

Publication of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

PENTECOST *Today*

July/August/September 2008



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Photo: Sr. Mary Anne Schaefer

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



Chairman's Corner

by Aggie Neck

The bond of love

One of the distinct characteristics of baptism in the Holy Spirit is the desire to be with people who have had the same experience. There is a common thread, a denominator, that common trait, that unites us and a bond of love that surpasses just friendship. It is a holy attraction that transcends the boundaries of social ranking, or economic standing. There is a strong desire to be together. Even when we encounter each other in different settings there is joy in the encounter. We have become the body of Christ. What a transformation this is! St. Paul tells us "The old order has passed away now all is new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Webster's Dictionary defines community as: a unified body of individuals; a group linked by a common policy; and fellowship. This is who we are and who we are called to be, that unified body with a purpose and a goal.

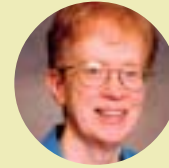
As much as we love the people in our prayer groups, community goes beyond the local bond of fellowship. No matter where we go, when we are with those who have had the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit we are drawn together in holy fellowship. We have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord, we have become aware of the love of God the Father for us, and the focus of our lives has changed as we allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us. There is now a meaning to life that goes beyond the day-to-day routine. In his writing

St. Paul points out to us that we now have a hope and a destiny: "life on high in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). This unites us as a community of believers.

St. Paul continues to inspire us with scripture that helps us to know what our role is in the community of those who follow Jesus. One of my favorites is in Colossians 3:12-17. It has the subtitle "The Practice of Virtues." "Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns, and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him."

These instructions are the definition of community at its best. When we have been able to perfect these virtues among us, we will indeed be a unified body of individuals, a group linked by common policy and fellowship. We will have become the Body of Christ in its fullness. It would be the Kingdom of God on earth. ♦

Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee.



Editor's Desk

by Sr. Martha Jean McGarry

✱ How fitting it is to welcome the National Association of Diocesan Liaisons as a regular contributor to our magazine in this issue, where our focus is drawn to community. We delight in their partnership with us in proclaiming the love of Jesus Christ and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

✱ In this **The Year of St. Paul** (June 28, 2008 – June 29, 2009) you will find many of our articles reflecting on St. Paul's writings regarding the theme of each issue. As we study the Word in his epistles may our hearts and minds expand with deep knowledge and love of our savior Jesus Christ.

Fr. George Montague, in this issue, gives us several insights into Paul's understanding of community. Check it out! Was Paul a Lone Ranger or a community builder?

Stephen Clark will share how our experience of baptism in the Spirit adds to our understanding and efforts to live the call to community. The article, *Growing in Ecclesial Maturity*, by **Walter Matthews** and **Aggie Neck's** column make practical what it means to be part of the Body of Christ.

Kay Murdy shares a perspective on the charisms as gleaned from her study of Paul's writings.

The witness given on page 3 and the leaders' sharing (pages 8-9) demonstrate the fruitfulness of building church where God has planted us.

How good it is, how pleasant, where people dwell as one! (Ps. 133:1) ♦

How small groups have made a difference in my life

by Fr. John Gordon

I recall a conversation a while back in which a good friend and mentor in the Lord shared with me that she had made three, what she called, “life-changing” decisions: in the first place; the ‘decision’ to give her life to the Lord; secondly, to pray every day; and then, to be part of a small group. Each of these ‘decisions’ resonated within me as true. I, also, am eternally grateful to the Lord for these graces. I remember well the teaching that I received, both during the Life in the Spirit Seminar, and in subsequent talks at prayer meetings and growth seminars and conferences. It was not until I moved to New Jersey and was part of the People of Hope that the teaching and value of small groups came alive.

Up to this point, my life in the Lord had been marked by the trial and error of new and exuberant faith striving to be expressed in the events of daily life. I relied on what some of the people in the prayer group shared about their lives, and I tried to read the various witness stories that spoke of living life in the Spirit. But it was not until I was part of a small group of brothers in the Lord, where we met every week to share and serve each other in love, that I began to go beyond growing in the Lord, to becoming mature in the Lord.

As I searched the Scriptures, I was taught to see how the Lord called some of the disciples aside to be particularly close to him. These are the apostles. Among the apostles, He called three to share a particular closeness with him; Peter, James and John. These were with him both on the Mount of Transfiguration as well as the Garden of Gethsemane. So, it became clear, that the Lord works in us most powerfully when we are part of a small group of disciples. Thus, the value of the small group was also having a biblical foundation. At the same time, as I participated in a small group, I was experiencing the practical effects of this way of life.

I was sharing with the same group of men every week. In sharing joys and sorrows, fears and hopes, I was being loved and encouraged, and corrected, to live a more fervent life in the Lord. My desire and ability to respond to grace grew tremendously. Ever since, I have been part of a small group; whether as a single man, or in the seminary, or now as a priest, I have experienced the blessing of being part of a small group.

Another aspect of small groups that I have found particularly helpful is how they can be an environment in which one can grow in confidence. I have often commented how the prayer meeting is a school for the spiritual gifts [see *Pentecost Today: vol 28, no 3 July/ August/September 2003*]. This is especially true when there is, in the prayer group, the opportunity to share and discover the charisms. My own experience bears this out. I first encountered the Charismatic Renewal at a small prayer group in my home parish. There I found others who were living the grace of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. As we met each week to pray I was able to see how the outpouring of gifts from the Holy Spirit is intended to be exercised everywhere, not just in the prayer meeting. As we grew and shared with each other, we discovered all the doors that the Lord was opening.

I am currently meeting with a group of priests that I have been part of for over twenty years. We meet each week to pray, to grow together and to share deeply about our lives. When we share in our small group, we open ourselves to the healing grace of God, calling us to be more faithful and zealous in his service.

A similar model can be used by any group of people who are committed to this way of growing in the Lord. To get something like this started, find a few others who would be open to this plan of small groups. Agree to meet together on a regular basis; once a week seems excellent, but that may be too much, especially as one is getting started. The most important element to keep this alive is the level of commitment from the people in the group to the meeting. If some come in and out, it makes it very difficult for the small group to grow. It takes a while to trust and share deeply with one another. Another important element to keep in mind is that this is for the long haul. If, for a while, the group misses some gatherings, or there seems to be a hurdle in developing the trust and confidence to grow together, be patient with one another. It is my experience, and has been born witness to by many others, that this process can help to change our lives.

Fr. John Gordon is a priest of the Archdiocese of Newark assigned as parochial vicar at Holy Family Parish in Nutley, NJ. A favorite conference speaker, Fr. John is presently a member of the National Service Committee of the National Catholic Charismatic Renewal.



A lot of people, I'm afraid, have that image of Paul: a fiery preacher who conquered Asia Minor and Greece for Christ single-handedly. But that is far from the real Paul. He traveled with others, he ministered in teams, he built communities, and he gave a magnificent theology of the church as community.

First of all, nobody in those days would think of traveling the distances he did without at least one companion. To do so would have put Paul in danger of mugging or murder, and, without a cell phone or e-mail, how could he send messages ahead or back to headquarters? All communication was either in person or by hand-carried papyrus.

Secondly, look at how Paul begins many of his letters: "Paul, Silvanus and Timothy" (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:10), "Paul and Timothy" (Phil. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philemon 1:1), "Paul...and Sosthenes" (1 Cor. 1:1). The Acts of the Apostles tell us of his traveling with Barnabas, with Silas and Titus. And Luke was probably with him on several of his trips. It seems that the only time Paul is alone is in jail.

Thirdly, it suffices to read 1 Corinthians to see how hard Paul works to build a unified community. He scolds them for their cliques, for their self-centeredness, for turning the Lord's Supper into a fast-food service where the wealthy eat their food before the poor arrive and "one goes hungry, while another gets drunk" (1 Cor. 11:21). He shows how the charisms are meant to build up the community, and he has that classic chapter 13 on love.

His greatest problem was convincing the Jewish converts that the Gentiles are on an equal footing with them, that in Christ there is neither "Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

PAUL:

lone ranger or community builder?

by Fr. George Montague, SM

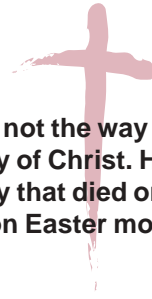
In Texas Ranger Lore, there is a story about the sheriff confronted with a riot that was out of control. He put in a frantic call to the Texas Rangers for help. Sure, they would help: "Wait at the station for the next train and you will have all the help you need." When the train arrived, a single ranger got off the train.

"Only one Ranger?" shouted the flabbergasted sheriff.

"Well, you've only got one riot, haven't you?" replied the Ranger.

But why was this so? Because in the death and resurrection of Christ, God had begun to remake the human race. Shattered from its original unity and grace by sin, the sin of Adam and his descendants (Genesis 1-11), all humankind is offered the unity of a new creation in Christ, the last Adam (Rom. 5:14-19) who by his resurrection has become a "life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). In a very rich passage Paul tells how this can bring each person into the unity of the new creation: "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of the one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

All baptized into one body. We would normally think of the "one body" here as being a collectivity, that is, the Church, as we might say that all the students in a school make up the student body. But that is not the way Paul thinks of the body of Christ. He is thinking of the body that died on the cross and rose on Easter morning. Baptism joins us in a very real, though sacramental way to that body. If the collectivity becomes the body of Christ, it is only because all are joined in a very realistic way to Christ's risen body. This becomes evident if we look at 1 Corinthians 6:15: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take Christ's members and make them the member of a prostitute?" He then proceeds to contrast the bodily union with the prostitute to the bodily union with Christ (he uses the same word for the union with each) and cites the Genesis text about the two becoming one flesh to show that union with the prostitute is adultery in relation to one's "bodily" union with Christ. The effect, of course, of this bodily union with the risen Christ, unlike that with the prostitute, is a spiritual transformation. We become



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"one spirit with him" (6:17). Think of what happens when we plug a cord into an electric socket. There is the physical contact between the plug and the socket. But then the electric current automatically flows into the plug and the cord. So by baptism we are joined to the risen Christ and automatically are charged with his Holy Spirit.

Why is this important for understanding Paul's theology of community? Because our becoming the body of Christ, and therefore our union with one another, is not like the metaphor of matriculation. It is a very real union, however mysterious, with the person of Jesus Christ. We become *his* members, an extension of his risen body. That intimate personal union with Christ, which each of us has by our baptism, far from isolating us from one another with a "Jesus and Me" spirituality, brings us into a sacred union with one another, closer than hand to arm, neck to torso.

If Baptism joins us to his body, the Eucharist nourishes us with the body to whom we are joined. Paul emphasizes that in 1 Corinthians when he says that "The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (10:16-17). We have the unspeakable grace of renewing daily that "bodily" union with the risen Christ when we receive the Eucharist. But communion itself, however intimate, is also corporate (a Latin

derivative that means "bodily"). And thus we become not only members of Christ but "members of one another" (Eph. 4:25).

The Holy Spirit, who inhabits the body of the risen Lord, therefore inhabits our body too. And, in another figure, we become individually and collectively, the temple of the Holy Spirit. "Do you not know that you (plural) are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

Paul draws a lot of practical consequences from this mystery. The Holy Spirit endows the members of the church with charisms for building up the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:11-16). Paul urges his readers to seek them earnestly (1 Cor. 14:1), and 1 Peter 4:10 urges his readers to use them. Further consequences concern holiness of behavior, as we can see throughout Paul's letters. There is no place for petty rivalries or jealousies or quarrels. On the contrary, everything should be done for building up one another and the community (1 Cor. 14:26). Quite a challenge in a culture where climbing to the top is the rule in the "corporate" world.

So for Paul it's not "one riot, one ranger." It's "one Lord, one body." ♦

Fr. George T. Montague, S.M. is a well known speaker and an author of more than twenty books in the area of biblical and pastoral theology. He has served as seminary rector in the U. S. and Canada and was di-



rector of novices for six years in Kathmandu, Nepal. In 1995 he began a new religious community in the Marianist family, the "Brothers of the Beloved Disciple."



Worship seems to be a major cause of the strength of charismatic communities.



Baptism in the Holy Spirit and community

by Steve Clark

I believe it is no accident that the outbreak of the charismatic renewal brought with it a flowering of new communities in the church.

We might simply attribute the new communities to the fact that charismatic renewal is a renewal movement. All renewal movements from the early ascetic or monastic movement on have given rise to new communities. Those who have entered into a renewed Christian life naturally want to be with others who have had the same experience.

Sometimes people say that those with a renewed Christian life seek one another out for support and personal help in living the renewed Christian life. That is certainly an aspect of it, but there is more to it. They seek others out because they need others to live the Christian life.

Christianity is something that you live with others. Even those of us born into societies as individualistic as modern

American society can see that the scripture teaches that Christian life is something you do with others. And the ages of Christian history confirm that. John, speaking to the Christians of the communities he worked with exhorted them to love one another (1 Jn. 4:7, 11), and renewed Christians respond to that word readily.

There is, however, more to why the charismatic renewal has given rise to communities, and that has to do with the very nature of being baptized in the Spirit. Baptism in the Spirit is a renewal of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian, and central to the work of the Spirit is unity. The Holy Spirit is at work to unite Christians, first of all with God, and then with one another. He makes us “one” by “dwelling in us and being in us” (Jn. 17:21, 14:17). He does this so that we can be the “one body” of Christ in the world (Eph. 4:3-4) and so that the world may believe through us (Jn. 17:21).

Many have an image of the day of Pentecost as a time when the Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples, empowered them, and then scattered them on mission throughout the world. But that is not what the Acts of the Apostles says. Rather, it says that when the Spirit came upon the disciples, they “were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:44). They were “of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32), and it was in the context of the united company of disciples that the apostles gave their testimony with great power (Acts 4:33). It was not until they were persecuted that they scattered (Acts 8:1), and where they went, they formed new communities that evangelized.

Those of us who were part of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal at the beginning experienced the same thing. We immediately began to form community. No doubt it had something to do with the Cursillo Movement, from which most of the early leaders came and which taught the formation of



“Christian communities in action”, but baptism in the Spirit added a great impetus. It only took three years for the first charismatic community, the community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to establish itself in a formal way, but even before that, when people were touched by the renewal in the Holy Spirit, they came together informally with enthusiasm.

Christianity is something that you live with others.

It is no accident that when the core of those involved in the charismatic prayer meetings in Ann Arbor formed a community, others around the world followed suit in a rapid way. It is also no accident that many of the communities were ecumenical, recognizing the same Holy Spirit in Christians of other churches, nor that many charismatic Protestants sought to bring community into their churches or form new charismatic churches. Renewal in the Holy Spirit brings a new impetus to community, and it allows Christians from many backgrounds to recognize in one another the same spiritual life.

We are in a time of renewed growth of communities in the Catholic Church (and of renewed community in many Protestant churches). Not all these new communities are charismatic. But in my experience, charismatic renewal brings a special strength to the formation of community.

Worship seems to be a major cause of the strength of charismatic communities. When we gathered together in the beginning, we gathered together primarily to worship. We had experienced renewal in the Holy Spirit as we worshipped, and when we came together we could experience the same Holy

(Acts 4:31) and this added others to the community.

The strength that comes from knowing the Lord and experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit is another factor. We are more able to love others than we were before, and we can also stand better in an adverse environment. The experience of the Holy Spirit provides a confidence and a motivation that is a significant help in persevering with other Christians in living for and following the Lord in the face of a society that is negative, and nowadays, one that provides the added obstacle of many options and distractions. The Holy Spirit is also at work renewing us within, allowing us to live with the fruit with which he equips us to love God and one another (Gal. 5:13ff).

Community is popular among Catholics nowadays. It can, however, easily be confused with human togetherness or with working for some human cause or just with socializing. In my experience, charismatic renewal is an antidote to that. Members of charismatic communities usually know that they are together with these others because of the work of the Holy Spirit. It is spiritual (Christian) community we are after.

We live in a time of great challenge for the Christian people throughout the world. The renewal that began among

Spirit again. Moreover, like the early Christians, when we prayed and were filled again with the Holy Spirit, we were more ready to speak the word of God with boldness



Prayer Card

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

Father, send your Holy Spirit with fires of hope from heaven to consume us.

Set our hearts ablaze with zeal, so that we will carry your message of hope to all nations.

Renew the youth of your bride, the Church, like the eagle's and carry us on the wings of Love into that divine transforming union that changes the entire world into your own kingdom.

Living Flame of Love, unite us all as one in the heart of the Blessed Trinity.

We make this prayer in Jesus' Name. AMEN!

us forty years ago was for “a time like this” (Esth. 4:14). The movement of charismatic communities that came with it continues to grow and hopefully will increasingly be able to make the contribution to the renewal and strengthening of the church for which the Lord brought it about. ♦

Stephen B. Clark is the President of The Sword of the Spirit, an international, ecumenical Christian community and is a regional coordinator of Christ the King Association, an association of Catholic communities and fellowships. He presently resides in Chelsea, Michigan.





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

- That the Lord will draw together all leaders for the National Leadership Conference to be held in Nashville, November 14-16, 2008, for the September NSC Retreat and for the NSC pilgrimages to bear great fruit.
- That the faith community of the Church will be strengthened and bound together with a three ply cord of faith, hope and love through the Holy Spirit.
- For the unity of all the children of God and for a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit at World Youth Day in Australia in July.
- For deeper conversion and holiness in all souls.
- For the spiritual renewal of the priesthood and the hierarchy of the Church.

Goodsearch

What if the National Service Committee earned a penny every time you searched the Internet? Well, now we can!

GoodSearch.com is a new search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. You use it just as you would any search engine, and it's powered by Yahoo!, so you get great results.

Just go to www.goodsearch.com and be sure to enter Chariscenter USA as the charity you want to support. Just 500 of us searching four times a day will raise about \$7300 in a year without anyone spending a dime! And, be sure to spread the word!



Finding a Home

by Deacon Edgar Torres

Our Prayer Group, Nueva Esperanza, was founded to evangelize the Mexican people coming into our city. We were disappointed the first two years. Our hall was filled to capacity with local New Mexican people who spoke both English and Spanish. Once in a while a Mexican family would stop by asking for help, for food and clothing and perhaps some directions for obtaining work or housing. Once they obtained what they wanted, we would no longer see them. However, to our surprise, one night a family came and remained with us and then another. Slowly but surely they began to come and stay. Now after 30 years of service more than 95% of the people attending Nueva Esperanza are Mexicans who have recently come from Mexico. Recognizing the blessings of the immigrants' culture and roots as integral to their life and faith was an important focal point of our prayer group. Use of the Spanish language, the Bible and other materials in Spanish became necessities in our group. Community is important to our Mexican people and we have learned to develop it through several means.

Since this prayer meeting was organized precisely to evangelize, the **teaching** is one of the main features of our gathering each week. Occasionally we bring in a priest to talk about some special subject that we feel necessary for giving strength to our great family. **Praying for the sick and needy** is another great avenue opening our

people to evangelistic efforts. So this is done every week. **Visiting the sick and inactive members** strengthen our bonds with our prayer group members. Another great feature is the **music** ministry where a group of women have developed a choir to lead people at praising the Lord and lifting up the people's spirits. The Lord has provided us with two men who play the keyboard that is a real asset to develop the spirit of those who come together. All these means have created us into a strong community. To fortify and help each other we have **workshops** about immigration and what Mexicans have to do to stay in this country legally. **Assisting members with special needs and occasional meals** together also furthers our commitment to each other. Our Mexican people love to share their food and resources when they are able. Giving our members opportunities to **intercede** for others, and **Eucharistic Adoration** have been effective ways of drawing us together as family. **Holy Spirit Seminars** also help us to build community and draw our people into deeper commitment to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, as well as giving them the opportunity to share their faith.

Praise God! He is forming us into a community of faith and love. Our immigrants have found a home among us and in our Church. ♦

Deacon Edgar Torres serves at St. Anne's Parish in Albuquerque, NM and is also a member of the leadership team of Nueva Esperanza Prayer Group.

