



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

- For a renewal and deepening of the gifts of praise and worship in our personal lives, our prayer groups and in the whole Church.
- That we may come into a greater union with Jesus as the Christ (Messiah, Anointed One, Anointed of the Spirit) during the Advent/Christmas Seasons.
- For the National Leaders Gathering (January 18-23) that all groups graced by Charismatic Renewal may work in harmony according to God's plan.
- For the finances to expand the national office for Catholic Charismatic Renewal, so that we can be even more fruitful in promoting all the graces of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.
- For the February 29-March 5, 2008 pilgrimage to the Shrines of Mexico.

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Editor's Note: Last issue Fr. Gelpi, SJ wrote an article with the focus on community. This article by Fr. Bob Hogan further highlights the relationship between charisms and building community.

Part Two

Charisms and Community Building

by Fr. Bob Hogan

Charisms (spiritual gifts) are a treasure in the Church. How do we make sure that they do not become "fool's gold" without the full, lasting value that God desires? I believe that the answer is found in a renewed effort to "build community" in our prayer groups.

Community building is essential for those seeking the lasting, fruitful use of charisms in the Church. The idea of charisms is exciting. We want to see "manifestations of the Spirit" in our lives (1 Cor. 12:7). It is wonderful to see God's presence made visible by charisms that awaken faith, demonstrate that God is in our midst, and build up the Church (1 Cor. 14:4, 12, 25-26). Charisms in individual lives are a great blessing for the Church. The Charismatic Renewal is an important reminder that God's work is not done only with our human abilities, but with charisms that manifest God's power, love and wisdom (1 Tim. 1:6-7).

However, the focus in the early church was not only, or mainly, on individual charisms. God manifested the Holy Spirit's presence through the witness of a committed, united community. Acts 2:42-47 describes the Jerusalem disciples after Pentecost: "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers...to meeting together in the

temple area and breaking bread in their homes...and every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." Steven Clark writes: "No doubt there was individual evangelism, but the account in Acts 2 emphasizes that it was their life together that impacted others. The result of the outpouring of the Spirit was a community living "in the Spirit," and this drew others to the Lord" (*Charismatic Spirituality*, p. 27). The community itself was a manifestation of the Spirit, a charism. St. Paul confirms this truth by regularly describing charisms in the context of being a committed, united community, the "body of Christ" (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:1-16).

What does this mean for prayer groups? We must "strive eagerly" (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 12) for the charism of "community building." People should witness a "togetherness" in the Spirit that manifests God's presence. Here are some suggestions for growing in this charism in prayer groups:

- 1) Pray together for the desire to be a community like Acts 2, that witnesses the presence of the Spirit, bringing others to Jesus Christ.
- 2) Pray for the community building charisms of pastoring, administration, wisdom, encouragement, hospitality, communal vision, practical teaching on relationships, etc.

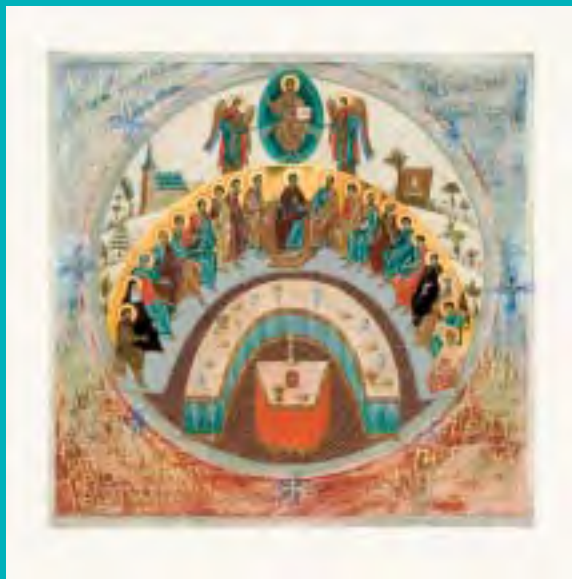
3) Pray for the grace to “think collectively” and “see connections,” so that people do not think only of their own desires and gifts, but learn to interrelate with others and complement each other. Teach about these abilities and practice them in your groups.

4) Have a yearly group plan that includes regular community building activities: one-to-one sharing where people can share their background and testimony; teachings on “working collectively,” communication skills, and group dynamics; “small group” sharing about one area of growth and one area of challenge in each person’s life; socializing together. Spend time helping people to get to know each other and grow in spiritual bonds of friendship.

5) Ask the Lord what persons and groups he wants you to be relating with in a committed way. Start with family and parish community, but also, smaller groups where you can share your faith journey.

As St. Paul teaches, we grow in maturity in Christ when we are in committed relationships where “living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:15-16). ♦

Fr. Bob Hogan is Co-founder of the Brothers of the Beloved Disciple, a Charismatic and Marian Religious community of priests and brothers. Presently he is a member of the NSC and involved with working at the Catholic Center for Charismatic Renewal in San Antonio, Texas.



Cover illustration: *Life in Community Acts 4*, Aidan Hart in collaboration with Donald Jackson. What Luke describes here is his idea on an ideal community. This passage has been the inspiration for monks, nuns, religious and others, who have tried to replicate this description of the early church in monasteries, parishes and communities. The illumination depicts a circle of people sharing a never-ending common table.

A vast illuminated manuscript, the *Saint John’s Bible*, has been commissioned by Saint John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota, from the contemporary scribe and illuminator, Donald Jackson. Mr. Jackson works in the Scriptorium in Wales, where he handwrites the Bible and creates illuminations in a unique collaboration with other artists and scribes.

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