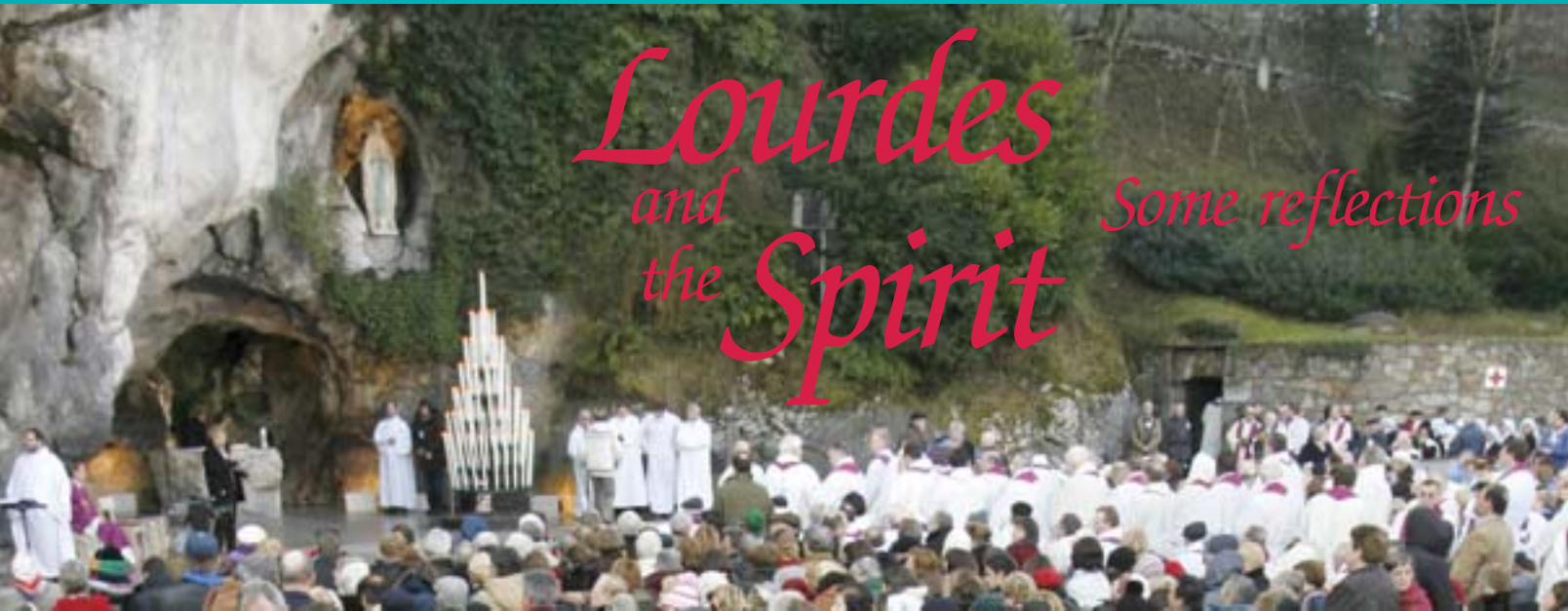
**4) Mary's openness to the Holy Spirit's insight and wisdom:** Mary is commonly described as prayerfully reflecting and keeping in her heart her experiences of the Lord (Luke 1:29, 2:19, 51). Sometimes people in CCR want instant prophetic insights from the Lord, but we do not grow in the deeper wisdom of the Spirit because we do not prayerfully reflect with the Holy Spirit about the events of our lives.

Mary is not only a *model* of openness to the Holy Spirit. She continues to live out her gift of "motherhood in the Spirit." God has used her as an evangelist, prophet and healer through the apparitions at Lourdes and elsewhere. As members of CCR, we should especially relate to Mary in her relationship with the Holy Spirit, her motherhood in the Spirit.

So what about the rosary at charismatic prayer meetings? I usually suggest that it is prayed before the meeting, but another suggestion is to use one set of mysteries of the rosary as part of a teaching time. Teach the scriptural basis of each mystery. Then pray the rosary leaving time after the mention of the mystery and the prayers to be open to Spirit-inspired prayers and insights into the particular mystery and how the Holy Spirit wants to apply this to people's life. In this way we are being open both to the Spirit and Mary's motherhood in the Spirit. ♦

*Fr. Bob Hogan is Co-founder of the Brothers of the Beloved Disciple, a Charismatic and Marian Religious community of priests and brothers. Presently he is a member of the NSC and involved with working at the Catholic Center for Charismatic Renewal in San Antonio, Texas.*





# Lourdes and the Spirit

Some reflections

by Fr. John Randall

The other night John Polce and I were at a wake service for the great healing priest, Fr. Ed McDonough, a Redemptorist from Boston. He died at the age of 87 on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. At the end of the service his Redemptorist brothers escorted his remains to the shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help where his body was placed, as under her mantle, for the night.

A flood of light and grace came to me as I reflected on God's marvelous providence, at his long-term plans of renewing his Church and world. First, he sent Mary at LaSalette in 1846, the same year Karl Marx was writing his Communist Manifest in a London garret. She was weeping over the state of the Church and the coming dangers to the world. Then in 1858 she was sent to Lourdes to begin reviving gospel power—to call people back to Jesus and his gospel, to restore faith, evangelism, prophecy, healing, the gifts that build up the Church. As Francis MacNutt

wrote recently in the original title of his book, *The Healing Awakening*, an almost perfect crime had been committed in the Church. Healing had almost disappeared and was confined mostly to "Extreme Unction."

Now 150 years later lay in state one of her sons of predilection who God so powerfully used for healing in our time. I saw the connection, the continuum of salvation history. I could hear her saying (as she said to her other son, Pope John Paul), "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Other memories from my experience followed. Fr. Jim Ferry, a real mentor to me as a pastor, set me on a rich trail with his theology that I would call "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be." That's God's plan for the renewal today, the same as it was in the first century. God sent his Spirit from heaven to wed our sister Mary at the Annunciation (and they have never been di-

vorced) and out of their union would come Jesus, the new Adam, God's plan for a new world.

As Augustine says, "at the end of this world there's only going to be one man walking this earth, Jesus Christ and all he has gathered into his Body." However, it must be the real Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary. The Holy Spirit and Mary continue to bring Jesus to birth and to nurture that life. I thought how foolish we have been, opposing the Holy Spirit movement and the Marian movement. It's as if the Pentecostals are at one end of the stage and the Marians at the other. They don't speak to one another, don't always trust one another, and the angels scratch their heads saying, "Don't they see God's plan?" The Spirit and Mary work together. Where one is, the other is. I remember Ivan, the Medjugorje visionary, coming to visit my 100 year old father who said to Ivan: "You don't think she comes on her own, do you?" Ivan smiled from ear to ear, knowing exactly what Pop meant.

Realizing this around 1996 marked a new spiritual thrust in my experience. We began to put together Mary and the Spirit in our meetings and the Lord blessed us with an incredible new burst of life. Over a 1000 people went through our Life in the Spirit seminars that year and we started perpetual Eucharistic adoration in our inner city parish. Since then 22 young men and women entered the seminary and religious life.

Another memory came to mind: the 1975 first International Catholic Charismatic Conference in Rome. On Pentecost Sunday Pope Paul VI invited us to St. Peter's for his Mass. We filled the right side of the basilica with 10,000 faithful. On the left side of the basilica sat 10,000 Marians, there for their big conference. Cardinal Suenens, a great churchman, happened to be the Cardinal Protector of both groups. Now in 1975 most on the right and on the left hardly spoke with one another (and, as I said, the angels shrugged their shoulders). It seems only Cardinal Suenens saw God's long range plan.

Speaking of Cardinal Suenens, I remember his speech (not too well accepted at the time) at the Notre Dame Conference about "the great secret of sanctity, a short-cut, as he put it—going to Mary as St. Louis de Monfort had pointed out. John Paul II knew this secret, as did Mother Teresa, but I am afraid many of us were slow to grasp this. We were afraid of the ecumenical repercussions, or something.

Back to Lourdes and Mary's influence in another aspect. She called herself the "Immaculate Conception." St. Maximilian Kolbe, led by the Spirit, ran with this so powerfully, calling her so fondly the "Immaculata, the quasi-incarnation of the Holy Spirit, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit." Our

rich Catholic heritage was coming alive for me.

Another Polish man, John Paul, largely converted by Louis de Montfort's 'True Devotion' became, as it were, Mary's little boy, "totus tuus" (I am all yours). He put it all together, Mary and the Holy Spirit.

We need to look afresh at all this. For example, Sr. Briege McKenna recently reminded me that in May of 1981 Fr. Emiliano Tardif and she prayed and prophesied over a Bosnian priest that Mary was going to visit his land and start a large wave of renewal, (probably today as large as the charismatic renewal). 50 million people have since visited Medjugorje and have had their lives renewed.

Who can forget the memory of Pope John Paul right near the end of his life visiting Lourdes as a "suffering servant," invited with all the sick and suffering of the world to "glory in their weakness" (2 Cor. 12:10) and "to complete in their bodies the sufferings of Christ" (Col. 1:24).

I think of today's powerful evangelist, Fr. John Corapi's words at a Boston men's conference recently. He talked of the warfare that is currently Christianity, and dressed in combat fatigues, he told the men, "My mother wears combat boots." I think here of the traditional image of Mary crushing the head of the serpent.

Let me end with a quote from Fr. Richard McAlear as it appears in a recent edition of the *National Catholic Register*: "Lourdes is a perfect example. It's absolutely Marian front and center, and it's absolutely Christ-centered. This is a perfect combination of the presence of Christ the savior, Christ the healer, and Mary—who kind of owns the place. She never obstructs Jesus or



## Prayer Card

For the renewing of the grace of Pentecost in the Church and in the world we pray:

Heavenly Father, help us to want to be more like the Mother of your Son – always ready to say "yes" when we sense the call to bring forth Christ into circumstances unfolding before us.

Grace us to trust unreservedly, as she did, that the power of the Most High, the Spirit of God, is poised to make this happen.  
Amen.

For the "Criteria for Judgement" of apparitions, see the Norms published by the Vatican Congregation of the Faith in 1978. The (document) is available on our website:  
[www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org).

gets in his way. The priest at Lourdes tells me the healings happen when they bring the Eucharist out. The focal point is usually the Eucharist." ♦



Fr. John Randall is presently Pastor Emeritus of St. Charles Parish in Providence, RI. He is Director of Spirit and the Word Ministry located in North Providence.



Please pray for the following initiatives and concerns of the National Service Committee:

That like Mary, full of hope and boldness, we would approach her Son in petition for fresh infillings of the new wine of the Spirit on behalf of all God's people.

That all disciples who know themselves as beloved of the Savior would be open to receive from him, personally, the gift of his mother as their mother.

That our hearts, like that of the Virgin of Lourdes, would find themselves ever overflowing with the healing love of her Son into the lives of others.

That all of us who have been crying out for a new springtime for Christianity would quickly experience fresh evidence of its bursting forth.

That the prayers and outreaches of the NSC be richly rewarded as youth are ignited with the fire of the Spirit and men and women everywhere answer the call into servant leadership.

### Why include the NSC in your will?

As you know the National Service Committee relies almost entirely on gifts from individuals to continue its mission. We ask you to please consider a gift to the National Service Committee when you make your will or update it. Making a gift to the NSC can be as simple as adding a codicil to your existing will or estate plan.

You may use this or a similar statement: "I/we bequeath \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (or % of my residual estate) to the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the United States, Inc. P.O. Box 628, Locust Grove, VA 22508-0628."

Please let us know if you have included us in your will so that we can properly thank you.

## A vision for today's prayer groups

by Sister Nancy Kellar, SC

The abbot of a monastery was concerned that the monastery was not attracting new members and seemed on the verge of death. He consulted with a wise person in the village who told him to tell the monks: "Jesus is going to come again as one of you; but I don't know which one." The monks began to treat one another with great love because they didn't know which brother might be Jesus. Their love began to attract new members and once again the monastery began to thrive.

I start with this story because it focuses on the most basic call we have as followers of Jesus and members of prayer groups, "This is my commandment, love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). St John, writing after the other evangelists, had seen the fruit of the Spirit in the churches founded by the Apostles; but he also saw the loss of the fire of the Spirit. He wrote as an elder simply about love as the way to rekindle life in the Spirit in the Church.

I have written and taught in prayer groups for many years in the Charismatic Renewal about: the need to keep expecting more of the Spirit and the charismatic gifts; the importance of having clarity of identity and clarity of mission. In the Leadership Formation Videos, David Thorp and I taught about "The spiritual marks and structural components of Charismatic prayer groups." As "Traveling Timothy's" we saw three conditions that seem to keep prayer groups vibrant:

- 1) Continuing to use the Charisms
- 2) Building committed relationships
- 3) Becoming more effectively evangelistic.

I still believe these are essential; but I go back now as an elder like St. John the evangelist to what is even more basic; that we love God, love one another and by our love attract others to know God.

**We are called first to be holy, to live and speak out of a personal love relationship with God. "Live on in my love" (Jn 15:9).**

Our experience of being baptized in the Spirit is a prophetic call to us to proclaim that God is present here and now, that we can know him by personal experience. We are called to proclaim the possibility of knowing God as Father, surrendering to Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives, and experiencing that the Spirit given at Pentecost is for everyone!

In the past many of us knew God by information believing that deeper knowledge was reserved for some special people. Baptism in the Holy Spirit brought us into a new way of knowing God through revelation, through the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It brought us to the conviction and to the experience that every one can come to have the knowledge of God and the mysteries of God. We are called to proclaim that in this new age of the im-personalization of God.

