

Spiritual Formation

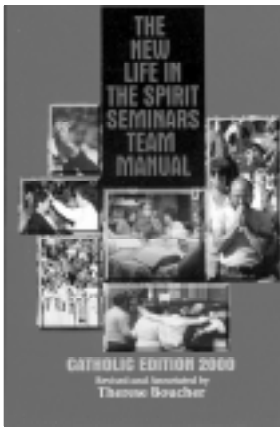
We who call ourselves Christian should “get with it.” Forgiveness is “in,” yet the reality of Christian forgiveness involves much more than just “feeling” better. The profound truth of forgiveness is not simply a psychological tool for feeling whole, although feeling right is a good benefit. Forgiveness actually restores the unity that is broken with God and others. It is possible because of the unity of Christ with his Father, and because Christ lives in us. Forgiveness is the work of Christ in us and through us now, which is what gives it its power.

We who seek to build the kingdom of God in this world—that kingdom of peace and joy and love all long for—have seen the power of this tool of forgiveness. We need to exercise it more often by being “kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven” us (Eph. 4:32). When we are deeply hurt, forgiving the one

who hurt us may not “feel” better right away; but the wound has been sealed, and resentment cannot breed infection within us. It is a cleansing, a deletion, an “undo” that lets the healing start. Like the initial attempt to learn to use a computer, learning to receive and to offer forgiveness may seem more difficult than rewarding. Yet both skills are well worth learning—even if the effort requires “seventy times seven” times each day. ♦



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



New Life in the Spirit Seminars Team Manual: Catholic Edition 2000

Now in its 4th printing, this newly revised seminar has been enthusiastically received and implemented across the US. The dynamism of the original format is preserved in the updated seminar which incorporates a Catholic understanding of the sacraments of initiation and baptism in the Spirit. Order a manual today and plan a New Life in the Spirit Seminar for your parish. **\$9.95** plus s/h

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Open Wednesday

“Open Wednesday” facilitates parents to prepare children for the Sunday Mass Readings.

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There are links to art and craft projects pertaining to the Readings

Correction

We apologize for the error that appeared in the Statement of Accountability in the October/November/December 2001 issue of *Pentecost Today*, page 13. The last line that began “Excess” should have read “Excess of Public Support and Revenue Over Expenses.”

Forgiveness

TEACHING OUTLINE

- A.** Computer analogy (forgiveness/delete key; reconciliation/undo key)
- B.** We will be forgiven as we forgive others.
- C.** Forgiveness is the key to joy and unity.
- C.** Forgiveness is necessary because sin has a social dimension.
- D.** The secular world has discovered the benefits of forgiveness.
- E.** The power in forgiveness is not in our own feelings, but in the power of Christ within us who forgives and restores unity with his Father.
- F.** We need to exercise forgiveness early and often.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If the sacrament of penance takes away my sin, why should I also seek to be forgiven by anyone but God?

What are the similarities and differences between a therapeutic understanding of forgiveness and the Christian understanding?

How is Christ involved when we seek or accept forgiveness?

Stirring the vision into flame

by Deacon Bill Brennan

I'm an average, ordinary guy who, on May 4, 1973, had a most extraordinary encounter with the risen Christ and the fire and the power of the Holy Spirit, which turned me around, upside down, inside out. It put a fire in my heart which burns to this day. I'm an average ordinary guy whose life completely changed.

God has done something truly spectacular in our lives by giving us the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit. If your experience was anything like mine, everything in your life changed. Everything came alive. Prayer came alive. Scripture came alive. The church came alive. And the most amazing thing to me personally was that Jesus came alive in ways that I had never known before. Over time, I began to discover that what had really come alive was my sacramental baptism.

You are probably familiar with Prov. 29:18: "Without a vision, the people perish." God is inviting us to stir into flame the vision of the Charismatic Renewal. What we are experiencing in this Renewal is not just to make us feel good at a conference or prayer meeting. It is not just so we can raise our hands and sing joyful songs when we gather with others who have had the same experience. God has given us this gift to bring to life the grace of our baptism, so that we can get on with doing what we were baptized to do.

There are two scriptures which we need to hold in our hearts because they are key to the vision of "doing what we were baptized to do." Luke 7:18-23 tells the story of John the Baptist's disciples questioning whether Jesus

is "the one who is to come." John is not one hundred percent sure that Jesus is the messiah. Jesus replies: "Go and report to John what you have seen and what you have heard. The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them." Jesus came to proclaim the good news of the Father's kingdom. All the miracles, the signs and wonders were there to authenticate Jesus as the messiah. The things that they were seeing and hearing were the things that would happen when the messiah came. This was the evidence that John the Baptist was waiting for.

God has given us this gift to bring to life the grace of our baptism, so that we can get on with doing what we were baptized to do.

The second scripture that I want to bring to your attention is John 14:12: "Amen, amen I say to you, the person who believes in me will do the works that I do and even greater." This is one of the most incredible promises made in the whole gospel, and it is so filled with implications for us that many of us treat it as if it is too good to be true. But it is not just a pious thought. Jesus is really serious.

Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit for the purpose of fulfilling this promise, to empower us to do what Jesus did. I would say to anybody in ministry: if you view your ministry as a job, you will burn out. If you view your ministry as a blank spot on a roster that needs to be filled, a dirty job but somebody has to do it, you will become disillusioned. You will probably die on the vine. But if you see your ministry as doing the works of Jesus, you will see the glory of God. You will see the power of the Holy Spirit manifested as God reaches out through you and touches the people you are serving.

We have received the same commission that the first disciples received, to go and to do what Jesus was doing, and to recognize that it isn't we who do it—it is Jesus. If we ever get confused and think that it is we who are doing it, we are in trouble. Sooner or later we will fall. It is Jesus who does it. We simply lend him our hands and our feet. The church tells us that this goes back to our baptism. We were baptized to be his instruments.

At Vatican II, the church said, "It is the obligation of every baptized believer to reveal the new man and new woman who has come alive in baptism and the power of the Holy Spirit" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 11). This is an obligation, not a wish or a pious thought. The word used for "power" is from the same root as our word "dynamite." It is a power that explodes. It is a power that makes things happen. Change occurs. That is the kind of power that we have been given through the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The church affirms that charismatic gifts are an integral part of this Christian life. In *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12, we read, "These charisms, whether they be the most outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the church."

In the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* we read, "From the reception of these charisms or gifts, including those which are less dramatic, there arises for each believer the right and duty to use them in the church and in the world" (n. 3). If we are baptized believers, and if we are not using our charisms in the church and in the world, then we are not doing what is our right and our duty.

I believe with all my heart that God has given us the gift of baptism in the Holy Spirit so that we can be a teachable moment for the church. Part of that teachable moment is to be the evidence that the power of the Holy Spirit is not just theoretical. It is not just something we declare to be true, a statement of faith. It is, as Pope Paul VI called it, "that certain lived experience of Pentecost." It is the lived experience of the Holy Spirit, alive and burning like fire within

us. We are empowered to do what Jesus does. That is the vision we need to be sharing. ♦

This article was adapted from Deacon Bill Brennan's presentation at the Day for Clergy and Leaders at the 2001 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in Houston. The audio recording of the presentation is available for \$8 (includes shipping) from Resurrection Tapes, 2719 E. 42nd, Minneapolis, MN 55406 or www.resevents.com.

Deacon Bill Brennan is a member of the National Service Committee and serves as liaison for the Charismatic Renewal in the Diocese of Stockton, California.



2002 SUMMER CONFERENCES

CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC CONFERENCE ON HEALING

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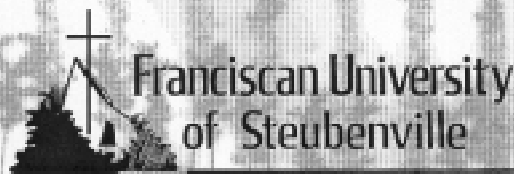
Many of us are burdened with spiritual or physical afflictions. Many of us desire to bring God's healing touch to others. In the name of Jesus Christ, we can pray for—and receive—the healing we humbly seek.

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Joining them will be Fr. Richard Ho Lung, MOP, founder of the Missionaries of the Poor and a Jamaican theater company, who will enact the life of Christ. Fr. Ho Lung will also receive the 2002 Poverello Medal, the University's highest honor, given to those who exemplify the Franciscan spirit of charity.

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Day of Prayer and Fasting

Friday, February 8

At the January 2001 meeting of national leadership groups in Alexandria, Louisiana, under the leadership of Bishop Sam Jacobs, Chairman of the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, it was decided to establish the Friday before Ash Wednesday, February 8, as a Day of Prayer and Fasting. (See *Pentecost Today*, April/May/June 2001, p.11.)

In light of the events of September 11, the Day of Prayer and Fasting takes on a special poignancy. The original purpose was to pray for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States and, more especially, for the church in the US, that it become inflamed with the fire of Pentecost.

By choosing one day to proclaim a fast we can strengthen the unity in the Renewal and communion in the church. Our fast acknowledges the "weaknesses of the past" and calls us forward in humility and "in hope" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 58).

NEWSBRIEFS

International colloquium on healing convenes in Rome

The Pontifical Council for the Laity in cooperation with the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS) convened an international colloquium entitled Prayer for Healing and the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church, November 10-13, at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Divine Love in Rome. About one hundred twenty participants from throughout the world gathered to discuss the experience of healing in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and in the church today.

Speakers included both church authorities and experts in certain fields (e.g. Scripture) as well as those from the Charismatic Renewal with experience in the healing ministry. There was a general affirmation of the importance of prayer for healing as a constituent part of the new evangelization, the proclamation of the Gospel, and of the loving care of God for his people.

The colloquium also discussed the Vatican document *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, issued last year by the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith. Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, the Secretary of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, was present to give a background to the document and an orientation to its doctrinal points and disciplinary norms.

The Instruction asserts in part that, "prayer for the restoration of health is...part of the church's experience in every age including our own...These healings are signs of his (Jesus') messianic mission...It is licit for every member of the faithful to pray to God

for healing." Archbishop Bertone stated unequivocally that one of the reasons for the Instruction was to counter a certain rationalization affecting some Catholic communities, leading to a neglect of prayer for healing and visiting the sick. Such rationalizing has removed the possibility of God's intervention in human life by healing of illness through prayer and the intercession of the saints and Mary.

The colloquium was led by Cardinal James Francis Stafford, the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Eleven bishops and over thirty priests were present. Twenty of the participants were from the US, including Bishop Sam Jacobs of Alexandria, Louisiana, Chairman of the US Bishops' Committee on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and Walter Matthews, Executive Director of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

In brief:

The *Comité Nacional de Servicio Hispano* (CNSH, the Hispanic NSC in the US) held its second national conference in late October in Chicago. Two thousand people attended. The CNSH will convene a conference within the 2002 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in Pittsburgh, September 13-15.

In late September the Association of Diocesan Liaisons convened their annual theological symposium in Albuquerque. "The Renewal at 35—Bridging Memory and Vision" addressed aspects of the Renewal including the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John, healing the roots of religious culture, and reclaiming the prophetic dimension of the Renewal. ♦

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Due in part to the economic downturn last year and compounded by the events of September 11 (which prompted an outpouring of generosity to those working directly with victims and families of the terrorist attacks) donations to the National Service Committee were significantly down from last year. As of this writing, income was \$100,000 below expenses.

This shortfall depleted the Service Committee's cash reserves, and we have been living month to month.

In late November we launched a new initiative called Fanning the Flame Partners to help motivate our higher-end donors to give more generously. The results of this effort will not be known until after the first of the new year.

If you have not been asked and you can make a pledge of \$300, \$500 or \$1000 a year or more for five years, we would like to hear from you.

However, **even with this effort, we need everyone's support.** If the readers of *Pentecost Today* each send \$10, \$15 or \$25 and, if prayer groups across the country could take up a collection and send \$50, \$100 or more, we could close the gap resulting from the economic downturn.

We need your help. We beg for it.

Here is what one of our top donors wrote to us recently:

Several years ago we felt that the Holy Spirit was asking us to re-prioritize our charitable giving and to direct a much larger portion of our tithe to support the work of the National Service Committee. We are deeply grateful for the blessing of charismatic renewal for our own lives and appreciate the dedication of the NSC in fostering this gift in the Catholic Church.

If you share a common vision with the NSC for spiritual renewal in the church, we challenge you to prayer fully consider how you can increase your financial support so this important work of the Holy Spirit can continue.

Thank you for your support.



New Life in the Spirit Seminars
Catholic Edition 2000

Faith-sharing, sponsors and small groups in the *New Life in the Spirit Seminars*

The *New Life in the Spirit Seminars: Catholic Edition 2000* is grounded in the gospel message and God's ongoing invitation to receive the Spirit. Teachings about the Christian life and the sacraments of initiation build on this invitation, but the real power to accept God in new ways often hinges on the team's ability to share their faith and to offer personal examples of God's presence. Jan's conversion at a Marian shrine, Connie's healing at a prayer meeting, or John's baptism in the Spirit while reading Psalm 23 are effective because we know Jan, we see Connie every week, and we admire John's ability to listen. Their lives become prophetic.

Faith-sharing is an important tool, a prism for God's presence. As Sr. Nancy Keller and Sr. Justin Wirth write in *Faith Sharing in Small Groups*, faith-sharing can be defined as "telling another person how God is working in my life, what a Scripture passage means to me, how God has answered prayer or taught me a spiritual truth." Faith-sharing demonstrates practical applications of the gospel without emphasis on personal conclusions. Faith-sharing is like connective tissue, or glue, that links our daily lives and the actions of God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit awakens faith as we talk about God's activity among us. Faith-sharing gives ordinary people hope about God's loving touch in everyday life.

The seminar provides three deliberate opportunities for faith-sharing: the witnesses given after each talk, a participant's one-to-one relationship with a sponsor, and the weekly small sharing groups. The weekly witnesses are an opportunity for the whole group to hear about the long-term effects of God's intervention in a person's life. The relationship with a sponsor provides for one-to-one faith-sharing on a more intimate basis.

Historically, the 1979 edition of the seminar talked about greeters (sponsors) as bridges between the prayer group and the participants. The new manual stresses the idea of sponsors as friends and spiritual companions on the journey of faith (see pages 25-28). The word sponsor comes from the church's experience with the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist). The sponsor accompanies a person during

his or her sacramental preparations. In much the same way, when a person completes the missing pieces of their spiritual formation through the *Life in the Spirit Seminars* they often need a guide to help them explore and describe ways that God can work in daily life.

The sponsor's role is one of the keys to effective evangelization and spiritual growth. A sponsor offers support and encourages sharing as a participant explores his or her response to the gospel message. Some of this happens naturally in the small groups, through informal conversations and through phone calls. The sponsor is not a personal counselor, teacher, or even a spiritual director; but a listening friend. All that is required is a confidence in God's presence and a willingness to affirm the participant's religious experiences. Sponsoring is almost like being a personal guide on a treasure hunt who has a bit more experience in spotting God's hand in daily life. Advice is not usually helpful, just encouragement. The sponsor can also offer individual, spontaneous prayer as a natural outcome of faith-sharing. Prayer leads Christians "little by little to acquire a contemplative view of reality, enabling them to recognize God in every moment and in every thing; to contemplate God in every person; to seek his will in all that happens" (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, n. 79).

The third setting for faith-sharing is the small group. This weekly gathering provides an introduction to the church as a large community made up of small communities. Pope John Paul II emphasizes this vision of church in his exhortation, *Ecclesia in America*. He says: "It seems timely therefore to form ecclesial communities and groups of a size that allow for true human relationships. This will make it possible to live communion more intensely... In such a human context it will be easier to gather to hear the word of God, to reflect on the range of human problems in the light of this word and gradually to make responsible decisions inspired by the all-embracing love of Christ" (n. 41). For practical ways to promote faith-sharing—rather than discussion—in small groups, see *Faith Sharing in Small Groups*. It also goes without saying that a good experience with a small group will awaken the desire to participate in a wide variety of large and small community gatherings after the seminar. ♦

The New Life in the Spirit Seminars Team Manual: Catholic Edition 2000 sells at \$9.95.

A bulk discount of 30% is available for purchase of five copies or more (shipping and handling extra). For more information, call Chariscenter USA at 1-800-338-2445.

Newly Revised Booklet! ***Faith Sharing in Small Groups: The Vision and the Tools***, is available for \$4.95 (a 20% discount until March 31; \$5.95 thereafter) through Chariscenter USA plus shipping and handling.

Storm from p. 3

Third, read the fifth chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians. There we read, "All of you are people who belong to the light...we do not belong to the night or to the darkness...encourage one another and help one another..."

This was true in Houston. It has been true in New York City and in the Washington, D.C. area. May it continue to be true throughout our world.

Fourth, intercede for our nation and for our leaders. I find the prayer for the 50th Anniversary of the National Day of Prayer—written by the Rev. Billy Graham prior to the events of September 11—prophetic and challenging. (See side bar on page 3.)

Finally, let us seize this moment. There is a hunger in the land for God in a way that there has not been for years. Men and

women are searching for answers. We have the answer in Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life, and we have a key to opening and deepening a personal relationship to Jesus Christ in the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit. The fire within is not just for ourselves or for those who are in our circle, our family or our prayer group.

The theme of the 2001 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference was *The New Springtime: Do You Not Perceive It?* In the rains that nearly flooded us out, we saw signs of God's powerful action. In the ashes of the World Trade Center, the damage of the Pentagon and the disintegrated plane crashed in the field in Pennsylvania, we are challenged to see more deeply. We are saddened at the terrible loss and angered by the madness of such acts, but as Christians, we hear the voice of our Lord challenging us to repentance and to witness.

As Deacon Bill Brennan proclaimed in Houston, "It is the lived experience of the Holy Spirit, alive and burning like fire within us" that will enable us "to do what Jesus does."

And then, maybe then, the dream of Cardinal Dias will come true:

...that the church in this nation, which is so vibrant and so blessed by God in so many ways, will respond generously to God's universal call to holiness...and that (we) will enter into a new Pentecost in the United States of America, and will make it a light to the nations and the glory of God's holy people. God bless America! ♦

Walter Matthews is the Executive Director of the National Service Committee.

Perceive from p. 6

not pronounce well but which I understand well, maybe the shortest word in English when pronounced: the word is *awe*.

I was very much impressed by the account left by one of the students present at the Duquesne weekend back in 1967: "Fear of the Lord welled up within us; a fearful awe kept us from looking up. He was personally present and we feared being loved too much... This holy fear was somehow the same as love." St. Gregory of Nyssa calls this "the awareness of a presence." In those early days, this awareness filled the meetings, the prayers, the songs, everything. "The Lord is present in his sanctuary, let us praise the Lord. The Lord is present in his people gathered here, let us rejoice in the Lord." We could feel that the Lord was really there; what we sang was what we experienced.

Will we be able to renew the miracle? Or will God have to raise up new people, new currents with the same kind of charism, new "waves" of the Spirit? Remember the words of Jesus, "If these keep silent the stones will cry out" (Lk. 19:40).

The greatest danger is for us to become accustomed to God, to fall from awe into rou-

tine. The special contribution of the Charismatic Renewal in view of the new springtime could well be in this field: keeping alive the wonder of a sense of being in the presence of

We cannot rely on our past charismatic expertise, on our own enthusiasm or willingness. We need a real, not an artificial, springtime.

God and his manifestations (in the sacraments, the charisms, the lives of persons). It is a prophetic contribution. What was the main task of the prophets in Israel, if not this one? They obliged the people to live amidst "a devouring fire and everlasting flames" (Is. 33:14). Their favorite exclamation was, "Behold!" John the Baptist, the greatest of prophets, would exclaim, "Behold, the Lamb of God... among you stands someone you do not know" (Jn. 1:26, 29). The same exclamation should resound every time we get up to speak.

Where shall we find the resources to achieve this task? To whom shall we go for strength? We cannot rely on our past charismatic expertise, on our own enthusiasm or willingness. We need a real, not an artificial, springtime. Faith is the answer—expectant faith.

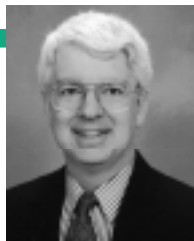
Marveling is the mother of faith and her daughter at the same time; she generates faith and is generated by faith. We can pray with Psalm 119:18, "Open my eyes so that I can see the marvels of your law." Open our eyes so that we can see the marvel of marvels, your Son Jesus Christ!

Sociologists speak of the "nascent state"—the moment of birthing. This is the magic moment when a relationship first appears and blossoms, as in a new social grouping, an institution, a religious order, a love between two persons. It is usually the moment of greatest strength, novelty, hope, joy, charm. Pentecost was the church in its nascent state! The Charismatic Renewal has had its nascent state and many among us remember it. But then we remember the words of Isaiah, "Do not remember the former things..." Our hope is that in faith there is room for a *new* nascent state, a new budding, a state always newly emerging, a reawakening of faith. "Is there anything impossible to God?" ♦

Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa is preacher to the papal household.

From the Director

by Walter Matthews



Working—and praying—for the new springtime

Although the 2001 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference was disrupted by the forces of nature (as described elsewhere in this issue) and, as a result, the Conference was shortened, it was nonetheless powerful and challenging.

In his remarks Cardinal Dias of Mumbai (Bombay), who had come to Houston specifically to experience for the first time the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the US, told us of his experience before the tomb of Pope John XXIII prior to his coming. When he prayed for us he said he heard the Lord tell him to tell us that there is a new springtime in the US and that we, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, are its first fruits. Praise God.

As those who are more seasonally knowledgeable than I know, springtime is a time of planting and, as Sr. Nancy Kellar is fond of reminding us, of harvesting the winter wheat. Amidst the difficulties of the economy even before September 11 and certainly since, the National Service Committee with its Council is hard at work planting and harvesting.

At the NSC's recent meeting with the NSC Council, working groups were formed in six areas. We firmly believe that now is not the time to hold back, to rest or to hide, but rather a time to "put out into the deep" as our Holy Father has encouraged us.

The working groups were and are more than discussion groups or advisory groups. The working groups will continue to operate between meetings to foster a number of areas following

the mission of the NSC "to strengthen the Catholic Charismatic Renewal."

The six areas are:

- ◆ future National Conferences
- ◆ praise and worship
- ◆ leadership initiative
- ◆ intercessory network
- ◆ healing and deliverance
- ◆ prayer group restoration.

Each working group was led by a NSC Council member with a National Service Committee member as a link to the NSC as a whole. Each group was tasked to define the need in the area chosen, assess the available resources of people, existing programs and money, and project how we, the NSC and NSC Council, might respond.

**"It is fatal to forget that 'without Christ we can do nothing.'"
Pope John Paul II**

Each working group then reported to the whole body, received input and questions of clarification, and was then tasked to refine the need. The results are under review by the National Service Committee, but a great amount of energy, enthusiasm and a sense of direction emerged. In future issues we will give more background to each group and discuss the plans that have been proposed.

I do, however, want to highlight one area, and that is the formation of an Intercessory Network. While such networks exist in some dioceses and for some ministries, we have never attempted to draw folks into such a network on a national level. We would all agree that prayer is a necessity. As Pope John Paul II

states in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "It is important...that what we propose, with the help of God, should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer" (n. 15). He further states:

If in the planning that awaits us we commit ourselves more confidently to a pastoral activity that gives personal and communal prayer its proper place, we shall be observing an essential principle of the Christian view of life: *the primacy of grace*.

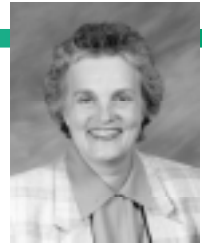
There is a temptation which perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with his grace, and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the kingdom. But it is fatal to forget that "without Christ we can do nothing" (n. 38).

If we are to "put out into the deep," we should be covered with prayer. Intercessors who would want to be part of such a network should write to our office by mail or e-mail. Finally, while in this issue of *Pentecost Today* we reflect on the Lord's actions and words to us in Houston last June, we are already in the midst of planning for the 2002 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference. We will gather in Pittsburgh September 13-15 with the theme *Go Forth in the Spirit! Charismatic Renewal Jubilee 35*. We look forward to seeing you there as we continue to put out into the deep for a catch and foster a new springtime in the church. ◆

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Walter Matthews". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'W'.

Ministry Update

by Aggie Neck



Renewal in the midst of tragedy

In the span of a four-month period, our faith has been tested, and as I see it, it has come forth like gold purified in the fire, like silver in the crucible. It is in difficult times we prove that we believe what we say. This issue's column will take a look at how the Charismatic Renewal, its leadership, and its people were there for each other and for others.

National Conference, Houston, June 8-10, 2001

It started off like any other conference—people gathering to hear teachings, to praise God and to enjoy the fellowship of other brothers and sisters in the Renewal. As we all left the convention center on Friday night, it was raining very hard. We laughed as we scurried to our cars. Little did we know what the next day would bring!

The relentless rain flooded buildings in the downtown area as well as homes and highways. Electricity was off in many areas. We learned that many people had lost their homes, and some had lost their lives.

What happened that morning was a moment of grace. People gathered in the convention center, in hotels and in homes where they were stranded and isolated. We began to praise the Lord for his sovereign majesty and prayed for the city of Houston and its people. We prayed for God's mercy and assistance. It was as if we shifted into emergency mode and knew that prayer was the answer. God led the way through many people working under an anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The conference did continue in a modified form that afternoon and the next morning. However, the real miracle of it all was seeing the people of God undaunted in their joy, their praise and their ability to function in the midst of difficult times. For me, it was a

moment of "holy pride" in the Renewal and the people of God.

Reflections

These reflections are from the evaluations submitted at the National Conference in Houston.

"This Conference signified a strengthening of leadership within the Charismatic Renewal. It was a demonstration of a faith-filled people and time, and it tested the Charismatic Renewal in the United States as pastored by the NSC."

"We must not forget the messages we learned from God to enable us to clarify our vision—not only asking God to bless our plans, but being willing to be part of God's plan, to stretch ourselves to the point of risk."

New York, September 11th

The following was written by Josephine Cachia, a member of the National Service Committee from Brooklyn. She entitles it "Loving Comfort."

This experience is beyond process. Only God in his mercy can fully absorb this horrible event. Looking back to the Regional Leaders' Gathering sponsored by the National Service Committee on the weekend of September 7-9th at Bishop Molloy's Retreat House in Queens, New York, I feel privileged to have served as the coordinator for the event. We were lifted up in prayer, praise and worship. We were inspired with good, solid teachings

and blessed with sincere and loving fellowship. I believe it was a key event to prepare us for what was going to happen.

While driving to work at the Charismatic Renewal Office on Tuesday, September 11th, I was reflecting on the great weekend experience when I noticed the sky filling with smoke. I turned on the radio and the rest is history.

Our office is just a few blocks away from both the Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges and just across the street from St. James Cathedral Basilica. As people were coming away from the World Trade Center area, they walked over the bridges and passed our way. Some made their way into the church to pray, while others were in a hurry to get home. We were able to minister in the street, forming prayer circles for those still in harm's way, hugging those who were frightened and in apparent shock. People came streaming into the office to use the phone to call family members.

It was a heart-breaking day and we are still in shock. So many lives changed in an instant on that tragic day. May God and his faithful people continue to comfort and support all those who are suffering the effects of this terrible tragedy.

"Our soul waits for the Lord,
who is our help and
our shield,
For in him our hearts rejoice;
in his holy name we trust.
May your kindness, O Lord,
be upon us
who have put our hope in you."
Psalm 33:20-22



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and others

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