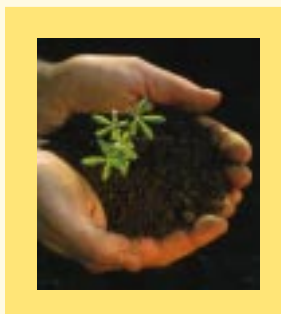


PENTECOST *Today*

July/August/September 2001 Volume 26, Number 3

Grace *for the*

New



Springtime

The prophetic role of the Charismatic Renewal 3

“The Charismatic Renewal came into being for the renewal of the whole church, not just one part,” writes **Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa**, who challenges the Renewal to reclaim its prophetic role.

Setting kids on fire 5

Katrina Zeno shares the story of a youth prayer group which is fanning the flame of the Spirit among teens and pre-teens, and bringing new spark to the adult prayer meeting as well!

Developing discernment 7

Daily decision-making becomes a lot easier if we learn to use the intellect God has given us, according to **Dorothy Ranaghan**. In this issue’s Spiritual Formation column, she explores the skills necessary for good discernment.

LEADERS FOCUS

Called to be a prophetic people 9

Aggie Neck believes that prophecy is not just a gift for prayer meetings, but a way of life for all Christians.

Newsbriefs 11

Charisms and the New Life in the Spirit Seminars 12

The New Life in the Spirit Seminars offers a broad—and challenging—vision of spiritual gifts.

Chairman’s Corner 2 Friends of the NSC 15

From the Director 14 Ministry Update 15

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

Chairman's Corner

by Fr. Patsy Iaquinta



Living on the edge

“Behold, I am doing something new. Can you not perceive it?” How many times have we heard these or similar words at prayer meetings, conferences and gatherings—locally and internationally! This seems to be the universal revelation to the Renewal. And well it should be if we truly are *re-new-al*. Is this not how the God Spirit has moved since the first Pentecost? “I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh” (Jl. 3:1). Nothing like this has ever happened before! Something new! “The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also” (Acts 10:45). Something new!

It is only with the initiative of the Spirit that something new is brought into the community of believers. Therefore our posture should be one of openness and discernment. Test everything and hold to what is good. We are first to listen to the Lord, then weigh what is heard in light of the Spirit. We cannot reject anything simply because “it has never been like that before,” or because “we’ve always done it this way,” or because “that is not part of our tradition.” Consider Peter entering the house of Cornelius, the Gentiles’ acceptance of the Gospel, the lack of circumcision of male believers. All these actions were beyond the experience of Jewish law, as was Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath.

In the Renewal we have readily accepted this fresh outpouring as by a new Pentecost. We are to be the vanguard of how the Spirit is moving the church. We become the point people, living on the edge where it is always dangerous and risky. Our posture is one of listening and observing what is new. Like the prophets of old we are to discern all things and filter back to the main body that which is seen and heard. This is not just a retelling but a reliving and acting out our experience. (Remember Jeremiah and the yokes, Jer. 27-

28.) These are the signs and wonders that follow. The Spirit “will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming” (Jn. 16:13).

The danger is that we enjoy the retelling, the reliving and the acting out so much that we do not return to the vanguard. Our function for the whole body is to observe and listen, to watch and pray, that we not miss the “things that are coming” and allow them to pass us by. We cannot become entrenched in one camp or another but must return to the forefront of where God Spirit is leading us.

As an example: I believe the Renewal has re-introduced the gift of healing into the church. It is up to others to decide the hows, whys, and wherefores of the exercise of the gift. Mass with healing prayers, anointing of the sick in the context of Mass, deliverance prayer and prayer for the healing of memories are opportunities for leadership to exercise its gifts. It was not a problem thirty years ago. Fewer people were being healed prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It reminds me of the problems caused by Gentile converts in the first century. Aren’t these nice problems for the universal church to have to deal with?

Our call is to return to the vanguard, to be people of constant prayer, always looking to be converted. We must remain open to our continual unfolding. We have not exhausted God’s love nor our capacity to receive his transforming love. Our growth is ongoing and continual, ever deepening in the love of God. Not only does God want to give us more, but God wants to give us everything. And he has: Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead. ♦

Fr. Patsy Iaquinta is chairman of the National Service Committee. He is pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Bluefield, West Virginia.

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The prophetic role of the Charismatic Renewal

by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa

Indeed, in its early days, like every prophetic movement, it was seen as a great sign of newness and openness, a forward thrust on various fronts.

In September 1999, Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, who serves as preacher to the papal household, addressed a gathering of priests sponsored by the Italian National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In his talk, Fr. Cantalamessa addressed several concerns facing the Renewal as it moves into the Third Millennium. The following article is excerpted from that talk.

Iwould like to turn our attention to certain shadowy areas that give rise, it seems to me, to concerns about the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, or, if you prefer, to certain dangers that we ought to address.

The Charismatic Renewal is for the whole church.

There are countries where the church is strongly polarized. On the one side are those who have come to be variously defined as liberals, progressives or innovators; on the other side are the traditionalists or conservatives. The word “liberal” in the English-speaking world—and especially in the United States—has a meaning that is a little different from the meaning it has elsewhere. It signifies those who are more open to novelty. Among them there are some whose positions are frankly unacceptable and extreme. But there are also those who simply identify with Vatican II, which they would like to see implemented a little more courageously in the matter of pluralism, inter-cultural dialogue and the question of decentralization.

On the opposite side, in reaction to things that are seen as too innovative and secularized, a current has developed that is strongly attached to the theology and practices of the past. Here too there is a whole spectrum, ranging from well-known extremists to people who are perfectly balanced and full of zeal and love for Christ and the church. Within reasonable limits this kind of tension is not only legitimate but necessary, since no one person, standing alone, can realize by himself the demands of fidelity and of progress in equal measure.

What is the danger as far as we are concerned? That the Charismatic Renewal, which came into being for the renewal of the whole church, should end up by becoming identified purely and simply with one segment of the church—the more conservative one. Reading religious publications from various countries, it is clear to me that some of them see the new ecclesial movements, including the Renewal, as conservative forces, if not as downright reactionary.

This does serious harm. The Charismatic Renewal is a gift for the whole church, not for just a particular part, and so it must remain. Indeed, in its early days, like every prophetic movement, it was seen as a great sign of newness and openness, a forward thrust on various fronts, the ecumenical outreach included. As such, it was welcomed by the Catholic Church hierarchy, and it has no need to change its appearance to make itself acceptable. Cardinal Suenens, who was for years its principal sponsor and ecclesiastical spokesman, was, during and after the Council, one of the most authoritative promoters of the need for *aggiornamento*—giving contemporary impact to the practices and beliefs of the church.

It is with infinite sadness that I see that the Charismatic Renewal has ended up confined to one part of the church only, and regarded by the rest as something so alien that they feel fully justified in keeping well clear of it. Let me say again, the Charismatic Renewal was born to renew the whole church and not just one part of it. When I say the whole church, I mean, naturally, the church that positions itself firmly in the mainstream of orthodoxy and the magisterium; that is ready,

This is a matter of being faithful to the Spirit who has no fear of differences.

if necessary—on one side or the other—to submit obediently to the appointed authority (the bishop or the pope, as the case may be), but not before having born prophetic witness to the goals that are close to its heart, according to the sound dialectic that has always been the Catholic Church's strength and the root of its capacity for self-renewal.

We need to look squarely at this situation and do what has to be done to prevent it becoming even more widespread, and to correct it where it has become established. This is not a matter of taking this or that stance, but of being faithful to the Spirit who has no fear of differences and who is always able, according to Irenaeus, “to create a beautiful symphony out of many voices” as he did on the day of Pentecost.

The Charismatic Renewal is for the “essentials” of the Christian life.

The second danger is devotionism. Here too, we need to remember how it all began. The Charismatic Renewal was born with a powerful drive to return to the essentials of the Christian life: the Holy Spirit, the lordship of Christ, the word of God, the sacraments, the charisms, prayer, evangelization. This is the secret of its explosive power. It simply accentuates what should be common and “normal” for every baptized person.

Let us once again offer to the church this taste for what is essential. The basic work of the Spirit is his sanctifying activity (see 2 Thes. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2) by which he transforms human beings, giving them a new heart, not the heart of a slave but the heart of a child of God's family. Next comes his charismatic activity, by which he distributes a variety of gifts for the good of the community. This is what he did at Pentecost: he transformed the apostles, making new men of them, then he had them speak in tongues and prophesy, and he gave them all the gifts they would need for their mission. In the Charismatic Renewal too, we need to respect this hierarchy: per-

sonal sanctification must come first, and only then, in second place, the experience of the charisms. The Holy Spirit does not set out merely to clean up the dress of his bride, the church. His first aim is above all to renew her heart.

Why do I think it necessary to mention all these things? I believe that the words of the letter to the Hebrews are addressed to us too: “Remember the earlier days...be as confident now” (Heb 10: 32, 35). The Charismatic Renewal, and Catholicism generally, runs the risk of again becoming overgrown and weighed down, after the Council's great effort to restore simplicity and essentiality in doctrine and practice. In many things—for example in the devotion to Mary—the Council sought to bring back to Catholic practice a sobriety that was lost in the course of the centuries, especially during the age of the Counter-reformation.

Little by little we have seen this fruit of the Council being lost. There has been a return to an excessive insistence on what is optional. The Charismatic Renewal itself has become sucked into this whirlpool, to such an extent that in some places it has become identified merely by association with certain devotions, apparitions, individuals and particular messages. Certain of these things are in themselves quite legitimate, and a sign of the richness of the Catholic Church, but they need to be kept within their proper sphere and not imposed on all and sundry as a measure of the greater or lesser extent of their “catholicity.”

This is not a question of taking position against any of these things. The point is whether the Charismatic Renewal ought to be characterized by this kind of thing, or by something else. We already have all that we need to become holy and to spread the Gospel. In this way, we would render our devotion to Mary more acceptable to other Christians, and we would be hastening the day

[See Role page 13](#)

Setting kids on fire



Prayer meetings and seminars for pre-teens

by Katrina J. Zeno

"The kids really wanted to be there and they really wanted to receive God's love and mercy."

How do you set youth on fire with the Holy Spirit? Is it possible for children to "own" the charismatic gifts? The Community of God's Love found an answer.

Three years ago, Kathy Cutler of Steubenville, Ohio, had a problem. After organizing a Life in the Spirit seminar for boys ages 8-18 in the Community of God's Love, she needed a follow

up. One of the boys suggested a prayer meeting just for youth. Kathy presented the idea to the community's council and was given the green light to go ahead.



"It's hard to get through the fear of what your peers think."

"I was shocked," Kathy says. "I expected the council to organize the youth prayer meeting, not pass the baton onto me." After stumbling through a couple prayer meetings, Kathy and a few other adults called twelve youth together to discuss goals and a vision. Out of that meeting emerged not only a vision statement, but a core leadership team of six youth.

Through trial and error, the core team eventually pieced together a combination of activities, praise and worship, testimonies, prayer, and pizza that reflected the vision statement's three goals: opportunities for worship, talks and sharing, and fellowship. While Kathy and other adult advisors are present during the planning and prayer meetings, the core team picks the themes, leads praise and worship, gives directions, and keeps the ball rolling.

That ball rolled into high gear last November when the core team planned and led an evangelical-style prayer meeting. "During the prayer meeting, we asked the kids to stand up if they wanted to commit their lives to Christ," says core team member Amy Nelson, age 15. "We asked them to stand not because their parents had this desire but because they wanted to make that choice."

At first, just a few brave souls stood up, but eventually the whole group of about thirty-five youth, ages 10-15, were on their feet. Core team leader Brian Feely led the group in a commitment

prayer and invited each person to come forward for prayer. With the lights dimmed and the cross spotlighted, the ordinary meeting room became a sacred space.

"I felt the power of the Lord pounding on the door of their hearts as we prayed over the kids," Brian says. "He just kept knocking, and he was going to get in no matter what."

"We had many prophetic words for the kids," says 17 year-old Monica Nelson who prayed over her peers along with her cousin, Laura Nelson. "God was saying to the kids that he loves them and not to be afraid." In particular, Monica experienced being in the shoes of the disciples. "We are called to do what they did, and it amazes me that God is working through kids these days to do that."

While Monica and Laura received an outpouring of prophetic words, high school freshman Jonathan Weiss and sophomore Jeanne Schreck were channels for a different spiritual gift. "As we prayed, many of the kids rested in the Spirit," Jonathan says. "We felt an awesome power because the kids really wanted to be there and they really wanted to receive God's love and mercy."

After every youth was anointed and prayed over, Brian led the group in exuberant praise and worship. Gone were the distractions. Gone were the fears. Most of the kids raised their hands while fixing their eyes on the cross. "It was such a time of celebration," Jonathan says. "You felt like the roof was going to come off. The kids' voices and praises filled the whole room."

"It's hard to get through the fear of what your peers think," Jeanne says, "but it started happening that night. I've never seen the kids so happy and joyful."

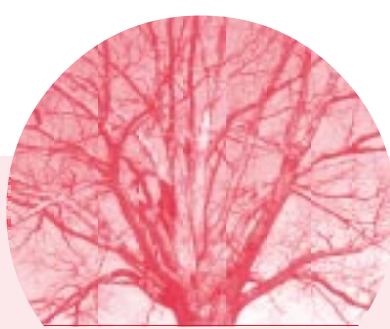
While the roof might not be blown off at every youth prayer meeting, the sense of God's presence remains. In February, the Holy Spirit moved sovereignly during worship so that two sisters, Bernadette and Regina Recznik, rested in the Spirit without even being prayed over. "I was praying in tongues and singing and started to lean over," says 10-year-old Regina. "One of the boys caught me and took me to a chair. I sat there for a while and felt God tell me I needed to pray more." Meanwhile her 12-year-old sister Bernadette rested in the Spirit for the first time. "I sensed God telling me I wasn't going to be elected to the core team (for the youth prayer meeting) because he had something better for me," Bernadette says. "I felt so peaceful."

Probably the most surprised person is Kathy herself. "I had no goals to start with. I just felt the Lord telling me that the youth would change the adult prayer meeting," she says. "And it's happening: The youth have prophesied and brought a spark to the adult prayer meeting. The high-school-age leaders are responding to the Holy Spirit and spurring the adults on." ♦

Katrina Zeno is a freelance writer,



retreat speaker, and member of the Community of God's Love in Steubenville, Ohio.



Spiritual Formation

Discernment

by Dorothy Ranaghan

Recently some friends of ours gathered for an impromptu party. The young man in charge of this event decided supplies were running low, and he sent someone out for more beer. The question was asked, “A couple six packs or a case?” He put his head into his hands, looked most solemn, and after a pause of a minute or so looked up slowly and said, “I’m discerning.” The entire roomful of people burst out laughing. We knew he was joking.

There is no question that God has a plan for our lives, a plan for our good. Nor is there any doubt that his plan for us includes even the smallest details of our lives. But kooky, frivolous things need not be “discerned.” God gave us good minds—made in his own image—to do the work of decision making. Details do matter, but we do not need a direct “word” from God about every move we make. Discernment will be both necessary and desirable in the bigger decisions of life—choosing our state in life, deciding where to work or where to live. For many of us, those decisions were made long ago and should not be revisited, but since finding, knowing and following God’s will in our everyday lives is a top priority, Scripture encourages us to “get our minds straight” (Rom. 12:2). It is the very best way to approach the subject of guidance and discerning God’s will.

Men and women act with God in co-creating their lives by the decisions they make. We should, therefore, place great value on learning to think intelligently, logically and clearly. Does that sound “unspiritual”? Think again. Study and other disciplines of the mind help us in acquiring the skills needed for wise decision-making, in formation of conscience and in the search for truth. Once we find the truth, we can then change, transform and/or renew our minds to accommodate it. Scripture clearly indicates that we are to be “transformed by the renewing” of our minds. Guidance becomes a lot easier if

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We should, therefore, place great value on learning to think intelligently, logically and clearly.

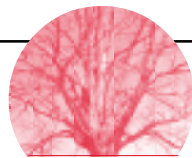
we do. If our behavior is influenced by what we think, then we will simply begin to act differently once we have a new mind on things. Romans 12:2 is clear on this: “Let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.”

The hard choices come between two goods. What will give God greater glory as I head off to college—a major in business or in social work? Or, now that I am retired, how should I spend this summer? Should I go on the pilgrimage, or volunteer in the local Right to Life office? Between two goods, God has a preference. He will give us an invitation, but he will never coerce. The Acts of the Apostles vividly describes the way God guides those who are willing to be led by his Spirit. The Spirit shows us as church—individually and collectively—what God wants us to do and be. “The mystery of Pentecost is that the gift of discernment is breathed into the world, enabling us to see the presence of the divine in the midst of the human—not as an aside or an afterthought, but as the main event of our lives” (Jay Rochelle in *Christian Century*, May 22, 1985, p. 535).

When we think clearly, and then live and breathe the atmosphere of the divine, guidance will not be confused with the tug of emotional impulse. If, on Monday, you have made a good decision to give God glory by attending medical school, you will not “hear” God call you to give all your money to an evangelist or to the poor on Tuesday. Why? Because you will need the money you have saved to support your decision to build God’s kingdom as a doctor. God will not contradict himself.

St. Ignatius of Loyola has some very helpful guidelines for fine-tuning our ability to make a good choice. He reminds





Spiritual Formation

us that the decision we can truly discern will always involve something we “intend” to do. It is not automatically a decision about what “will” happen. I can pray about whether to be open to marriage, but I cannot be certain that I will marry. Why? John can decide, or intend, to ask Mary to marry him, and he may rightly hear God call him to ask her, but it does not follow that John and Mary will marry, because Mary is also free to make a choice. All you can discern is what *you* may choose, not the responses of others. One thing is clear, however: we should commit in advance to do what God wills once it is clear. Why ask God a question if our mind is already made up, or if we don't want to hear his answer, or if our attitude is, “Let me know what you want Lord, and I'll think it over.”

The process of seeking guidance should be simple and peaceful. There is no need to be frantic or confused in seeking God's will. He loves us and will make it clear. We don't need psychics and crystal balls. We don't need lots of fear, doubt or self-analysis. “Many people seek to hear God solely as a device for securing their own safety, comfort and righteousness... (but) extreme preoccupation with knowing God's will for me may only indicate, contrary to what is often thought, that I am over-concerned with myself, not a Christ-like interest in the well being of others or in the glory of God” (Dallas Willard, *Hearing God*, p. 28).

My husband is fascinated by the novels of Patrick O'Brien, which describe early nine-

teenth century sailing vessels. He is intrigued with the history and the beauty of the old masts, and by all the seemingly primitive, yet accurate navigation accomplished with only seasoned hands, a mariner's compass, clock and sextant. We have our own versions of these essential tools when it comes to guidance, things by which you can set your course: Scripture, the teaching of the church, well-tested charisms, pastoral care (advice from others who are wise). To set sail without them is foolhardy. Best of all, we have the life of Christ, whose food is to do the will of the Father, within us. We should get our own thinking process straight, allow the mind of Christ to grow within us, and then simply make our choices for the glory of God.

As for our party—the Father is all about feasts and bounty and overflowing water jugs. We sent out for a case of beer.



Dorothy Garrity Ranaghan is a founding member of the People of Praise Community. A former member of the National Service Committee and former editor of the Chariscenter USA Newsletter, Dorothy currently does writing and retreat work. She and her husband, Kevin, live in South Bend, Indiana, and have six children and seven grandchildren.



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TEACHING OUTLINE

Discernment

God has a plan for our lives that includes the smallest details.

God gave us minds made in his own image to help with decision making.

God wants those minds to be well formed, as well as transformed, renewed.

Our choice should be based on what gives God greater glory.

We are to be led by the Holy Spirit not by our emotions.

We should decide in advance to do God's will once it has been discerned.

Aids to our discernment process include Scripture, the teaching of the church, well-tested charisms, and pastoral care (advice from others who are wise).

Reflection Questions

Do I believe God has a preference in the decisions I am called upon to make every day?

If I have been identified with Christ, if his life flows within me, if I have begun to “put on his mind,” do I feel confident to ask myself at various points of decision, “What do I think about this?”

What does it mean to be “led by the Spirit?”

What do my mind and clear thinking have to do with the glory of God? ♦