

Fostering charisms in prayer meetings

by Fr. John Gordon

*“Renew Your wonders in this our day,
as by a new Pentecost.”*

With these words of prayer, inspired by Blessed John XXIII, the whole church anticipated the grace of Vatican II. The fruit of the Council was immediate, startling, exciting and frightening, and new. Without doubt, one of the richest graces in our day is the Charismatic Renewal. Bursting on the scene in the late 60s, it grew at such an exponential rate it has been called the fastest growing movement in the church.

A tool that the Lord has used to pour out this gift is the charismatic prayer meeting. It is often at prayer meetings that people are introduced to the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit and the charisms. It is important, therefore, that we use well the tools the Lord gives us. How can the prayer meeting be better used as the tool the Lord intends?

In the first place, we need to know the purpose of the prayer meeting. There are all kinds of good reasons for having a prayer meeting: we like to be together; it is an opportunity to praise the Lord in a more spontaneous manner; we are freer to exercise the charisms. Yet, as part of a move of the Holy Spirit within the life of the church, the purpose of the prayer meeting is the same as the purpose of the church: to enable her members to grow in

holiness and to evangelize the world with the good news of Jesus Christ (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 773; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 14).

The unique contribution that the charismatic prayer meeting brings to the church is the free and deliberate exercise of the

Prayer group leaders need to take on the very important task of teaching about the gifts.

charisms. The charisms, as seen evidenced in the Charismatic Renewal and charismatic prayer meetings, are biblically based. St. Paul discusses charisms in several passages of his letters. In 1 Corinthians 12, he places his discussion of charisms within that part of the letter dealing with the prayer of the church. It seems that these charisms, gifts of the Holy Spirit which empower us to live the good news, can be somewhat surprising. To say that the grace of these gifts came as a surprise to the Catholic Church is an understatement.

I remember when I went to my first charismatic prayer meeting. It was a summer night (Friday, August 15, 1975 to be exact!) and I had no idea what to expect. I had never heard of the Charismatic Renewal and I merely thought it would be interesting to see what a prayer meeting was about. I will never forget the feeling of electricity in the air as the prayer meeting went on; the exuberant singing and spontaneous praise, the praying and singing in

tongues, the Scripture readings and prophecies, the speaking and interpretation of tongues. They even prayed over someone that night for healing! One person had the gift of tears! I walked out that night stunned, amazed, curious and hungry for more. I realized these people had something—better yet, someone—that I had never realized could be experienced. Because it was clear that Jesus was the Lord of that meeting, and it was apparent that

Intercessory Prayer

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

Lord, fill our minds and hearts with the fire of the Holy Spirit so that we may serve you in purity of body and please you in cleanness of heart.

Lord, may the Paraclete who proceeds from you enlighten our minds and lead us to all truth as your Son has promised.

Lord, may the Holy Spirit cleanse our consciences by his coming, so that when your Son Jesus comes, he may find in us a dwelling place prepared for him.

from the Breviarium Romanum, as quoted in the booklet Devotions to the Holy Spirit by Brian Moore, SJ

he was Lord of their lives, I was not put off by the flourishing of charismatic gifts at the prayer meeting. I was certainly intrigued, and I knew that I wanted what

Once I experienced the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit, those charisms that I had seen and heard started to well up within me. Within a few days I started to

I am renewed in the Lord and the gifts of the Spirit. When I hear teaching about the charisms, I am renewed in the Lord and the gifts of the Spirit. When I am exhorted to be open and to expect the Lord to use me, I am renewed in the Lord and the gifts of the Spirit.

As I continued to go to the prayer meeting, I began to realize the importance of the charismatic gifts.

these people had, a knowledge of Jesus that was based on an experience of him, not just on texts about him. I couldn't wait for the next week's meeting. I read all that I could get my hands on, and I found the Lord moving more and more surely into my heart, into my life. As I continued to go to the prayer meeting, I began to realize the importance of the charismatic gifts; their presence and exercise emboldened and empowered me in the new life I was now living. I asked for baptism in the Holy Spirit and I received so very much from the Lord.

pray in tongues, right away the Scriptures came alive, and I started to hear the Lord speak to me. The prayer meeting made a considerable difference in my ability to respond to this new grace as it taught me to expect the gifts and how to exercise them. As I continued to attend prayer meetings, I began to broaden my understanding and expectations about the gifts. I learned that there was a wide variety of charisms—like teaching, mercy, hospitality and exhortation—and that God wanted us to be open to all of them. In addition to the fundamental task of the prayer meeting being a tool for evangelization, it is also a school for the reception and use of the charisms. Indeed, teaching and learning how to grow in and stir up the charismatic gifts needs to be one of the primary tasks of the prayer meeting and those leading it.

Prayer group leaders need to take on the very important task of teaching about the gifts and stirring them up in the prayer meeting. There are a variety of tools and resources: local and regional renewal centers (including Chariscenter USA); books like Steve Clark's *Baptized in the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*; a series of books and pamphlets on the gifts written by Fr. Robert DeGrandis; and the growth seminar *There's Always More* by Sr. Nancy Kellar (Sr. Nancy's book has an entire session on the stirring up of the charismatic gifts). As we are schooled in the charismatic gifts at our prayer meetings, we will be equipped to exercise them outside the prayer meeting. We will be ready to witness, to pray for healing, to offer a word of wisdom or knowledge, to even speak a prophetic word.

"Strive eagerly for the spiritual gifts. But I will show you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31). "Over all these virtues, put on love, the bond of perfection" (Col. 3:14). As we seek to respond to the grace of the Lord poured out so generously in these days of the new Pentecost, let us live the greatest gift, love. May we love the Lord and one another. In so doing, we will be renewed in the Holy Spirit and the charisms will flourish among us. ♦

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

- ◆ For upcoming Regional Leaders Gatherings in Chicago and Denver.
- ◆ For the Twelve Days of Blessings Conference and Retreat sponsored by the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services in September.
- ◆ For the preparations for the National Leaders Conference in Nashville in November.
- ◆ For the Holy Spirit seminars being planned and presented throughout the country.
- ◆ For charismatic conferences being planned or presented throughout the country.
- ◆ For the financial provision for the mission of the NSC.

The charismatic gifts of the Spirit are not natural, they are supernatural; hence, we cannot rely on our own understanding but must learn from the Spirit of the Lord how best to exercise them. The Scriptures themselves introduce us to the charisms and speak of them in such a way that suggests their frequent and regular use (see 1 Cor. 12-14; Rom. 12). The Word of God also addresses the need to be renewed in the Holy Spirit; we are reminded to "fan into flame the gift of God received through the laying on of hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). This renewal, or rekindling, also calls for a stirring up of the gifts. I have experienced the need for this over and over again. When I am involved and participating in a charismatic prayer meeting,



Fr. John Gordon is a member of the National Service Committee. He has recently been named Associate Director of the pre-theologate program at the Franciscan University of Steubenville.

NEWSBRIEFS

Gathering of National Leadership Groups

Bishop Sam Jacobs, Chairman of the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, chaired the National Leaders' Gathering: Catholic Charismatic Renewal, in mid-January. The gathering brought together members of the National Service Committee, the Association of Diocesan Liaison Steering Committee, the Korean Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States of America, the *Comité Nacional de Servicio Hispano*, *Le Conseil du Renouveau Charismatique Catholique Des Haïtiens D'Outre-Mer*, the Alliance of Filipino Catholic Charismatic Prayer Communities and the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Communities and Fellowships. Held in Augusta, Georgia, the gathering was hosted by the Alleluia Covenant Community whose Catholic Fellowship is part of the Catholic Fraternity. About twenty members of the Alleluia Community joined the other forty leaders present.

The groups met under the direction of a Committee of Five led by Bishop Jacobs and consisting of the Chairpersons of the NSC (Aggie Neck) and the Diocesan Liaison Steering Committee (Judith Hughes), an ethnic representative (Msgr. Joseph Malagrecia), and a representative of the Fraternity (Dennis McBride). The purpose of the Gathering is to bring the groups together for prayer, fellowship and hearing

the word of the Lord together for the Renewal. As was true in 2002, each of the Leadership Groups was encouraged to bring one or two younger leaders (i.e. under age 35). There were six such leaders present.

Most of the time together was spent in prayer, small group sharing and discussion. What emerged could be focused under four headings:

Unity

1. To share events with each other and to publicize.
2. Focus prayers on Thursdays (Mass, rosary, time before the Blessed Sacrament) praying for unity in the Renewal.

Personal transformation

1. During 2003 (preferably Lent) focus on fasting during the week, fostering a deeper prayer life and reflection on returning to first love.

Mission

1. Conduct Life in the Spirit Seminars during the Easter season—if possible focus on family.

Youth

1. Conduct Life in the Spirit Seminars specifically for youth.
2. Adults need to be more open to youth.
3. Encourage diocesan leadership for charismatic youth events around the country.
4. Develop an internet web site for prayer.

In 2004 the Groups have set the Friday before Ash Wednesday, February 20, as a Day of Prayer and Fasting. The Groups also decided to again meet in 2004 and again bring one or two younger leaders.

The NSC Council

In early 2000 the National Service Committee formed the NSC Council to replace the former Advisory Committee. Those who were on the Advisory Committee at the time were invited to join the NSC Council and, based on years of service on the Advisory Committee, were given terms of varying length. In December 2002 a number of those terms were up. New invitations were issued and the following are new NSC Council members:

- ◆ Tom Curran, Trinity Formation Resources (Federal Way, Washington)
- ◆ Sr. Christine Edwards, SFP, Lighthouse Renewal Center (Cincinnati, Ohio)
- ◆ Tammy Evevard, youth and young adult leader (Erie, Colorado)
- ◆ Carol Forsythe, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Center for Chicago, Illinois
- ◆ Fr. Tim Hepburn, Diocesan Liaison (Atlanta, Georgia)
- ◆ Scott Kaldahl, worship leader (Miami, Florida)
- ◆ Nick Alexander Kleszczewski, young adult leader (Milford, Connecticut)
- ◆ Martha Krupp, community and youth outreach leader (Montrose, Michigan)
- ◆ Bill Marcotte, Youth Arise (Tempe, Arizona)
- ◆ Pat Molyneaux, Renewal leader (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)
- ◆ Deacon Dan Pudvah, Renewal leader (Barre, Vermont)
- ◆ Mary Jo Webb, Native American Renewal leader (Fairfax, Oklahoma)

In addition, invitations were extended to several individuals who

had recently left the National Service Committee. Accepting the invitation were: Deacon Bill Brennan (Service Committee member 1994–2003), Fr. Art Cooney, OFM Cap. (Service Committee member 1995–2003) and Dr. Michele Greischar (Service Committee member 1991–2003).

The purpose of the NSC Council is to actively support the mission of the National Service Committee through prayer, counsel and service. Its Mission Statement reads:

The NSC Council is called by the National Service Committee and gifted by God to work in partnership with the National Service Committee to foster the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church.

Beyond the NSC Council, the Service Committee relates directly to local dioceses, liaisons and renewal centers and are available for consultation. The NSC also relates to liaisons nationally through its relationship with the Association of Diocesan Liaisons with the ADL Steering Committee chair serving as a consultant to the NSC. The NSC and the Diocesan Liaison Steering Committee meet prior to the Gathering of National Leadership Groups: Catholic Charismatic Renewal for fellowship, prayer, sharing and discussion. The NSC also attempts to build closer ties to liaisons, renewal center directors and prayer group leaders in a smaller geographic context through Regional Leaders' Gatherings. ◆

CHARISMS

Mission, ministry and charisms

by Sherry Weddell

I received a phone call last month that really got me thinking. A man in charge of diaconate training for his diocese wondered if I could tell him what charisms would be most appropriate for deacon candidates. What was his bishop's vision of the diaconate, I asked? The answer: Someone who could recognize and take direct, personal action to meet the pastoral needs of people. I told him that pastoral charisms such as *encouragement, helps, hospitality, pastoring* and *mercy*—as well as *service*—would be most useful. But I also voiced my concern that such a specific ministry focus would leave little room for candidates who might be called to an uncommon lifestyle, to minister as evangelists, teachers, or academics or to take risks in order to begin something new. My friend's response was simple and clear: "Those aren't the sort of deacons that the bishop wants."

Fr. Michael Sweeney and I have long noticed that most of the pastoral associates that we work with are competent facilitators of group process but that few are confident teachers. This reality forced us to change our approach to parish-based adult formation. But after that phone call, I began to connect the dots. After helping over 13,000 Catholics in 46 dioceses to discern their charisms, I was seeing something that I had never grasped before. We are systematically calling forth *only* certain charisms at the parish level.

The gifts that are most frequently manifested by members of diocesan parishes are those that are directly related to administering the structures and nurturing the inner life of the Christian community (such as *encouragement, helps, hospitality,*

pastoring, administration, service, giving and *wisdom*). These are the charisms of the overwhelming majority of pastoral associates, youth ministers, deacons, lay leaders and pastors that we have interviewed. This is significant because these gifts are most readily used in existing internal ministry, but they do not propel us out in mission to the world.

The charisms that are most critical for mission *beyond* the Christian community, forming the next generation of apostles and undertaking new apostolic initiatives, are much less frequently manifested in diocesan parishes where 98% of all Catholics have their only contact with the church. We are not regularly calling forth apostles with the gifts to:

- ◆ evangelize the unchurched and non-practicing (*evangelism*);
- ◆ crosscultural and lifestyle barriers to bring Christ to those outside the church (*missionary, voluntary poverty*);
- ◆ form apostles by making the riches of church teaching available (*teaching, knowledge*);
- ◆ successfully start new apostolic initiatives (*leadership, faith*);
- ◆ challenge Christians with the social implications of the gospel (*mercy, prophecy*).

These charisms have long been regarded as the province of particular religious orders or congregations who "specialize" in

the outward mission. Leaders in diocesan parishes who have been given these latter gifts (whether clergy or lay) are often frustrated by inward-looking structures and priorities and can feel isolated in their concern for mission outward. If they have a choice, lay Catholics with these charisms often join third orders, lay movements, or a parish run by a religious order that shares their priorities.

I saw this vividly demonstrated recently in a Canadian parish. I was interviewing five married couples who were being mentored by their pastor, a member of a new apostolic society of priests dedicated to evangelism. Of the ten interviewees, 50% showed real signs of the charism of evangelism—a proportion five times larger than in the Catholic population in general! In my experience, most lay people with a charism of evangelism feel very much alone and misunderstood in their parish, but the experience of these couples was very different. The evangelizing charism of the pastor's religious community seemed to call forth and encourage parishioners with this gift in a remarkable way.

If the evangelization of the world is the church's reason for being, then our world needs *all* the charisms and *all* the vocations that God is giving us. If our vision of the church's mission is too narrow, if we seek just to "fill" obvious ministry holes rather than form apostles, then only those leaders with the narrow range of gifts and vocations that fit our "slots" will emerge. Other Catholics will a) regard themselves

Faith-sharing from p. 5

Helpful hints

1. When others share, accept their testimony or witness as a true experience of theirs, without judging or questioning.
2. Reverently let their sharing stand on its own. Faith-sharing isn't discussion time. We don't need to add our own experiences or ideas to theirs.
3. Be grateful and encouraging to those who are willing to share, but also honest in showing approval or appreciation.



Charisms continued...

as either *not* having a gift worth discerning; or b) will leave to exercise their gifts and calling in a place where it is understood and honored.

I believe that if we are going to successfully call forth the next generation of apostles and saints, we need thousands of Catholics willing to serve as a new type of parish-based pastoral leader—the “formator.” A formator’s entire ministry focus is enabling the baptized to become mature disciples, to discern their charisms, whatever they might be, and to live their apostolic call wherever it might take them. Like John the Baptist, formators can change the course of history by making straight the paths of those whom God has sent to heal and transform our world.

If you feel you may be called to this crucial ministry, visit the Catherine of Siena Institute website at www.siena.org. ♦

Sherry Weddell is Associate Director of the Catherine of Siena Institute, a program of the Western Dominican Province dedicated to equipping parishes for the formation of lay Catholics.



Peter Comaish of England prayed, and I join him:

Bless us, Lord, as we try to work out new ways of encouraging others to consider “whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, whatever is excellent or praiseworthy” (Phil. 4:8). Lord, there are so many people who want to make a meal of lesser things. Help us to put into words...great deeds that will pull others toward higher aspiration and inspiration.

Thank you, Dan, and all the other Christian friends who have shared their faith stories with me, and in this way have brought me closer to God and to them. ♦

A former chair of the Association of Diocesan Liaisons, Sr. Justin Wirth is a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She is co-author of the recently revised Faith Sharing in Small Groups: the Vision and the Tools, available from Chariscenter USA.



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From the
Director

.....
by Walter Matthews

Calling leaders together

In nearly every leaders' meeting I have participated in over the last ten or more years, the need for raising-up new leaders and the need to re-energize those faithful leaders who are experiencing a lack of zeal or vision has been vocalized.

In his important talk at the 2002 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in Pittsburgh, Bishop Stanislaw Rylko said:

It is meaningful that in all the messages addressed to the communities of the Renewal in the Spirit, the Pope often stressed the need for "a deep and solid formation" as a priority...In addition, those who (for example leaders of Christian communities) participate actively in Christian instruction, take this responsibility not only with respect to others but also before God and the church. For this reason there is also an urgent need to form leaders so they are adequately prepared to avoid the danger of the "blind leading the blind"...Forming others is not a private activity of a leader or of a community. Each one should be aware of being nothing than a servant for the great cause of God. The Holy Father emphasizes: "God is the first and great teacher of his people."

With these discussions and exhortations in mind, the National Service Committee, whose Mission Statement includes the call "to strengthen the Catholic Charismatic Renewal," in collaboration with the Association of Diocesan Liaisons, is convening the 2003 National Leaders' Conference in Nashville this November. The theme is "Charismatic Leadership in the New Millennium: Led by the Holy Spirit." This will be the first National Leaders' Conference convened by the NSC since 1979.

The keynote will be given by Fr. Tom Forrest. Seven tracks, consisting of four workshops in each track, will be offered: Prayer Group Leadership, Healing/ Prayer Room Ministry, Praise and Worship, Charisms, Theological Foundations, Prophetic Call of the Church to the Charismatic Renewal, and Praticums: Tools for Moving Forward.

Workshops include: "Evangelizing Prayer Groups," "Holy and Skilled: Qualities of Fruitful and Effective Leadership," "The Basics of Inner Healing Prayer," "Discernment and the Use of Charisms in Healing Prayer," "Releasing Greater Praise and Worship," "Do We Really Need Charisms?" "Praying to Release Charisms in Others," "The Holy Spirit in Scripture," "Baptism in the Holy Spirit Revisited," "Building a 'Culture of Pentecost' and Other Challenges," "Witnessing to the Power of God," "The Gifts of Prophecy and Word of Knowledge." The list of speakers may be found on the back page of this issue.

Who is this conference for? Liaisons, renewal center directors, itinerant ministers, covenant community leaders, ethnic Renewal leaders, and religious order contacts are being invited. Through them we hope to extend this invitation to other leaders (e.g. members of diocesan service teams, other key leaders in a community, or prayer group leaders) including those in various ministries such as healing prayer, music, word gifts, etc. We hope also to encourage new, younger or potential leaders to attend. We encourage "seasoned" and veteran leaders to bring new and younger leaders—or potential leaders—with them, even paying their expenses if necessary. We encourage leaders to look "outside the box" of leaders to youth leaders and ministers, those in LifeTeen,

Franciscan University youth conferences, etc. We are particularly anxious to reach young leaders.

If you would like to attend please contact your diocesan liaison, renewal center director, community leader or ethnic leader. If you live in a diocese without a liaison or renewal center, please contact our office. No one who serves as a leader or feels the Lord calling him or her to leadership should exclude him or herself.

In his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, our Holy Father has encouraged the whole church to go forward into this new millennium with hope and to "put out into the deep."

Now we must look ahead, we must "put out into the deep," trusting in Christ's words: *Duc in altum!* What we have done this year [the year of the Jubilee] cannot justify a sense of complacency, and still less should it lead us to relax our commitment. On the contrary, the experiences we have had should inspire in us new energy, and impel us to invest in concrete initiatives the enthusiasm which we have felt. Jesus himself warns us: "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). In the cause of the kingdom there is no time for looking back, even less for settling into laziness. Much awaits us.

Leaders especially need to hear these words and to respond. Coming to Nashville in November would be one way—a very important way—to respond. See you there. ♦

Friends of the NSC

The National Service Committee would like to thank all those who have made a donation or donations in this difficult year. In the face of a weak economy, a war in Iraq, and concerns about SARS and terrorism, charitable giving has been down, not just to the National Service Committee and Chariscenter USA, but to many Catholic and Christian organizations. Donations to the NSC are 10-20% below giving in 2002. However, the Lord is faithful to his promises and the work continues.

If you are able to make a summertime donation, we would certainly appreciate it. It can get pretty lean around here in the dog days of summer!

We would like to introduce and thank the following for becoming Charter Members of Fanning the Flame Partners:

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If you would like more information about Fanning the Flame Partners or would like to become a Charter Member, call us at 1-800-338-2445.

Ministry
Update
.....
by Virginia King



In January, two new members were elected to serve three-year terms on the National Service Committee. I asked them to share their reflections on the vision of the NSC, "Renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church."

Chuck Hornsby, a leader in the Alleluia Community in Augusta, Georgia, reflects on how important the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is to our modern world.

Pope John Paul II has said we live in a "culture of death." We need the Holy Spirit to bring life out of death. In Jesus' time many religious people were in bondage to legalism. They sought the letter of the law but had forgotten its essence. We need the Holy Spirit to bring us beyond legalism so that we live under the law of love. In our age we define freedom as getting to do whatever we want. We need the Holy Spirit to bring us into the true freedom of being able to do those things that we are called to do. We live in an age that is "relationally challenged." We need the Holy Spirit to draw us again into meaningful personal relationships. We live in an age of litigation. We need the Holy Spirit to draw us into reconciliation. We live in an age of isolation and independence. We need the Holy Spirit to draw us into forms of community that will support our daily lives in Christ. We often feel helpless to deal with the fearful complexity of the problems in the modern world. We need the Holy Spirit and his gifts to empower us so that we face the future with faith and boldness.

It is not a time for business as usual. It is not a time to hang back. It is an exciting time. It is a time for "renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church." "All creation groans and moans

waiting for the coming of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:18). The poor, the disenfranchised, the sick, and those in bondage to the deception of the devil, are all waiting for the coming of the sons of God. We need a new and even more powerful release of the Holy Spirit. We need to stir up the "gifts given us with the laying on of hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). I am looking forward to working with the National Service Committee in this task. May our hearts be full of hope as we move forward. "He who is faithful has begun this good work in us; he will surely bring it to fulfillment" (Phil. 1:6).

Fr. John Gordon, a priest of the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, and currently working with the pre-theology program at Franciscan University of Steubenville, shares his enthusiasm.

Praise the Lord Jesus Christ, now and forever! God is not finished yet! He has so much more. What we have already experienced in the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a tremendous gift. And the grace, the power, the mercy, the love of the Lord keeps pouring in! I believe the vision statement of the NSC invites all who know this new Pentecost to partner together, that the whole church may explicitly live in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Lord is doing so much, and yet we miss so much of what he is doing. As we are more and more able to recognize the hand of the Lord, we will more and more be able to see his face! I am encouraged that there are so many signs of the Lord's grace in these days; among young people, in the various ethnic communities, in the renewal of Catholic family life and many other experiences of renewal, both personal and institutional. And there's still more! Now and forever, praise the Lord Jesus Christ! ♦

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