

Publication of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

# PENTECOST *Today*

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## *the gift of healing*

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



## Chairman's Corner

by Aggie Neck

### Healing mercy

Mercy is a word that conjures up many images. The dictionary itself lists several synonyms for mercy: charity, clemency, grace, leniency. They are then defined “as a disposition to show kindness or compassion. Mercy implies compassion that forebears punishing even when justice demands it.”

The Greek word that describes mercy says it is to wipe out, obliterated forever. In her Magnificat, Mary proclaims that God is “ever mindful of his mercy” (Luke 1:54). Scripture says of God’s mercy, “Let us fall into the hands of the Lord and not into the hands of men, for equal to his majesty is the mercy that he shows” (Sirach 2:18). “Who can measure his majestic power or exhaust the tale of his mercies?” (Sirach 18:3). My favorite comes from the book of Lamentations, which seems like an unlikely place to find such a promise. “But, I will call this to mind as my reason to have hope: The favors of the Lord are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning so great is his faithfulness” (Lam. 3:21-23).

When we think of the great gift of Divine Mercy and its celebration on Divine Mercy Sunday it causes us to stand in awe. Pope Benedict XVI highlighted this earlier this year when he said that Divine Mercy is “an integral dimension of a Christian’s faith and prayer.” Pope John Paul II had said: “outside of the mercy of God there is no other source of hope for man.”

God’s mercy is constantly being given to the world. It is always before us ready to be given to us and be embraced by

us. It is mercy that gives healing, it is mercy that sets things right again, and it is mercy that frees us from the punishment due to sin. It is mercy that ultimately calls us to be merciful as he is merciful. It calls us to give mercy in the same measure we have received mercy. Only the grace of God can raise us up to such a level.

Very often the scripture from Luke 6:36-38 is used to create in us the zeal to give in a monetary way. As we look closely at the words we will note that we are told not to judge in order not to be judged, not to condemn in order not to be condemned. We are told to pardon in order to be pardoned and then we read “for the measure you measure with will be measured back to you.” As we struggle to do these things we find that it is not as easy as it looks or seems. This should create in us a desire to cry out to God for the grace to be people of mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

“In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and risen, in the spirit of his messianic mission, enduring in the history of humanity, we raise our voices and pray that the Love which is in the Father may once again be revealed at this stage of history, and that, through the work of the Son and Holy Spirit, **it may be shown to be present in our modern world and to be more powerful than evil: more powerful than sin and death.** ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy’” (John Paul II, *The Mercy of God*). ♦

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



## Editor's Desk

Sr. Martha Jean McGarry

*Whoever tastes the Lord becomes a spring of joy for all the world in pain.*

These words I recall from a hymn I once read have both challenged and inspired me. I am continually reminded of my call to be an agent of God’s tender love in my daily life. The articles in this issue seek to explain, demonstrate and encourage each of us to be instruments of God’s mercy through the charism of healing.

Our columnists—**Aggie Neck, Walter Matthews and Sister Mary Anne Schaezner**—each approach this gift from a different aspect. Check their columns for important insights.

**Christie Beback** in her article gives testimony to her call to be an agent of healing and mercy. She encourages us to hear our call to be the same. **Roy Handy and John Sullivan** show us how to simply, yet effectively bring this charism of healing into our parishes.

**Michele Greischar** dramatically demonstrates healing prayer ministry in our prayer meetings in her article on page 8 and 9. *Could this happen at your prayer meeting?* Spiritual formation for those in the healing ministry is of utmost importance. **Ron Novotny** gives us some suggestions to strengthen and equip us for this service.

The Lord uses our youth as instruments of healing as we read in **Cindy Erivez’** article detailing healings that take place during the praise & worship of her Youth Prayer Meeting. *Our God is an awesome God!* ♦

# Vigil of Pentecost in Rome

## Church Celebrates with Renewal Movements

**O**n Saturday, June 3, 2006, the eve of Pentecost, Benedict XVI gave an exhortation to a gathering of some 400,000 members of movements and ecclesial communities gathered in and around St. Peter's Square. This massive meeting presided over by Benedict XVI was the second of its kind. A similar meeting was convoked in 1998 by Pope John Paul II.

Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, during Saturday's meeting addressed Pope Benedict in these words: "Holy Father, you have always told us that wherever the Spirit appears there is surprise, bewilderment and amazement, because it transforms people and changes the course of history, generating fruits that could never be the outcome of human planning. Today we wish to raise our song of praise for the fruits of holy lives, of communion, of courage and missionary creativity that these new charisms make flourish in the Church of our times. They are truly signs of a new Christian spring. "See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19).

In his greetings to the crowd gathered Pope Benedict XVI emphasized several points which were of great encouragement to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and other movements represented at this event:

- ◆ The Holy Father expressed hope that the Church's "pastors will be careful not to extinguish the Spirit manifested in the new movements and ecclesial communities."
- ◆ The Spirit always inspires new gifts, using diverse instruments to achieve his purposes.
- ◆ In him multiplicity and unity go together. The Spirit breathes where he wills. He does so in an unexpected way, in unexpected places, and in ways that had never before been imagined.
- ◆ Multiformity and unity are inseparable. The Holy Spirit

desires multiformity, and desires all to be one body in union with the Church.

- ◆ The Pope said, "One who has found what is true, beautiful and good in his life — the only treasure, the precious pearl! — runs everywhere to share it, in the family, at work, in all the environments of his life."
- ◆ The movements and communities were encouraged to be even more and more involved in the Pope's universal apostolic ministry of evangelization—opening the doors to Christ.
- ◆ "You are called to use your gifts to build an authentic civilization—the civilization of love."

After the Pope's message there was a liturgical memorial of the sacrament of confirmation, characterized by the rite of fire, the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the profession of faith.

Luis Fernando Figari, founder of the Christian Life Movement, and Patti Gallagher Mansfield, of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, thanked the Holy Father at the end on behalf of all the movements and ecclesial communities. In her remarks Patti Mansfield said, "Holy Father, thank you for loving us. Thank you for your constant support and encouragement. Thank you for saying that you are a friend of the movements and that we are a sign of the new springtime. We want to return love for love. Jesus said, 'If you love me, keep my word' (cf. John 14:23), and we stand ready to receive your word, Holy Father, and to follow your direction."

As Archbishop Rylko proclaimed to the Pope, "**We are ready for the mission! The Church can count on us! The Pope and bishops can count on us!**" ◆

*This summary is adapted from Zenit.org Vatican News #ZE06060413 & #ZE060604103, June 4, 2006.*

# Agents of mercy



by Christie Beback

I used to have a nice, respectable view on the subject of divine healing. I definitely believed that God had the *power* to heal. I believed that he *had* healed in the past, especially through the earthly ministry of Jesus. I even believed that on rare occasion, under special circumstances, he healed in our time. This presumably happened because those involved had great holiness or great faith, or God had an extraordinary reason to interrupt the natural order.

*It took a lot longer for me to believe that when I pray for healing that anything could possibly happen.*

Then, in 1972, my husband and I began to attend the Amazing Grace Prayer Meeting. My views on divine healing quickly changed. Seeing what was happening around me, I came to know that when people of faith *ask*, God often heals. It took a lot longer for me to believe that when I pray for healing that anything could possibly happen. The road to this faith was through humble experience and the taking of baby steps.

It began with feeling a bit guilty about my mother. Here I was seeing wonderful healings occur and at the same time she was suffering from painful, nearly crippling arthritis. I found it difficult, though, to even think of encouraging her to receive prayer. She was a very hardworking, stubborn woman who did not approve of people that “ran to the doctor.” She had actually lost all feeling and control in her left leg because she had refused, for years, to seek medical help for her Sciatica pain. All my

efforts to get her to the doctor had proven fruitless. In light of the fact that I am a Registered Nurse, this was particularly frustrating. She also happened to be a Protestant and I didn’t know how she’d feel about “Catholic prayer.”

Finally, I found myself phoning her and inviting her to attend a Mass and Healing Service. I was certain that nothing would come of it, but to my utter amazement, she came. When prayer for healing was offered she quickly got in the line for the priest’s team and received prayer. At this point I was daring to hope that she would be healed but alas nothing happened.

Months later we went home for the holidays. I noticed my mother was rushing around energetically. Her movements seemed free and easy. There was no facial grimacing. “How’s your arthritis?” I asked. “Oh, that’s not much of a problem any more.” she said. I stared at her, questioning... Finally she shed some light of the situation. “Okay... I went to the doctor,” she said, sheepishly, “and he gave me some pills that seem to really take care of it.”

People say that God heals in different ways. Knowing my mother as I did, I had no trouble seeing this as divine intervention. In fact, her going to the doctor was almost a bigger event to me than an instantaneous healing. I thanked God for rewarding my small baby step so generously.

# Agents of mercy

**M**y next faith-building experience involved my father. This occurred about a year later when my parents came for a visit. After putting their suitcases down, my mother pulled a chair into the middle of my kitchen floor, commanded my father to sit in it and announced that I was to pray over his skin cancer. Thoughts raced through my head. Should I try to quickly round up someone from the prayer meeting that actually knew how to pray for healing? I decided this was not feasible. Did my father *want* prayer? It seemed that he was agreeable in a Stoic sort of way. Feeling put on the spot and profoundly awkward, I anointed my father with blessed oil and asked God to please heal the skin cancer. The prayer was painfully short and humble and nothing happened. We all sort of shrugged and went on with our visiting.

The next morning we were in for a wonderful surprise. My quiet, undemonstrative father was smiling like a Cheshire cat. The large skin cancer that had been growing on the back of his ear had totally disappeared! I was in shock and could only praise God for his goodness.

Some months later I had another experience that was to increase my understanding and faith in this area. While on a playground outing with my daughter I met a stranger who was obviously very ill. He had all the signs of end-stage lung disease including a portable oxygen tank. Talking to him I learned that he was suffering from Asbestosis. He was a very sweet man and my heart went out to him. Plucking up my courage I suggested that he seek prayer for healing. I even offered to come, with others, to his house, as he didn't feel he had the strength to attend a meeting or Mass. He was open to this and a few days later three of us knocked on his door. One of my prayer partners had brought a written prayer she wanted him to repeat after her. She said it was a good preparation for re-

ceiving God's healing. As the prayer began I was horrified at how personal and direct it was, especially in light of the fact that the man's extended family had gathered. She led him through asking for forgiveness for all his sins, giving his life to God, forgiving everyone who had ever hurt him, rejecting Satan, you name it. The only thing she left out was a baptismal ceremony. The man, however, prayed along in sweet humility and sincerity. Finally we joined in asking God to heal him. I felt God's love in the room, but no obvious healing occurred.

As it happened, this man died a couple months later. I felt true sadness at his loss. I wanted to offer his wife my condolences but I held back. Had my interference in their suffering just made things worse? Had I stepped out of acceptable bounds in my enthusiasm? Weeks later I did stop by. His wife then told me the story of his death. She had sat at his bedside as the shortness of breath became more and more extreme. At one point she asked him, "Honey, are you scared?" He said, "No. Jesus is right here with me!" Then he died. She explained that he had rarely set foot in a church but that she felt certain he was now with God and this was her greatest comfort.

I have come to believe that we should never neglect to pray for physical healing. God wants to bless and heal and love and help people. He even wants to bring some into his saving grace. His arm is not shortened. He only needs a few baby steps on our part. ♦

*Christie Beback was baptized as an adult at Blessed Sacrament Church in Seattle where she happily presents workshops to this day. She has been a speaker for various church programs, including Alpha, and has presented workshops at Catholic Charismatic Conferences.*



*I have come to believe that we should never neglect to pray for physical healing.*



# Prayer ministry in our

How often have we heard, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could have the opportunity to pray for the needs of those in our parish!" Below are two examples of people who went beyond the thought, and beyond the words, and worked together with their pastors to bring this hope into reality. *Holy Spirit, continue to open doors and hearts to the charism of healing in our everyday life.*

## Prayer for Healing Ministry

by John O. Sullivan

**T**he Prayer for Healing Ministry at the parishes of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and Immaculate Conception in Everett, Washington began in September of 1995. Supported and encouraged by our pastor, Fr. Dennis Robb, we offer this ministry not only to our parishioners, but also to the wider community.

We use a team approach to this ministry. Prayer teams of two trained prayer ministers will pray with an individual, in strict confidence, for physical, emotional, spiritual or relational healing.

Currently we provide prayer teams after the 11:30 AM Mass every Sunday at Our Lady of Perpetual Help and twice a month after the 6:00 PM. Mass at Immaculate Conception. We also offer once a week (for several weeks) one-hour ministry with individuals at the parish office or church during the week, as the need presents itself.

Most of our 25 Prayer for Healing ministers have participated in the two-year training program of *Institute for Christian Ministries* (I.C.M.), founded by Fr. Leo Thomas, O.P. in 1977. In fact, af-

ter the parish purchased the training program from I.C.M., and with the strong support of our pastor we have trained three, two-year groups ourselves. I.C.M. provides a training program that is internationally packaged (information is available on their website: [www.healingministry.org/icm](http://www.healingministry.org/icm)).

The reason why this ministry is so important is that we minister to the whole person, not just a part of that person. We do not compete with the medical and counseling professions, but rather complement what they provide, with healing prayer. One of the most important things we are trained to do is to listen intently to what the individual brings to the ministry session without judging or condemning them. In fact, after listening to their request/their story, one of the first prayers we offer is a prayer of affirmation, thanking God for this person and how much God loves them just as they are. This is before we pray for their specific request. This prayer in itself is powerfully healing.

The Prayer for Healing Ministry is also a powerful tool of evangelization and re-evangelization. In the early centu-

ries of our church history, many people came into the Faith via this particular ministry. I remember a few years ago a woman called the parish office. She had been away from the church for twenty-five years because she thought she had committed an unpardonable sin of abortion. I invited her to come into the office that very day. I listened to her distressful story and prayed with her. Affirming her uniqueness as God's beloved child, I asked him to heal her of this tragic event and reconcile her to her loving Savior, Jesus Christ. I asked her if she wanted to go to confession and though she felt nervous, she agreed to do so. Our Assistant Pastor was in the office at that time and was willing and able to hear her confession then and there. She has been actively participating in the sacramental life of the Church ever since.

A testimony often expressed by supplicants, which validates the effectiveness of this ministry, is their experience of the presence of God through those who minister to them. ♦

*John Sullivan and his wife, Carmen, are on the staff at Our Lady of Perpetual Help and Immaculate Conception Parishes in Everett, WA. Carmen is director of Religious Edu-*



*cation, and John is responsible for three outreach ministries: Prayer of Healing, Grief Ministry and Stephen Ministry.*



## How to bring healing prayer ministry to your parish

by Roy Handy

It was 10:30 in the morning and Mass was letting out at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Toledo, Ohio. Father had just announced that, starting today, the “Healing Team” would be available to pray for any needs of parishioners. A man who had come into the church thinking Mass was just starting heard Father’s announcement. He ran to the front of the church. Weeping, he told the team his life was in a shambles and asked for prayer. Thus began the ministry we call the “Afterglow of the Eucharist.”

Sometime before this, our ministry to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the Diocese of Toledo had been to have weekly charismatic Masses and healing services in parishes around the diocese. Those of us who served on healing teams for these Masses felt that we often had our fingers on the pulse of the diocese as we prayed with people. Many times, I had shared with our late Bishop James Hoffman about the needs of the people we encountered. However, we were only able to visit these parishes once a year and we were concerned that this wasn’t enough. Our people needed more help.

One day at a lunch meeting in the Charismatic Renewal office, a group of us began discussing ways to bring prayer to our local parishes. My wife,

Barb, mentioned a book she had read many years ago called *The AfterGlow* about the Holy Spirit in our lives. Another person talked about the Eucharist and how powerful it is when we receive it at Mass.

We decided that we would approach our pastor and parish council with a proposal that teams of parishioners provide prayer ministry after Mass. It would be a ministry for the parish run by the parish, not the Charismatic Renewal office. We would call it the “Afterglow of the Eucharist,” a name previously given to the time of silence we always had after receiving the Eucharist at the charismatic Masses to listen for words from the Lord. We had a brochure made up so the idea could be presented to other parishes as well.

At Good Shepherd, the Afterglow of the Eucharist has been a work of love. The prayer team members are the last to leave the church and before they go, they make sure all the needs of the people are met. Sometimes, two or three people come for prayer and other times we have as many as eight or nine. As long as there are people who need prayer, we remain in the church.

We use a prayer called the “Simple Blessing Prayer” and may pray silently as the Spirit leads us. Since beginning

### Prayer Card

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

**Solemn Blessing of Pentecost**  
 This day the Father of light has enlightened the minds of the disciples by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. May he bless you and give you the gifts of the Spirit forever. AMEN.

May that fire which hovered over the disciples as tongues of flame burn out all evil from your hearts and make them glow with pure light. AMEN.

God inspired speech in different tongues to proclaim one faith. May he strengthen your faith and fulfill your hope to see him face to face. AMEN.

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. AMEN. AMEN.

*From the Roman Catholic Sacramentary*

this parish ministry, the idea has spread to other parishes in the diocese and we have received calls from throughout the country from people who have heard about it and want to start it in their own parishes.

Although all of us who serve on the parish healing team know we are called to pray everyday, it is a special privilege to be able to pray for our fellow parishioners when they come forward after a Sunday Mass. ♦



*Roy Handy is a member of Good Shepherd Parish and is Director of the Charismatic Renewal in the Diocese of Toledo.*