

Publication of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

PENTECOST *Today*

January/February/March 2005

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



Chairman's
Corner

by Aggie Neck

Our true wealth

THE YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST!

What a gift this will be for the Church from John Paul II our beloved Pope. He seems to know what we need, exactly when we need it. In these times when there are those who question the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, this year will offer the opportunity for Bishops, priests and the laity to profess with faith that indeed, Jesus is truly present among us in the Eucharist.

“In the sign of the consecrated Bread and Wine, Christ Jesus risen and glorified, the light of the nations (Lk.2:32) reveals the enduring reality of his Incarnation. **He remains living and real in our midst in order to nourish the faithful with his Body and Blood.**” (*Mystery of the Incarnation*- Par.11).

“Let me solemnly assure you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day” (Jn. 6:53, 55-56).

There is a growing awareness that Jesus is truly present in this Sacrament. Eucharistic processions are becoming more common and frequent at Catholic gatherings. Adoration chapels have increased in number and those who frequent them have also increased. They have become places of peace and prayer as many come to spend time with the “Living Presence” of Jesus among us.

I personally have witnessed the response from the people of God in different settings, and have been touched by what I have seen when the Eucharist is processed among us.

◆ Youth Conferences – young people fall into their knees in adoration.

◆ Charismatic Conferences:

New Orleans – Healing Service on Sunday with many confirmed healings as people reach out to touch Jesus in the Eucharist.

Guatemala – ECCLA - a response of joy and jubilation as well as a deep devotion reaching out to touch his presence.

National Conference in Lowell – When the Eucharist was processed in powerful worship followed.

◆ Benediction processions and the reverence that is evident.

“The Eucharist is more than simply the culmination of Christian initiation. While Baptism and Confirmation serve as a beginning and introduction to the life of the Church and cannot be repeated, the Eucharist is the living and lasting center around which the entire community of the Church gathers. The various aspects of the Eucharist reveal its inexhaustible wealth: it is at one and the same time a sacrament of sacrifice, communion and presence” (*Ecclesia in America*, Par. 35).

“... There is no distance between those who are united in the same communion, the communion which is daily nourishment at the table of the Eucharistic Bread and the Word of Life. Every Sunday, the risen Christ asks us to meet him as it were once more in the upper room where, on the evening of ‘the first day of the week’ (Jn 20:19) he appeared to his disciples in order to breathe on them his life-giving Spirit and launch them on the great adventure of proclaiming the Gospel” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Par.58).

Let us ask the Lord to lead us in this Year of the Eucharist into a greater and greater awareness of the awesome, glorious gift we have been given. Let the Eucharist be our “food for the journey” as we live to proclaim the Gospel. ◆

Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee.

PENTECOST Today

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For Your Information

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Leading worship

Steps for improvement

For over sixteen years Nick Alexander has been immersed in the dynamics of charismatic prayer groups. He has seen all sorts of music-leading: good, bad, and ugly. Nick has seen it done with a full dynamic worship team and a cappella with a tape player. Regardless of where your group is at, Nick would like to share ten simple steps to assist worship leaders in improving their worship leading skills. Below are four steps from his article entitled “Ten Steps to Better Worship Leading.” The complete article can be downloaded from www.nsc-chariscenter.org or you may ask for a copy from Chariscenter USA.

Live a holy life

If you are leading worship, you are, whether you like it or not, on full display. You have become a model Christian. You have all the more incentive to run the race, so that you could not be stumbling block for others. Believe me, when you're on fire for God, it shows in your music. If you have studied the scriptures, tithed, prayed for anointing, loved others, and made sure that

your lifestyle changes are in accordance with Scripture-living, it will show. If you received Communion on the day of your performance it will show. If you are lacking in any area—and who isn't—then resolve to better yourself, go to confession, and take steps to remedy the situation.

Become open to the Holy Spirit

Far too often, I've noticed that many worship teams lead music like it's the radio show “America's Top 40.” They go into songs with no rhyme or reason, no understanding of flow. The purpose of the flow is to allow a person to shake off the dust of the concerns of the day. It allows someone to slow down and enter into the presence of God. A general approach for this to happen is to start off with fast and fun songs, and slow it down over the time allotted; allowing extended strumming times to occur between songs. When the song is slowed enough it allows an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to minister to people in the audience individually, whether through tongues, prophecies, laughter, or his quiet presence.

See **Worship** page 13

**The
Holy Father's
2004
Eve of Pentecost
Message**



Spread the spirituality of Pentecost

by Bishop Sam Jacobs

Over the past thirty-seven years Pope Paul VI and John Paul II have on numerous occasions encouragingly addressed the members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement. Addressing the church in one of his most recent statements the Holy Father had this to say:

“Thanks to the Charismatic Movement, many Christians, men and women, youths and adults, have re-discovered Pentecost as a living and present reality in their daily life. I desire that the spirituality of Pentecost be spread in the church, as a renewed thrust of prayer, holiness, communion and proclamation” (May 29, 2004).

Notice he did not say the “spirituality of the Charismatic Movement” but the **“spirituality of Pentecost,” which is the spirituality of the whole Church.** The Church is charismatic by its very nature, as well as hierarchical. The Pope sees that the Charismatic Movement has been raised up by the Lord to help bring into clarity of understanding and into lived experience full life in the Spirit. This full life in the Spirit is the reason why we

were baptized and confirmed. The revealed vision of God is that we, like so many in the scriptures, be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that led by the Spirit we may do the work of the kingdom of God.

The quoted words of our Holy Father continue to reiterate his prophetic message to the world “At the Beginning of the New Millennium.” In that exhortation John Paul II focused his and our attention on a number of areas: holi-



ness, prayer, Eucharist, Reconciliation, primacy of grace, listening to the Word of God, proclaiming the Word of God, communion, and love. It is this last word, **love**, which is the connecting thread.

I would like to share some reflections on what I think the Holy Father desires not only of us, who have experienced in a fresh new way the Grace of Pentecost or, in the words of the Pope, who “have rediscovered Pentecost as a living and present reality in (our) daily life,” but of the whole church as well.

Prayer. We are called to develop an unceasing spirit of prayer as well as to pray with greater expansion and greater intensity. Our prayer is to be expressive of praise, adoration, thanksgiving, repentance, intercession, whether in prayer of tongues or in our own language, whether personal or communal. The focus of our prayer is the Lord God, into whose awesome presence we desire to come, uniting ourselves with the heavenly worship of the angels and saints. In the words of Jesus, we are called to worship in spirit and truth. This is the highest form of prayer: worship, where words are in-

adequate and being before, for, and in the Lord God is enough. For this prayer life to be effective and fruitful, it must be motivated by true love of God.

Holiness. St. Paul reminds us in his writings that it is God’s will that we be holy. The call to holiness is primarily a call to be and secondarily a call to do. Most people think that if they do “holy things,” they will become holy. The truth of the matter is that if we reflect the mind of God we will do that which reflects the holiness of God. Holiness is “putting on the mind of Christ,” which is an attitude of the heart first that then flows into specific actions. Holiness has a twofold thrust: purification and transformation. Because of our relationship with Jesus we desire to put away sin (purification) and to live as a son or daughter of the Father in light of the Gospel (transformation). Like prayer, there is no holiness of life that is not based on true love of God.

Communion. Our ultimate fulfillment in life is union with God, which includes union with one another. How can we be one with God, if we are not one with each other? This com-

munion was the prayer of Jesus at the end of the Last Supper (Jn 17). This too was one of the ways the early Church nurtured its members through the formation of small communities. Sharing life, prayer and values, while supporting and holding each other accountable in love is the spirituality of communion the Holy Father sees as integral to the Gospel message. Communion is at the heart of family life and church life. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that at the height of the early church life was the lived decision to be of one mind and heart. Our celebration of Eucharist is to be the apex of this communion as the Body of Christ. Like prayer and holiness, communion happens when we put into practice the admonition of St. Paul: “Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another” (Rom 13:8).

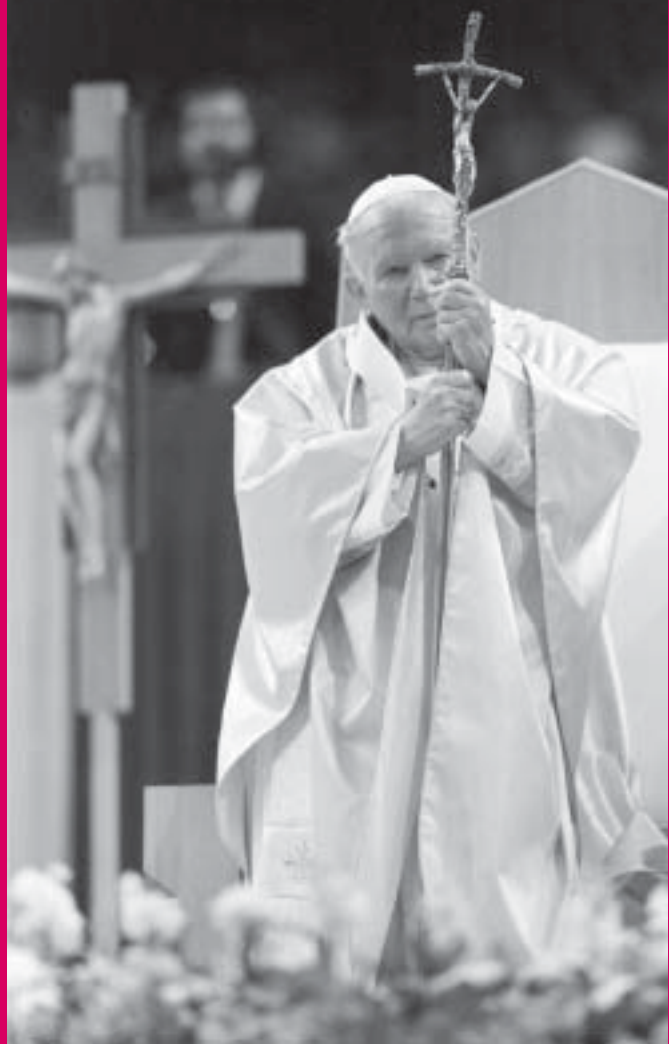
Proclamation. The final command of Jesus to the Apostles is still the command he gives each of us. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Mt 28:19-20). To be witnesses, who evange-

lize in the power of the Spirit, proclaiming the truth of the Gospel to others is the responsibility of each baptized and confirmed believer in Jesus Christ. The saving Word of God that we hear is to be lived within and then shared with others. Not to share would be like conceiving and never giving birth. Eventually what was conceived will die within if there is no birth. Like prayer, holiness and communion, our proclamation is to be done in and out of genuine love of God and one another.

Heeding the exhortation of Pope John Paul II, may each of us “rediscover Pentecost as a living and present reality in (our) daily life.” For the words of our Holy Father spoken on the eve of Pentecost are applicable to all who profess faith in Jesus Christ and who seek to do the will of God. ♦



Bishop Sam Jacobs, former chairman of the National Service Committee, is Bishop of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana and serves on the US Bishops Ad Hoc Committee on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.



What the Pope's message means to the Charismatic Renewal

by Aggie Neck

The Pope presided over vespers in St. Peter's Square on Saturday, attended by 15,000 pilgrims. He had called the event to witness to the variety of charisms—gifts or graces by God to people for the good of others in the Church” (Zenit.org - May 30, 2004).

John Paul II issued a special invitation to members of Renewal in the Spirit (Italian Renewal), confirming a continued expression of his support of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. This gathering at Pentecost only

confirmed what has been stated by two Popes through the years. Over and over again they expressed words of encouragement and affirmation. May 1975: “How then could this ‘spiritual renewal’ be other than a blessing for the Church

and for the world? And, in this case, how could we fail to take all means in order that it may remain so?” (Paul VI) June 2001: For this is what the saints are: people who have fallen in love with Christ. And this is why the Charismatic Renewal has been such a gift to the Church: it has led a host of men and women, young and old, into this experience of love which is stronger than death” (John Paul II).

Highlights of the Pope's message at this Pentecost vigil bring hope and inspiration to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal as well as affirmation and mission. Here are some of the key phrases:

“I energetically repeat what I said on that occasion” (1998 gathering).

“The ecclesial movements and new communities are a providential answer, inspired by the Holy Spirit given the present need of new evangelization.”

“This evangelization needs mature Christian personalities and strong Christian communities.”

“I desire that the spirituality of Pentecost be spread in the Church as a renewed thrust of prayer, holiness, communion and proclamation.”

“Conformed by the Spirit in Christ, (the) new man, believers become his witnesses, sowers of hope, agents of mercy and peace.”

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is given for the renewing of the church and the world. It begins with the renewal of individual believers. It brings the grace and power to live the Gospel message with conviction, courage and boldness. The Pope has expressed a desire to see the spirituality of Pentecost spread in the Church. This is an affirmation of the

We have been commissioned by him to be intercessors, evangelists, proclaimers and to become mature Christian personalities.

work of the Renewal. This is the task of the Renewal. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this past century has brought about many changes that are positive.

◆ There has been a renewed interest and devotion to Sacred Scripture.

◆ The Lordship of Jesus has become a priority and a reality.

◆ Prayer has taken on a deeper meaning and a spontaneity.

◆ Music from the Renewal has enhanced our Liturgy.

◆ Praying for healing is more available in groups and Masses.

◆ More people are seeking to know the will of God for their lives.

◆ Proclaiming the Kingdom, the Gospel message, has become urgent.

Those of us in the Renewal have been given a vision and a mission. One way of articulating it is: To renew the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the Church, and to broaden and deepen the understanding that baptism in the Holy Spirit is the Christian inheritance of all.

The affirmation of the “current grace” urges us on with a zeal for the “gift of God.” This gift we have been given is meant to be shared. We have a treasure in earthen vessels, given by our Father in heaven and manifested through the Son, Jesus the Christ. “Exalted at God’s right hand, he (Jesus) first received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, then poured this Spirit out on us” (Acts 2:33). We have the words of Jesus: “The gift

you have received, give as a gift” (Matt.10:8).

The Pope speaks of a mission for us: “New evangelization, which needs mature Christian personalities and strong Christian communities.” He has challenged us before: “There is a need for witnesses to ‘things of above,’ contemplated and lived out in everyday existence. This commits that the groups and communities of the Renewal be ever more places of contemplation and praise, where the heart of man is filled with the love of God, opens up to the love towards his brother and becomes capable of **building history according to God’s design**” (2001).

Yes, the challenge for us, as believers is to become God’s witnesses. The message of hope is ever ready on our lips because it is ever present in our hearts and minds. The parable of the silver pieces shows us very clearly what God does expect. He does not want us to bury what we have been given, but to multiply it (Matt.25:14-30). How do we do this? The Pope gives us an insight. We are to become sowers of hope. The whole of humanity needs those who sow hope. *It must be us.* The Renewal has the words of hope. We have experienced hope and walked in hope. We can witness to hope! He goes on to say we are to be “agents of mercy and peace.” An agent is something or someone that produces an effect. Let us speak of God’s mercy and show his mercy. Let us bring peace into our families, our churches, and our communities until it overflows into the whole world.

We have been given a mission by our Holy Father, a mission to be what God has gifted us to be. We have been com-

Prayer Card



Pray for the renewing of the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the Church.

*“Because of His mercy,
He saved us through
the bath of rebirth,
and renewal by the Holy
Spirit, whom He richly
poured out on us
through Jesus Christ
our Savior.”*

Titus 3:5-6

missioned by him to be intercessors, evangelists, proclaimers and to become mature Christian personalities. There is so much more to do. We must put out into the deep again and again. Lower the nets over and over until we bring in the harvest that the Lord desires. In the Pope’s own words, “Thanks to the charismatic movement, many Christians, men and women, youths and adults, have rediscovered Pentecost as a living and present reality in their daily lives.”

“A journey has begun for each one of you. ... **Do not interrupt the journey undertaken!** Trust: Christ will complete the work which he himself began” (John Paul II, May 2000). ◆

Aggie Neck is chairman of the National Service Committee.

Suggested Prayer intentions:

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

- ◆ For God's love and unity at the Gathering of Leadership Groups for Catholic Charismatic Renewal on January 17-19.
- ◆ For preparations for the Cenacle... scheduled for Pentecost weekend in Miami, and for all other Pentecost activities throughout North, Central and South America.
- ◆ For the scheduling of upcoming Regional Leaders Gatherings.
- ◆ For strength, wisdom and the grace of perseverance for all those who are serving Charismatic Renewal in prayer groups, communities and parishes.
- ◆ For many more young people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and for experienced people to be faithful in mentoring the young in the charisms.

Paul's Letter to the Romans A Bible Study

This Scripture Study allows the Holy Spirit to teach and transform the lives of those who examine and reflect on this powerful book of the Bible.

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Intercessory Prayer

by Virginia King

In a committee that I serve on, there is a man who developed an allergy to dairy products. It was so severe that if he even had a trace of milk or cheese, he would have an asthma attack. He had many emergency trips to the hospital as a result.

All the members of the committee were very concerned about him and we decided to each select one day of the week when we would fast from all dairy products ourselves, as a way of interceding for this man. It was difficult for me to avoid dairy just one day a week. I realized how much more difficult for him to avoid it all the time. This intensified my prayers for him.

Eventually, through prayer and treatment, he overcame this allergy. Praise the Lord!

I ask for your intercession for the fulfillment of the vision of the NSC—"Renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the Church." Please consider some kind of fast or sacrifice that you might make for this intention. Thank you for your prayers. ◆

National Conference Audio/Videotapes/CDs

The main talks, homilies and witnesses from the 2004 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference are available.

For more information and for a complete list of available audiotapes or CDs/DVDs contact:

For Audiotapes:

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For CDs/DVDs:

George Willett
292 Franklin Street
Braintree, MA 02184
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Burning Bush Initiative

At the Pentecost Vespers last year Pope John Paul II encouraged "the initiative known as 'Burning Bush,' promoted by Renewal in the Spirit. This involves perpetual adoration, day and night, before the Blessed Sacrament; it is an invitation to the faithful to 'return to the Upper Room,' so that, united in contemplation of the Eucharistic Mystery, they may intercede for full Christian unity and the conversion of sinners. I warmly hope that this initiative will lead many to rediscover the gifts of the Spirit whose original source is in Pentecost."

The National Service Committee encourages the Charismatic Renewal in the U.S. to learn more about the Burning Bush Initiative as promoted by the Italian Charismatic Renewal and encouraged by our Holy Father.

Kim Kollins, an American living in Germany and serving in the Renewal there and throughout Europe, was instrumental in birthing the Burning Bush Initiative. She spoke at the 2004 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference and a tape/CD of her talk is available (see page 8). She has also written a small booklet giving the background to the initiative. *Burning Bush: A Return to the Upper Room in Adoration and Intercession* is available from Chariscenter USA for \$10.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling. ◆

Priests' retreat support

We again encourage prayer groups and Renewal Centers to put the monies together to send priests and seminarians to the International Priests' Retreats in Monterey, Mexico (July 25-28) or Ars, France (September 25-October 1) or the Annual Priests' Conference in Steubenville, June 13-17. May the fire of Pentecost enliven all our priests and seminarians. ◆