

PENTECOST *Today*

July/August/September 2007

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THE
HOLY SPIRIT
HAS BEEN
GIVEN!

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



Chairman's Corner

by Aggie Neck

Rise up and be counted

“...the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I will not treat God’s gracious gift as pointless”
(Gal. 2:20-21).

It has taken me awhile, but I do understand what St. Paul was expressing when he wrote these lines. To be living in the grace of Pentecost is a transforming journey. It calls us to strive to build a culture of Pentecost again, in this time in history. Building a culture of Pentecost means first of all that we ourselves live this culture.

The dictionary defines culture as “the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior that depends upon man’s capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.” If we do not teach and pass on what we have come to know and believe as truth, then we will be held accountable for letting it die.

You and I have a foundation of faith today because of faithful ancestors who handed down the truths of the gospel and in some instances gave their life for it. This handing down of the faith goes back to the Apostles and disciples of Jesus. Each succeeding generation kept alive the basic elements of faith and it became a culture in the midst of a pagan world.

St. Augustine said the church is placed “amid the persecution of the world and

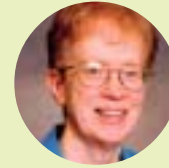
the consolation of God.” We can certainly see this to be true in our day. There is a struggle to keep the message of the gospel alive in the face of a culture that is not spiritual and at enmity with God.

Today we see a slipping away of the foundation on which our faith was built. It is indeed time to shake off the drowsy state that veils the message of Pentecost. Shout it from the housetops, speak of it whether convenient or inconvenient, live it as if today could be the last day. We must not miss any opportunity to proclaim the message of hope. We must not sit by silently when all that is sacred and holy to us is defamed. Above all we must live fully and openly our charismatic culture of Pentecost. This means keeping the gifts alive, all of the gifts, and especially the gift of prophecy. It is necessary to hear the Lord.

“Let these words be in your own mind and heart, then you shall whet and sharpen them, so as to make them penetrate; and teach and impress them diligently upon the minds and hearts of your children. You shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:6-9 Amplified Version).

To build this culture of Pentecost we must live it faithfully and hand it down to succeeding generations as the precious treasure that it is. Now is the time to rise up and be counted. This is indeed the season of the harvest. May God grant us the grace and zeal that will enable us to accomplish this task. ♦

Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee.



Editor's Desk

by Sr. Martha Jean McGarry

“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke of the great things God had done” (Acts 2:4, 11).

This issue helps us to explore how we might live the grace and culture of Pentecost in our world today. Aggie Neck in her Chairman’s column gives us a clear understanding of what is meant by ‘living the grace and culture of Pentecost.’

Bishop Sam Jacobs points our attention to living this grace in our **church and in society**. Look for the key word “transformation” in his article. Brien and Debbie Bensel give us practical ways to live Pentecost in **marriage and family life**.

What’s missing in our ministry to youth? Long time youth minister, Jim Beckman believes he has the answer. See his article on page 6-7.

Looking for help in **witnessing** to the grace of Pentecost to others? Check out Patti Mansfield’s article which shows us a simple, but effective way to witness.

Fr. Don Gelpi, SJ in his article entitled *Charisms and Building Community* challenges us to a deeper understanding of the basics of community.

Do you want evidence of **Pentecost alive** today? The conference reports will set your feet a-dancing in the power of the Spirit.

As scripture tells in 2 Tim. 1, the Spirit of God is not a spirit of fear or timidity, but of boldness, power and love. The Spirit of God lives within us. May this issue teach us ways to set this Spirit free in our world! ♦



Cultivating Pentecost in family life

by Brien and Debbie Bensel

Each spring the Church in her wisdom gives us the opportunity to celebrate the glorious feast of Pentecost and rekindle the fire of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The grace of Pentecost is meant to transform our lives and our world, just as it did for those first followers of Christ. It often seems, however, that once we walk out the church doors, the culture of death, secularism, and materialism begin to bombard us, pulling our hearts and thoughts far from the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. How do we take hold of this unfathomable gift of love and power, and begin to cultivate a culture of life-giving Pentecost, which will bring our hearts, our families, and ultimately, our world, back into union with the very heart of God? Perhaps taking a closer look at the word “culture” may provide some insight.

Culture and *cultivation* come from the same Latin word *cultura*, meaning “to till the soil,” preparing it for a season of planting and growing. It is our responsibility to “till the soil” of our hearts and our homes in order to be

prepared to receive the abundant harvest the Holy Spirit wants to reap in our lives. Cultivating a culture of Pentecost means going far beyond the celebration of a day or a season; it means living out a perpetual Pentecost, day by day, moment by moment being fully receptive to the voice and action of the Spirit.

Any gardener will tell you that tilling and preparing the soil is hard work. However, it is crucial to the harvest that will follow. The parable of the sower tells us that bad soil produces a poor crop but good soil will produce even a hundredfold! Here are some tips for ensuring a bountiful Holy Spirit harvest.

BREAK UP THE GROUND. Our hearts become hardened with the cares, worries, and frustrations of daily life. Only consistent, daily prayer can soften and break open the soil. It is vital to set aside a specific time each day for personal prayer, and a regular time for prayer with the whole family. We have found that simple intercessory prayer, the rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet work well with our children. Praying individually, and together as a family, helps to keep our hearts softened towards God and each other.

DIG OUT THE ROCKS. We frequently throw the rocks of resentment, unforgiveness and anger into the soil of our hearts and bury them, preventing the fruit of the Holy Spirit from taking root. Being quick to forgive and ask forgiveness rids the soil of rocks. Forgiveness is the heart of God, and he will freely give us the grace to forgive whenever we ask. Not just saying “I’m sorry” or “That’s OK,” but using the words “Please forgive me” and “I forgive you” will bring the grace of reconciliation into our homes. Once the rocks are gone, the fruit will grow!

PULL THE WEEDS. The weeds of sin when allowed to grow freely will crowd

out the godly fruit we are trying to cultivate. Inviting the Holy Spirit to guide us through a daily examination of conscience will give us the wisdom to see where the weeds of life-choking sin are gaining a foothold. Applying the potent “weed-killer” of confession will uproot the sin, leaving the fruit and power of the Spirit to flourish in our lives. Going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a family can be especially grace-filled.

FERTILIZE THE SOIL. An “attitude of gratitude” produces rich soil indeed. The Holy Spirit, the Divine Gardener, searches for grateful hearts in which to sow the seeds of Pentecost. Refuse to allow negative thoughts and words to take root. Help each other focus on gratitude and together look for the positive. Some families find it helpful to have each person share three specific things they are grateful for about their day at the dinner table or at bedtime. Gratitude must be practiced until it becomes a habit. Then we’ll enjoy the sweet fruit of joy and peace.

WATER DAILY. Praise is to our souls as water is to a seed. It is the living water of praise that helps us to break through trials and difficulties, hardness of heart and selfish pride and desire, just as a well-watered seedling breaks out of its shell and through the soil to new life. Praising God in all things washes away fear, doubt and unbelief that prevent us from living fully in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we daily prepare our hearts, we will find the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) growing abundantly, our hearts opened to the gifts he freely bestows (Is. 11:2-3), and our lives filled with the grace and power of a true culture of Pentecost! Come, Holy Spirit! ♦

Brien and Debbie Bensel are members of the City of the Lord, a Catholic, charismatic community in Tempe, AZ.



Living *the culture of Pentecost* in society

The culture of Pentecost is in direct opposition to the culture of Babel.

by Bishop Sam Jacobs

In an address to a delegation of members of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit Movement, John Paul II said: “In our time that is so hungry for hope, make the Holy Spirit known and loved. Help bring to life that ‘culture of Pentecost’, that alone can make fruitful the civilization of love and friendly coexistence among peoples. With fervent insistence, never tire of praying, ‘Come Holy Spirit! Come! Come!’” (March 14, 2002).

What is the culture of Pentecost? To answer this, we have to look at the event of Pentecost itself. When we reflect on this mystery three terms stand out, love, proclamation and witness.

Essentially, what happened at Pentecost is what happened to Jesus on the day of his Baptism, his Pentecost. As he experienced in his humanity the enveloping and transforming love of the Father in the person of the Spirit, so too those in the upper room had a similar experiential grace. In the words of Paul: “the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5). This overwhelming love of the Father has been identified as the kiss of the Father, which is the Spirit.

If the experience of God’s personal love is at the very heart of Pentecost, then the culture of Pentecost is to bring this same love to others both in word and deed, not in some superficial way, but in real, tangible and life-giving ways. What we are called to do is to bring people into the experience of God’s love for them. But that love is mediated, by God’s plan, through us. The culture of Pentecost is the love of God at the heart of our own life and the reason underlying our relationship to others. Jesus experienced in his humanity the depth and length and height of the Father’s love for him and evidenced this love to others by his words and deeds.

The second revelation of Pentecost is that, once those in the upper room experienced the infilling presence of God’s love, they proclaim the marvelous deeds of the Lord. This is exactly what the people from the various nations of the world acknowledged on that day. “We hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God” (Acts 2:11).

The culture of Pentecost involves proclaiming the works of the Lord. The culture of Pentecost is in direct opposition to the culture of Babel.

There the focus was not the marvelous works of the Lord but a desire to make themselves the focus. "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky, and so make a name for ourselves" (Gen. 11:4).

By exercising authentically the gifts of the Spirit following the lead of the Spirit, we will evidence the marvelous works of God. The gift of prophecy is God's life-giving word; the gift of healing is God's power and authority over human frailty; the gifts of wisdom, knowledge and understanding are the ways of the Lord to know his truth; the gift of discernment is God's way of guiding us to follow his lead. Even though the gifts are for our sanctification and the up-building of the Body of Christ, they manifest the works of the Lord on our behalf. It is the culture of Pentecost to so proclaim these deeds of God to the world. This is what the apostles did following the example of Jesus.

The third revelation of Pentecost is witnessing the central mystery of our salvation. In the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost: "Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

The culture of Pentecost involves giving testimony, again by word and deed, to the great mystery of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to his saving redemption, especially in one's life. This is explicitly clear in the words of Paul: "For, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

This acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus is not merely a statement of fact, for Jesus is Lord in fact. But it is the reality at the heart of one's life. Jesus is the Lord and Savior of one's personal life. In the culture of Pentecost a person learns and chooses to yield everything to Jesus and to place all under his total authority and control.

This experience of God's love, this proclamation of God's mighty deeds, this personal surrender to the Lordship of Jesus are not just for the sake of the individual. God fills us anew with the person, presence and power of the Spirit in order for us to share this with others. This is the mission of Pentecost. The apostles remembered what Jesus had told them after his resurrection. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn. 20:21).

This is the new evangelization that John Paul II frequently urged the Church to bring about. "In the first place, (this new evangelization) calls for a commitment to live the Gospel which is preached and to incarnate it in one's personal life and in the life of the community in such a way that the proclamations of the good news might be sustained by the very strength of a life of witness to the Gospel. The more (the evangelizers are such) by means of the dynamic and irresistible energy of the light and heat coming from the truth and charity of Christ, so much more will their lives witness to the Gospel they profess."

The culture of Pentecost thus involves a personal transformation as well as transformation of society through the power of the Spirit, who immerses us ever deeper into the life-giving love of God. The Spirit gives us a new awareness of the mighty deeds of God, shown in his providential plan and a deeper conviction and surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

As a result the culture of Pentecost will evidence, both in the life of the individual and in the community, the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). ♦



The culture of Pentecost thus involves a personal transformation as well as transformation of society through the power of the Spirit.



Bishop Sam Jacobs, former chairman of the National Service Committee, is Bishop of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana and presently serves as Chairman of the Evangelization Committee for the US Bishops.

The necessity of the Holy Spirit:



Enabling youth to live counter-culturally in the postmodern world

by Jim Beckman

In an effort to make sure we're all on the same page, I want to begin by briefly talking about what the term Postmodern actually means. It refers to an "era" of time. The "Postmodern Era", began in the early 20th Century. It was preceded by the "Modern Era" (17th Century to the early 20th Century), which was preceded by the "Pre-Modern Era" (16th Century and before). Universities devote entire semesters to studying just one of these eras. We don't have time here to delve into all the intricacies, however, it is important to look at the marking characteristics of this time we call "postmodern."

At the end of the modern era, key thinkers like Nietzsche began to question the Enlightenment, which paved the way into postmodern thinking. We were experiencing the crash of science and reason during this time—man was coming to the end of himself. The era of Postmodernism ushered in a new philosophical mindset: NOTHING was at the center of the universe: one of the marking qualities of this time we live in, and when nothing is at the cen-

ter of the universe then anything goes, because nothing matters. This philosophical mindset sets the stage for moral relativism and secular humanism.

You can see the philosophical backdrop of our culture that postmodernism engenders; the ramifications of it are all around us. Recent studies have revealed that more than 90% of church-going teens do not believe in absolute moral truth (Barna Research Group). What is most striking is how drastically that figure has changed in the past 10 years. The number of believing teens who did not believe in absolute moral truth was closer to 50% in the early nineties.

What is causing this crisis of morality? We are seeing before our eyes the impact of postmodern philosophy. As each new generation is born, the effects of this become more firmly rooted. Today's teens are one of the first generations to be raised by parents who were fully immersed in postmodern thinking from their birth.

With the erosion of the true center for the universe—God, we are left grasping

for straws as to what we are here for. There is no meaning or purpose for our existence, and that reality itself has had devastating effects on today's young people. John Paul II saw it coming, and from the first days of his election began reaching out to the young generation of the Church. He saw the errant philosophy and where it would take us, and his entire pontificate would be devoted to preaching the "truth" that was becoming so relative.

Pope Benedict now is speaking similarly, recognizing the emptiness of our culture and where it is taking us. He has made some striking remarks about the "dictatorship of relativism" (*Pre-Conclave Homily, April, 2005*). His emphasis is that the true good of society is no longer the pursuit of truth, but the pursuit of relativism itself. It seems that the only "absolute" is that nothing is absolute. Does it begin to become clear why our young people are so confused? This question brings us to the primary consideration of this article: the necessity of the move and work of the Holy Spirit in evangelizing young people today.

My thought here would be that the youth ministry we have seen over the past couple decades seems to be waning in its effectiveness. There are many approaches and techniques employed to evangelize young people, but by and large these efforts have centered around what I would call "event-driven" ministry. Retreats, conferences, rallies, etc. have been the primary conversion engines in our youth ministry efforts. And for the most part, they have been fairly effective. Over the past 15 years or so we have seen a dramatic increase of young people in attendance at evangelistic events, youth conferences and camps. Yet, with all this success, we have seen minimal increase in vocations, and recent studies such as "Soul

Searching” have demonstrated a pretty dismal picture of the belief system of both Catholic and Protestant teens.

I believe that the missing element is not our ability to evangelize our young people, but rather our ability to catechize and disciple them. For years we have put great effort into events that will draw young people into an encounter with the person of Christ, and even into an encounter with the Holy Spirit. However, we have not been effective in “integrating” those encounter moments with the rest of their lives. The more immersed we become in the postmodern world, the more critical that integration is. The lack of this integration has resulted in a limping youth ministry that keeps young people hanging onto spiritual high experiences once or twice a year. The “staying” power of a youth ministry that is fostering “counter-cultural” teens is painfully absent.

How do we foster such young people? Young people who will transform the world around them simply by the way they are living their life? I propose that it is by a very intentional imparting of the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit through personal prayer. As ministers to young people, we must first draw them into the incredible gift of relational prayer, and teach them how to access the immeasurable grace that can be found there. This kind of ministry will not be done at a conference, or a weekend retreat. It can be touched on, even experienced. But it will only be fully integrated through day-in and day-out repetition. Someone needs to be walking with these young people, talking with them several times a week, processing their prayer experiences with them, gradually teaching them the subtle gifts of discernment necessary to access the deeper fruits of prayer. Want to teach a young person how to live

counter-culturally? Teach them how to pray well. Teach them how to listen and discern the subtle moves of the Holy Spirit, pray over them often for a deeper outpouring of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, and invite the Holy Spirit’s work into the life of their whole family. Who better to do the work of the day-in-day-out mentoring than their own parents?!

Why is the Holy Spirit so important to this work? I would go as far as saying that without the work and move of the Holy Spirit, any youth ministry in our time will be absolutely fruitless. How could you possibly address the postmodern philosophies on your own without the clarifying revelation provided by the Holy Spirit? (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1695). How could you lead young people into prayer without the Holy Spirit, who is the source of holiness and the Master of prayer? (*CCC* #749). It is the Holy Spirit that will enlighten, strengthen and renew them (*CCC* #1695), and lead them to a life of prayer (*CCC* #768). We need to invite the Holy Spirit into our work with young people.

There are a number of snapshots that show where God is moving in Catholic youth ministry. Where you see vibrant youth ministry and significant conversions, I believe there are some “common threads.” Such ministry is centered on the person of Jesus and is intensely Eucharistic—young people are encountering Jesus through his real presence in the Blessed Sacrament, the ministry is rooted somehow in the local parish, the ministry is sacramental in nature and is rooted deeply in Catholic spirituality, yet open to various expressions of the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit. The ministry is “dynamically” orthodox, and often has a uniquely Marian aspect as well. It all really is a beautiful blend of everything

Prayer Card



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

“Lord, enable your servants to speak your word with all boldness, as you stretch forth your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

Acts 4:29-30

we hold near and dear as Catholics, no one aspect overshadowing the other, and all rooted in the centrality of Jesus. I hope that the ministry I do with young people would be a reflection of this, drawing young people, one-by-one into the beautiful gift of relationship with Jesus and his Church through prayer, and the move and work of the Holy Spirit. ♦

Jim Beckman has been involved with youth ministry and evangelization of teens for more than 20 years.



Jim is the Executive Director of Impact-Center, a youth minister mentoring and consulting ministry based in Colorado.



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

- ◆ NSC Retreat meeting in September in Augusta
- ◆ That those who have attended the various 40th Anniversary of CCR events & Conferences will be used by God to ignite fresh enthusiasm in prayer groups, outreaches and ministries.
- ◆ That youth and young adults who have been touched by the Renewal will become active participants
- ◆ For wisdom in pastoring the Renewal into the heart of the Church
- ◆ For the newly launched Youth Ministry Committee that will be meeting in October.

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.

Pour Out Your Spirit Anew



40th Anniversary Conference of the Charismatic Renewal

June 22 to 24, 2007

Photos: Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner, Tammie Stevens

by Mary Anne Schaezner, SSND



With the blowing of the shofar and a procession of flags from throughout the US and some other countries, the national celebration of 40 years of charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church began on Friday evening, June 22, at The Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, New Jersey.

Pour Out your Spirit Anew, REPANDS TON ESPRIT A NOUVEAU, DERRAMA DE NUEVO TU ESPIRITU, IPAGKALOOB MULI NINYO ANG INYOUNG SPIRITU.

With the sound of music provided by an ensemble made up of members of each language group we began a joyful and faith-filled weekend of celebration. Members of these language groups plus other charismatic organizations spent many months planning for this special 40th year celebration.

Many of the speakers have been with this renewal for nearly 40 years. They shared some memories but also called us forward to the challenge of the future. It is not time to rest.

We viewed a video of Pope Benedict at the time of the 2006 Pentecost meeting of Renewal Movements in Rome. We heard him say, "Upon all of you I invoke an outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit."



Patti Mansfield reminded us of the Scripture quote from *Lumen Gentium*, "The love of God has been poured out into our heart by the Holy Spirit who has been poured out on us."

Bishop Sam Jacobs read the prayer of Pope John XXIII at the opening of Vatican Council II: "Renew your gifts in this our time..." He remarked that without the Holy Spirit there is no renewal of the Spirit. He went on to say that, "The Church's mission is to share Christ with the world. The Church is charismatic by its very nature. God's plan is that we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Do not interrupt the journey you have begun."