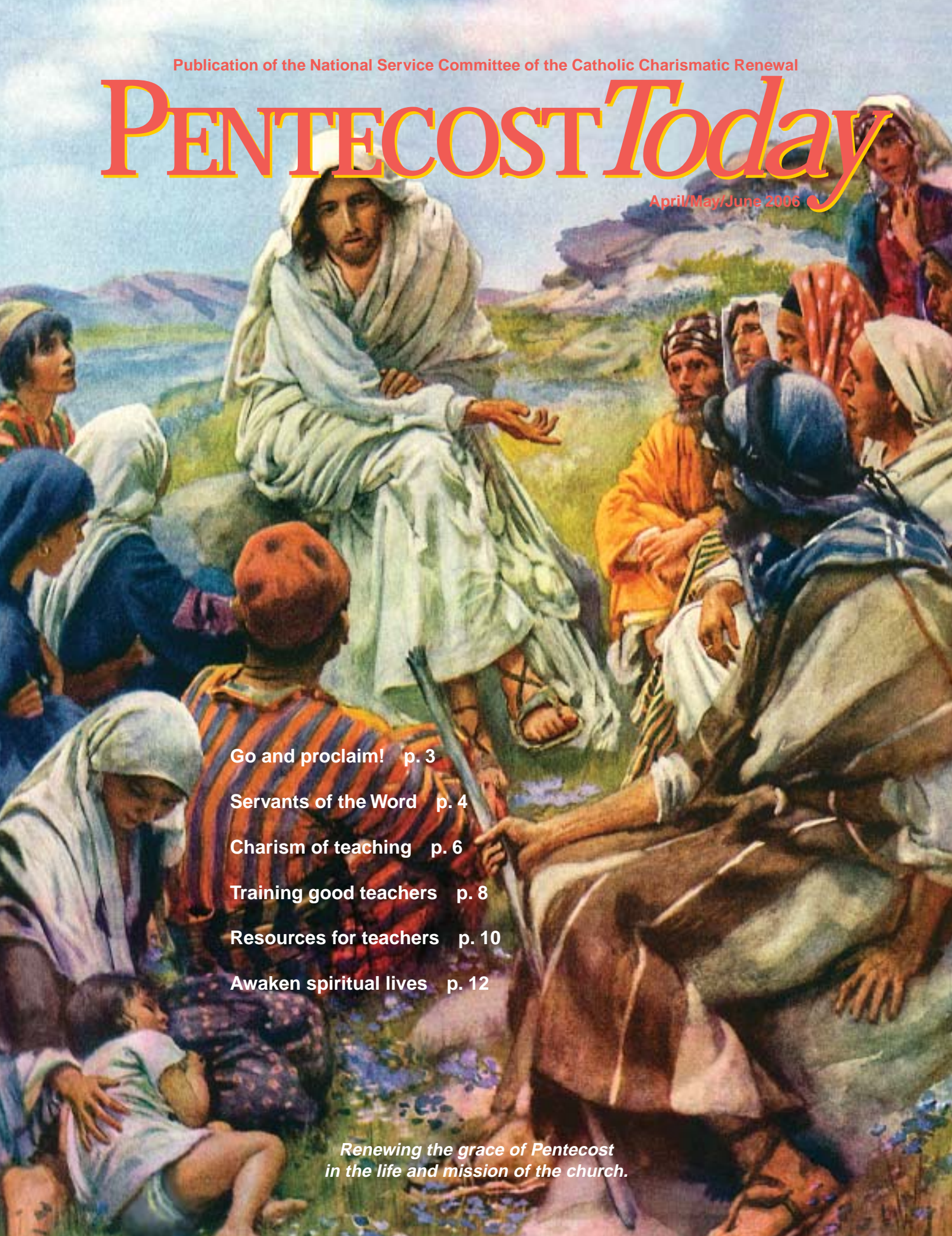


Publication of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

PENTECOST *Today*

April/May/June 2006

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



Chairman's
Corner
.....
by Aggie Neck

Share the joy

“All Sacred Scripture is but one book,
and that one book is Christ,
because all divine Scripture speaks of
Christ and all divine Scripture is
fulfilled in Christ”
(*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #134).

With that being noted, we can see that to be a servant of the word is to be a servant of the Word made flesh, Jesus the Christ. He came so that none would be lost, and that all would come to know the love of the Father. Does not a servant carry out the will of the master? Jesus tells us, “What I tell you in darkness, speak in the light. What you hear in private, proclaim from the housetops” (Matt. 11:27).

If the word is Jesus, then it seems logical that to be a servant of the word we must know the word. The word must be read, studied, spoken and proclaimed. To read the written word is to know the Word made flesh. If a servant loves the one they serve, they want to know everything about him and they also want to tell every one they know about the wonderful master they have. We know that to tell, to proclaim the word is not an option, but a duty. Jesus tells us, “When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say ‘We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty’” (Luke 17:10).

And this duty is not a burden. For those who know and love the word, it becomes the desire of our hearts. This duty is a gift to the servant. It allows

us to be a part of our master’s plan. It enables us to share in the joy of the plan as we proclaim it to others. There can be no mediocre proclaiming, for that which we proclaim is the word of life. It requires zeal and an excellence in our proclamation.

“Indeed, the whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19). A promise follows this verse “because the world itself will be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (v. 21) that is why we work and this is why we pray, so that none will be lost. This is indeed the will of the one we serve.

It requires zeal and an excellence in our proclamation.

So, there remains a mission for the servants of the word: to speak, to teach, to heal, and to love as the master loves. “Thanks be to God, who unfailingly leads us on in Christ’s triumphal train, and employs us to diffuse the fragrance of his knowledge everywhere!” “We speak in Christ’s name, pure in motivation, conscious of having been sent by God and of standing in his presence” (2 Cor. 2:14, 17).

Let our prayer be that when we see the Word Incarnate, our Jesus, face to face, we can hear those words, “Well done good and faithful servant. Come and share your master’s joy” (Matt. 25:21). ♦

Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee.



Editors Desk
.....
Sr. Martha Jean
McGarry

Let us, who have been baptized in him, listen to the voice that calls us beloved and gives us a work to do—the work of the Gospel proclaimed and lived in love of God and neighbor.

In this issue we invite you to journey with us in exploring the **charism of teaching**. Aggie Neck starts us out with a reflection on the importance of *knowing* the Word made Flesh—Jesus. Do we attempt to teach a Jesus that we ourselves do not know?

David Thorp presents several paths we can take to fulfill our call to be **servants of the Word** wherever God has placed us.

Sister Nancy Kellar and Bill Brennan give us deep insights into the charism of teaching and the call to be teacher in our groups and ministry, along with suggestions for preparing a teaching. To aid us further, some practical helps for teachers can be found in Virginia King’s article and Therese Boucher’s suggestions for a one-day Life in the Spirit Seminar.

Mark Berchem witnesses on youth’s efforts to be servants of the Word through the ministry of NET and Walter Matthews in his column gives a great account of the National Service Committee’s continuing determination to bring forth the Word among us through conferences, regional gatherings and published materials.

Check out the quotes from our bishops located in *Bishops Speak to the Renewal* box. Do they challenge you? Excite you? Encourage you? Are you ready to share your gifts? ♦



Go and proclaim!

by Mark Berchem

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Jesus was very clear with his disciples when he commissioned them to carry on his work, “Go and proclaim.” There is no doubt what Jesus was asking of his church.

Somewhere in our past, many Catholics lost a sense of their responsibility to “Go and proclaim.” Evangelization left our vocabulary. That helps explain why twelve young Catholics traveling around in a van and sharing about their love for Jesus were viewed as odd. NET Ministries began in 1981 at the St. Paul Catholic Youth Center, whose staff was profoundly influenced by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. As the first NET team embarked upon its mission, the most frequently asked question was, “Are you sure you are Catholic? I didn’t know Catholics talked about Jesus.” Well, yes they do! Thanks to the profound influence of Pope John Paul II, the Church has reawakened to its most important work.

“The number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the church is constantly on the increase. When we consider this immense portion of humanity that is loved by the Father and for whom he sent his son, the urgency of the Church’s mission is obvious... I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the church’s energies to a new evangelization. No believer in Christ can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples” (Redemptoris Missio, John Paul II).

Each year, NET recruits and trains 90 young adults who commit a year of their life to “Go and proclaim.” Since NET’s beginning, over 1700 faith-filled young Catholics have served as team members. After completing 5 weeks of training, the NET teams (10-11 members) travel around the country conducting retreats for Catholic junior and senior high school students. Over 1.5 million young people have heard the gospel proclaimed on a NET retreat. Using a variety of means—talks, testimonies, small group discussion, skits, music, prayer ministry, and liturgy—the team members proclaim the message of

God’s love and mercy in a language that young people can understand.

Our young people today have so many voices clamoring for their attention, and ultimately, their heart. Now more than ever, the gospel must be proclaimed to our youth, by both word and witness. Simply stated, that is the mission of a NET team. Faithful to the church, they share their love for Christ with the young people they meet. Different personalities with different life experiences, they each appeal to a different set of youth, thus maximizing the number of youth who can identify with the person proclaiming. The message becomes all the more believable when the young people find someone on the team with similar background or life experiences.

But in the end, what brings the message home, is the lived example of faith in the life of the team. Faith is meant to impact how we live. There is no more powerful proclamation than seeing a group of people loving and serving one another for Christ’s sake. Today more than ever, young

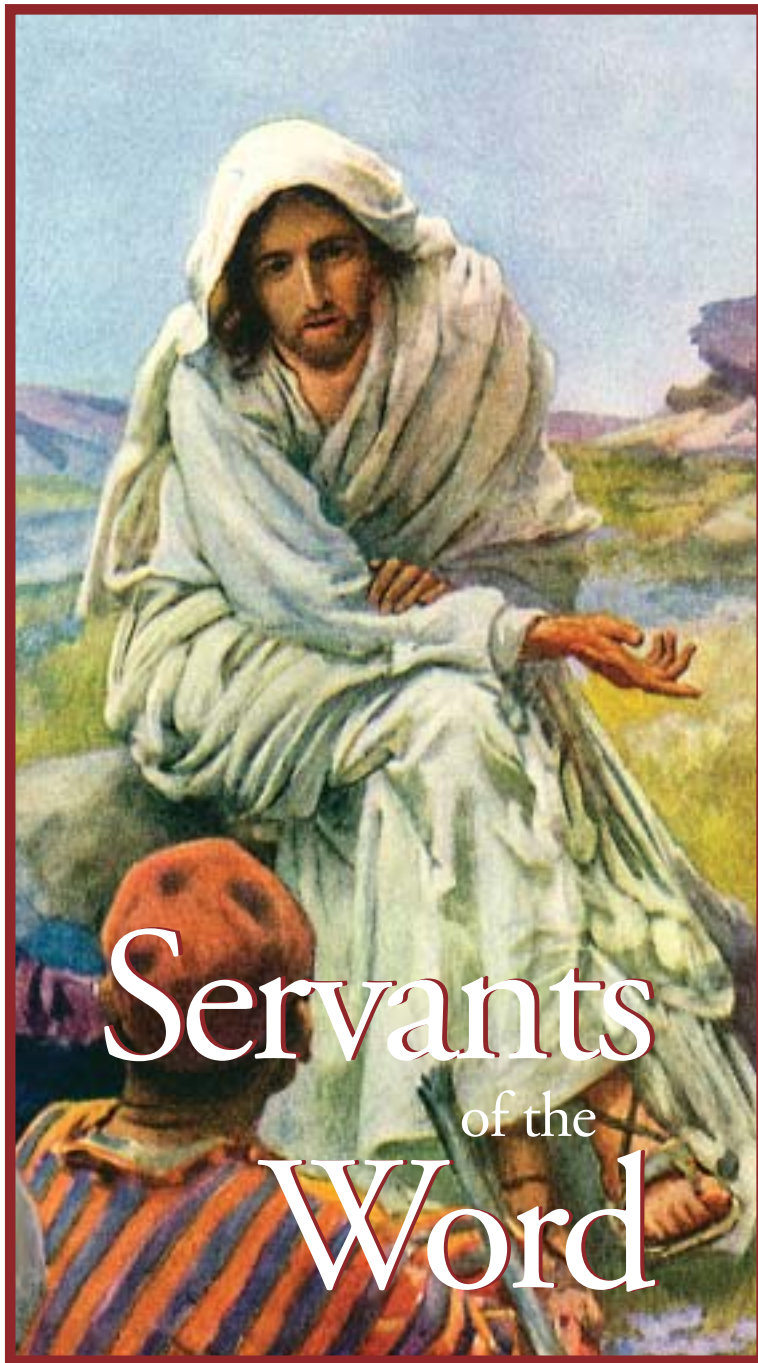
people listen with their eyes. What a loud message it is to see the NET team members relate with love, honor, and respect towards one another. Christ told us as much when he said, “the world will know you are my disciples by your love for one another” (John 13:35).

Today, more than ever, young people need to hear the gospel proclaimed. People of faith need to heed the Lord’s commission to “Go and proclaim.” Young Catholics are responding to that call. They are serving the church’s mission of evangelization with great generosity. NET team members are impacting the lives of thousands of young people as they challenge young Catholics to love Christ and embrace the life of the church.

For information on NET Ministries, please see our web site: www.netusa.org, or contact us at ministry@netusa.org. ♦

Mark Berchem, M.S.W., M.S.T. is the founder and Executive Director of NET Ministries, a national evangelistic ministry.

Photos: Mark Berchem, NET



Servants of the Word

by David Thorp

“You’ll know it’s Jesus’ voice because it sounds like Jesus.” We all stared back at the retreat director with kind of blank stares. “Oh, great,” I thought, “another mysterious answer.” It was a question-and-answer time during our weekend retreat and one of us had asked, “How do I know it’s Jesus’ voice that I’m hearing in prayer?” Fr. Tom Forrest, the retreat director, then held up his bible and said, “Here’s how you learn what Jesus sounds like.”

As I reflected on Fr. Tom’s answer I could more and more see the wisdom—and the challenge—of it. I could know what Jesus, the Living Word of God, “sounds” like. I could know not just the general tone of his “voice” but also the nuances and inflections, the subtleties and specifics of his “voice” if I spent more time listening to him speak through the scriptures. And, the more I listened, the better I would be able to even sound like Jesus when I spoke. I heard a call on that retreat to become more deeply rooted in the bible so that I could be better prepared to make use of God’s word; at home, in ministry and in daily conversation.

At Home

The pastor of our parish encouraged all families to establish a prayer corner somewhere in their home as a way to tie together our worship at Mass and the domestic church. Prominent in the corner, he recommended, was a bible. The bible was to be a visible reminder that we live by “every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Deuteronomy 8:3). But, this was not to be just a display but a book that one would pick up and bring to prayer. In our home we kept changing the page to which the bible was open, usually to each Sunday’s gospel as a continuation of our prayer on Sunday. Visitors would look at the bible when they came into the room where we had it displayed and this sometimes became a topic of conversation. Even our children noticed and commented!

The bible came into our Advent every year. My wife and I had created a Jesse tree early in our marriage. Each day in Advent had a symbol, re-telling the history of salvation. Each day had a passage of the bible connected to it. We sometimes read the passage; at other times, we just talked about it in a more summary form. But we always attached what we were doing to the word of God. Advent and Christmas were rooted in the bible for our family.

The bible also was integrated into table conversation. We didn't do bible study as we ate our evening meal. But, as one of our children talked about something that was going on at school or in what seemed like the endless angst of relationships, my wife or I would recall for them some incident in the bible in an effort to lead them to a different and more healthy perspective on things. Sometimes the stories were something that they were somewhat familiar with (Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son). At other times the story was more obscure and required longer telling (I loved that!) in order to draw out the point and its connection to their lives. Despite, "Oh no, another sermon!" we persisted because we wanted them to know "the voice" of the bible.

And, the use of the bible persists even as our children have become older. Recently, I've had trips to art museums with two of my children. You cannot look at medieval art without the bible being depicted. From time to time I'd say, "I really like this one" as I pointed out some aspect of the painting. Then I'd add, "Do you know the story behind this painting?" Their "no" was a perfect lead in to recalling something in the bible.

In Ministry

In my ministry of teaching I have sought to lead people to the bible because I am confident of its truth. I do so because I want people to go to the bible more and more for their own growth. It is the well that never ceases to give refreshment. If I can draw their attention to one part of the bible they will be more likely to go back for another drink.

In evangelizing and in speaking about the truths of our Catholic faith I also find it so critical to start with the bible. There is widespread suspicion of institutions today. Saying, "The Church says..." often is not a helpful beginning point; there seems to be a resistance. Saying, "Let's see what it says in

the bible" or "Let's read Jesus' words" often gains a better hearing. What "the Church says" never contradicts the bible and grows from the revelation in the bible. Why not start there?

The Church is a place to start in RCIA sessions. Especially when there are candidates coming from Christian communities rooted in the bible, I have found that showing Catholic teaching is rooted there as well helps people to grasp the teaching of Catholicism more easily. And, where there are difficulties in understanding what the Church teaches, by going to the bible we now have a common ground on which to stand.

The bible is an "evergreen" book. That is, the situations that it records... are very familiar to us today.

In evangelization we are trying to connect others with a person—Jesus. We want them to come into a new relationship with him. **Speaking the words of the bible centered on Jesus keeps our evangelizing focused and helps others to connect to him.** Being connected to the Body of Christ is vital to evangelization as well; it's just not the first step in a several part "dance."

In Conversation

The more I study the bible the more I am convinced that there is not a great deal that is new with the human condition. The bible is an "evergreen" book. That is, the situations that it records, despite the passage of centuries and the differences of culture, are very familiar to us today. Believing that the bible is wisdom that provides both illuminating insights into life and God's unique perspective, I have made use of the bible in casual conversations.

When someone shares a difficulty in life, if I know the bible (know what "Jesus

sounds like"), I am able to share a passage that can provide consolation. It might be a psalm or something from the actions or words of Jesus. When someone is at a loss where to turn with a particular problem or in making a decision, the more bible I know the better I can guide them to reflect on a passage that I've found helpful or some insight I've gained from our prayer with the bible.

When people question the position I have taken on a moral issue, pointing to the bible has been very helpful. I'm saying that my position is not simply because "I say so" or "The Church says so" but because I believe God has revealed it to be so. If the person is a Christian this gives us a common source to continue our discussion. If the person does not accept the authority of the bible, it gives me the opportunity to say why I find the bible to be a reliable guide. And, I have the opportunity to ask them what guide they follow so that I can better understand why they have a different position. I believe that the most reliable, most firm guide for all of life and for every life is the bible as it is lived and understood in the context of the Church. If I'm willing to speak about the bible maybe I can lead them to see this and to see the deficiency in any other guide.

There are so many ways that the bible can be a part of our daily lives: at home, at work, in ministry; in casual conversations and in heated discussions. But, of course, for the bible to be this part I have to know the bible—not just my favorites, but all seventy-three books—so that I can know what God "sounds" like, so that I can sound like God. ♦



David Thorp is Assistant Director of the Spiritual Life Center of Marian Community, a private association of Christ's faithful in Medway, Massachusetts.



Charism of teaching

by Sister Nancy Kellar, SC

The teacher is a shepherd of people and the most important thing for him or her is to know the Shepherd. “Whoever is called ‘to teach Christ’ must first seek ‘the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 428). “From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him” (*CCC*, 429).

I. The gift - Who should teach?

The gift of teaching is one of those listed among the spiritual gifts. “To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8). “It is he who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).

Teaching is a gift for making Christian truth clear, life-giving and attractive. There are different gifts for different kinds of teaching. Some are gifted to give exhortative teaching that calls the community back over and over again to live the basic gospel message. Others have the gift of informative teaching that helps the community develop new understanding of the Christian life. The ideal is for a balance of both of these so that the variety of the different gifts may be used for the upbuilding of the community.

Those who have the charism for teaching should teach and in the church there is often a close link between teaching and pastoring. The Pope and bishops are both pastors and teachers for the church. In prayer groups and communities there is often a similar connection.

Those who have the overall responsibility for a group are often also given the gift of teaching. That is not to say that all leaders have teaching gifts or have them in the same degree. Nor is it to say that only leaders should teach, but there is often a link between the two that we need to notice.

A person who teaches needs a sense of his or her own unworthiness. “I am a man of unclean lips...seraphim touched lips...uncleanness removed...whom shall I send? Send me Lord” (from Is. 6:5-8). A sense of sinfulness calls us to a reverential humility, to a fear of the Lord, realizing that we are handling the sacred when we handle the word of God. It requires such reverence so that the teacher uses the time with responsibility, not using the time to ‘grind an ax’, to give pet peeves or pet opinions. A sense of inadequacy leads us to rely on God’s power and not our own.

A teacher needs to be willing to be purified. If God wants us to minister in any way he is going to see to it that we are purified, that we are pruned. “Not many of you should become teachers, those who do will be called to sturdier account” (James 3:1). We will be called to account by our own words and also by the words of others.

God sent an angel to Isaiah; but to us he sends our neighbor. Most of us recoil at the suggestion that our work for the Lord and his people ought to be regularly evaluated; but good order and effective service are impossible without regular evaluations. In fact evaluation can be liberating and upbuilding when undertaken in love and commitment.

Encouragement is one of the primary purposes for evaluation. The branches that are producing fruit are pruned to produce more.

II. The Call - Why teaching?

Teachers are people who are willing to respond generously to God’s call to serve. We need to be willing to respond, “Here I am Lord, send me” (Is. 6:5). We need to move from seeing service as something I have to do, to something I am privileged to do. We need to be convinced that we will grow as we serve. Service is not a reward for holiness, but a means to it.

When I was prayed with for the baptism in the Spirit (36 years ago) I was asked, “What gifts do you want?” I knew nothing about charismatic gifts; but I remembered God was pleased with Solomon when he asked for wisdom and I was a teacher. I asked for the gifts of wisdom and teaching. When I returned to my classroom the next day and gave my witness of the new life in the Spirit that I was experiencing, the youngsters said



“Sister, something happened to you, you never talked like that before!” I realized I was experiencing the charismatic gift of teaching. The gifts are not just for prayer meetings; they are for life and need to be brought into our daily life.

At the same time we need to be convinced that short teachings in our prayer meetings and community gatherings are a part of the way God wants us to continue to bring people to know Jesus and to help them grow in the Spirit.

Jesus wants his people to be taught. He sent out the apostles with the threefold command to preach, to teach and to heal. “He sent them forth to proclaim the reign of God and to heal” (Lk. 9:2).

Teachers need to be willing to persevere without seeing results or getting credit for the effort. “Preach the word, stay with this task whether convenient or inconvenient, constantly teaching without losing patience” (2 Tim. 4:2).

III. The Work - How to teach?

While teaching is a gift it is also the fruit of prayer, study and discipline. We need to find the balance between not preparing, leaving it all up to God and over-preparing so that the Spirit can't get in.

When I give a teaching I prepare usually having three points (which you may have noticed); but as I step up to the podium I imagine the anointing that is around it and I try to be attentive to it, stepping into the anointing as the assembly prays for me and for themselves.

Learning to give a teaching is like learning to cook. You need the right ingredients, the right seasoning, and the right timing.

The right ingredients: The ingredients are the basic contents of a teaching. They are the information, knowledge, truth, understanding, and insight that the per-

son who is teaching aims to impart. They may come from personal reflection on the teachings of Jesus in scripture, the teaching of the church, from the writings of church fathers and the popes, the truths passed on to us in the traditions of the church and everyday experience in the world or from the suggested content of a seminar outline.

The right seasoning: These are the stories and personal experiences that explain or clarify, that is, add spice to the basic ingredients. The truth needs to be presented in a clear fashion that people can take in and use. It shouldn't be too theoretical. It should be practical. We should do it in such a way that people can say, “I know what you mean; that is just the kind of thing that happens to me.” When we reach people at that level they will be able to receive and apply the teaching we give them more thoroughly.

The right blend: A good teaching blends inspiration with information. It needs to touch the heart as well as open the mind. The teachers need to be touched in their own spirit by the anointing of the Holy Spirit if their words are to motivate and draw others toward the truth they are communicating. Inspiration does not equal emotion. It may involve emotion, but it goes deeper than emotions that are on the surface of our lives. If inspiration only appeals to the emotions it does not go deep enough.

The right timing: One of the most difficult things to achieve in a good teaching is the right timing. If it is too short the information will not have enough clarification. If it is too long it will not keep the attention of the people. It helps to start with a story to get peoples attention and to end with questions that lead them to make concrete applications of the information, and with prayer that gives them time to respond to the inspiration.

Prayer Card



For the renewal of the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church we pray:

Father, we thank you for providing shepherds for your people, and especially we thank you for the priests who are being ordained this year.

We ask that all your shepherds may continue to guard the rich deposit of faith with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells within them, and to bear with courage their share of the hardships which the gospel entails.

Father, protect them from the evil one and keep them in your love always.
Amen.

*I will appoint over you shepherds,
after my own heart, who will
shepherd you wisely and prudently.*
Jer 3:15

Conclusion: Good teachers are Christ's gift through the power of the Spirit. We should expect the Lord to provide them. If our prayer group or community does not have them we need to ask the Lord to give them. If they are not very good we should ask him to improve them. ♦

Sister Nancy Kellar, SC has served in various leadership positions in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal on the local, diocesan, national and international level. She has taught at conferences and workshops throughout the United States and in more than 50 countries.





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

- ◆ That God will raise up many gifted teachers to make Christian truth clear, life-giving and attractive.
- ◆ For a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all priests who are ordained this year.
- ◆ For multitudes to pray the Pentecost Novena this year and that it bear much fruit for conversion and Christian unity.
- ◆ For the gathering of Lay Ecclesial Movements with Pope Benedict XVI at the Pentecost Vigil in Rome.
- ◆ That many dormant spiritual lives will be awakened in the Holy Spirit Seminars that are being conducted throughout the country between Easter and Pentecost.

Attention: Pentecost Today Readers

If you are one of the 5,000 recipients of *Pentecost Today* who have not made a donation to the NSC in the last year, we encourage you to send a donation today. The suggested donation is \$15 per year. This is a small amount for such a valuable resource.

Please make your check payable to: **Friends of the NSC** and mail it to: NSC-Chariscenter USA, PO Box 628, Locust Grove, VA 22508-0628. Thank you for your support.

List your prayer group on our website! Visit NSC-Chariscenter.org for list and see the links to national and international websites.

Identifying, raising up and training good teachers

by Deacon Bill Brennan

Anyone who has been in leadership long enough has probably met more than once the brother or sister who has experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit as a life-changing encounter and has become convinced that God wants him or her to teach everybody else in the prayer group what life in the Spirit is all about. Sometimes the person turns out to be a genuine blessing for the prayer group and beyond. At other times, however, the person, insisting that he or she has been sent by God, makes the leadership cringe because of bad teaching and/or delivery.

I am reminded of the lady, a friend of mine who has, sad to say, left the church for a “Bible-believing church,” who made a point of telling me how happy she is in her new church, adding that she does not need the church to tell her what the scriptures mean. God, she explained, is telling her directly what they mean (inside I cringed). I am also reminded of an important concept for leaders always to keep in mind: sometimes bad teaching can be worse than no teaching.

Good teaching remains one of the great needs in many prayer groups to this day. Without it, prayer groups run the risk of remaining stuck in entry level renewal or, even worse, in permanent spiritual immaturity. They may never hear the Spirit’s invitation to go deeper into the Spirit and deeper into life in the Spirit. They may never, in effect, come to know the true adventure that awaits all of us if we, as Pope John Paul II wrote, are docile to the Holy Spirit. And bad teaching may lead them into outright error.

How can we as leaders help prevent this from happening? How can we identify, raise up and train good people to be good teachers? I believe this is one of the great opportunities and challenges facing all who are called to lead God’s people. Our role is to shepherd and feed those who have been placed in our care and to do it in cooperation with and not opposition to the recognized teaching authority in the church. The starting point in facing this challenge is with ourselves.

If good leaders are to be responsible leaders, they must first of all recognize in themselves their own need to be taught. They should be grounded firmly in the scriptures and in the teaching of the church. They should be willing to take advantage of all the opportunities that are available to us to grow, whether they be conferences, bible studies (formal and informal, group or individual), seminars, theology courses, spiritual reading, constant study, etc. Why go to all this trouble? Because leaders and teachers who are unteachable can be a deadly threat to the spiritual health of a prayer group. And leaders who are not well-grounded themselves in what scripture and the church teach are not in a position to instruct others how to be well-grounded. Using the tools that are given to us can equip them to recognize bad teaching when they hear it and deal with it. The tools can also equip them to make prudent and informed judgments when it comes to identifying and raising up potential teachers in a prayer group.

See **Identifying** page 9