

EXERT YOURSELF!

by David Thorp

Perspire. It was the only word on the piece of paper the woman handed me as leaders from several prayer groups concluded a time of prayer. She said, “I don’t usually get words but I think I have a word for you. I don’t know what it means.” When I read it aloud everyone laughed.

But I prayed with the word. And it has become a call and challenge from God: I am to live by/through (*per*) the Spirit (*spire*); I am to live by allowing the Spirit to breathe into, in and through me. There’s nothing really new about that word, that manner of being a disciple of Jesus.

But we forget. We forget individually, as a movement of Charismatic Renewal and even in the church as a whole. We tend to rely on our experience, our education, our positions, our power. That’s why the call urgently needs to be repeated to us (to me!) and to the church. The more that the Charismatic Renewal seeks to and actually does “perspire” the better we will serve the church. We will serve the church prophetically. We will be a reminder—sometimes irritatingly so—that the only way to fully and authentically live as church is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Perspiring” means developing a passion for dynamic and life-giving tensions. A recurring problem for us is that we don’t like tension; we aren’t good at living in tension. We settle for one thing *or* another, rather than embracing *both*.

“Perspiring” says:

- ✓ We’re ready to go immediately *and* we won’t go until the Spirit says so.
- ✓ We’ll wait until the Spirit directs our moving *and* we won’t keep the Spirit waiting.

- ✓ We won’t tight-fistedly hold onto the old *and* we won’t be enchanted by novelty.
- ✓ We’ll be firmly grounded by the Spirit *and* we’ll be ready to pull up stakes.
- ✓ We’ll be bold because it is the Spirit of God that blows in and through us *and* we’ll be humble because it’s the Spirit of God that blows in and through us.
- ✓ We’ll be confident because it is with the power of the Holy Spirit that we speak and act *and* we’ll tremble in holy fear because it’s the power of the Holy Spirit that’s active in us.

To “perspire” means to live on the edge—reaching out in new ways, being carried/sent to places we would prefer not go and to people we would rather not approach. “Perspiring” has us risking—being misunderstood, unappreciated, looking foolish, falling flat. *And* to “perspire” is to be ever-vigilant for and always discerning the Spirit’s movement: Is this really the Holy Spirit that we are following?

Charismatic Renewal as a movement serves the church precisely by perspiring. We serve the church by living in this prophetic way.

Perspiring is the always-challenging *manner* of our living as a movement. But is there a *matter* to our living? That is, is there a particular ministry into which we are being carried by the Holy Spirit by which the Charismatic Renewal movement serves the church and the world?

I have met people everywhere currently or formerly involved in the Charismatic Renewal movement who are serving in parishes as religious education teachers and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, on marriage preparation teams, on parish councils, as pastoral associates and in other

staff positions. They are in pro-life activities: praying outside abortion clinics, helping at crisis pregnancy centers, involved in post-abortion healing ministries, advocating for legislative change. They are in leadership positions in dioceses. They are in prison ministries and caring for the poor. They serve the church as priests and deacons, in consecrated religious life. None of these activities is the core ministry of the Charismatic Renewal movement.

Archbishop Paul Cordes, addressing the National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in 1987, closed his remarks with an exhortation: “Be who you are. Be a movement of evangelization.” We must hear that same exhortation repeatedly. We must heed that exhortation with more zeal, with more imagination, with greater effort. ▶



Intercessory Prayer

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

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
That I love only what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
To defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
That I always may be holy.

Prayer of St. Augustine

Charismatic Renewal is to pour itself out for the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God. We are to spend ourselves being heralds of the good news that God, in Jesus Christ, is reconciling the world—and every person—to himself. We are to offer ourselves totally as ministers of that reconciliation, appealing with fervor to others and helping them to be reconciled to God, to others, even with themselves. Precisely in doing that we serve the church.

We are to bring this Good News, to be instruments of reconciliation in the only effective way: in the power of the Holy Spirit who is, according to Pope Paul VI, the principal agent and goal of evangelization. We are to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and to be instruments that perspire—work really hard—in our evangelizing activities.

When we do that people open their lives to the Lord and begin to learn how to “perspire.” They find themselves inspired to serve God and to build the Kingdom in many different ways.

In our evangelization ministry today we face some special challenges. God has brought many people across our individual paths and to prayer meetings. In doing so God has shown mercy as he healed them, helped them to know him better, filled them with his Holy Spirit, set them on a life of holiness and service. And God showed us mercy in letting us have it pretty easy to evangelize; God brought people to us.

In most parts of the country prayer group leaders have been saying for years that not as many new people are coming. The “fish” that God wants caught into his net are no longer swimming near the “pier” of our prayer groups. It is past time to launch out, to leave the comfort of the pier and go into deep waters way over any of our heads (our ideas, preferences and comfort levels). It is time to go to the places where the “fish” are swimming. It is past time to look at the “nets” (our methods and expressions of evangelizing) we have been using and ask if God wants us to use some new nets. I’m convinced God does!

There are so many more people who will never come to hear the Good News, come

to the Lord to receive his reconciling love. There are so many who won’t come to our prayer meetings and seminars, to healing services or conferences. So many do not even know that such things exist. Since they won’t come, we must go. We must go to them, not simply in order to re-stock our prayer meetings, seminars and conferences, but to bring them the life-giving message of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring them to an encounter with the living and reconciling Lord who overcomes all alienation and gives new life.

We also need to be challenged to see that other individuals and groups—beyond the movement as it is currently configured—are also evangelizing in the power of the Holy Spirit. We need to find ways to affirm their service to the Lord. We must look for ways to learn from them. We must pursue relationships with them and become co-laborers for the glory of God.

Come on, now—perspire! ♦



A member of the National Service Committee, David Thorp serves as Liaison for the Charismatic Renewal in the Archdiocese of Boston.



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

- ♦ For the 2003 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in San Antonio, May 30-June 1, that this event will impact the church and the nation through thousands of people, renewed in hope, carrying hope back to their homes and communities.
- ♦ For all the Holy Spirit seminars that are planned during the Easter Season, that through them many lives will be renewed by the Holy Spirit.
- ♦ For those throughout the nation who have worked so faithfully to foster baptism in the Holy Spirit, that their work will bear abundant fruit, and that they will be sustained through every trial and illness.
- ♦ For a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our parishes and communities on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, 2003.

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NEWSBRIEFS

National Service Committee meets

The National Service Committee met in mid-January in Augusta prior to the Gathering of National Leadership Groups of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

During the meeting the Committee said goodbye to Deacon Bill Brennan and Michele Greischar whose terms had come to an end, and to Fr. Art Cooney, OFM Cap., who had resigned earlier in January. After the election of new members (see article below), time was devoted to continuing the discussion begun during the Committee's December retreat meeting (see *From the Director*, p. 14) about the current state of the Renewal and the Service Committee's response.

The Committee also spent time praying for the Renewal, reviewing the status and membership of the NSC Council, evaluating recent issues of *Pentecost Today* and the Editorial Board's work, and preparing for its joint meeting with the Diocesan Liaison Steering Committee and the Gathering of National Leadership Groups.

The meeting with the Diocesan Liaison Steering Committee was also prayerful. Discussion focused on the National Leaders' Conference to be held in November in Nashville, and a cooperative venture toward youth. ♦

NSC elects new members

At its meeting in January, the National Service Committee elected two new members, Fr. John Gordon of Newark and Chuck Hornsby of Augusta. Josephine Cachia of Brooklyn was re-elected to a second term. All three will serve three-year terms.

A priest of the Archdiocese of Newark, **Fr. John Gordon** was ordained in 1988. He has been active in the Catholic Charis-

matic Renewal since 1975, having served in a number of local, regional, national and international positions, including Vice-Chair of the North American Renewal Service Committee (NARSC) and as a local leader for the New Jersey Chapter of the Fraternity of Priests. He has been a member of the NSC Council since 2001. Fr. John also serves as regional and archdiocesan English-language Spiritual Director for the Cursillo Movement. He is Parochial Vicar of St. Adalbert Parish in Elizabeth, New Jersey.


Chuck Hornsby is a native of San Antonio, Texas, who moved to Georgia and joined the Alleluia Covenant Community in Augusta in 1976. Chuck has worked as a teacher of the deaf, having taught in the poverty-stricken districts of San Antonio. He has served as a lay pastor, administrator and head of finances for the Alleluia Community, and presently serves as the Community's Pastoral Coordinator and School Superintendent. He has been a member of the NSC Council. Chuck and his wife, Peggy, have three children. ♦

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1/03

CHARISMS

Three basic signs of a charism

by Sherry Weddell

Some time ago I attended a gathering of lay people committed to the mission of evangelization. Near the end of two days of sharing, the time had come for the part that most of us dread: trying to get practical and figure out where we wanted to go from here. As we discussed the always-exciting prospect of creating yet another ad hoc committee, one of our members suddenly interrupted: "I was feeling great about this whole meeting until this point. I think we're off track. I'm losing energy and I don't feel the Spirit anymore." Another member echoed his concerns, "Me, too. I don't feel the Spirit anymore".

It looked like the meeting was going to come to a screeching halt when our moderator, who knew both speakers well, intervened. "Greg and Allen," he said, "you are both practitioners—you just want to get out there and evangelize." Both men nodded. "That's what energizes you. Committee work bores you, so of course you feel a loss of energy. But we must not confuse that lack of interest with the leading of the Holy Spirit."

My friends had not yet learned to distinguish between the signs that they were working in an area of their own giftedness and other ways in which the presence of the Holy Spirit and our feelings interact. Of the three basic signs of a charism—your experience, your effectiveness, and the feedback that you receive from others—one's personal experience can be the most difficult to sort out.

Discernment is often complicated by the fact that many Catholics have only one category for unusual experiences of any kind: the supernatural. We are not used

to distinguishing between the kinds and purposes of such experiences and the very human feelings that may accompany them. Unlike many Catholics, charismatics *expect* to feel God's love and presence in tangible, even remarkable ways. But it can seem irreverent and ungrateful to seek to evaluate their source and meaning further. We can unintentionally set such store by direct, supernatural interventions that we regard more ordinary means of discernment such as prayerful, critical thinking as "unspiritual." But the God who created our minds and gave us the Holy Spirit never intended these two means of discernment to be in conflict.

What does this mean for the discernment of our charisms? Typically (but not always) we experience renewed energy, satisfaction and joy at the moment that we are exercising a charism. We may have a strong sense of the presence of God when doing the activity in question or find that we are spontaneously moved to prayer or contemplation.

However, if we depend for our discernment upon our personal experience alone, it can be easy to confuse one of the signs of a gift with the emotional ups and downs that are just part of being human. That is why the other two signs of a charism are actually more important. Because a charism is always for others and does what it is supposed to do, we must pay attention to what God really does through us when we take action, *and* to what people tell us they observe. If we have a charism of healing, people will get well. If we have a charism of mercy, those who suffer are truly comforted. If they are worse off after we're done trying to "help", then we

need to pay attention! How we felt while we were engaged in the activity is never the final word in discernment.

This also means that we cannot assume that just because a supernatural joy often accompanies the use of a charism, that the lack of joy and energy necessarily means that we are no longer doing God's will. It is entirely normal to experience a drop in energy and satisfaction when we are involved in activities to which God is truly calling us but that do not draw upon our charisms. No longer feeling the extraordinary energy that frequently accompanies a charism does not mean that the Holy Spirit is no longer present or that we have somehow missed God's will.

Experiences of extended dryness or "desolation" are an important and common part of spiritual growth as we mature, but their meaning must be carefully discerned. We must be careful not to jump to hasty conclusions. We need to take the joyful side-effects of using a charism seriously, but hold them lightly. As one guide in a larger discernment process, our personal experience is valuable. But if we take it as our only clue to the leading of the Holy Spirit, our feelings can quickly become erratic tyrants that obscure and undermine the quiet but powerful ways in which the Holy Spirit works when God feels farthest away. ♦

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. For more information on the Catherine of Siena Institute, visit their website at www.siena.org.

Future from p. 5

family is a “domestic church,” and parents are the most important teachers and witnesses of faith for their children. The initial formation a person receives in the family marks the rest of that person’s life and constitutes the most precious inheritance parents can leave their children. Faith in our modern society depends in great part on families. Unfortunately the institution of family, also among Christians, is going through a period of crisis that influences this important mission of educating and transmitting faith.

The second place of importance for Christian formation is the parish. The parish constitutes the main structure for pastoral care and for the apostolate. However, to be a truly missionary community, it needs a vibrant network of communities of different kinds, including ecclesial movements.

The parish needs the ecclesial movements to help it achieve a high standard in religious instruction for the lay faithful, and the ecclesial movements need the parish. For the movements the parish is a school of communion and of mission. The large parishes, especially in big cities, are often anonymous, so the small communities help the lay faithful to experience fraternal communion. They become an important place for Christian witness and spiritual support in a world often hostile to Christian faith and morals. The ecclesial movements are also a privileged place where the Gospel is announced directly in a personalized and clear manner, and where lay men and women play a major role.

What are the essential characteristics in the formation of the lay faithful in these Christian communities? The Pope gives an extensive answer in *Christifideles Laici* (cf. n. 57-61). It will be useful to briefly mention the points:

1) It is a **unified and integral** formation engaging the whole person, in all aspects: the natural and Christian dimensions, the

spiritual, doctrinal and missionary. The basis should be a Christian vision of the human person and her vocation. It should be a coherent training that aims to form strong and harmonious Christian personalities built on a convinced and vibrant faith. Today, unfortunately, we meet too many divided, fragmented, and even contradictory persons among Christians.

2) It is an **ecclesial** formation. Christian formation takes place in the church, which as mother and teacher continually generates new life. The church gives us the guarantee and the certainty that we are truly following the right path in educating from the viewpoint of doctrinal content and from the viewpoint of method rooted in the Gospel and the tradition of the church.

3) The ecclesial dimension of formation is a training **oriented towards active participation in the mission of the church**. In the missionary formation of the lay faithful, ecclesial movements have brought extraordinary fruits: fruits of missionary courage and dynamism, helping many lay faithful to overcome a certain shyness and inferiority complexes when confronting the world. At the same time they have brought creativity and originality to the methods of evangelization.

4) The process of formation is a **demanding process**. Christ requires radical choices from his disciples. The whole Gospel needs to be taken seriously and lived to the fullest. Sweetened forms of Christianity in the long run do not convince anybody. We need to have the courage to aim high, especially with the youth. We must say that one of the secrets of success in the ecclesial movements is that they do not restrain from demanding decisive choices from people. Movements are not afraid of placing high demands.

5) Finally, the whole process of Christian formation is **based on the principle of the primacy of grace**. John Paul II writes in the *Novo Millennio Ineunte*: “There is a temptation which perennially besets every

spiritual journey and pastoral work: That of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan” (n. 38). Programs are necessary, but they are not enough. For this reason the Pope stresses: “This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer...our Christian communities must become genuine schools of prayer” (n. 32-33). In the daily life of the baptized, more value should be placed on sacramental life (I refer especially to the sacrament of reconciliation and the Eucharist) and on listening to the Word of God. In this field Renewal in the Spirit has brought many good fruits to the church. Many people have rediscovered the value of prayer, Sunday Mass, reading the Scriptures and sacramental reconciliation linked to spiritual direction. They are very important fruits that need to be cultivated with great care.

We have considered the vast panorama of Christian formation: a great challenge the church is facing on the threshold of the third millennium. All ecclesial movements, in virtue of their own distinctive particular charisms, can and must give an important contribution in this regard. The church needs the ecclesial movements! The church needs Renewal in the Spirit! In order to answer the tremendous challenge of formation, all ecclesial movements—including Renewal in the Spirit—need to grow in ‘ecclesial maturity’ in order to gather mature fruits of communion and mission.

On behalf of the Pontifical Council for the Laity I wish to thank the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and all its communities here in the United States for their commitment to this. You are giving a wonderful service to the church. Continue your mission with courage and perseverance! ♦

Bishop Stanislaw Rylko serves as Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. This article was excerpted from his address at the 2002 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in Pittsburgh.



From the
Director
.....
by Walter Matthews

Discerning the Spirit

Several years ago, as the NSC worked through a number of issues, it sought to clarify its role in the Renewal in these words:

The National Service Committee is a body of leaders in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal who work together *as discerners of the Spirit* to serve the Lord in renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church.

It shares pastoral responsibility for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal with several other leadership bodies in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal with whom it seeks to be in a good relationship.

The Committee meets to pray, discuss and discern the Lord's work in and through the Renewal and the services the Committee provides.

The Service Committee had regularly held five meetings per year. The fifth, held in the late Fall, was often referred to as a "retreat" meeting. The format allowed for extended prayer, discussion and hearing the Lord. Unfortunately, due to tighter finances, the Committee had not held retreat meetings in recent years.

With so many members having reached their term limits and the advent of new members (the current average length on the Service Committee is under three years), the members felt the need to convene a retreat meeting. This was an act of faith because, at the time of the decision, the Committee did not have the money to do so. The meeting was the fourth of the year, finances having eliminated not one but two meetings from the calendar.

So the Committee met last December at the Catholic Charismatic Center in Saginaw, Michigan, for extended prayer and "as discerners of the Spirit." What happened and what did the Committee hear?

The Executive Committee, under the leadership of NSC Chairman Aggie Neck, had prayerfully prepared the weekend under the theme, "Be Shepherds of the Flock," (1 Pt. 5:2). Some additional Scripture passages/verses were identified for the Service Committee's prayerful reflection: John 15:16 (invitation); Hebrews 11:1, 6 (faith); 2 Timothy 1:6-7, 14 (anointing); Ephesians 1:17-19 (infilling); 1 Timothy 4:12-16 (pastoral call); Isaiah 54:2-3 (vision); Mark 16:17-20 (mission).

It is the Service Committee's hope that in taking this extra time for prayer and listening it may make its contribution to that "ecclesial maturity."

During the course of the weekend, many prophetic words were shared: words of protection, encouragement and mission. The Committee spent part of Saturday afternoon praying with one another for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Many individual words and images were shared.

Our discussion was wide ranging. These key points emerged:

- ◆ There is a need to break out of the past, to think outside the box.
- ◆ There is a need to further discuss "charismatic" language and, specifically, the title "Charismatic Renewal."
- ◆ Individual members and the Service Committee as a whole need to own the

Vision and Mission Statements of the Service Committee and its development in response to Pope John Paul II's teachings.

◆ There is a need to discuss further how to implement the Vision and Mission statements in new and creative ways.

◆ Finally, there is a desire among the Committee members to have an annual retreat meeting, as well as time at every meeting to pray, discuss and "discern the Spirit."

In the Committee's meeting in Augusta in January, the prayer, discussion and discernment continued.

Toward the end of Bishop Stanislaw Rylko's important talk at the 2002 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference, he said: "The church needs Renewal in the Spirit! In order to answer the tremendous challenge of formation, all ecclesial movements—including Renewal in the Spirit—need to grow in 'ecclesial maturity' in order to gather mature fruits of communion and mission."

It is the Service Committee's hope that in taking this extra time for prayer and listening it may make its contribution to that "ecclesial maturity" to which Bishop Rylko and, earlier, Pope John Paul II have called us.

It is hoped that the convening of its first National Leaders' Conference since 1979 this coming November will also move this Renewal forward to maturity. (More on this in the next issue.) ◆



One of the great blessings of serving on the NSC is the opportunity to see the great variety of expressions of Catholic Charismatic Renewal around the country. As we travel to different locations for meetings and conferences, we meet dedicated people serving their dioceses through retreat centers, houses of prayer, covenant communities, prayer groups and renewal centers. Like facets of a jewel, each reveals a different aspect of this great renewal in the Holy Spirit.

In December, we had a meeting in Saginaw, Michigan. The wonderful people at the Charismatic Renewal Center there treated us like royalty. We stayed at the retreat house which this dedicated group of people renovated from an old convent which was ready to be torn down. Their vision of a place of spiritual renewal, and the way they have laid down their lives for the sake of this vision, is truly inspiring. It was a holy place, and we were privileged to be able to soak in that holiness.

In January we had a meeting in Augusta, Georgia, hosted by the Alleluia Covenant Community. Again, this was an eye-opening experience. This community purchased quite a few houses in a slum area of Augusta, moved in, prayerfully “cleaned up” the area so that crime was greatly reduced, and renovated many of the homes. They purchased a school that was being closed and opened their own Christian school. Again, the transformation of the places where they live and pray took a lot of hard, physical labor.

Our “life in the Spirit” is lived on every level—physical, spiritual, emotional, relational. Each place we visit gives evidence that the Holy Spirit draws people together and helps them grow in wisdom, age and grace as they serve the Lord. In the same way that no two families are exactly alike, so are no two expressions of Catholic Charismatic Renewal alike. I rejoice that I am privileged to get to know so many different facets of this jewel.

Last but not least, we have a few words of reflection from Fr. Art, who ended his term of service on the NSC in January 2003.

Fr. Art Cooney, OFM Cap.

My years on the NSC have been a tremendous blessing to me. I especially treasure my relationships with the other members; the love and laughter, and at times, the sorrow we have shared.

There is a special closeness that comes from sharing our faith in Jesus and sharing prayer, but there’s also a sense of being collaborators in the most important mission in the world; to extend to others a life-changing knowledge of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are people of faith and love, serving a gracious God on a holy mission! I am truly grateful to have been a part of, and to continue to support and collaborate with, the National Service Committee. ♦

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