

Publication of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

PENTECOST *Today*

THE
YEAR
OF
FAITH



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November/
December 2012

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



Chairman's Corner

.....
by Fr. Bob Hogan



In the last few months the Holy Spirit has been stirring me up! May the fire of the Spirit rush on us all! I sense a wave of grace coming. The Holy Spirit has given me a glorious excitement about the Year of Faith beginning on October 11, which was announced by Pope Benedict XVI. I also believe that the Holy Spirit is urging us to enter fully into the Five Year Preparation for the Jubilee of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 2017. Lord, may it not be just words on a page. We want to hear your word and act on it. I feel convicted that God wants to make me a more faith-filled and faithful man of God, man of the Spirit, during this Year of Faith. I believe that he wants to do this with you, too!

This year we can have a greater spirit of faith in God's providence which will release us from our complaining and negative attitudes. We can experience a greater trust and openness to God's surprises, since he works all things for good for those who love him. Last month I got stuck overnight in an airport which allowed me to have a fruitful conversation with a man whose family had stopped being involved in Church after their father had a disagreement with a priest many years ago. Rather than complain about surprises, let us expect that surprises can become Divine appointments.

Photo: Tobias Johanson, Photos.com

This year God wants to stir up the disciple-learner in us. He wants to give us a hunger for the Word of God, for reading the Scriptures every day, and reading the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to deepen our understanding of Catholic teaching. The Spirit of Truth wants to give us a hunger to know well the content of the faith and to grow in the wisdom to apply this knowledge in our lives.

God wants to stir up a bold, expectant faith that is always open to God's call to mission and evangelization. God says, "Who will I send?" Our faith-filled heart says, "Send me!" You may have thought that God cannot make you into an evangelizer, but ask him to do it this year, and you will receive a surprise of the Spirit. God will give us a new faith in the call and work of charismatic renewal in the Church: a new maturity, a new purification, new doors opening, new practical wisdom, and new vision.

God can get you and me where we never imagined we could go. Come and get us, Holy Spirit. Year of Faith ignite us! ♦

Fr. Bob Hogan, BBD is Chairman of the National Service Committee.



Editor's Desk

.....
by Sr. Martha Jean
McGarry

Faith, peace, fire, unity, and celebration are key words you will find throughout this issue as our writers focus on the many ways we might choose to prepare for the great Jubilee of the Renewal.

Fr. Bob Hogan extends an invitation to all people who have experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit to join together in the preparation for the 50th anniversary Jubilee of the Renewal. See his article on pages 4-5. And be sure to read Fr. Bob's inspiring Chairman's Column on page 2! Catch his fire!

Looking for ways to live out this Year of Faith? **Mother Lucy Lukasiwicz** offers a number of great suggestions in her article on pages 6-7.

Matteo Calisi's article on pages 8-9 calls us to help bring about the reign of Christ by striving to build bridges of understanding among groups, peoples and nations.

Did you know that plans are underway for a global celebration of the Holy Spirit? In his article on pages 10-11 **Vinson Synan** shares the goals and history of *Empowered 21*, a movement dedicated to bring this about.

In their columns, pages 14 and 15, **Walter Matthews** and **Jane Guenther** share the mission of the Renewal and reveal some of the present works of the National Service Committee.

May this issue inspire and challenge each of us, in new ways and old, to share the graces of the Renewal—*Go and make disciples of all nations!* (Matt 28:19) ♦

Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Charisms

A new document from the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services



*Editor's note: What a gift and resource for the Renewal and the Church! The latest ICCRS document entitled **Baptism in the Holy Spirit** is a treasure to be explored and shared. In our last issue of Pentecost Today, Kevin Ranaghan gave us a fine introduction to this document. We continue to bring awareness of this document to you by excerpting some passages highlighting the charisms of the Holy Spirit.*



Paul's teaching on life in the Spirit is the necessary context for understanding the charisms of the Spirit. A charism, also called a "gift" (Eph 4:7–8) or "working" or "manifestation" (1 Cor 12:6–7) of the Spirit, is a gift freely bestowed by the Spirit for building up the body of Christ. Charisms are not merely natural endowments or acquired skills. They are supernatural gifts that either enable what is humanly impossible (such as healings or miracles) or enhance a natural gift, such as teaching or service, to a level of supernatural efficacy. Paul's most extensive teaching on charisms is in 1 Cor 12–14, within a larger section on proper conduct in the liturgy (1 Cor 11–14). (Part II, p. 45.)

Paul emphasizes that charisms are freely distributed by the Holy Spirit as he wills. Charisms are distinct from the sanctifying grace given at baptism, in that they are given not primarily for the personal sanctification of the recipient but to be exercised for the good of others. The charisms are forms of "service" (1 Cor 12:5) because their purpose

is to serve others. The marvelous diversity of charisms is ordered to the Church's unity, founded on the unity of the one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (12:4–6). (Part II, p. 45–46.)

At the center of Paul's teaching on charisms is his great hymn to love (*agape*) in 1 Cor 13. This chapter is not a digression but rather provides the foundational principle that must order all the exercise of charisms. Even the greatest charisms are nothing apart from love (13:1–3). Whereas charisms will one day pass away, faith, hope, and love will last (13:8–13). Paul does not speak of love itself as a charism but as a "way" (*hodos*), the path along which charisms must be exercised, the motive and measure for their use (1 Cor 12:31). (Part II, p. 47.)

"... Paul places strongest emphasis on prophecy as the charism that is especially efficacious in building up the church (1 Cor 14:1–5). Prophecy is speech inspired by the Spirit, communicating a message that is not one's own but comes from God. It may include a disclosure

concerning the future (cf. Acts 11:27–29) or the reading of hearts (1 Cor 14:25; cf. Acts 5:2–4), but more often it takes the form of encouragement and consolation (1 Cor 14:3) or conviction of sin (1 Cor 14:24). Prophecy is the only gift that appears every time Paul lists the charisms. Together with apostleship, it is foundational to the Church (Eph 2:20; cf. 1 Cor 12:28). Thus Paul often exhorts believers to strive for this gift: "earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor 14:1); "earnestly desire to prophesy" (1 Cor 14:39); "now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy" (1 Cor 14:4–5); "do not despise prophesying" (1 Thes 5:20). (Part II, p. 49.)

The charisms are manifestations of the sovereignty of the risen Lord that are meant to be received gratefully, fostered, and used generously. This is not to say that the charisms cannot be abused, but their abuse entails the grave danger of following spirits other than the Holy Spirit. In the context of Church history, the experience of charisms in the Re-

newal today is new in that, first, the full range of charisms described by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians is present as part of the Holy Spirit's endowment of the Church. Second, the charisms are in principle available to every Christian rather than being largely limited to clergy or religious, or those who have practiced years of ascetical discipline. They are understood not as special graces for very holy people but as public gifts that equip the body of Christ to fulfil its mission. (Part III, p. 66.)

"Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts" (1 Cor 14:1). Although charisms are given to each member of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:7), few Catholics are aware that they have charisms or know how to use them. Preparation for baptism in the Spirit should include teaching on the charisms the Spirit bestows (see Part II, section 2.3 above) and how to receive and exercise them. (Part IV, p. 82.) ♦

(To order *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* see ad on page 12.)

Catholic Charismatic Renewal Invites All People...



Fr. Bob Hogan, BBD

An Inviting Renewal

“Catholic Charismatic Renewal **invites** all people to experience the Holy Spirit...” (First line of the Vision Statement of the National Service Committee). When I was in high school a priest *invited* me to commit my life to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. He told me that Jesus would then give me the gift of the Holy Spirit that would enable me to live and love like Jesus did. I experienced the Holy Spirit in a new way. I experienced a release of fear; the love of God being poured into my heart; Jesus becoming real for me; Jesus’ presence with me; and the Scriptures becoming alive.

John the Baptist had a successful ministry of baptizing people in water for the forgiveness of sins, but he *invited* his followers to look for the one who would baptize in the Holy Spirit.

At his Ascension Jesus gave his followers an authoritative **invitation**: “He enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for ‘the promise of the Father’...in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses...” (Acts 1:4, 5, 8). On Pentecost, Peter *invited* and exhorted the listeners to “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for

the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:18).

In Catholic Charismatic Renewal we are to be witnesses to this experience of the Holy Spirit who “*invite* all people” (“every one of you”) to this experience. We have not fully appropriated the grace of being baptized in the Spirit when we are not witnesses who regularly *invite* others to this deepening of the gift of the Spirit in their lives. We are to be people who share with others our experience of being baptized in the Spirit; who *invite* others to come with us to a charismatic prayer group; who *invite* others to a Life in the Spirit Seminar; who ask people if we can pray with them for a renewal of the Spirit in their lives.

Preparing for the Jubilee

A number of the National Leadership Groups for Catholic Charismatic Renewal have joined together to “*invite* all people,” who have experienced the Holy Spirit in a new way in their lives through being baptized in the Spirit, to join with us in “Preparing for the Year of Jubilee: 50 Years of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal” with a five-year preparation. Here is an outline of the plan. You can download this information in leaflet form (English, Spanish, and French) from the web page, www.nsc-chariscenter.org.

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Renewal Identity

2012: Time of Life-Giving Repentance (June 1 to December 31). We will:

- ◆ Begin this time with repentance and prayer.
- ◆ Imitate Pope John Paul's Year of Repentance in preparation for the year 2000.
- ◆ Encourage a time of reflection and dialogue in the Renewal, and with the Church, preparing for the Year of Faith.
- ◆ Follow Jesus' command: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15).

2013: Year of Spirit-filled Faith. We will:

- ◆ Celebrate the Year of Faith in the Church and baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Emphasize the experience of Pentecost and the grace of Charismatic Renewal
- ◆ Reach out to youth and young adults.

Renewal Maturity

2014: Year of Charisms and Grace for the Church.

We will:

- ◆ Explore Charismatic Renewal's identity as a movement.
- ◆ Celebrate being fully Catholic (ecclesial maturity) and fully charismatic.
- ◆ Promote greater and more mature use of the charisms.

2015: Year of Unity. We will:

- ◆ Reach out to all groups influenced by charismatic renewal.
- ◆ Endeavor to lay down our lives for each other.
- ◆ Foster unity in the Renewal, unity with the Church, and ecumenism.
- ◆ Focus on the importance of community.

Renewal Influence

2016: Year of Mission. We will:

- ◆ Renew our zeal for souls.
- ◆ Promote Life in the Spirit Seminars, the New Evangelization, and a culture of Pentecost.

2017: Year of Jubilee. We will:

- ◆ Celebrate a "time of fulfillment" as in the Jubilee Year of the Scriptures.
- ◆ Gather all people in the Renewal (prayer groups, covenant communities, ministries, youth, and families) of all cultures.

Invited Together and Inviting All People

We believe that these five years can be a special time of grace for individuals, groups and ministries that have been birthed through the experience of being baptized in the

Spirit. First of all, pray and act in a united way to live these yearly focuses and enter ever more fully into all the graces of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, we want to encourage and challenge each other to renew our call to be witnesses who "invite all people" to experience the Holy Spirit, baptism in the Spirit, growth in holiness through the work of the Spirit, and the greater and more mature use of the charisms (spiritual gifts) for ministry and building community.

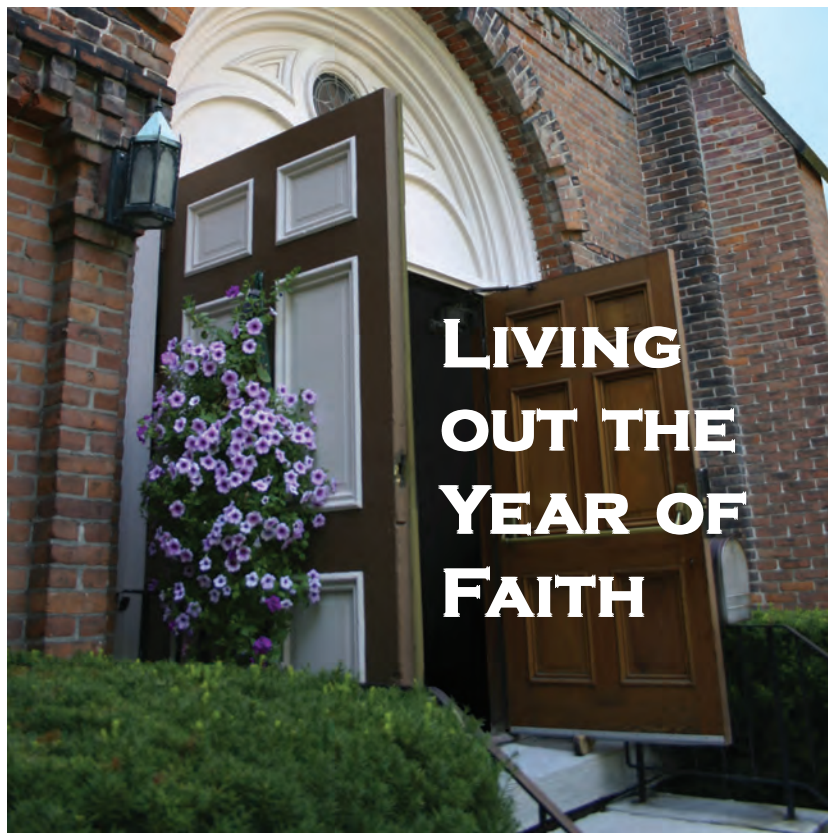
The theme of "Renewal Identity" invites us to enter more deeply into the grace of Pentecost and baptism in the Spirit with an active, expectant faith. We want to invite youth and young adults to a greater understanding and experience of this grace of the Spirit. We cannot do this without first reflecting on the ways that we have fallen short of God's full call by our sins and lack of unity. We believe that a time of fulfillment can be experienced in a greater way in our own day as we hear the call to "Repent and believe in the gospel." *Holy Spirit, search us, so that we are not blind to our sins, hardness of heart, and disunity!*

The theme of "Renewal Maturity" invites us to seek what it means to be fully Catholic and fully charismatic. The Vatican has given the International Council for Charismatic Renewal Services, officed in Rome, status as a Pontifical Association of the Faithful, and consistently refers to the Renewal as an ecclesial movement. The Vatican and recent popes have called us to be a movement that has a prophetic role of inviting and reminding the Church of the importance of the role of the Spirit in the life of the Church. The grace of Pentecost is meant for the whole Church, but some are also called to embrace being part of the ecclesial movement of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which promotes this grace in the Church and receives special graces through the Church's recognition of the movement. Our prophetic calling also involves promoting the greater and more mature use of the charisms for the life of the Church. Finally, the call to maturity invites us to a united purpose, rather than working as isolated individuals and groups. We have a variety of callings, gifts, and ministries, but we need to explore the ways we are to have unity for the good of the whole Church.

The theme of "Renewal Influence" invites us to a renewed zeal for souls, witnessing, promoting baptism in the Spirit, and actively working for the New Evangelization in the Church. We invite you to join in our heartfelt commitment to this 5-year preparation so that the 2017 Jubilee will be a "time of fulfillment." ◆



Fr. Bob Hogan, BBD is Chairman of the National Service Committee.



LIVING OUT THE YEAR OF FAITH

**We have the resources
readily available for
renewal and faith,
let us take advantage
of them.**

The time has come to rediscover the power of the Word of God in our lives. “Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Rom 10:17). It isn’t enough to hear God’s Word on Sunday at Mass or even hearing God’s Word at daily Mass. It is time to “feed” on the Word of God in daily prayer so as to allow Jesus to preach to us. So powerful is this that God not only speaks to us and gives us direction but also strengthens the heart and mind to withstand doubt, distractions, and following false ideologies. I once heard a young priest recall that as a teenager in a prayer meeting, there was an “expectant faith” that God would speak through Holy Scripture. The more I pondered what he said, the more I came to ponder the power of the Word of God. It has the power to heal past hurts and bring reconciliation with our enemies. It has the power to give us the direction in our lives. It has the power because it is the voice of God speaking to us. In this year of growing in faith, are we willing to spend more time in reflecting and praying with the Word of God?

by Mother Lucy Lukasiewicz, DLJC

Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth? (Luke 18:8)

Whenever I read this scripture something within me shudders. When Jesus comes will he find faith? Will he find faith in me? Will he find faith in my family, my church, my religious community? Will he find faith in you?

Pope Benedict XVI wrote the Apostolic Letter “Porta Fidei” (*The Door of Faith*) announcing that the whole Church will celebrate a Year of Faith beginning on October 11, 2012, the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Vatican II Council and the 20th anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Year of Faith will end on November 24, 2013 on the feast of Christ the King. The Pope is the good shepherd and he is looking for green pastures that would give life to our souls.

Hillary Fox, Photos.com

I am grateful that God is giving the people of God this “Year of Faith” to re-discover faith or perhaps in certain circumstances recover faith. Our Holy Father says that faith must begin first and foremost with a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Fostering Our Relationship with Jesus

What are some ways we can foster a relationship with Jesus? Prayer draws the heart of the creation to his/her Maker. This prayer should incorporate audible words on the lips as well as the inaudible words from the heart. A communication from the heart of God to the heart of this person should be happening simultaneously as both are enjoying each other’s presence. The heart longs to please God so it joins in praise and worship to the all powerful, all holy, omnipotent God. The individual now enters into the door of faith, *porta fidei*. As we enter this portal of faith relationship we “set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime” (PF #1). This journey begins with relationship. This journey begins with prayer.

Meeting Jesus Sacramentally

We are called to intensify the celebration of faith in the Eucharist and in the Sacrament of Penance. We know that as our relationship with Jesus intensifies so does our need for his presence sacramentally also intensify. Jesus draws his beloved to himself in Holy Communion, nourishing the soul as well as the body. In return when we draw near to Jesus in communion a greater intimacy happens. During this time of Communion, let Jesus minister to you and speak to you.

All are summoned to “an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Savior of the world” (PF #6). I once heard this: “True renewal happens when the confession lines are longer.” This was said by a very wise and outstanding bishop. I have seen this on the campus at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio a number of years ago while attending courses in theology. The young people responded to the friar’s examples and fiery homilies of repentance and forgiveness. Because of this, the confession lines were many and longer. The Lord is calling for the witness of authentic and renewed conversion of life. The Lord is calling you.

Rediscovering the Documents

Pope Benedict XVI has encouraged us to rediscover the documents of Vatican II and to revisit the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. We have not yet come to understand the profound impact these documents have for us. In the Holy Father’s address to the Roman Curia, “If we interpret and implement it guided by a right hermeneutics, it can be and can become increasingly powerful for the ever necessary renewal of the Church.” We have the resources readily available for renewal and faith, let us take advantage of them. The Pope asks us to take this year to rediscover the blessings of Vatican II and the *Catechism*.

Commitment to Evangelize

“It is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us” to evangelize (2 Cor 5:14). As the call to repentance requires a response so too does the love of Christ. The love of Jesus is a fire that impels us and a light that attracts others. We are given the mandate to be “lovers of God” and to love our neighbor. The greatest act of love is to share the *kerygma*, the Good News of Jesus. Pope Benedict asks for a “stronger ecclesial commitment to the new evan-

gelization in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith” (PF #7). Practically speaking, we can communicate our love and our faith in the home as well as the workplace. In the home we can model Christ by blessing one another and by living out acts of charity and forgiveness. A religious congregation is like a family, we try to model Christ in this way. In a tangible way, it has become a practice for us to give scripture cards or witness cards to the people we meet and in the letters we write. I am also seeing in e-mails people including a scripture verse, a quote from the Holy Father, a quote from a saint or a Christian message along with their signature. I have seen a men’s religious congregation and various individuals use Facebook strictly for evangelization purposes. I have heard of people purchasing Christmas Madonna and Child stamps and using them year-round. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and impel you to be a credible witness; he will give you the inspiration to spread the Gospel.

Other Ways to Grow in Faith

1. Read “Porta Fidei” (*The Door of Faith*) and meditate on it.
2. Reflect on the Vatican Documents, the writings of the Church Fathers, the *Catechism*.
3. Familiarize yourself with Catholic Apologetics. There are many websites that will help you know and defend your faith.
4. Become more familiar with the lives of the saints.
5. Intensify and increase the witness of charity by doing random acts of kindness and great acts of generosity.
6. Speak to others about your faith. There is nothing more powerful than a personal testimony of faith through God’s healing, God’s intervention, and God’s assistance in trials. Offer to pray with individuals.
7. Proclaim the New Evangelization.



Photo: Tammie Stevens

Finally, take the opportunity each day for Jesus to find faith in you, your family, your workplace, and in your church. Be the credible witness of faith entering through the door and bringing others through the “door of faith.” “And when they arrived, they gathered the church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27). ♦

Mother Lucy Lukasiewicz is the Superior General of the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ community based in Prayer Town, Texas. She presently serves as a member of the National Service Committee.



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

1. That our five year preparation for the Jubilee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 2017 bring forth a new stream of graces for the Church and the Renewal. May God be glorified!
2. That Renewal participants will exercise with renewed faith the charisms and ministries we have received, and encourage and teach others to do the same.
3. For fruitfulness in all NSC sponsored events: Leaders' & Ministries' Conference in San Antonio, Nov 2-4 and other planned outreach events.
4. That the culture of Pentecost will give witness to the love of Christ which impels us to evangelize, and that the Renewal in each diocese will joyfully offer its collective experience and charisms in service to the New Evangelization.
5. That leaders in the Renewal will plan events during the Year of Faith that will highlight for all Catholics the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in this special time of grace.



National Leaders' & Ministries' Conference

Denver, Colorado

More information will be added to our website as soon as possible.

Building Bridges of Understanding

between peoples and groups



by Matteo Calisi

Let myself be guided for this reflection by chapter 60 of the Prophet Isaiah:

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord rises upon you. For behold, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness the peoples but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory appears over you" (Is 60:1-2).

For us Christians, this project of light, unity, peace and justice for humanity passes through two fundamental aspects:

1. Firstly through the acceptance of the primacy of God on the history of humanity. Jesus is the only hope for peace, and as Christians we have the responsibility to proclaim it with clarity and trust, exhorting mankind to truly *"Open the doors to Christ"* (Blessed John Paul II).
2. The second fundamental aspect is to welcome the universal mission of peace of the Church. The Church is the instrument of Christ for the reconciliation of peoples. Between Christ and his Church there is a close and

indissoluble relationship, without solution of continuity. In Christ God has reconciled us in "one body" (*Eph 4:16*) the Church!

These are the fundamental reasons with which we Catholics must intercede constantly so that Jesus Christ may triumph, the Prince of Peace, the cornerstone for building unity among the nations, real hope for the future.

In these days of violence and hate our responsibility as Christians is to maintain unity and peace in the Church. If the nations of the earth are in conflict with one another and do not give the honor and glory to the God of nations, one of the fundamental faults is our disunity among Christians. God is no longer honored by the nations also because of our division and discord in the Christian Church. The sin surrounds the nations, because Christians do not witness the love towards one another. And the world will never believe the Gospel we preach, if we are divided among us believers in Christ. Jesus says that a kingdom cannot stand if divided

Erica da Silva Moura, Photos.com

Peace is made in small steps, starting immediately and personally, even with a simple handshake.

within itself. The division among Christians can compromise the cause of the holy Gospel which is the salvation of mankind. In fact, Jesus had prayed the Father for the unity of his disciples to “*be one that the world may believe*” (Jn 17:21). Therefore, the search and commitment to the unity of the Church are essential!

Christian unity is the only concrete form through which God creates the unity of the nations. A unity of the nations which is only economic, geographical or political, assigned to human organizations like the UN or the European Union will never exist: these are profound illusions. There is the unity of the nations according to the pattern of Pentecost. This is the work of God.

In the event of Pentecost described by the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke tells us that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob becomes the God of nations on earth. If as Christians we are divided, we contradict the Spirit in the Church of Pentecost, and we hinder the plan of God to make the nations of the world his people.

With Christians of different traditions we must look for peace through dialogue and prayer. Before a world torn by war and hatred, we must intercede so that the fire of weapons goes out and the fire of love rekindles among the disciples of Christ and among all people.

The new millennium has started with terrorist acts often determined by religious fundamentalism. For this reason, we are still witnessing a process of instability in various parts of the world. In some of these lands, Christians pay

the highest price, that of life, to restore peace among the peoples; not only among Catholics but also among Christians of other denominations. This is evidenced by the long list of martyrs who have been killed in hatred of the faith in Christ and in places of worship. Maybe one day a common martyrology among all Christians will be written because martyrdom is also a source of unity and reconciliation for the Church and the world.

It is therefore necessary, as Christians, to be aware that peace could be hard-won and that we may be required to sacrifice even our life in order to offer it in imitation of that of Jesus. Jesus has taught us that there is nothing to kill for, but there is something to die for. This is the great mystery of Christ and his Church!

By now all peoples claim their right to govern themselves. Nowadays we see clearly that the only way to peace is to destroy the *enmity*, not the enemy. Not to mention that what Tertullian said about the blood of Christians applies also to enemies: “*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians*”: the blood of enemies, regrettably, is the seed of other enemies.

Someone reproached Abraham Lincoln one day for being too nice to his enemies, and reminded him that his duty as President was rather to destroy them. To which he replied: “Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?” Enemies are destroyed with weapons, but enmity with dialogue!

Before pointing it to the nations, the Church, led by the Pope, is striving to carry out this program with the quest

for Christian unity and through the dialogue among the various religions. Peace is made in small steps, starting immediately and personally, even with a simple handshake.

Jesus has come to announce “*peace to those near and far*” (Eph 2:17). Peace with “*those near*” is often more difficult than peace with “*those far...*” Jesus said: “*If you bring your gift to the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave there the gift before the altar and first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift*” (Mt 5: 23-24). Be reconciled with our neighbors, especially those whom we tend to reject, in our families, between spouses, between parents and children, in our communities, parishes and prayer groups. “*Through him we have access to the Father by one Spirit*.” (Eph 2:18). “*The one and the others*” are not just Jews and Gentiles, there are also Christians and Muslims, Greeks and Latins, Catholics and Protestants, clergy and laity, men and women, whites and blacks.

In the eyes of God, already now, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave nor free, neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). The reconciled world, which has become one in Christ, already exists “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20). ♦

Matteo Calisi is the President of the Community of Jesus and President of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships. He is a Member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. (Palazzo San Calisto, 16 -00120 Vatican City).

