

# PENTECOST *Today*

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



## Chairman's Corner

by Aggie Neck

# Where two or more gather

**D**o you remember your first prayer meeting? I certainly do. I knew nothing of the Renewal, for it was only five years old at the time. I experienced a wide range of emotions, feeling uncomfortable, apprehensive, and uncertain that I should be there. Yet even as I left I knew I wanted to come back. I wasn't sure why, but I felt drawn to return.

That was thirty-one years ago. How I thank God that someone invited me. How I thank God that I responded. My life took on new meaning and I was changed. The prayer group that became my "family in the Lord" has supported me, uplifted me, prayed with me and prayed for me. The people in my prayer group allowed me to grow and to stumble in the process. I know they love me.

Prayer groups are truly a gift from God. I would not have known on my own that praising God was so uplifting and exciting. Now, I don't mean just saying, "Praise the Lord." I mean centering our lives around the God we have encountered in such a powerful way so that praising him becomes as natural as breathing in and breathing out. You become aware of God's goodness in everything, and gratitude and thankfulness are the natural results.

We find spiritual friends who believe—as we do—that God loves us, gifts us, and calls us to step out and be a witness for him. We learn to listen together knowing that God is speaking to us in varied ways. I never knew God spoke to us so personally as in prophecy, scripture passages, words of knowledge and words of wisdom until I was baptized in his Holy Spirit and experienced these things at prayer meetings.

Prayer groups are places of refuge where we are nurtured back to wholeness after being wounded. Personal prayer is ministered by caring people who really do love you and want to see you healed, and who believe that it will happen. Prayer groups are schools for growing in holiness. They are places to learn about and experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are a preparation for learning to witness and to evangelize.

When we gather together the words of Jesus are truly realized: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" (Matt. 18:20). It never ceases to amaze me that the God of all creation wants to be, chooses to be present when we come together as his people. Even the desire to praise him is his gift. Even the joy that bursts forth in our praise is his gift. And yes, even the desire to worship that fills a room with a holy silence is his gift.

Do we need this prayer group experience to grow, to progress in our journey, to keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning brightly? St. Paul certainly thought so. "We must consider how to rouse each other to love and good deeds. We should not absent ourselves from the assembly, as some do, but encourage one another; and this all the more because you see that the day draws near" (Heb. 10:24-25). We also read in Hebrews 6:11, "Our desire is that each of you show the same zeal to the end, fully assured of that for which you hope." May God grant us such a zeal. Let us reach out and invite someone to share this gift we have received. ♦

*Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee. She co-directs Servant House, a Catholic Charismatic House of Prayer in Marksville, Louisiana.*

# PENTECOST Today

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# Seasons of change

by Josephine Cachia

*The Lord has done great things for us and we are filled with joy! (Ps. 126:3)*

In 1988 I was interviewed by a reporter from our diocesan newspaper, *The Tablet*. I was the first woman given the appointment to serve as the Bishop's Liaison for the English-speaking prayer groups in the Diocese of Brooklyn and it was deemed newsworthy. The reporter seemed to have some peripheral knowledge of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and appeared interested in exploring some of the dynamics of the Renewal.

One of her questions, if I remember correctly, was, "What are your hopes, expectations, visions and goals for the Charismatic Renewal in our Diocese?" I thought for a moment and discovered that my real hope was that the Renewal and baptism in the Holy Spirit would be totally integrated into Catholic parish life and that it would be reflected in the liturgy, sacraments, and in the pastoring of the faithful. She was as surprised as I was with my response, since the general population of the priesthood did not readily accept the concept or the experience.

*Be exalted, O God above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth! (Ps. 57:5)*

At that time we had vibrant prayer groups that were filled with enthusiastic Christians who were on fire with the Holy Spirit. We numbered around 110 English speaking groups, not to mention the growing number of Hispanic and

Haitian groups. Many of the leaders in the prayer groups discerned the vision and mission that would engage them in various areas of Renewal. Growing in prayer, recognizing and affirming charisms that were manifested in the community of believers, studying scripture, becoming more articulate in sharing faith with others and serving in the local church. Expectant faith was perceived as vital to any gathering that was formed to praise the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Life in the Spirit Seminars were viewed as foundational to the growth of the prayer group since the heart of the group was to prepare others for baptism in the Holy Spirit. Did we as leaders in the Charismatic Renewal find support within our parish leadership? No, not in the beginning, but we did find support among the priests who were involved.

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heaven. (Ecc. 3:1)*

In this season of grace how are we doing? Well, many of the larger groups have become smaller, some have become extinct and there are new ones just starting to form. Within the groups that are still meeting some are not experiencing the charisms as they did in the past and for them new members are few and far between. It has been noted that when repentance and ongoing conversion is not expected, people fall away, as do those who are simply seeking repeated religious experiences. Leadership in some groups became self-absorbed and neglected coming together to pray and seek the Lord's leading outside the prayer meeting. ▶

# Seasons of change

**T**he prayer groups who have committed leadership remain vibrant and continue to attract new members. For those who remain faithful to the Spirit in discerning the vision and mission of their group there is life. The charismatic prayer meeting is the ideal place for birthing and nurturing the new life in the Spirit. It is the fertile ground where people are encouraged to experience Jesus alive in their midst, as well as joy in prayer, praise and song, loving and challenging fellowship, deeper understanding of the church, liturgy and sacraments. Here we are touched and moved by the power of scripture, grow in our understanding and knowledge of spiritual gifts and become bold to proclaim with confidence that God's love is real and awesome.

Across the globe, this Pentecost experience has propelled millions of people to exercise their gifts in service to the parish. In our diocese, at least 70-80 percent of those who serve in parish ministries have been members of prayer groups. This has made an impact on the local church. People are attracted to the Lord when they see faith in action, lives transformed, and people caring for one another. In our diocese the pastoral team of the Charismatic Renewal Office ministers to many who are not associated with a weekly prayer group. We offer days of renewal, youth conferences, retreats, parish Holy Spirit seminars, conferences, and monthly diocesan prayer meetings with a healing service.

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. (Ecc. 3:11)*

There are many challenges and distractions in the world of today. Yet seeking healing in physical, spiritual, psychological, and emotional levels and in relationships are needs most of us ex-

perience. In the past we did not have expectations that God would heal us of our infirmities, or that he would shower us with gifts that could transform the world of our hearts, minds and spirits. We expected little and as a result received little. Those who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and continue to cooperate with the graces given, are like the light on the hilltop that Jesus refers to in Matt. 5:14-16, or the unleavened bread St. Paul refers to in 1 Cor. 5:7-8.

Will prayer groups survive into the future? Yes, if leadership is willing to listen, obey and depend on the Spirit for the fruit-bearing results.

It takes prayer, discernment, discipline, commitment and determined, guided energy to form community—as well as a community willing to be formed. “Listen to me devout children, and blossom like the rose that grows on the bank of a watercourse. Give off a sweet smell like incense, flower like the lily, spread your fragrance abroad, sing a song of praise blessing the Lord for all his works.” Ecc. 39:14

As long as we remain guided by the Holy Spirit in the power of Pentecost and remain connected to the church, the Charismatic Renewal in its various manifestations will continue to have a vital role to witness to the ever-present Lordship of Jesus Christ, in his life, in his death and in his resurrection. ♦



*Josephine Cachia is a member of the National Service Committee. She serves as Liaison for the Charismatic Renewal in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.*

# Faith-sharing: A way to grow

by Sr. Justin Wirth, SSND

One evening during faith-sharing time at our prayer meeting, Dan related an experience of God teaching him that week.

The farmer on the farm next to Dan's was plowing his field all night. As his tractor went round and round, Dan found himself getting more and more upset. "Why doesn't he work during the day like everyone else?" he grumbled to himself. "He could have started two weeks ago."

The tractor stopped abruptly and was quiet. The next morning Dan saw the tractor broken in the field. "I'll just bring it to my shed and fix it." Dan thought. "I know he doesn't have the tools to do it."

Fixed and back, the tractor went round and round the field again that night. In the morning Dan looked out and saw the bean field plowed and beautiful in the sunshine.

God gently chided Dan. "I didn't ask you to judge your neighbor. I just asked you to be Christian."

This example of faith-sharing has come back to me often when I am about to judge my neighbor. I pray for the grace to just "be Christian."

Dan's sharing that night was a real witness to me of a way God teaches us through one another. Adults learn best by sharing their own experiences and by hearing the real life experiences of others. As we verbalize what God is doing in our lives, it becomes more real to us and suggests to others similar experiences they have had.

## The ABCs of faith-sharing

Here are some tips  
for effective faith-sharing:

- A.** Be audible. It doesn't help others if they cannot hear us.
- B.** Be brief. Just give the important facts and enough detail to make the sharing interesting and intelligible.
- C.** Be Christ-centered, or God-centered. The sharing should give God the glory, not ourselves.

Faith-sharing is not a problem-solving time, nor the time to ask for prayers for self or others. It is a time of encouragement and up-building for the community; a time to thank and praise God for blessings and miracles; a time to pass on to others the wonderful things God is teaching us in our prayer time or doing in our lives; a time to share how Scripture comes alive for us and the Word becomes meaningful or helpful in our own circumstances.

Not everyone needs to share at every session. Attentive listening is a gift to the group also. Feel free to pass. Wait until the Spirit nudges you to share, then be courageous in sharing.

Someone once asked Archbishop Ramsey how he knew a favorable incident was God's answer to prayer and not just a coincidence. He responded, "I don't know whether it was just a coincidence, but I do know this: I have many more coincidences when I pray." Sharing these "coincidences" or answers to prayer builds up our own faith and that of others.

## Some impediments

There are also some things which can get in the way of effective faith-sharing:

◆ **Fear.** Sometimes we feel what we have to share isn't important enough. If God thinks a sparrow falling out of its nest is important enough for him to notice, how much more what happens in our lives!

◆ **Doubts.** Sometimes we're not sure it is really God speaking to us. God can use happenings in our lives, other persons, even our imagination to inspire us. Why limit him to Scripture or prayer? Be open to all the ways God wants to be present to us and to speak to us.

◆ **We might sound foolish.** Paul says in 1 Cor. 4:10, "We are fools for Christ's sake." Not bad company! Not a bad reason to share!

◆ **Human respect.** We may be afraid others will think we are trying to appear better than others. We are afraid to be open and honest, to take the risk of sharing who we really are, afraid we will be misunderstood. Read the advice Paul gave to Timothy: "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord..." (1 Tim. 1:7-8).

See [Faith-sharing page 13](#)



# Youth ministry

## The fields are ripe for the harvest.

by *Cindy Erivez*

**J**oining youth ministry has certainly opened my eyes up to a whole new world of struggles and victories in and for the kingdom. I have been very blessed with my own children, and so prior to my involvement with teenagers, my awareness of most of the struggles of young people came from television news, and books, along with heartbreaking stories from the adults to whom I had ministered. Reflecting on my past, gave me the desire to help young people so that they could lead healthy happy lives. I have to say that the Lord himself has given me a heart for young people.

The group I work with is called Journey and the Tribe of Judah. Judah means “praise.” Each young member has a story that truly glorifies the Father, that speaks of our hope in Jesus Christ, and gives witness to the power of the Spirit to change lives. These young people flow in all the charismatic gifts. And yes, they know that they are charismatic Catholics. The fantastic part is that some of these have been alive in the Spirit since before they were old enough to be “official” teenagers. The Lord has led me to accept young people of any

age. He sends them to me—I keep them. The challenge for our church, then, is to put meat on our teenagers’ plates. They are hungry for the things of God. Adults tend to “water down” or “talk down” to them assuming that they are making it easier for young people to grasp. It actually bores them. Young people want to be challenged and have things told to them “straight up.”

No amount of knowledge or gifting prepares one for the pain that so many of our youth today experience. Oftentimes, they seek protection from the very ones who should be protecting them. So many are abused physically, mentally, and emotionally. Neglect is also a problem. It is such a blessing to see healing take place—to see the young person laugh and grow strong in the Lord.

Not all bad situations go away. A bad parent-child relationship may still be underway, but it is amazing what the Lord does to undergird and strengthen his child to live a wonderful and exciting life of love, forgiveness and acceptance in spite of it. The young community stands strong for each other. They pray and encourage one another. It is an incredible thing to see.

The young people do not stop there. Adults find their way to this group and actually receive ministry from them.

There are many snares of the enemy. Of prime concern to us is interest in occult. The rare teenager is the one who has never gotten involved in the occult. Hexes and curses do not surprise the young. It is not surprising that many parents are also involved, although they seem to prefer the personal touch, through witches. This is an area that is very neglected. Most of the Catholics that we have ministered to are not aware of occult and new age as sin.

We need to show God’s people how to apply the truth about his cross and his precious blood to our lives. Journey spends a lot of time bringing light and truth to these areas. Young people are coming out of bondage because they find out that Jesus saves! Just as important is that their parents are coming into order as well. The fields are ripe for the harvest! ♦



*A leader in charismatic youth ministry in El Paso, Texas, Cindy Erivez is a member of the NSC Council.*



# The heart of God

If God is love, why are a lot of Catholics I know cowering before him and his pending wrath? I've pondered and puzzled this for some time now, and, as sincerely as that viewpoint is held, I feel it might be based partly on some biblical misunderstandings. Is there a coming reckoning? Surely. The day of final judgment will come to each of us. But if that is our focus, then our perception of reality—both of God and ourselves—is skewed and distorted.

We image God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as a community of persons, a community of love. God drew us into his very heart, his inner life of love, when we were baptized into his Son. In Jesus we have seen the Father. If we want to know what the heart of the Father is about, we would do well to reflect on this passage:

When Israel was a child, I loved him and called him out of Egypt as my son. But the more I called to him, the more he turned away from me...They refuse to return to me, and so they must return to Egypt. War will...destroy my people...They will cry out because of the yoke that is on them, but no one will lift it from them...How can I give you up, Israel? How can I abandon you? *Could I ever destroy you...? My heart will not let me do it! My love for you is too strong. I will not punish you in my anger.* I will not destroy Israel again. For I am God and not man. I, the Holy One, am with you. *I will not come to you in anger.* (Hosea 11:1-9)

In this fascinating text, God is really upset. He starts raging against the Israelites. "Back to Egypt with you! Be devoured by your enemies!" Then suddenly, almost mid-rant, God "changes" his mind. Even if Israel goes back on its liberation and election by God, God cannot. His "heart" recoils. As one translation words it, "my compassion

kindles vehemently!" Vehement compassion defines God. He will not execute his fierce anger because he is God, not man. Found guilty, Israel is, nonetheless, set free; is not sentenced. Yet the sentence is demanded and must be paid. Israel could not keep her end of the bargain. What was God to do? Wipe out Israel? Israel could not love God. Jesus, the new Israel, the son he had "called out of Egypt," did it for them. He fulfilled the covenant.

**Every word of the gospel throbs with the boundless love of Christ for each human being.**

The Hebrew word *hesed* means the unconditional, everlasting, loyal, covenant love of God. In the New Testament, we find that God himself, in his Son, suffers the rejection that Israel was spared. God takes upon himself the punishment Israel deserved from a just God. God's wrath is not greater than his love. He *is* his love.

Jesus is the incarnation of the love of God. The once popular devotion to the Sacred Heart has all but disappeared in the modern church. I don't necessarily recommend that we resurrect it. But with or without a specific form of devotion, we should try to enter more deeply into an understanding of the reality of the heart of God. It unlocks one of the secrets by which we are to act as Christ in the world today. Every word of the gospel throbs with the boundless love of Christ for each human being, particularly those who are lowly or distressed. His heart is so passionately in love with us that (as artists have tried to suggest to us) it can no longer withhold the flames of that burning desire for us. The closer we get to the heat waves of love coming from the flaming furnace which is the heart of Jesus, the more our hearts will burn within us. Stay long enough, and like current flowing through a wire, you begin to find yourself in contact with the current of love that flows from him. You burn and become one with his incandescent love. You begin to be filled with a love of what he loves and to want to love those things too.





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## Outline

**T**he more on fire we become as each of us catches on fire from drawing near to his blazing love, the more we will go out and throw off sparks everywhere until the whole world is ablaze. The love that casts out fear sends us out, not with a message of imminent doom, but with new words of hope and joy on our lips—with the "good news."

"A day is coming when people will sing, 'I praise you, Lord!' You were angry with me, but now you comfort me and are angry no longer. Tell the nations what he has done! Tell them how great he is!" (Is. 12:1,4).

We cannot afford to misunderstand the relationship between the mercy and anger of God. Jesus did not come to condemn us. He came to save us from our sin and from the Father's wrath. That wrath is spent. The sword is no longer hanging over our heads. It has already pierced the side of Christ.

*A writer and retreat director, Dorothy Ranaghan and her husband, Kevin, live in South Bend, Indiana, and are members of People of Praise Community.*

- A. Our perception of God.
- B. The Trinity: a community of love. We have been drawn into the life of God.
- C. God's people fail him, but he does not exact punishment. He so loved us that he, himself, in his Son, suffers it.
- D. God is unconditional love.
- E. As the fire of his love enkindles us, we set the world on fire. Our mission is to tell good news. God in Christ has spent his wrath.

## Discussion questions

- Is there a difference between a day of wrath and tribulation, and a day of judgment?
- How did God choose to balance his justice and mercy?
- What is the "view" from the heart of Christ? If Christ is in us, how does it affect the way in which we evangelize?

# HOLY SPIRIT POWER CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

By Bob Williams

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# Fostering charisms in prayer meetings

by Fr. John Gordon

*“Renew Your wonders in this our day,  
as by a new Pentecost.”*

With these words of prayer, inspired by Blessed John XXIII, the whole church anticipated the grace of Vatican II. The fruit of the Council was immediate, startling, exciting and frightening, and new. Without doubt, one of the richest graces in our day is the Charismatic Renewal. Bursting on the scene in the late 60s, it grew at such an exponential rate it has been called the fastest growing movement in the church.

A tool that the Lord has used to pour out this gift is the charismatic prayer meeting. It is often at prayer meetings that people are introduced to the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit and the charisms. It is important, therefore, that we use well the tools the Lord gives us. How can the prayer meeting be better used as the tool the Lord intends?

In the first place, we need to know the purpose of the prayer meeting. There are all kinds of good reasons for having a prayer meeting: we like to be together; it is an opportunity to praise the Lord in a more spontaneous manner; we are freer to exercise the charisms. Yet, as part of a move of the Holy Spirit within the life of the church, the purpose of the prayer meeting is the same as the purpose of the church: to enable her members to grow in

holiness and to evangelize the world with the good news of Jesus Christ (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 773; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 14).

The unique contribution that the charismatic prayer meeting brings to the church is the free and deliberate exercise of the

## Prayer group leaders need to take on the very important task of teaching about the gifts.

charisms. The charisms, as seen evidenced in the Charismatic Renewal and charismatic prayer meetings, are biblically based. St. Paul discusses charisms in several passages of his letters. In 1 Corinthians 12, he places his discussion of charisms within that part of the letter dealing with the prayer of the church. It seems that these charisms, gifts of the Holy Spirit which empower us to live the good news, can be somewhat surprising. To say that the grace of these gifts came as a surprise to the Catholic Church is an understatement.

I remember when I went to my first charismatic prayer meeting. It was a summer night (Friday, August 15, 1975 to be exact!) and I had no idea what to expect. I had never heard of the Charismatic Renewal and I merely thought it would be interesting to see what a prayer meeting was about. I will never forget the feeling of electricity in the air as the prayer meeting went on; the exuberant singing and spontaneous praise, the praying and singing in

tongues, the Scripture readings and prophecies, the speaking and interpretation of tongues. They even prayed over someone that night for healing! One person had the gift of tears! I walked out that night stunned, amazed, curious and hungry for more. I realized these people had something—better yet, someone—that I had never realized could be experienced. Because it was clear that Jesus was the Lord of that meeting, and it was apparent that

## Intercessory Prayer

For the renewal of the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church we pray:

Lord, fill our minds and hearts with the fire of the Holy Spirit so that we may serve you in purity of body and please you in cleanness of heart.

Lord, may the Paraclete who proceeds from you enlighten our minds and lead us to all truth as your Son has promised.

Lord, may the Holy Spirit cleanse our consciences by his coming, so that when your Son Jesus comes, he may find in us a dwelling place prepared for him.

*from the Breviarium Romanum, as quoted in the booklet Devotions to the Holy Spirit by Brian Moore, SJ*

he was Lord of their lives, I was not put off by the flourishing of charismatic gifts at the prayer meeting. I was certainly intrigued, and I knew that I wanted what

Once I experienced the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit, those charisms that I had seen and heard started to well up within me. Within a few days I started to

I am renewed in the Lord and the gifts of the Spirit. When I hear teaching about the charisms, I am renewed in the Lord and the gifts of the Spirit. When I am exhorted to be open and to expect the Lord to use me, I am renewed in the Lord and the gifts of the Spirit.

## As I continued to go to the prayer meeting, I began to realize the importance of the charismatic gifts.

these people had, a knowledge of Jesus that was based on an experience of him, not just on texts about him. I couldn't wait for the next week's meeting. I read all that I could get my hands on, and I found the Lord moving more and more surely into my heart, into my life. As I continued to go to the prayer meeting, I began to realize the importance of the charismatic gifts; their presence and exercise emboldened and empowered me in the new life I was now living. I asked for baptism in the Holy Spirit and I received so very much from the Lord.

pray in tongues, right away the Scriptures came alive, and I started to hear the Lord speak to me. The prayer meeting made a considerable difference in my ability to respond to this new grace as it taught me to expect the gifts and how to exercise them. As I continued to attend prayer meetings, I began to broaden my understanding and expectations about the gifts. I learned that there was a wide variety of charisms—like teaching, mercy, hospitality and exhortation—and that God wanted us to be open to all of them. In addition to the fundamental task of the prayer meeting being a tool for evangelization, it is also a school for the reception and use of the charisms. Indeed, teaching and learning how to grow in and stir up the charismatic gifts needs to be one of the primary tasks of the prayer meeting and those leading it.

Prayer group leaders need to take on the very important task of teaching about the gifts and stirring them up in the prayer meeting. There are a variety of tools and resources: local and regional renewal centers (including Chariscenter USA); books like Steve Clark's *Baptized in the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*; a series of books and pamphlets on the gifts written by Fr. Robert DeGrandis; and the growth seminar *There's Always More* by Sr. Nancy Kellar (Sr. Nancy's book has an entire session on the stirring up of the charismatic gifts). As we are schooled in the charismatic gifts at our prayer meetings, we will be equipped to exercise them outside the prayer meeting. We will be ready to witness, to pray for healing, to offer a word of wisdom or knowledge, to even speak a prophetic word.

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

- ◆ For upcoming Regional Leaders Gatherings in Chicago and Denver.
- ◆ For the Twelve Days of Blessings Conference and Retreat sponsored by the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services in September.
- ◆ For the preparations for the National Leaders Conference in Nashville in November.
- ◆ For the Holy Spirit seminars being planned and presented throughout the country.
- ◆ For charismatic conferences being planned or presented throughout the country.
- ◆ For the financial provision for the mission of the NSC.

The charismatic gifts of the Spirit are not natural, they are supernatural; hence, we cannot rely on our own understanding but must learn from the Spirit of the Lord how best to exercise them. The Scriptures themselves introduce us to the charisms and speak of them in such a way that suggests their frequent and regular use (see 1 Cor. 12-14; Rom. 12). The Word of God also addresses the need to be renewed in the Holy Spirit; we are reminded to “fan into flame the gift of God received through the laying on of hands” (2 Tim. 1:6). This renewal, or rekindling, also calls for a stirring up of the gifts. I have experienced the need for this over and over again. When I am involved and participating in a charismatic prayer meeting,

“Strive eagerly for the spiritual gifts. But I will show you a more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31). “Over all these virtues, put on love, the bond of perfection” (Col. 3:14). As we seek to respond to the grace of the Lord poured out so generously in these days of the new Pentecost, let us live the greatest gift, love. May we love the Lord and one another. In so doing, we will be renewed in the Holy Spirit and the charisms will flourish among us. ◆



*Fr. John Gordon is a member of the National Service Committee. He has recently been named Associate Director of the pre-theologate program at the Franciscan University of Steubenville.*

## NEWSBRIEFS

**Gathering of National Leadership Groups**

Bishop Sam Jacobs, Chairman of the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, chaired the National Leaders' Gathering: Catholic Charismatic Renewal, in mid-January. The gathering brought together members of the National Service Committee, the Association of Diocesan Liaison Steering Committee, the Korean Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States of America, the *Comité Nacional de Servicio Hispano*, *Le Conseil du Renouveau Charismatique Catholique Des Haïtiens D'Outre-Mer*, the Alliance of Filipino Catholic Charismatic Prayer Communities and the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Communities and Fellowships. Held in Augusta, Georgia, the gathering was hosted by the Alleluia Covenant Community whose Catholic Fellowship is part of the Catholic Fraternity. About twenty members of the Alleluia Community joined the other forty leaders present.

The groups met under the direction of a Committee of Five led by Bishop Jacobs and consisting of the Chairpersons of the NSC (Aggie Neck) and the Diocesan Liaison Steering Committee (Judith Hughes), an ethnic representative (Msgr. Joseph Malagrecia), and a representative of the Fraternity (Dennis McBride). The purpose of the Gathering is to bring the groups together for prayer, fellowship and hearing

the word of the Lord together for the Renewal. As was true in 2002, each of the Leadership Groups was encouraged to bring one or two younger leaders (i.e. under age 35). There were six such leaders present.

Most of the time together was spent in prayer, small group sharing and discussion. What emerged could be focused under four headings:

**Unity**

1. To share events with each other and to publicize.
2. Focus prayers on Thursdays (Mass, rosary, time before the Blessed Sacrament) praying for unity in the Renewal.

**Personal transformation**

1. During 2003 (preferably Lent) focus on fasting during the week, fostering a deeper prayer life and reflection on returning to first love.

**Mission**

1. Conduct Life in the Spirit Seminars during the Easter season—if possible focus on family.

**Youth**

1. Conduct Life in the Spirit Seminars specifically for youth.
2. Adults need to be more open to youth.
3. Encourage diocesan leadership for charismatic youth events around the country.
4. Develop an internet web site for prayer.

In 2004 the Groups have set the Friday before Ash Wednesday, February 20, as a Day of Prayer and Fasting. The Groups also decided to again meet in 2004 and again bring one or two younger leaders.

**The NSC Council**

In early 2000 the National Service Committee formed the NSC Council to replace the former Advisory Committee. Those who were on the Advisory Committee at the time were invited to join the NSC Council and, based on years of service on the Advisory Committee, were given terms of varying length. In December 2002 a number of those terms were up. New invitations were issued and the following are new NSC Council members:

- ◆ Tom Curran, Trinity Formation Resources (Federal Way, Washington)
- ◆ Sr. Christine Edwards, SFP, Lighthouse Renewal Center (Cincinnati, Ohio)
- ◆ Tammy Evevard, youth and young adult leader (Erie, Colorado)
- ◆ Carol Forsythe, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Center for Chicago, Illinois
- ◆ Fr. Tim Hepburn, Diocesan Liaison (Atlanta, Georgia)
- ◆ Scott Kaldahl, worship leader (Miami, Florida)
- ◆ Nick Alexander Kleszczewski, young adult leader (Milford, Connecticut)
- ◆ Martha Krupp, community and youth outreach leader (Montrose, Michigan)
- ◆ Bill Marcotte, Youth Arise (Tempe, Arizona)
- ◆ Pat Molyneaux, Renewal leader (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)
- ◆ Deacon Dan Pudvah, Renewal leader (Barre, Vermont)
- ◆ Mary Jo Webb, Native American Renewal leader (Fairfax, Oklahoma)

In addition, invitations were extended to several individuals who

had recently left the National Service Committee. Accepting the invitation were: Deacon Bill Brennan (Service Committee member 1994–2003), Fr. Art Cooney, OFM Cap. (Service Committee member 1995–2003) and Dr. Michele Greischar (Service Committee member 1991–2003).

The purpose of the NSC Council is to actively support the mission of the National Service Committee through prayer, counsel and service. Its Mission Statement reads:

The NSC Council is called by the National Service Committee and gifted by God to work in partnership with the National Service Committee to foster the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church.

Beyond the NSC Council, the Service Committee relates directly to local dioceses, liaisons and renewal centers and are available for consultation. The NSC also relates to liaisons nationally through its relationship with the Association of Diocesan Liaisons with the ADL Steering Committee chair serving as a consultant to the NSC. The NSC and the Diocesan Liaison Steering Committee meet prior to the Gathering of National Leadership Groups: Catholic Charismatic Renewal for fellowship, prayer, sharing and discussion. The NSC also attempts to build closer ties to liaisons, renewal center directors and prayer group leaders in a smaller geographic context through Regional Leaders' Gatherings. ◆

# CHARISMS

## Mission, ministry and charisms

by Sherry Weddell

I received a phone call last month that really got me thinking. A man in charge of diaconate training for his diocese wondered if I could tell him what charisms would be most appropriate for deacon candidates. What was his bishop's vision of the diaconate, I asked? The answer: Someone who could recognize and take direct, personal action to meet the pastoral needs of people. I told him that pastoral charisms such as *encouragement, helps, hospitality, pastoring* and *mercy*—as well as *service*—would be most useful. But I also voiced my concern that such a specific ministry focus would leave little room for candidates who might be called to an uncommon lifestyle, to minister as evangelists, teachers, or academics or to take risks in order to begin something new. My friend's response was simple and clear: "Those aren't the sort of deacons that the bishop wants."

Fr. Michael Sweeney and I have long noticed that most of the pastoral associates that we work with are competent facilitators of group process but that few are confident teachers. This reality forced us to change our approach to parish-based adult formation. But after that phone call, I began to connect the dots. After helping over 13,000 Catholics in 46 dioceses to discern their charisms, I was seeing something that I had never grasped before. We are systematically calling forth *only* certain charisms at the parish level.

The gifts that are most frequently manifested by members of diocesan parishes are those that are directly related to administering the structures and nurturing the inner life of the Christian community (such as *encouragement, helps, hospitality,*

*pastoring, administration, service, giving* and *wisdom*). These are the charisms of the overwhelming majority of pastoral associates, youth ministers, deacons, lay leaders and pastors that we have interviewed. This is significant because these gifts are most readily used in existing internal ministry, but they do not propel us out in mission to the world.

The charisms that are most critical for mission *beyond* the Christian community, forming the next generation of apostles and undertaking new apostolic initiatives, are much less frequently manifested in diocesan parishes where 98% of all Catholics have their only contact with the church. We are not regularly calling forth apostles with the gifts to:

- ◆ evangelize the unchurched and non-practicing (*evangelism*);
- ◆ crosscultural and lifestyle barriers to bring Christ to those outside the church (*missionary, voluntary poverty*);
- ◆ form apostles by making the riches of church teaching available (*teaching, knowledge*);
- ◆ successfully start new apostolic initiatives (*leadership, faith*);
- ◆ challenge Christians with the social implications of the gospel (*mercy, prophecy*).

These charisms have long been regarded as the province of particular religious orders or congregations who "specialize" in

the outward mission. Leaders in diocesan parishes who have been given these latter gifts (whether clergy or lay) are often frustrated by inward-looking structures and priorities and can feel isolated in their concern for mission outward. If they have a choice, lay Catholics with these charisms often join third orders, lay movements, or a parish run by a religious order that shares their priorities.

I saw this vividly demonstrated recently in a Canadian parish. I was interviewing five married couples who were being mentored by their pastor, a member of a new apostolic society of priests dedicated to evangelism. Of the ten interviewees, 50% showed real signs of the charism of evangelism—a proportion five times larger than in the Catholic population in general! In my experience, most lay people with a charism of evangelism feel very much alone and misunderstood in their parish, but the experience of these couples was very different. The evangelizing charism of the pastor's religious community seemed to call forth and encourage parishioners with this gift in a remarkable way.

If the evangelization of the world is the church's reason for being, then our world needs *all* the charisms and *all* the vocations that God is giving us. If our vision of the church's mission is too narrow, if we seek just to "fill" obvious ministry holes rather than form apostles, then only those leaders with the narrow range of gifts and vocations that fit our "slots" will emerge. Other Catholics will a) regard themselves

Faith-sharing from p. 5

### Helpful hints

1. When others share, accept their testimony or witness as a true experience of theirs, without judging or questioning.
2. Reverently let their sharing stand on its own. Faith-sharing isn't discussion time. We don't need to add our own experiences or ideas to theirs.
3. Be grateful and encouraging to those who are willing to share, but also honest in showing approval or appreciation.

### Charisms continued...

as either *not* having a gift worth discerning; or b) will leave to exercise their gifts and calling in a place where it is understood and honored.

I believe that if we are going to successfully call forth the next generation of apostles and saints, we need thousands of Catholics willing to serve as a new type of parish-based pastoral leader—the “formator.” A formator’s entire ministry focus is enabling the baptized to become mature disciples, to discern their charisms, whatever they might be, and to live their apostolic call wherever it might take them. Like John the Baptist, formators can change the course of history by making straight the paths of those whom God has sent to heal and transform our world.

If you feel you may be called to this crucial ministry, visit the Catherine of Siena Institute website at [www.siena.org](http://www.siena.org). ♦

*Sherry Weddell is Associate Director of the Catherine of Siena Institute, a program of the Western Dominican Province dedicated to equipping parishes for the formation of lay Catholics.*



Peter Comaish of England prayed, and I join him:

*Bless us, Lord, as we try to work out new ways of encouraging others to consider “whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, whatever is excellent or praiseworthy” (Phil. 4:8). Lord, there are so many people who want to make a meal of lesser things. Help us to put into words...great deeds that will pull others toward higher aspiration and inspiration.*

Thank you, Dan, and all the other Christian friends who have shared their faith stories with me, and in this way have brought me closer to God and to them. ♦

*A former chair of the Association of Diocesan Liaisons, Sr. Justin Wirth is a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She is co-author of the recently revised Faith Sharing in Small Groups: the Vision and the Tools, available from Chariscenter USA.*



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From the  
Director

.....  
by Walter Matthews

## Calling leaders together

In nearly every leaders' meeting I have participated in over the last ten or more years, the need for raising-up new leaders and the need to re-energize those faithful leaders who are experiencing a lack of zeal or vision has been vocalized.

In his important talk at the 2002 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in Pittsburgh, Bishop Stanislaw Rylko said:

It is meaningful that in all the messages addressed to the communities of the Renewal in the Spirit, the Pope often stressed the need for "a deep and solid formation" as a priority...In addition, those who (for example leaders of Christian communities) participate actively in Christian instruction, take this responsibility not only with respect to others but also before God and the church. For this reason there is also an urgent need to form leaders so they are adequately prepared to avoid the danger of the "blind leading the blind"...Forming others is not a private activity of a leader or of a community. Each one should be aware of being nothing than a servant for the great cause of God. The Holy Father emphasizes: "God is the first and great teacher of his people."

With these discussions and exhortations in mind, the National Service Committee, whose Mission Statement includes the call "to strengthen the Catholic Charismatic Renewal," in collaboration with the Association of Diocesan Liaisons, is convening the 2003 National Leaders' Conference in Nashville this November. The theme is "Charismatic Leadership in the New Millennium: Led by the Holy Spirit." This will be the first National Leaders' Conference convened by the NSC since 1979.

The keynote will be given by Fr. Tom Forrest. Seven tracks, consisting of four workshops in each track, will be offered: Prayer Group Leadership, Healing/ Prayer Room Ministry, Praise and Worship, Charisms, Theological Foundations, Prophetic Call of the Church to the Charismatic Renewal, and Praticums: Tools for Moving Forward.

Workshops include: "Evangelizing Prayer Groups," "Holy and Skilled: Qualities of Fruitful and Effective Leadership," "The Basics of Inner Healing Prayer," "Discernment and the Use of Charisms in Healing Prayer," "Releasing Greater Praise and Worship," "Do We Really Need Charisms?" "Praying to Release Charisms in Others," "The Holy Spirit in Scripture," "Baptism in the Holy Spirit Revisited," "Building a 'Culture of Pentecost' and Other Challenges," "Witnessing to the Power of God," "The Gifts of Prophecy and Word of Knowledge." The list of speakers may be found on the back page of this issue.

Who is this conference for? Liaisons, renewal center directors, itinerant ministers, covenant community leaders, ethnic Renewal leaders, and religious order contacts are being invited. Through them we hope to extend this invitation to other leaders (e.g. members of diocesan service teams, other key leaders in a community, or prayer group leaders) including those in various ministries such as healing prayer, music, word gifts, etc. We hope also to encourage new, younger or potential leaders to attend. We encourage "seasoned" and veteran leaders to bring new and younger leaders—or potential leaders—with them, even paying their expenses if necessary. We encourage leaders to look "outside the box" of leaders to youth leaders and ministers, those in LifeTeen,

Franciscan University youth conferences, etc. We are particularly anxious to reach young leaders.

If you would like to attend please contact your diocesan liaison, renewal center director, community leader or ethnic leader. If you live in a diocese without a liaison or renewal center, please contact our office. No one who serves as a leader or feels the Lord calling him or her to leadership should exclude him or herself.

In his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, our Holy Father has encouraged the whole church to go forward into this new millennium with hope and to "put out into the deep."

Now we must look ahead, we must "put out into the deep," trusting in Christ's words: *Duc in altum!* What we have done this year [the year of the Jubilee] cannot justify a sense of complacency, and still less should it lead us to relax our commitment. On the contrary, the experiences we have had should inspire in us new energy, and impel us to invest in concrete initiatives the enthusiasm which we have felt. Jesus himself warns us: "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). In the cause of the kingdom there is no time for looking back, even less for settling into laziness. Much awaits us.

Leaders especially need to hear these words and to respond. Coming to Nashville in November would be one way—a very important way—to respond. See you there. ♦

## Friends of the NSC

The National Service Committee would like to thank all those who have made a donation or donations in this difficult year. In the face of a weak economy, a war in Iraq, and concerns about SARS and terrorism, charitable giving has been down, not just to the National Service Committee and Chariscenter USA, but to many Catholic and Christian organizations. Donations to the NSC are 10-20% below giving in 2002. However, the Lord is faithful to his promises and the work continues.

If you are able to make a summertime donation, we would certainly appreciate it. It can get pretty lean around here in the dog days of summer!

We would like to introduce and thank the following for becoming Charter Members of Fanning the Flame Partners:

Mr. and Mrs. James Archer  
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Mr. and Mrs. William Cable  
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If you would like more information about Fanning the Flame Partners or would like to become a Charter Member, call us at 1-800-338-2445.

Ministry  
Update  
.....  
by Virginia King



In January, two new members were elected to serve three-year terms on the National Service Committee. I asked them to share their reflections on the vision of the NSC, "Renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church."

**Chuck Hornsby**, a leader in the Alleluia Community in Augusta, Georgia, reflects on how important the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is to our modern world.

Pope John Paul II has said we live in a "culture of death." We need the Holy Spirit to bring life out of death. In Jesus' time many religious people were in bondage to legalism. They sought the letter of the law but had forgotten its essence. We need the Holy Spirit to bring us beyond legalism so that we live under the law of love. In our age we define freedom as getting to do whatever we want. We need the Holy Spirit to bring us into the true freedom of being able to do those things that we are called to do. We live in an age that is "relationally challenged." We need the Holy Spirit to draw us again into meaningful personal relationships. We live in an age of litigation. We need the Holy Spirit to draw us into reconciliation. We live in an age of isolation and independence. We need the Holy Spirit to draw us into forms of community that will support our daily lives in Christ. We often feel helpless to deal with the fearful complexity of the problems in the modern world. We need the Holy Spirit and his gifts to empower us so that we face the future with faith and boldness.

It is not a time for business as usual. It is not a time to hang back. It is an exciting time. It is a time for "renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church." "All creation groans and moans

waiting for the coming of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:18). The poor, the disenfranchised, the sick, and those in bondage to the deception of the devil, are all waiting for the coming of the sons of God. We need a new and even more powerful release of the Holy Spirit. We need to stir up the "gifts given us with the laying on of hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). I am looking forward to working with the National Service Committee in this task. May our hearts be full of hope as we move forward. "He who is faithful has begun this good work in us; he will surely bring it to fulfillment" (Phil. 1:6).

**Fr. John Gordon**, a priest of the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, and currently working with the pre-theology program at Franciscan University of Steubenville, shares his enthusiasm.

Praise the Lord Jesus Christ, now and forever! God is not finished yet! He has so much more. What we have already experienced in the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a tremendous gift. And the grace, the power, the mercy, the love of the Lord keeps pouring in! I believe the vision statement of the NSC invites all who know this new Pentecost to partner together, that the whole church may explicitly live in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Lord is doing so much, and yet we miss so much of what he is doing. As we are more and more able to recognize the hand of the Lord, we will more and more be able to see his face! I am encouraged that there are so many signs of the Lord's grace in these days; among young people, in the various ethnic communities, in the renewal of Catholic family life and many other experiences of renewal, both personal and institutional. And there's still more! Now and forever, praise the Lord Jesus Christ! ♦

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