

PENTECOST *Today*

January/February/March 2010

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Photo: Tammie Stevens

New life in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.



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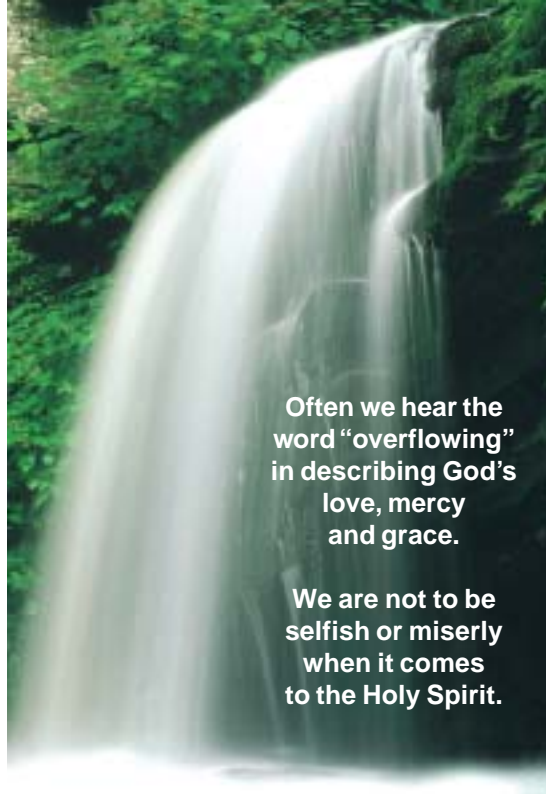
.....
by Fr. Richard Loch

We are on a Mission

As Catholic charismatics we have always had a sense of mission. Our lives were changed when we were baptized in the Holy Spirit. For many of us it was at the time of that experience when we became aware of, and experienced, the presence, love and power of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in new and deeper ways.

The National Leaders' and Ministries' Conference last October was a time for us to recall that with baptism in the Holy Spirit comes a mission. God is generous in his love and does not hold back. Often we hear the word "overflowing" in describing God's love, mercy and grace. The conference was a reminder of how God equipped us for the mission we received at the time of our sacramental Baptism, stirred it up in our lives and brought it to our attention in new ways with baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Our mission is to live baptism of the Holy Spirit and to spread it to others. We are not to be selfish or miserly when it comes to the Holy Spirit. We are called to bring this wonderful awareness and experience of God's presence



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to as many people as we can. As we prepare for the season of Lent it is a time when those in the RCIA are in their final preparation to be baptized and/or received into the Church. This is an opportunity for us to reach out, where possible, to the catechumens and candidates and invite them to build on the joy of their Easter Vigil experience.

In 2000 Pope John Paul II stated: "The Charismatic Renewal represents a grace, a kind of leaven to invigorate all our parishes and all our Churches." I strongly encourage everyone in the Renewal to somehow involve themselves in some form of Life in the Spirit Seminar during the Easter season. Pray about this, plan rich talks and testimonies and boldly promote this around the parishes and communities. This is an important part our mission and this is what the Lord has equipped each of us for. May we be generous in sharing the great and powerful presence of God with whomever we can. ♦

Fr. Richard Loch is Chairman of the National Service Committee.



Editor's Desk

.....
by Sr. Martha Jean McGarry

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations (Psalm 100:5).

This issue explodes with messages of God's faithfulness, continued love and presence with us. There is no doubt that God is still in charge and blessing us beyond all expectations.

Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner gives a general overview of the National Service Committee **Mission Statement**. This statement is a true testimony of God's faithfulness and guidance. Don't miss it. We will continue to expand on its riches in future issues.

It's the 20th anniversary of *Fanning the Flame!* Can you believe it! In his article **Fr. George Montague** reminds us of the blessings of this booklet, how it relates to today, and gives hope and suggestions for our continued growth.

Jane Guenther and Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner share some of the highlights and blessings of the **October Leaders' and Ministries' Conference**. Hope you enjoy the photos, too.

Using an example of two different prayer meetings as a starting point, **Gerry Mader** speaks to us of the importance of using the charisms with confidence.

Jackie Tucci continues our reflections on the fruits of the Spirit. Her 'parable of the orange tree' is filled with practical wisdom.

As **Walter Matthews** shares his experience of the love of God in his life (See page 14) may we too give witness that God's faithfulness will be experienced for generations to come. ♦

Patience ♦ Kindness ♦ GENEROSITY

by Jackie Tucci

Whenever I think about the fruit of the Spirit, I remember a lesson that I learned while living in South Florida where there is an abundance of beautiful flowers, plants and trees. We had some citrus trees in our yard but decided to buy another orange tree, one that was known for bearing the best juice oranges. We went to a local nursery and saw a beautiful, healthy tree. We were surprised to find that the price tag was much lower than all the other trees. We asked the salesman why this tree was so inexpensive. He said because he lost the tag and didn't know what kind of fruit the tree would bear. It looked like a citrus tree, so we decided to be adventuresome and buy the tree. When the tiny fruit appeared, sure enough it was a citrus tree. We tried smelling the fruit and even tasting it, but it was bitter and green. Was it a lemon, lime, grapefruit or orange? We had no idea. As the fruit grew it began to take on the characteristics of an orange and we knew for sure that it was an orange tree. At that point the fruit was kind of dry and still a little bitter. We tried nourishing the tree hoping to help it to bear good fruit. However, we soon lost patience and decided to pull the tree out, throw it away and replace it with the one we originally wanted to buy.

While Tony and I were standing by the tree, ready to dig it out, my dad was riding by on his golf cart. (He spent his retirement from the corporate world, playing golf every day and gardening.) Dad stopped to say hello and we told him of our decision to get rid of the tree. Dad said, "Don't uproot this beautiful, healthy, little tree. Let me take care of it." Every day, dad stopped by to take care of the tree, feeding it the right food, pruning it, speaking to it and having a lot of patience with it. Much to our surprise, when harvest time came, this tree was ablaze with fruit that was tasty, juicy, nourishing and filled with vitamin C. This tree grew to maturity to provide family, friends and neighbors with many mornings of fresh, delicious orange juice. All that the tree needed was a little patience, kindness and generosity. Dad would not hear of us throwing that tree away. He patiently worked to help it to be all that it was created to be. He kindly spoke to the tree, encouraging it and he generously gave of his time, not stopping until the tree was bearing the best oranges this side of heaven. It turned out to be the tree we originally wanted to buy.

This is the way it is with us. When we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, our prayer life and our walk with our Lord begins to strengthen. The divine characteristics of God, which are the fruit of the Spirit, begin to develop in us. When the fruit is beginning to grow in us, it is hardly recognizable. If we persevere in our walk with the Lord, the time will come when there will be a maturity in us that others will see and they will know that we are children of God. "By their fruit you shall know them." Of course, we need the help of others, who like Dad will have patience with us while the fruit is still immature, helping us by the example of their lives, by encouraging us, by sincere kindness and the generosity of giving of their time to help us to grow to our potential in life. This teaches us to serve others as we were so generously served, with kindness and patience.

I was not a patient person. I would pray for patience and wind up with trials and tribulations. I finally figured it out. In order for the fruit of patience to grow, we are sent these trials so that we can learn to be patient. The Lord prunes us just as Dad pruned the little tree. To bear the fruit of patience, we have to be given opportunities to learn patience. Kindness and generosity are the same. They have to come from a sincere heart. They have to grow to maturity in us as we walk with the Lord, being obedient to his commandments, following his guidance and most important, spending time with him in prayer.

The Good Samaritan is a great example of one who exhibited the fruits of patience, kindness and generosity. He had compassion for the man who was beaten by robbers. He patiently went out of his way to take him to a hotel. The fruit of generosity was evident when the Good Samaritan paid in advance for this stranger's room and board. He saw to it that his needs were met. He didn't have to do what he did, but he had a kind and generous heart.

Patience, kindness and generosity walk hand in hand. Patience walks in the middle, because without patience, generosity and kindness would be limited in what they are meant to accomplish. Let us never cease to pray for these very important fruits to grow to maturity in us, even if along the way we may need some pruning. Let us trust that "God's will, will never lead us where his grace can't keep us." ♦



Jacqueline Tucci and her husband, Tony, are the Directors/Bishop's Liaisons for Catholic Charismatic Services, Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina and members of the NSC Council.

Together, a culture of Pentecost

by Sr. Mary Anne Schaenzer, SSND

In an effort to be in tune with the work of the Holy Spirit, the National Service Committee (NSC) has revised its Vision and Mission Statement.

Those of you who are regular readers of *Pentecost Today* will recall that these statements were published with an introduction in the April/May/June 2009 issue.

With the awareness that we, the NSC, spent two years praying and writing and rewriting these statements as we worked toward consensus, we want to share with you our understanding of what these statements on vision and mission mean for us.

On pages 4 and 5 of the July/August/September issue of *Pentecost Today* Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR writes about our invitation to be in relationship to the Trinity. He highlights that aspect of the Vision Statement in which we say that Catholic Charismatic Renewal “invites all people to experience the Holy Spirit who opens us to a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ and the love of the Father.” He closes his article writing that, “It is the prayer of the National Service Committee that we would be instruments in revealing the unconditional, passionate love of God who is our Father as revealed in his Son, Jesus, through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.”

In the October/November/December issue, Fr. Bob Hogan, BBD helps us to understand the part of the Vision Statement that states “The Holy Spirit empowers us for... renewed Catholic life...” He reminds us to ask the Holy Spirit “To reveal to us what renewed life looks like in each area of family, work, finances, church, society, culture, media, relationships, ministry, etc.” He exhorts us to “want to learn to let the

Holy Spirit be our Advocate in every aspect of daily life and the life of the Church.”

OVERVIEW

In this article we wish to give an overview of the Mission Statement. In future articles others will break open and explore various aspects of this statement.

The Father sent the Son.
The Father and Jesus send the Spirit.
And now the Spirit sends us.

As we think of Mission we can again go back to the Trinitarian model which would show us that the Father sent the Son. The Father and Jesus send the Spirit. And now the Spirit sends us. We believe it is our mission “to foster the dynamic grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5) which empowered the members of the early Church at Pentecost.”

To foster the dynamic grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit is to make known a powerful grace for all. In *Grace for the New Springtime* it is described in this way.

As experienced in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal baptism in the Holy Spirit makes Jesus Christ

known and loved as Lord and Savior, establishes or reestablishes an immediacy of relationship with all those persons of the Trinity, and through inner transformation affects the whole of the Christian’s life.

There is a new life and a new conscious awareness of God’s power and presence. It is a grace experience which touches every dimension of the Church’s life. Because of this, it is our conviction that baptism in the Holy Spirit, understood as the reawakening in Christian experience of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit given in Christian initiation, and manifested in a broad range of charisms, including those closely associated with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, is part of the normal Christian life.

This is an ambitious undertaking and while we experience this as our call, as what we are sent to do, we know that we do not do this on our own. We want to be instruments of the Holy Spirit. We then need to ask what this call requires of us.

In our prayerful seeking of the Lord’s will for us we found ourselves focusing our mission in five areas. The acronym PEACE emerged as we chose action words for each part of the Mission Statement, i.e. Proclaiming, Encouraging, Assisting, Cooperating and Empowering.

“Proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the love of the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit which leads to the renewal of the **grace and culture**

of Pentecost.” We see this statement as foundational. While we can go far and wide in making this proclamation, we may also find that we need to remind those close to us of the love of the Father for each of us. We need to ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to work through us daily. Each of us participates in the renewal of the grace and culture of Pentecost.

“Encouraging the awareness and the experience of the **full role of the Holy Spirit** among Catholic Charismatic Renewal groups and ministries, with the goal of reminding the Church to be fully conscious of this role.” It could be easy for us to forget that the Holy Spirit empowers us in many ways. We are accustomed to thinking of the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit. However, we say that the Holy Spirit also leads us to:

- ❖ Experiencing union with God
- ❖ Inner transformation, leading to personal holiness
- ❖ Ministry empowered by the charisms for evangelization and service
- ❖ Building communities that witness to a renewed Catholic life.

We all know that having experienced this touch of the Spirit in our depths, we are led to experiencing union with God, for which we need to be conscious on a daily basis. We need to be intentional, desiring and willing to allow God to act in us and to do what it takes for this transformation to take place. In the beginning it can all seem so exciting because it feels so fresh and new, but as time goes on we can become impatient or forget that it takes some effort and discipline on our part to be attentive to what the Holy Spirit wants to work in and through us.

No matter what our age and physical ability, we can all grow in the first two

points. Having yielded to charisms we can still exercise them in service to others. We continue to minister to others in a variety of ways. We allow the Spirit to lead us. We ask that we might be open for whatever way that we may be called today to share the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The building of community happens in many ways. We are connected to others. We recognize that we are the Body of Christ. We are, as the Apostle Paul teaches, many parts of one body, the church. If we are no longer able to go out in ministry to others we are still part of the community and its mission by praying for those who do minister to others.

Make the effort to grow in the charism of leadership.

Another way that we see ourselves carrying out our mission is by:

“Assisting leadership development as well as serving and offering **leadership** to the Renewal.” Those in leadership would do well to want to develop their gifts and their natural skills in leading others. Leadership is a serious responsibility. If the Spirit has called, the Spirit will also empower a person. One key to being a good leader is the desire to be of service to others. One of the ways that the NSC assists in leadership development is through our Leaders’ and Ministries’ Conferences and various Outreach Events. We gather leaders, those in various ministries, those exercising any charisms as well as those seeking growth, for prayer, teaching and encouragement. The NSC can assist in the development of leadership but those who are called also need to make the effort to grow in the charism of leadership.

“Cooperating with other **Catholic organizations and movements** as well as

other Christian groups in **authentic ecumenism.**” Members of several Catholic movements, including Charismatic renewal, are currently in dialogue to understand how the Spirit is moving them. Ecumenism has been active in various areas of the country as led by the Spirit. Ecumenism was active in the very early days of this movement of the Holy Spirit within the Catholic Church. It was both a surprise of the Spirit and a joyful experience. In the October/November/December 2009 issue Fr. Peter Hocken, in the article entitled “The ecumenical grace of Charismatic Renewal,” wrote that, “One of the areas at the heart of the prophetic dimension of CR is its ecumenical character. When we lose that we lose the deep dynamism of the Spirit.”

“Empowering **youth and young adults** by entering into dialogue with them regarding the Holy Spirit in their lives and inviting them to participate in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.” We are all responsible for fostering the grace of Pentecost among all people and in a particular way for sharing the importance of this grace and fostering an openness to it in those who will someday be our leaders in the church in a variety of ministries and vocations.

You are invited to reflect on the NSC’s Vision and Mission Statements and to consider what they may mean for your personal life as well as for the life of the prayer group/community/ministry to which you belong in the Renewal. Together, we can foster a rich and vibrant culture of Pentecost. ♦

The complete articles and *Grace for a New Springtime* referred to above can be read at our website, www.nsc-chariscenter.org.



Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner is a member of the National Service Committee.



Twenty years and counting

by Fr. George Montague

There we sat, thirteen theologians and pastoral leaders, in a brightly lit retreat house conference room in Techny, Illinois, trying to figure out how to apply a big, scholarly theological study to Church life today, something rarely done with heavy theology books. But this book held such promise for the life of the Catholic Church that we agreed it needed a short, simple exposition so that “he who runs may read” (Habakkuk 2:2). Seeing this need, the National Service Committee, with the encouragement of the Bishops Ad Hoc Committee on Charismatic Renewal, convened the group in May, 1990. The big book? *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, the work of Benedictine Father Kilian McDonnell and Marianist Father George Montague. We discussed, prayed, discussed and prayed again for six days. Result? A thirty-page booklet called *Fanning the Flame: What Does Baptism in the Holy Spirit Have to Do with Christian Initiation?* This year is the twentieth birthday of the book and the booklet. The flame got fanned so fast that there are a lot more than twenty candles on the birthday cake.

The book took off rapidly and came out in a second, expanded edition already in 1994. It was soon translated into seven languages. A year later seventy theologians were invited to discuss the value and relevance of the book at a meeting in Boston, co-hosted by Cardinal Bernard Law and Archbishop Harry Flynn of St. Paul-Minneapolis. Ninety-five percent of the book reviews were posi-

tive, and one reviewer later apologized for some of his negative remarks.

Fanning the Flame did even better. It was quickly translated into Polish, Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian, Czech, Korean, Urdu, Portuguese, Japanese, Lithuanian, Maltese, Swedish, Slovak, German, Russian, Chinese and Indonesian. (I thought you would enjoy the litany!)

What was it that grabbed the attention and the enthusiasm of these Christians all over the world? For late comers into the renewal and for those of us with memory loss, let’s skim the contents once more. First of all, the booklet maintained that baptism in the Spirit was “captive to no camp,” there was no founder other than the movement of the Holy Spirit, so it belonged to the entire Church, rooted in the sacrament of Baptism and hence beyond the boundaries even of any movement. Second, there is a need for conversion and renewal in the church, for which the Holy Spirit with the charisms is God’s own answer: “Send forth your Spirit and the earth shall be renewed.” Third, Christian initiation *IS* baptism in the Holy Spirit, as the New Testament amply shows, and it belongs to public liturgy and is normative. Fourth, the Fathers of the Church join in chorus with the New Testament authors that the charisms of the Holy Spirit flow from the grace of baptism. What today is called baptism in the Holy Spirit is an awakening of what was implicit in the sacrament, and therefore is for everybody.

It is not the book or the booklet, though, that should get the credit. It is rather the work of the Holy Spirit moving especially through the Charismatic Renewal throughout the world. The value of the study was to show that, far from being a Protestant or Pentecostal thing, the Charismatic Renewal is a recovery of energy that powered the Church of the New Testament and the early centuries. We had both Scripture and Tradition on our side. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is simply the flowering of the grace received at our sacramental baptism and confirmation. It is tied to the essence of what it means to be a Christian. Therefore it is not an optional thing—although we were careful to say that it need not be tied to any particular movement. (Of course, as Father Kilian once remarked, “If you are interested in learning an art, you go to someone who is experienced in it!”). It was our hope that this serious theological study and its popularization would help both hierarchy and faithful embrace the renewal with confidence.

As I look back over the twenty years of *Fanning the Flame*, I am grateful that the book and the booklet contributed importantly to keeping the Charismatic Renewal within the Catholic Church. Or, to quote Father Kilian, “The Charismatic Renewal’s gift to the church is the re-discovery of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as something flowing from the nature of the church.” It would have been a disaster to see the millions of Catholics who have experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit leave their spiritual home in search of what is really their heritage from the beginning. Fortunately that has not happened. But nowhere is this concern more evident than in the third world, where Pentecostalism has, until now, won over many Catholics. But that is changing. One bishop told me that the

Charismatic Renewal will save the Church in South America. And one African bishop insists that all his seminarians make the Life in the Spirit Seminar and be “baptized in the Holy Spirit.” Imagine what would have happened if bishops in the third world had condemned the Charismatic Renewal as a Pentecostal thing not to be indulged in by Catholics!

The success of the Renewal in many places, however, can easily lead to complacency. If you want to be jolted out of any smugness, reread, as I just did, the last section of *Fanning the Flame* entitled “What Then Should We Do?” (pages 22-26). It is a call for “recovery of the baptism in the Spirit and the charisms... in all the institutions of the church,” religious orders, Catholic universities, preaching, the RCIA, the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, but especially the parish as a whole. While the effects can be seen in some places, there are still many untouched by the Renewal. Have we lost that dream and settled for less? Gravitating to parishes, as the majority of prayer groups did, they became embedded in a larger community but for the most part remained simply another parish group with only indirect influence, if any, on the parish as a whole. Where the pastor had experienced the Renewal the results were more positive.

Two areas need to be addressed: strengthening of the Renewal within, boosting its outreach beyond and evangelization. As for strengthening within, a particular need is for follow up to the Life in the Spirit. We have too many revolving doors in our prayer groups, too many people who lose the fire of Pentecost because they have no further support group or community with which to share their faith and ongoing experience of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in Acts created community. And community means commitment. The

covenant communities saw this early on, but the wisdom did not filter down sufficiently to the local level. A second need is the Renewal began with young adults. Those young adults are now old adults, and young adults are no longer the driving force in the Renewal. That group needs to be targeted more energetically. Third, charismatics need to turn the fire of the Spirit toward their own purification. Once we are in community we discover a lot of human weaknesses in ourselves (sensitivity to remarks, insensitivity to others, tagging the whole group as bad because of a problem with an individual—in short, the capital sins). We need the ongoing purification of the Spirit to overcome the work of the flesh in us.

Of course the Holy Spirit must have known about this when he burst in on the Catholic Church in the middle of the last century. Despite our failings, an incredible amount of fruit has come from the Renewal world-wide. Could we have thought that in just a few years there would be so many millions of Catholic charismatics on our planet?

As for outreach, the Renewal has spawned many good works too numerous to list. I think of those whose charismatic experience enabled and prompted them to minister to prisoners, like Sister Margaret Carew, CCVI, who recently retired after 30 years of ministering the Holy Spirit to prisoners in the Bexar County jail in San Antonio. Or the Lamp Ministries founded by Tom and Lynn Scheuring ministering to the poor in New York. Second, the Renewal in its beginning flourished in an ecumenical setting. Understandably the Catholic Church wanted to assure the faithful that they could find the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit within the Church (and our book and booklet fostered that). But one is permitted to wonder if this is all that God had in mind. In San



Prayer Card

That all will find new life
in Christ Jesus through
the power of the Holy Spirit,
we pray:

Lord Jesus, your Spirit is
the living water flowing
from your side;
allow us to drink deeply
of this living water,
that we might bear abundant fruit
for the Kingdom of God.
Amen

“Go and bear fruit that will last.”
Jn 15:16

Photo: Sr. Mary Anne Schaefer

Antonio some of us have begun to pray regularly with Protestant leaders (mostly Pentecostal and Evangelical), and the Catholic Charismatic Center has joined with some of them for the second year in a “Church of the City” rally of prayer for the transformation of the city. This would not be a bad thing for the wider Renewal to consider doing for the entire nation (2 Chronicles 7:14). Third, the gift of the Holy Spirit impels us to mission and evangelization, as the Second Vatican Council and Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI have exhorted us. It is what Pentecost was and is all about.

Fanning the Flame, twenty years and counting, still witnesses to the reality of the power and presence of the Holy

See Twenty years page 8

Please pray with the National Service Committee for the following intentions:

1. Lord, anoint and make fruitful the Gathering of National Leadership Groups: Catholic Charismatic Renewal to be held Jan 11—13, 2010.
2. Lord, inspire thousands of people to join in the Day of Prayer & Fasting on February 12, to “unlock the power” of the grace of Pentecost in all aspects of life in our nation. (see ad on p. 13)
3. Lord, bless the Day of Teaching and Ministry in Camden, the Regional Leaders’ Gathering, September 10—12, in Denver and all other NSC planned events.
4. Lord, supply the needs of all prayer groups and dioceses that are offering Holy Spirit Seminars during Lent, and bring about a great outpouring of your Holy Spirit into the hearts of all who attend, that their lives will be transformed and the face of the earth will be renewed.
5. Lord, empower us with charisms and the fruits of the Spirit, that we might be leaven to advance the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Twenty years from page 7

Spirit given to us in Baptism and the Sacraments of Initiation. There is still so much work to be done. Let us continue to fan into the flame in our lives the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. ♦

Fanning the Flame booklet is available from LaSalle Company, Inc. for \$3.35. 1-800-348-2227 or www.renewed-life.com.

Fr. George T. Montague, S.M. is a well known speaker and an author of more than twenty books in the area of biblical and pastoral theology. In 1995 he began a new religious community in the Marianist family, the “Brothers of the Beloved Disciple.”



STRENGTH

Sharing the charisms with confidence

by Gerry Mader

Recently when attending a small prayer group, I was disappointed by a lack of power in the utilization of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There was little freedom as the leader seemed to be operating off of a schedule and was quite concerned that things needed to be done by a certain time. The music played for a short period of time and then he called for the sharing of word gifts and there were two words, one from the scripture and one delivered by a woman. The prophecy was delivered as though it was just another nice thing to say.

Later we attended an area prayer meeting, where the praise and worship were extended and the words came forth after a powerful time of praying in tongues, and the word was delivered with confidence and with power. It became clear to me that it is so important to building up the body of Christ that all can see clearly that the Holy Spirit is in charge of the meeting and we can be confident that we are to praise, worship, sing with confidence, pray in tongues and prophesy with confidence, so that all will know that we believe that the Holy Spirit is leading us and wants to build up the people of God. As we continue to be confident the Lord will continue to add to our numbers.

“In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Eph.3:12 NIV).

“...you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your

Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13 NIV).

God, our loving Father, asks us to come and approach him with confidence. If we have asked him and Jesus to send us the Holy Spirit we need to be confident that God is faithful to his promises and that we have received the outpouring of his Holy Spirit. We are called to be confident that we have the first gift which is the Holy Spirit and also are confident that he has given us gifts to build up the body of Christ that we are with. “So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church” (1 Corinthians 14:12 NIV).

We in the charismatic renewal have been extremely blessed to have experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the accompanied gifts (charisms) of this outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit. Paul challenged the early Christians to be bold and eager to have the gifts of the Spirit but he also said to use them wisely and in proper order.

Paul saw how evangelistic the charisms could be if they were done in such a manner as to honor God. St. Paul never said don’t use them, but rather he encouraged their use as a means of drawing others to Christ. In 1 Corinthians 14, he especially encourages the gift of prophecy because he says that it builds up the body of Christ particularly for new people. He also says that tongues help to build up the individual believer.

Having said all this, what is our current situation as we look at prayer groups today? There are some groups who are saying we need to minimize

the charisms or minimize their use so as not to offend anyone who might come into our group. In other cases some groups are practicing various devotions and it is difficult to know if they are charismatic and what their purpose is.

The more charisms are present the more people will be challenged to seek them from the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 14:31, Paul speaks to the community about the order of prophecy and he suggests that the prophets should prophesy in order so that all may benefit. *“For you can all prophesy one by one so that all may learn and be encouraged”* (1 Cor 14:31).

So it is with tongues, even though Paul is correcting some behaviors, he is also exhorting the church to use this gift. Prophecy is for the believers who are there and tongues is for unbelievers who may be new to the meeting. “Now I should like all of you to speak in tongues (1 Cor 14:5)... I give thanks to God that I speak in tongues more

than any of you” (1 Cor 14:18). Paul clearly encourages the use of these charisms.

We also see how healing plays such a prominent role in the early chapters of Acts. Peter and John are imprisoned for healing the crippled beggar at “the Beautiful Gate.” Their response is “to evangelize” the Sanhedrin by proclaiming what they had just accomplished in the name of Jesus. The people praised God for what had happened and gave glory to God. All through the Acts of the Apostles we hear about the people praising God for what God is doing through the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:29-31).

The Holy Spirit gave men and women the power to preach and teach, even those who had no formal training but who had an encounter with the Holy Spirit. Among them Peter, Stephen, Phillip, and of course Paul stand out. These are men who became leaders, teachers, preachers, evangelists, deacons, prophets and healers. People who

witnessed by their life and testimony with charisms that testified to the presence of the Holy Spirit did so with the confidence that the charisms they were utilizing were from the Spirit of God. So it is with us today. The more confidently we use the charisms the more winsome we will be and the more others will be drawn to use the charisms to build the body of Christ.

We in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal believe that the charisms experienced in the early church are for today. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit delineated in the recently released NSC mission statement says that the action of the Holy Spirit leads us to ministry empowered by the charisms for evangelization and service. If we are empowered with the charisms by the Holy Spirit, we certainly need to use them with confidence so as to give the glory to the God who gave them to us. ♦

Gerry Mader serves on the NSC and lives in Florida with his wife Lois.

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