

Publication of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

PENTECOST *Today*

April/May/June 2008

*Our Lady
of Lourdes
150 years*



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Photos: CNS

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





Chairman's Corner

by Aggie Neck

Hope fulfilled

“Rejoice, O highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women” (Luke 1:28). A footnote to this verse of scripture says: “Highly favored daughter—Mary is to be the recipient of the divine favor, i.e. of the sanctifying power of God in view of her office of mother of the Messiah, which the angel announces to her.”

Before the creation, before her birth, God knew the one he could choose, the one who would say “yes.” Mary becomes for all of us the God-Bearer. Mary has said yes. She who was highly favored and full of grace, said yes. She spoke for the whole human race not only a yes to God, but also a yes to redemption, to salvation. Mary’s yes comes because of her great and deep faith: Faith in the scriptures that spoke of God sending a Messiah, and faith that what the angel said was true even though she did not understand how this could or would happen.

“The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined Mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 488).

“The Annunciation to Mary inaugurates ‘the fullness of time,’ the time of fulfillment of God’s promises and preparations. Mary was invited to conceive him in whom ‘the fullness of deity’ would dwell ‘bodily’” (CCC Par. 484).

The first Ark of the Covenant was overshadowed by God’s glory and became a dwelling place for God. Mary was overshadowed by the power of the Most High by the Holy Spirit coming upon her. Everything in the Ark of the Covenant *pointed to Christ*. Mary as the second Ark of the Covenant *contained Christ*.

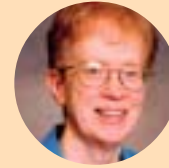
A footnote to Luke 1:35 compares these two events. The overshadowing of Mary recalls the cloud that covered with glory both the meeting tent (Ex. 40) and the temple of the Lord (1 Kings 8:10). The descent of the Holy Spirit upon her, the designation of her child as Son of God are further signs of God’s favor.

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Mother of the Redeemer* said, “Standing at the foot of the cross, Mary is the witness, humanly speaking, of the complete negation of the angels’ words. Yet, how completely she abandons herself to God without reserve.”

“While her mother’s heart was pierced with anguish at her son’s death, she never once cursed God or abandoned her calling. Even as she held her son’s dead body, Mary knew that it must be this way, and that his death brought about the greatest of all miracles: humanity’s reconciliation with God. Finally, the kingdom she longed for had come. She had only to wait for Easter Sunday to see all her hopes fulfilled and her sorrow reversed” (*The Word Among Us*, October 2006).

This and so much more is Mary: Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of the Church, our Mother. Thank God for our holy, spiritual Mother. ♦

Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee.



Editor's Desk

by Sr. Martha Jean McGarry

“The Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is his name” Luke 1:49.

The Church and the world are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the appearances of our Blessed Mother at Lourdes. **Pentecost Today** joins in honoring Mary with this issue. The variety of articles give witness to our love for her, Mary’s unique role in drawing us to Jesus, and our own belief that his mercy is indeed from age to age.

In our two lead articles **Fr. Bob Hogan** and **Fr. John Randall** describe for us the wholesome relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit.

Would you like to grow in your relationship with Mary? **Barbara Ryan** shares some suggestions that she found meaningful on her spiritual journey.

Strengthening the mission of prayer groups through proclaiming the Holy Spirit through Love, Unity, and Evangelization are keys of wisdom shared by **Sister Nancy Kellar** in her article.

Veronica Murphy shares with us her call to service. If you want to know what is necessary to respond to Jesus’ call to serve you won’t want to miss this article on the *charism of service*.

The witnesses shared on page 3 and the messages of our columnists reiterate that we indeed have been blessed with the gift of an awesome MOTHER and a model of a Spirit-filled servant. Yes, we can join along with Mary in saying: *“The Mighty One has done great things for me.”* ♦

Mother

by Mark Nehrbas

I came back to the Lord through the charismatic renewal 37 years ago, when I was 19. Shortly after my “reversion” experience, (I was brought up Catholic but left the Church in my early teen years), my friends in the renewal began discussing Mary and her role in our lives. Since I was surrounded by many cradle Catholics it was very natural for us to accept the teachings of the Church regarding her as the Mother of God, ever-virgin and a powerful intercessor.

I remember attending an early national conference at Notre Dame and someone sharing a prophetic sense from Mary. That caused an interesting discussion among a group of us as not everyone in the early days was immediately accepting of Mary and her role in our lives. Some feared it may harm the ecumenical work that the Spirit was doing.

It wasn't a struggle for me, though. I needed the presence of a mother in my life. And, God provided Mary for me. I can recall one evening shortly after I was baptized in the Spirit, when I was praying. I experienced an overwhelming love of Mary for me. I sensed that she wanted to provide a maternal love for me that had been missing in my life.

The reason that love was missing is because my parents separated when I was 13. It was the early 60s and my mother, due to her own difficult upbringing, didn't know quite how to respond. My three brothers and I went through our high school years without receiving much care and devotion from her. She wasn't around the home much. As a result, I needed significant inner healing. The Lord would provide that healing through a personal relationship with his own mother, Mary.

I am grateful to God for the gift of his mother who he gave us from the cross. She has walked with my family and me over the years revealing herself as a companion, guide, intercessor, healer and protector. I don't know where we would be today without her. Thank you, Jesus for the gift of Mary!

From the day I experienced Mary's personal love for me, I began to ask a lot of questions to priests that I met in the renewal. One of them, Fr. George Kosicki, taught me at length. He shared a prayer with me that I have prayed daily ever since. It is: “Mary, I consecrate my family to your Im-

maculate Heart for your intercession, that all our worldly needs would be provided for so that we would be free to advance the kingdom of your son.” I also pray a daily personal prayer of consecration to Mary. I found this prayer in our family bible. So, I have added it to our family rosary time: “Mary I give myself to you. In order to show my devotion to you, I consecrate to you my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart, and my entire self. Wherefore O loving Mother as I am your own keep me and protect me as your property and possession, Amen.”

by Jackie Morgan

When I was in the 3rd and 4th grade I sung in the choir and loved it especially when I would get out of a class to sing for something in church. Many times it was a funeral. At nine and ten years old, I didn't realize what harm I was doing to myself, and how I would feel years later about death, especially a death in my own family. I still have some trouble over the death of my father 42 years ago. I came very close to committing suicide over the death of a fiancé in 1984. (That was before I joined the Charismatic Renewal).

About 1991 I was a member of a small church community that my parish was sponsoring and a couple, Bob and Mary, were also members of my group. They were very dedicated to Our Lady and prayed to her every night. One night they asked her who to pray for and my name kept coming up. They actually argued with her saying that I was fine and I didn't need any prayers as far as they knew. Our Lady told them again to pray for me. So they did, in a general way. Two days later at our small group meeting, Bob related this story to me and it made me very nervous. I didn't know what was going to happen but I knew something would—and soon.

Soon happened within a few weeks. Five people, very close to me, died—one right after another. I was upset, of course, but not devastated. Then I remembered Our Lady asking for intercession for me. She protected me and because of that she became very, very real to me. She did what she always does for her children. She showed me her love and then pointed me toward her Son. He became more real to me than ever. My faith increased by leaps and bounds because of that experience. Thank you Mom! ♦



Mary's Motherhood in the Spirit

by Fr. Bob Hogan

The Catholic Church is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of Mary, the mother of Jesus, at Lourdes, France. Lourdes is known as a place of many conversions and healings. Many people in Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) appreciate that Lourdes has helped to foster openness to healing prayer in the Church. Also, many Renewal participants in the 1980's became interested in the reported apparitions of Mary in Medjugorje. A number of significant Renewal leaders spoke positively about these reported apparitions, which led to a greater devotion to Mary for many in CCR.

Has Marian devotion helped or hindered CCR?

However, there has not been complete agreement about the effect of increased Marian devotion on CCR. Some people would affirm Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens' statement at the 1973 Notre Dame Charismatic Conference: "Just to conclude, I want to confide in you a little secret which you may tell to everyone, about how to receive the Holy Spirit in the best way. Unity in the Spirit is in our unity with Mary, the mother of God. Christ was born out of the Spirit by the cooperation of Mary. On the day of Pentecost the Church was born in the same way. Mary was there helping the apostles to receive the Spirit of God. May we be simple children of Mary, the woman, and open all that we are to the fullness of the Spirit of God." These people believe that their devotion to Mary has strengthened their spiritual life.

At the same time other people in CCR protest that too many charismatic prayer groups have become devotional groups. The groups sing a few songs, pray the rosary and/or the chaplet of divine mercy or other novena prayers, and finish with intercessions. These groups have little active time of praise and worship, and there is not much sharing of prophetic inspirations (scriptures, prophecies, prayers, words of wisdom and knowledge, images, etc.). Is this a good or bad development? How are we to discern God's call to us in this issue?

How can devotion to Mary support the focus of CCR?

Devotional prayers have an important place in the Church, but they cannot be the dominant focus in CCR. The Renewal is called to be a reminder in the Church of the role of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of Catholic life. We cannot lose this primary focus on the gift of the Spirit because this is the

grace we have been given by God to share in the Church. There are many other important gifts in the Church, but this is our special calling. How can CCR understand the role of Mary within our predominant focus on the Holy Spirit? I believe that Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter, *Mother of the Redeemer* (1987), has given us some helpful insights.

The Catholic Church has commonly spoken of Mary's "spiritual motherhood." At the cross in John's gospel Jesus gives Mary to the beloved disciple (and all disciples) as his mother. The difficulty with the term "spiritual mother" is that it can be understood as the opposite of being a "physical mother." Mary was Jesus' physical mother and now she is our non-physical (spiritual) mother. People lose the connection that the word "spiritual" is related to the Holy Spirit, not mainly to the fact that she is not our "physical mother."

Pope John Paul II wants us to understand that Mary is intimately connected to the Holy Spirit. Mary is not divine. She cannot influence people around the world and through the centuries except through the Holy Spirit: "(Mary's) influence is sustained by the Holy Spirit, who, just as he overshadowed the Virgin Mary when he began in her the divine motherhood, in a similar way constantly sustains her solicitude for the brothers and sisters of her Son" (#38). John Paul describes Mary's ongoing role as "motherhood in the Spirit" (#44-47). The Church is always on a "pilgrimage in the Holy Spirit" (#25). He writes: "And so, in the redemptive economy of grace, brought about through the action of the Holy Spirit, there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who

links these moments is Mary... In both cases her discreet yet essential presence indicates the path of 'birth from the Holy Spirit'" (#24).

God has used her as an evangelist, prophet and healer through the apparitions at Lourdes and elsewhere.

Charismatic Marian devotion

As persons involved in CCR we should always prayerfully be asking the question, "How does the Holy Spirit influence this aspect of daily life and my Catholic beliefs?" How can the power, love, prophetic inspiration and wisdom of the Spirit enhance every aspect of my life and the life of the Church? What do we find when we seek ways that the Holy Spirit relates to Marian devotion?

1) Spirit-inspired prayer, praise and worship: Mary's prayer during her visit with Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56) is a Spirit-inspired prayer of praise and prophecy. She "proclaims the greatness of the Lord" and "rejoices in God my Savior." She announces and proclaims God's faithfulness to his people, and what great things he is now doing in their midst.

2) Mary prays in tongues: Mary is among the 120 at Pentecost who all are filled with the Spirit and proclaim God's mighty deeds with the gift of praying in tongues (Acts 1:14; 2:1-11).

3) Mary's prophetic inspiration and expectant faith: At the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-11) Mary is inspired to intercede with her Son for a miracle. She tells the servants to "Do whatever he tells you." Her Spirit-inspired expectant faith leads to Jesus' first miracle. The abundant, better, new wine is also a symbol of the age of the outpouring of the Spirit.

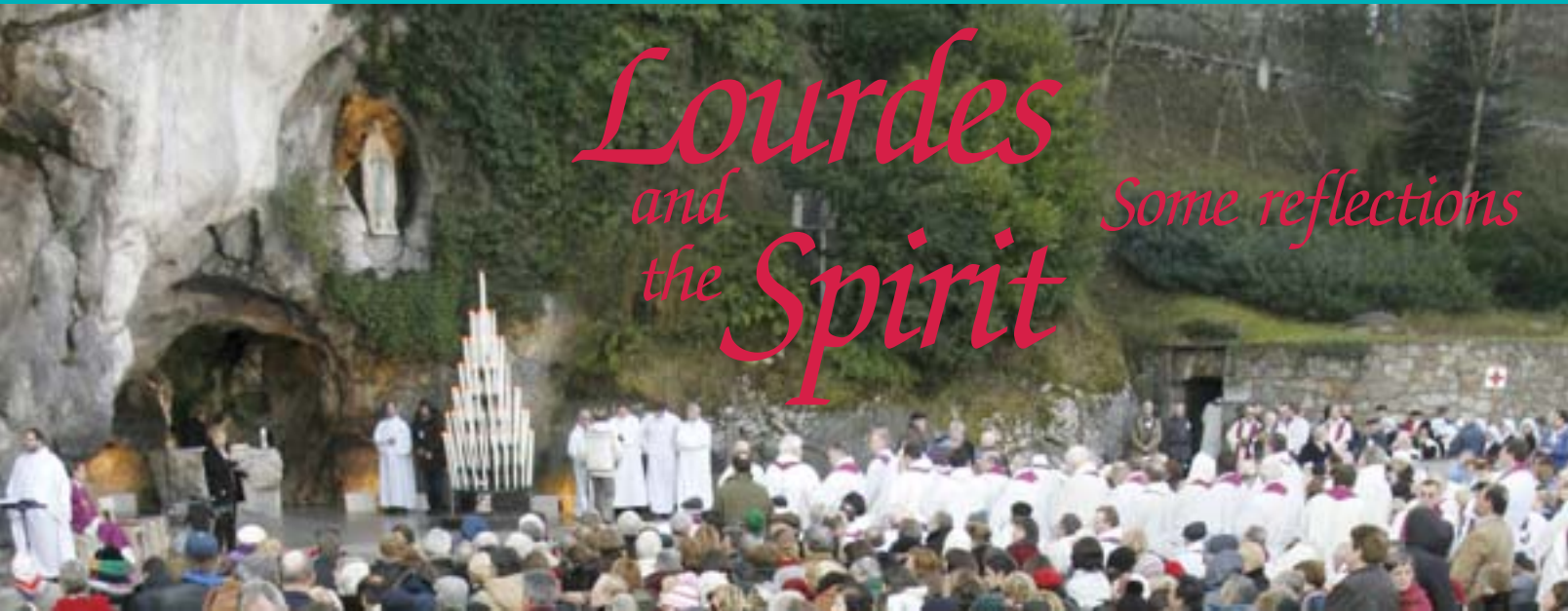
4) Mary's openness to the Holy Spirit's insight and wisdom: Mary is commonly described as prayerfully reflecting and keeping in her heart her experiences of the Lord (Luke 1:29, 2:19, 51). Sometimes people in CCR want instant prophetic insights from the Lord, but we do not grow in the deeper wisdom of the Spirit because we do not prayerfully reflect with the Holy Spirit about the events of our lives.

Mary is not only a *model* of openness to the Holy Spirit. She continues to live out her gift of "motherhood in the Spirit." God has used her as an evangelist, prophet and healer through the apparitions at Lourdes and elsewhere. As members of CCR, we should especially relate to Mary in her relationship with the Holy Spirit, her motherhood in the Spirit.

So what about the rosary at charismatic prayer meetings? I usually suggest that it is prayed before the meeting, but another suggestion is to use one set of mysteries of the rosary as part of a teaching time. Teach the scriptural basis of each mystery. Then pray the rosary leaving time after the mention of the mystery and the prayers to be open to Spirit-inspired prayers and insights into the particular mystery and how the Holy Spirit wants to apply this to people's life. In this way we are being open both to the Spirit and Mary's motherhood in the Spirit. ♦

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.





Lourdes and the Spirit

Some reflections

by Fr. John Randall

The other night John Polce and I were at a wake service for the great healing priest, Fr. Ed McDonough, a Redemptorist from Boston. He died at the age of 87 on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. At the end of the service his Redemptorist brothers escorted his remains to the shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help where his body was placed, as under her mantle, for the night.

A flood of light and grace came to me as I reflected on God's marvelous providence, at his long-term plans of renewing his Church and world. First, he sent Mary at LaSalette in 1846, the same year Karl Marx was writing his Communist Manifest in a London garret. She was weeping over the state of the Church and the coming dangers to the world. Then in 1858 she was sent to Lourdes to begin reviving gospel power—to call people back to Jesus and his gospel, to restore faith, evangelism, prophecy, healing, the gifts that build up the Church. As Francis MacNutt

wrote recently in the original title of his book, *The Healing Awakening*, an almost perfect crime had been committed in the Church. Healing had almost disappeared and was confined mostly to "Extreme Unction."

Now 150 years later lay in state one of her sons of predilection who God so powerfully used for healing in our time. I saw the connection, the continuum of salvation history. I could hear her saying (as she said to her other son, Pope John Paul), "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Other memories from my experience followed. Fr. Jim Ferry, a real mentor to me as a pastor, set me on a rich trail with his theology that I would call "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be." That's God's plan for the renewal today, the same as it was in the first century. God sent his Spirit from heaven to wed our sister Mary at the Annunciation (and they have never been di-

vorced) and out of their union would come Jesus, the new Adam, God's plan for a new world.

As Augustine says, "at the end of this world there's only going to be one man walking this earth, Jesus Christ and all he has gathered into his Body." However, it must be the real Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary. The Holy Spirit and Mary continue to bring Jesus to birth and to nurture that life. I thought how foolish we have been, opposing the Holy Spirit movement and the Marian movement. It's as if the Pentecostals are at one end of the stage and the Marians at the other. They don't speak to one another, don't always trust one another, and the angels scratch their heads saying, "Don't they see God's plan?" The Spirit and Mary work together. Where one is, the other is. I remember Ivan, the Medjugorje visionary, coming to visit my 100 year old father who said to Ivan: "You don't think she comes on her own, do you?" Ivan smiled from ear to ear, knowing exactly what Pop meant.

Realizing this around 1996 marked a new spiritual thrust in my experience. We began to put together Mary and the Spirit in our meetings and the Lord blessed us with an incredible new burst of life. Over a 1000 people went through our Life in the Spirit seminars that year and we started perpetual Eucharistic adoration in our inner city parish. Since then 22 young men and women entered the seminary and religious life.

Another memory came to mind: the 1975 first International Catholic Charismatic Conference in Rome. On Pentecost Sunday Pope Paul VI invited us to St. Peter's for his Mass. We filled the right side of the basilica with 10,000 faithful. On the left side of the basilica sat 10,000 Marians, there for their big conference. Cardinal Suenens, a great churchman, happened to be the Cardinal Protector of both groups. Now in 1975 most on the right and on the left hardly spoke with one another (and, as I said, the angels shrugged their shoulders). It seems only Cardinal Suenens saw God's long range plan.

Speaking of Cardinal Suenens, I remember his speech (not too well accepted at the time) at the Notre Dame Conference about "the great secret of sanctity, a short-cut, as he put it—going to Mary as St. Louis de Monfort had pointed out. John Paul II knew this secret, as did Mother Teresa, but I am afraid many of us were slow to grasp this. We were afraid of the ecumenical repercussions, or something.

Back to Lourdes and Mary's influence in another aspect. She called herself the "Immaculate Conception." St. Maximilian Kolbe, led by the Spirit, ran with this so powerfully, calling her so fondly the "Immaculata, the quasi-incarnation of the Holy Spirit, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit." Our

rich Catholic heritage was coming alive for me.

Another Polish man, John Paul, largely converted by Louis de Montfort's 'True Devotion' became, as it were, Mary's little boy, "totus tuus" (I am all yours). He put it all together, Mary and the Holy Spirit.

We need to look afresh at all this. For example, Sr. Briege McKenna recently reminded me that in May of 1981 Fr. Emiliano Tardif and she prayed and prophesied over a Bosnian priest that Mary was going to visit his land and start a large wave of renewal, (probably today as large as the charismatic renewal). 50 million people have since visited Medjugorje and have had their lives renewed.

Who can forget the memory of Pope John Paul right near the end of his life visiting Lourdes as a "suffering servant," invited with all the sick and suffering of the world to "glory in their weakness" (2 Cor. 12:10) and "to complete in their bodies the sufferings of Christ" (Col. 1:24).

I think of today's powerful evangelist, Fr. John Corapi's words at a Boston men's conference recently. He talked of the warfare that is currently Christianity, and dressed in combat fatigues, he told the men, "My mother wears combat boots." I think here of the traditional image of Mary crushing the head of the serpent.

Let me end with a quote from Fr. Richard McAlear as it appears in a recent edition of the *National Catholic Register*: "Lourdes is a perfect example. It's absolutely Marian front and center, and it's absolutely Christ-centered. This is a perfect combination of the presence of Christ the savior, Christ the healer, and Mary—who kind of owns the place. She never obstructs Jesus or



Prayer Card

For the renewing of the grace of Pentecost in the Church and in the world we pray:

Heavenly Father, help us to want to be more like the Mother of your Son – always ready to say "yes" when we sense the call to bring forth Christ into circumstances unfolding before us.

Grace us to trust unreservedly, as she did, that the power of the Most High, the Spirit of God, is poised to make this happen.
Amen.

For the "Criteria for Judgement" of apparitions, see the Norms published by the Vatican Congregation of the Faith in 1978. The (document) is available on our website:
www.nsc-chariscenter.org.

gets in his way. The priest at Lourdes tells me the healings happen when they bring the Eucharist out. The focal point is usually the Eucharist." ♦



Fr. John Randall is presently Pastor Emeritus of St. Charles Parish in Providence, RI. He is Director of Spirit and the Word Ministry located in North Providence.



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

That like Mary, full of hope and boldness, we would approach her Son in petition for fresh infillings of the new wine of the Spirit on behalf of all God's people.

That all disciples who know themselves as beloved of the Savior would be open to receive from him, personally, the gift of his mother as their mother.

That our hearts, like that of the Virgin of Lourdes, would find themselves ever overflowing with the healing love of her Son into the lives of others.

That all of us who have been crying out for a new springtime for Christianity would quickly experience fresh evidence of its bursting forth.

That the prayers and outreaches of the NSC be richly rewarded as youth are ignited with the fire of the Spirit and men and women everywhere answer the call into servant leadership.

Why include the NSC in your will?

As you know the National Service Committee relies almost entirely on gifts from individuals to continue its mission. We ask you to please consider a gift to the National Service Committee when you make your will or update it. Making a gift to the NSC can be as simple as adding a codicil to your existing will or estate plan.

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.

A vision for today's prayer groups

by Sister Nancy Kellar, SC

The abbot of a monastery was concerned that the monastery was not attracting new members and seemed on the verge of death. He consulted with a wise person in the village who told him to tell the monks: "Jesus is going to come again as one of you; but I don't know which one." The monks began to treat one another with great love because they didn't know which brother might be Jesus. Their love began to attract new members and once again the monastery began to thrive.

I start with this story because it focuses on the most basic call we have as followers of Jesus and members of prayer groups, "This is my commandment, love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). St John, writing after the other evangelists, had seen the fruit of the Spirit in the churches founded by the Apostles; but he also saw the loss of the fire of the Spirit. He wrote as an elder simply about love as the way to rekindle life in the Spirit in the Church.

I have written and taught in prayer groups for many years in the Charismatic Renewal about: the need to keep expecting more of the Spirit and the charismatic gifts; the importance of having clarity of identity and clarity of mission. In the Leadership Formation Videos, David Thorp and I taught about "The spiritual marks and structural components of Charismatic prayer groups." As "Traveling Timothy's" we saw three conditions that seem to keep prayer groups vibrant:

- 1) Continuing to use the Charisms
- 2) Building committed relationships
- 3) Becoming more effectively evangelistic.

I still believe these are essential; but I go back now as an elder like St. John the evangelist to what is even more basic; that we love God, love one another and by our love attract others to know God.

We are called first to be holy, to live and speak out of a personal love relationship with God. "Live on in my love" (Jn 15:9).

Our experience of being baptized in the Spirit is a prophetic call to us to proclaim that God is present here and now, that we can know him by personal experience. We are called to proclaim the possibility of knowing God as Father, surrendering to Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives, and experiencing that the Spirit given at Pentecost is for everyone!

In the past many of us knew God by information believing that deeper knowledge was reserved for some special people. Baptism in the Holy Spirit brought us into a new way of knowing God through revelation, through the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It brought us to the conviction and to the experience that every one can come to have the knowledge of God and the mysteries of God. We are called to proclaim that in this new age of the im-personalization of God.



The Renewal helped us understand that prayer is not just speaking to God; but also listening and letting God reveal himself to us. We recognized the longing in our hearts as a call to go more deeply into the spiritual. We are called to draw into the possibilities the Holy Spirit gives us, those turning to satisfy that longing in material things or in false spiritualities.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit opened our eyes to recognize the world of evil, of demons, and to call them what they are, to recognize sin as sin and not excuse it. We are called to challenge the excuses given for sin, “just the way I am, my family is like this,” and to reveal by the new freedom in our lives the possibility of healing and deliverance.

We are called to be one and to call others into unity. “Father, may they be one even as we are one” (Jn. 7:11).

Life in the Holy Spirit taught us that community is an essential part of Pentecost and that we can’t grow in relationship to God unless we are growing in relationship with one another. The Spirit teaches us that joy comes from putting the needs of others ahead of ourselves, that other centeredness makes us better individuals. We learn the paradox that in losing ourselves, we find new life.

In contrast, modern culture teaches that salvation comes from self-realization, self-help, that success equals individualism and independence. “I’ll do it my way.” Society calls sin in relationships “personality clashes” that are irreconcilable.

In the Spirit we learn the possibility of hearts changing, of reconciliation, of unity in diversity. We are called to prophetically proclaim that in the

Spirit unity between races, genders, age groups, and religions is possible.

We are called to be missionaries and to call others to mission. “May they be one, so that the world may believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:21). The Holy Spirit calls us to an evangelization that is proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are to proclaim that God sent his Son Jesus into the world that we might know him, that knowing him is a gift offered to anyone who has the ears to hear and the heart to believe.

We are challenged to persevere, to become even more zealous in the face of

people who consider our zeal for the gospel disrespectful of other people’s way to God. By our lives and words, we are sent to proclaim the Word of God’s infinite love for each and every human person. Please God then, like the failing monastery, our prayer groups will thrive again because of our love. ♦

Sister Nancy Kellar, SC has served in various leadership positions in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. She has taught throughout the United States and in more than 50 countries.



PENTECOST OF THE NATIONS...for a new culture of Pentecost
An ICCRS 10-Day Pentecost Project May 2–11, 2008

In 2002, Pope John Paul II urged the members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal to “bring to life that *“culture of Pentecost,”* that alone can make fruitful the civilization of love and friendly co-existence among peoples. With fervent insistence, never tire of praying “Come Holy Spirit! Come! Come!”

In response to this urging, International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS) has launched a two-part project called ***Pentecost of the Nations...for a new culture of Pentecost.*** Part I of this project involves a Pentecost Novena (nine days of prayer from Ascension Thursday to the eve of Pentecost) and Part II is a Pentecost Day Celebration. 2008 is a first phase of a three-year journey during each Pentecost season, culminating in 2010 at an international event in Jerusalem, sponsored by ICCRS. More information can be found on the NSC website: www.nsc-chariscenter.org.

In the last two years, many countries and tens of thousands of people on all continents have participated in the *Burning Bush Initiative* and *Operation Upper Room*, worldwide prayer events that had the goal of weaving a dense global prayer network of adoration and intercession.

Join the Prayer Network

The United States is actively participating in this worldwide network of intercession—and you are invited to become part of this network! We are praying on behalf of our nation and our Church, and also upholding in prayer the various events sponsored by ICCRS and by the National Service Committee (NSC) of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the U.S. If you are willing to make a one-year commitment to this international network, contact Kathleen Haner, NSC Coordinator, USA by email at usintercessorsnetwork@gmail.com, or write 1540 Vaughn Lane E, Port Orchard, WA 98366, for the Commitment/Registration form. By registering you will be notified through this network of future intercessory prayer requests made by NSC and/or ICCRS.

For additional resources, information and special prayer intentions contact Kathleen Haner at
usintercessorsnetwork@gmail.com.

Return to the “Upper Room of Jerusalem” in one heart and in constant prayer becoming “burning bushes” in adoration and intercession.



Hail Mary, for the Lord is with thee; Blessed are all bearing women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen

Relating to Mary: some practical steps

by Barbara Ryan

“Barbara, you’ve been chosen to carry Mary’s crown for this year’s May crowning procession.” I was only 6 years old, a first grader at Christ the King Catholic School in suburban Chicago, and didn’t fully understand what Sr. Dionetta was saying to me. It was a lovely spring day in May, the entire school sang “On this Day, ‘O Beautiful Mother’” as I handed the flowered crown to the eighth grade girl who placed it on Mary’s head. My heart filled with waves of joy and I remember thinking, “I have another mother and she really loves me.”

It’s a memory living within my spirit for more than 60 years, becoming more vivid with the passage of time. However, in spite of such an early awakening to the role of Mary, there are sometimes long periods of dryness and emptiness regarding her presence. Then my rosaries and devotional Marian readings seem to be more of a burden than a blessing.

These spiritual deserts led me to discover one of the secrets of relating to Mary: her motherly love is boundless and transcends our attempts to ‘feel’ connected. She gently companions us through all the dark days of life, just as she stood at the cross of her Son, Jesus. The heart knows this even when our feelings don’t seem to register any emotions.

I’ve found the following suggestions to be helpful for maintaining an ongoing relationship to the Mother of God.

✿ Slowly read the scriptures regarding her life on earth, especially Luke’s Gospel, which contains the majority of Marian stories. As you read, invite the Holy Spirit to open

your mind and heart to a deeper awareness of Mary’s role in the life of her Son. It may be helpful to read these well-known passages aloud and write down the bible verses that seem to speak to you. Invite Mary to bring her maternal, gentle nature to any place in your body, mind or spirit needing healing.

✿ Recognize Mary as a prayer partner. When Jesus spoke to John, he said, “Behold, your mother.” From ancient times to the present the Church teaches us to invoke Mary as an intercessor. I often invite her to join me in prayer, especially when a situation seems particularly difficult. On one occasion when I was interceding for a woman who was in an adulterous relationship, the power of Jesus Christ set her free the minute I asked Mary to join us in prayer.

✿ Tell others about the role of Mary in the life of a Christian. Catholics are sometimes hesitant to share their understanding of Mary’s loving support. Telling our experiences of graces received from her seems to make her more ‘real’ in our lives. One person gave me quite an argument, citing all the reasons it was spiritually dangerous to have any devotion to the mother of Jesus. I knew this man to be a prayerful and committed Christian so I asked him to put the question to Jesus. That evening he prayed, “Lord, what shall I do about your mother?” Several days later he phoned to say, “Jesus told me he loved his Mother very much and he expected me to do the same.” He became deeply devoted to Mary and never tired of telling others the story of his ‘conversion.’

✿ Attend a regular Marian novena or rosary group in a local parish. When private prayer time seems dry and meaningless, it helps to join with others who are calling upon Mary's gentle touch. There appears to be a deeper concentration of prayer power when "two or three are gathered together" (Matt. 18:20). If there are no novenas or rosary groups in your parish ask the pastor if you may lead one. If he seems reluctant to do so, invite someone to join you at home or elsewhere. I have a number of non-Catholic friends who began saying the rosary with me in my home when I explained it was a meditation on the life of Jesus Christ. Eventually, some of them went through the RCIA program and joined the Catholic Church.

✿ Use music as a reminder of Mary's presence. There are hundreds of Marian CD's containing hymns and ancient Latin chants invoking Mary's love and protection. I often have various favorites playing in my home and car as 'background music' for whatever is happening in my everyday busy life. This was a common practice when my five children were very young. They could sing the words long before understanding the meaning.

✿ Make an imaginary pilgrimage to one of the Marian shrines. Not everyone has the ability to travel to Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe or the numerous other places where Mary appeared. There are hundreds of books and movies about the various recognized apparitions of the Mother of Jesus. As you image the scene, listen with your heart to the words said to the visionaries. Invite Mary to bring her maternal, gentle, nature to any place in your body, mind or spirit that may need healing.

The woman who calls herself the "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk. 1:18) always leads us closer to her Son, Jesus and deeper into the heart of the Father. ♦

Barbara Ryan is President of Beloved Ministry and, as a Roman Catholic lay-



woman, has been actively involved in evangelism since 1965. She travels nationally and internationally as a retreat director, conference speaker and workshop leader.

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Charism of Service

by Veronica Murphy

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" Luke 1: 38.

One prayer meeting, as our prayer group studied the first chapter of Luke, I was struck by the above verse. The word "handmaid" seemed to keep flashing before my eyes. I began to imagine myself as a young girl in Mary's position. What would I have done if an angel of God appeared before me? As my mind walked with the Lord through this little interior vision, I was led to think about Mary. She simply and profoundly answered the angel with a "yes" that would change the world. When considering the charism of service, one has to consider Mary the Handmaid of the Lord. What was it in Mary's life that gave her the ability to answer yes without reservation? How can I find this ability in my own life?

Before giving a possible answer to these two questions, I want to engage you in a dialog about our call as Catholics/Christians. I feel that God has been preparing me for many years to follow his will and do whatever he asks. When I first began to go to prayer meetings, I prayed to follow the Lord and do whatever he asks of me. There used to be a song called, "Lord make me like you." The words were:

"Lord make me like you, please make me like you, you are a servant, make me one too. Oh Lord, I am willing, do what you must do to make me like you, Lord. Please, make me like you."

I loved this song and it became my most fervent prayer. The Lord answered this prayer. Soon enough, I found myself helping at many different levels in prayer groups, but even

more than this, the Lord helped me focus on others in a different way. I began to see people with the Lord's eyes. The more my prayer life grew, the more I was able to see people more positively. I wanted to be of service to those the Lord called me to and I wanted to learn from as many as the Lord brought my way. This is no claim to be perfect in anyway, but simply a desire to serve the Lord that the Lord has answered.

Theologically, our call to serve comes out of our Baptism and Confirmation. Sadly enough, many people do not call upon the power of the Lord that comes from these sacraments. They need a renewing in the Holy Spirit to continue their journey towards a truly adult faith (a faith that will withstand all the joys and sorrows of life). Everyone is called to serve in some capacity, but the charism of service is a bit deeper than this. If a person has the charism of service, he/she will begin to see ways to solve problems. Or the person will understand how to remove obstacles and have a desire to do what it takes to remove those obstacles. In my opinion, there will also be a commitment and a joy to the process

Going back to my original thoughts on Mary, I asked what was it in Mary's life that gave her the ability to answer yes without reservation? How can I find this ability in my own life? In a round about way I answered these questions. As Catholics we believe that Mary was without sin: "full of grace." God had a plan for her life and he must have prepared her to reach the point where she would know and believe the angel's words to her. Certainly, her parents taught her the Jewish faith, but just learning about God is not enough to have the ability to answer his call espe-

cially if it might put your life in peril. There has to be a relationship or a bond. Where can we find this bond? I believe we can find this bond the same place Mary did. If we take the time to open ourselves to God's plan for our life in everything we do and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide our comings and our goings, God will open a whole new world to us. With our focus surrendered to the Holy Spirit, we may find ourselves doing things we could not imagine or helping people that we normally would avoid. One of my favorite scriptures is Sirach 6:36, which in a nutshell says: when you find a wise person, sit at his feet and wear out his door mat. I think we need to do just that in our relationship with Jesus. We need to learn as much as we can, live a life of prayer, and be open to serving others just as Jesus did. To serve as Mary did when she said yes.

For some people, the thought of laying down their whole life/plans to the Lord may seem just too much to do. We all have things we want to accomplish or plans that we feel are important, but in the end we have to ask if these things will matter in heaven. What is important about service is that service is simple. The key is placing our lives at the service our King and God just as Mary did. God always seems to work out the details as we go along. If we are faithful in small matters, perhaps we will be put in charge of larger matters, but what joy it will be when we hear Jesus say, "well done good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:23). ♦

Veronica Murphy is Vice-principal at St. Rita Catholic School, Dayton, Ohio. She co-leads the Cross and the Dove prayer group, and is co-liaison for the Charismatic Renewal in the northern part of the Cincinnati Archdiocese with husband Bruce Murphy.



Leadership groups challenged to embrace Year of St. Paul

The Gathering of National Leadership Groups: Catholic Charismatic Renewal met in Miami, January 14-16 and were challenged by Msgr. Joseph Malagrec, a longtime member of the planning committee for the Gathering to “put the whole Charismatic Renewal at the service of the Church in the Year of St. Paul celebrating the 2000th anniversary of his birth.”

This was the tenth year in which members of the National Service Committee, the Diocesan Liaison Steer-

ing Committee, the Alliance of Filipino Catholic Charismatic Prayer Communities, the *Comité Nacional de Servicio Hispano*, *Le Conseil du Renouveau Charismatique Catholique des Haïtiens D’Outre-Mer*, the Korean Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States of America, and the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Communities and Fellowships of Pontifical Right met in the configuration. There were three earlier meetings of national leaders convened by a Subcommittee

formed by the NSC and ADL and chaired by Bishop Sam Jacobs.

Msgr. Malagrec noted that just as the Renewal had responded to the Jubilee Year in 2000 and the 3 years of preparation (1997-1999) such that the more we took it seriously, the more we lived it, the more graces were available to us, so too the Year of St. Paul offers an opportunity for grace.

About sixty leaders attended including most of the members of the newly formed Youth Ministry Committee. As always the participants spent time in prayer, small

groups for sharing, and by Committees for processing.

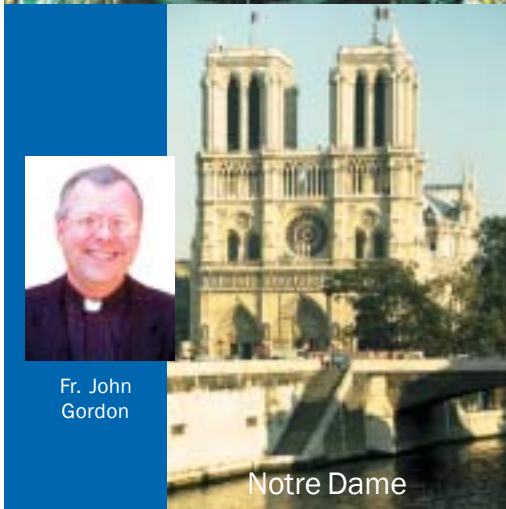
One of the ideas that emerged from the NSC discussions in response to Msgr. Malagrec’s challenge was that the NSC will write a once a month reflection on one of the Pauline themes and make it available via email and on our website.

The Gathering will also develop a Prayer Card on the Year of St. Paul for distribution in the Renewal.

The next Gathering will be held next January in a site yet to be determined. ♦



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Fr. John Gordon

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**From the
Executive
Director**

.....
by Walter Matthews

The pattern of Mary

“One of the basic principles of the Catholic charismatic renewal is that our Spirit-filled life needs to grow and develop in a fully Catholic context of faith and practice. The teaching of the church about Mary... is a major element within this basic principle. Leaders of prayer groups need to understand and put into practice in their own lives the teaching of the church about Mary. We also need to be able to help Catholic participants in our groups to do the same” (Kevin Ranaghan, *NSC Newsletter*, May 1983).

Twenty five years later these words seem so obvious. At the time they were not so.

Given the Renewal’s early connections to Pentecostals and other charismatic Protestants there was “ignorance about the blessed Virgin...among some Catholic charismatics”(ibid).

Thanks to the work of the NSC, Diocesan Liaisons and others since then the US Bishops could affirm in 1997 in *Grace for the New Springtime*, “Authentic Marian devotion and imitation is a welcome and growing dimension of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States...It is thus with great anticipation that we find within the Renewal this joyful awareness of the relationship of Mary and the Holy Spirit.”

Among other activities the NSC recently sponsored a Pilgrimage to the Shrines of Mexico including that of our Lady of Guadalupe praying for “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit” on the Church in America.

We are now planning a Pilgrimage to the Marian shrines of Europe to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Mary’s appearances to Bernadette at Lourdes. (See ad on page 13.)

At the core of these initiatives is our continuing affirmation that, “the Spirit calls each of us and the Church as a whole, after the pattern of Mary and the Apostles in the Upper Room, to accept and embrace the baptism in the Holy Spirit as the power of personal and communal transformation with all the graces and charisms needed for the upbuilding of the Church and for our mission in the world” (*Fanning the Flame*).

As reported in the last issue, Aggie Neck and I will travel to Rome to participate in the Colloquium on Charisms sponsored by ICCRS and the Vatican. Please pray that this Colloquium will have a significant effect on the Church’s understanding and openness to the charisms we have experienced in this Renewal. What the US Bishops called in *Grace*, “normal Christian life.”

In January the NSC spent most of a day in prayerful discussion facilitated by Deacon Dean Condon on “Where do we go from here?” examining aspects of the Committee’s vision and mission, public identity, and services and office. The discussion continues. One of the challenges he brought to the Committee was the question of how good organizations and ministries become great: in the intersection of passion (for the Renewal), speciality (what can the NSC bring that is unique, anointed) and resources (of time, money and people).

Mary’s willingness to say “yes” and to receive the Word made flesh, her humble service (“Behold the handmaid of the Lord.” Lk. 1:38) and maternal intercession (“They are out of wine.” Jn. 1:3) will help us find our way forward. ♦

Friends of the NSC

Thanks to the generosity of our donors the NSC ended 2007 in the black. There was both a positive response to our Matching Gifts Appeal (we raised \$26,900 slightly more than the \$25,000 given to us initially) as well as to our Christmas Appeal. The extra Matching Gifts money supported the publication of *Pentecost Today*, the Youth Ministry Committee and the Third Millennium Fund.

If you would like to make a similar Challenge Gift, please call Walter Matthews at NSC headquarters or Gerry Mader at 239-267-2684 our Development Manager.

As we move forward in 2008 the Service Committee is again facing a financial challenge. In order to maintain the many services the NSC provides the Committee needs the support of many.

If you are not an active donor we ask you to prayerfully consider using the enclosed envelope or going to our secure website at www.nsc-chariscenter.org/donations.htm to make a donation.

A donation of any amount will help the Service Committee continue to work for the renewal of the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the Church.

We would like to encourage our donors to consider becoming a member of Friends 300/600/1000 or a Fanning the Flame Partner.

Friends 300/600/1000 are those donors who make a one-year pledge of one of the above amounts. These pledges can be paid monthly, quarterly or annually.

A Fanning the Flame Partner is one who makes a pledge of \$300 or more for five years. This longer commitment better helps the Service Committee in budgeting for its future service. Please call or write for a descriptive brochure.

Let us work together through our one-year gifts, or our pledges of one or five years to continue to fan the flame, especially in this Year of St. Paul!

Executive Director

Walter Matthews

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For Your Information

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What we have seen and heard

.....
by Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner



Pentecost continues

The story of Pentecost goes back to the post resurrection experience of the disciples and Mary in the Upper Room. "All these [the eleven apostles] devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14). In this issue of *Pentecost Today* we read articles which speak of Mary and Pentecost and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This connects us to the experience of the Apostles. It is recorded that Mary was there. I recall back in my college year of 1966-67 that I received a letter from Faith, a woman of another Christian denomination, a Japanese convert from Buddhism. We had been communicating by mail regarding the experience of the Holy Spirit today. I had already been praying the prayer, "Come, Holy Spirit" with some intensity before being introduced to her through written communication. In her efforts to encourage me to be open to the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts, she quoted the Acts of the Apostles, impressing on me that even Mary was there.



Our newest addition to the National Service Committee, elected in January 2008, is Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR, a

Franciscan priest from Franciscan University in Steubenville. He has been ordained for eleven years and is currently serving the University as the Director of the Study Abroad Program in Gaming, Austria. He will return to the United States in late spring. Fr. Dave has been involved in the renewal for over 20 years. He served with the NET Team for one year and the FIRE Team for four years. He has spoken at charismatic conferences across the United States and Canada. Father has also produced a series of talks on the spirituality of freedom and 'Generation Why' which discuss the youth culture. A new book by Fr. Dave, to be released this Easter, is titled, *Spiritual Freedom: God's Life Changing Gift*. Fr. Dave was born and raised in Durango, Colorado and has four brothers and one sister. Welcome, Fr. Dave! ♦

In January the Service Committee met for its Annual Meeting and reelected Judith Hughes (Norwich, CT), Fr. Richard Loch (Scranton, PA), Gerry Mader (Ft. Myers, FL), and Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner, SSND (Apple Valley, MN) and elected Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR (Steubenville, OH). In September, after prayerful discernment, the Committee extended the term of Aggie Neck as member and Chairman until January 2009.

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