

### Intercessions:

That all priests, with the help of the Holy Spirit, discharge without fail, the office of priesthood in caring for the Lord's flock.

That all priests celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and with sincere devotion as the Church has handed them down to us.

That all priests exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith.

That all priests consecrate their life to God for the salvation of his people, and unite themselves more closely everyday to Christ the High Priest.

For a fresh outpouring of the Spirit upon all priests who have blessed the Renewal with their service, teachings, and support.

For the Lord's blessing upon the National Leaders' and Ministries' Conference to be held in October.

(Some of the petitions were paraphrased from the Rite of Ordination)



## Aging and Disappearing Prayer Groups *God's desire, or our need for fresh fire?*

by Deacon Chuck Matzker

### *Eavesdrop with me:*

**To some comments from prayer group members:** "It is hard for me to drive at night—no one helps me get here." "We don't do Life in the Spirit Seminars any more." "We rely on the Spirit to bring people." "We don't pray in tongues so we don't offend or scare anyone." "Did anyone speak to the new people here tonight?"

**To visitors to the meeting:** "Best kept secret in the Catholic Church." "There is no one here my age." "I don't feel like I belong—there is an in-group and then the outsiders."

Any of these sound familiar? These are just a few of the many reasons why prayer groups diminish, grow stagnant, or even disappear, yet we can learn from these comments.

What should we do? I believe that our first posture **must** be one of hope. Prayer groups are meant to be vibrant places of praise that act as a well from which the grace of the baptism in the Spirit, the grace of Pentecost, flows and where the charisms are made real and witnessed to in community for the up building of the Church and for the evangelization of society. As Sister Nancy Kellar once said, "the meeting place is the learning place for the market place."

If God wants a prayer group to cease, it will, but let it not disappear because of our failure to do our part consciously

and in prayer. Our spirituality is an incarnational one, and God acts through us and with our cooperation. So, let me propose four "prisms" to help us look at our prayer groups with wisdom from the past, to avoid mistakes in the present and the future.

They are designated by the words KNOW, SHOW, SOW and GROW. How well, as prayer groups, do we  
KNOW—Who and why we are.  
SHOW—Tell others who and why we are.  
SOW—The grace given, the grace of Pentecost  
GROW—In community, holiness, numbers and zeal for mission

### **KNOW who and why we are.**

Unless this is done, we float without a compass. So we must ask: Do we have a mission? Do we foster the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), which empowered the members of the early Church at Pentecost; live life in the Spirit; evangelize; grow in use of the charisms, etc?

Are we fully Charismatic? Are the charisms eagerly sought, taught, used and discerned at the meeting. Or have we become a Rosary or Eucharistic Adoration group—all wonderful, but not our mission.

Are we really Community? Life in the Spirit is best fostered in community where people support and care for one another. Do we welcome the stranger and invite him or her to be a part of us, to serve with us?

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You may use this or a similar statement: "I/we bequeath \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (or % of my residual estate) to the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the United States, Inc. P.O. Box 628, Locust Grove, VA 22508-0628."

Please let us know if you have included us in your will so that we can properly thank you.

Can we call ourselves “a charismatic community, a ‘body of Christ with a mission?” or are we simply a “once a week” prayer meeting—a revolving door of IN and OUT?

**SHOW others that we exist.**

God can and does sovereignly bring people to our meetings, but this does not absolve us of the common sense work of inviting them, of telling as many people as we can that “a charismatic community is here and you are invited.” We can do this through personal invitations; advertising our existence and events everywhere; invitation cards; websites and many other ways. To adapt St Paul’s words from Romans 10:14 to this case, “How can they come if they have not heard, and how can they hear if we do not invite them.”

**SOW the grace of the renewal through prayer meetings, outreaches and ministries.**

The grace of Baptism in the Spirit must be given away. We are called to sow this grace into the field of the world. The Sea of Galilee remains fresh and full of life because it has an outlet; the Dead Sea is dead because it has no outlet, and keeps all the water for itself. We are meant in humility to “give the grace away.”

How can we do this? Primarily through being a prayer meeting where God’s presence and power are sought and experienced and lives are changed.

**Other ways:** Life in the Spirit Seminars; Workshops on the Gifts of the Spirit; Confirmation preparation; prayer teams for special needs after Masses; Workshops on Evangelization; and much more!

**GROW in unity, community, holiness, life in the Spirit, zeal and numbers.**

If we KNOW, SHOW and SOW, growth should be taking place. But

more is needed. Commitment to daily prayer and the sacraments are essential to seek God and his will. A prayer to the Holy Spirit is a great way to begin the day or any activity.

Conscious and continual community building is **absolutely vital**. For example, make hospitality a priority at the prayer meeting; greet and recognize newcomers; send cards to those who are ill or have had a significant life event; call or send cards to those who have not attended in a while; have monthly pastoral team meetings; quarterly CORE (regular attendee) meetings; frequent teachings on the group’s mission; retreats; community events (game nights, picnics, etc.); invite all into some ministry in the prayer group

(use them or lose them); invite people to attend Charismatic Conferences to see the big picture; and much more!

Holy Spirit, send us fresh fire! Help us to KNOW, SHOW, SOW and GROW so we may proclaim in power and with renewed zeal that **JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!** ♦

*Deacon Chuck Matzker is the Bishop’s Liaison to the Charismatic Renewal in the Diocese of Colorado Springs. He and his wife Barbara are on the NSC Advisory Council, and have been prayer group and renewal leaders for over 20 years.*



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