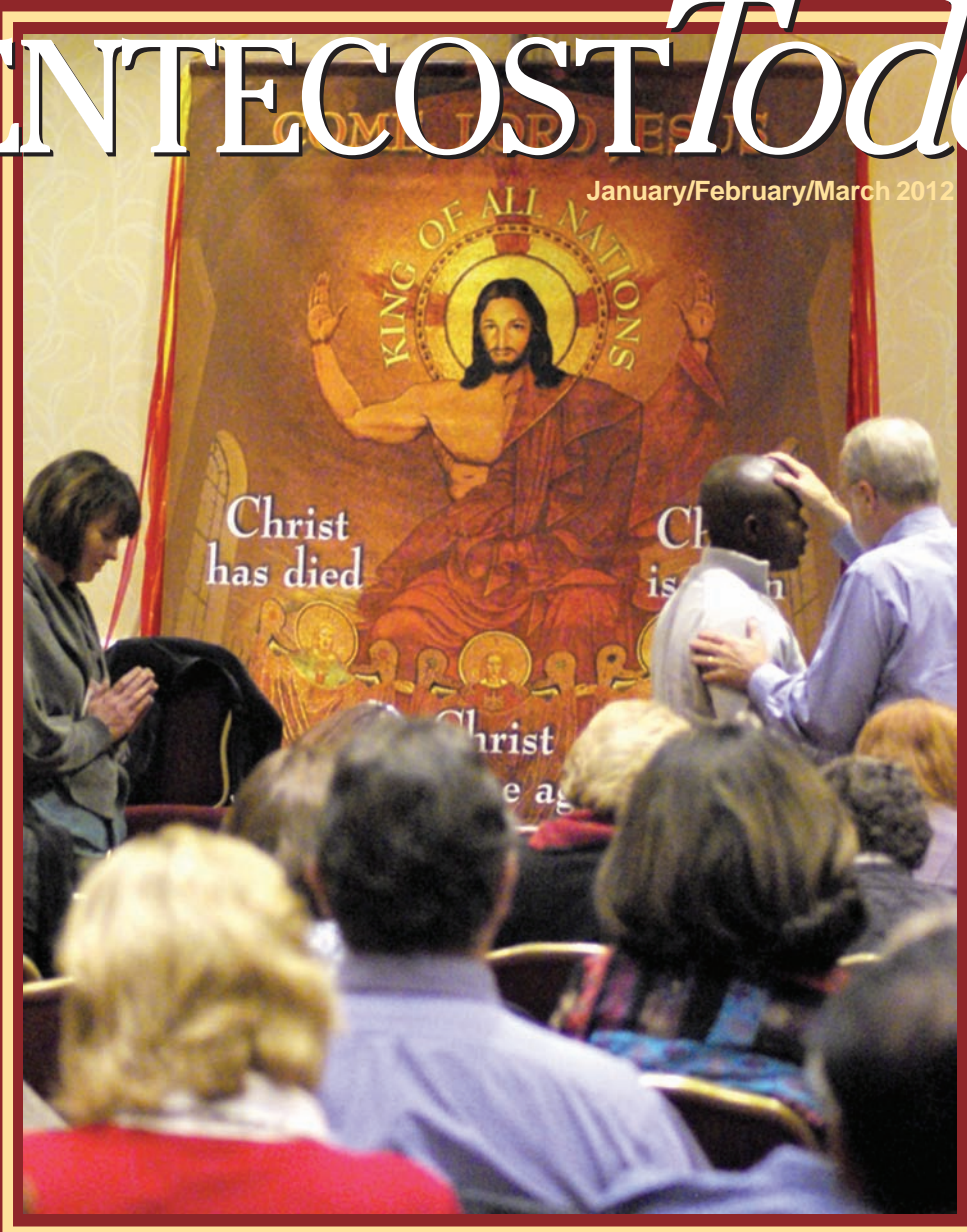


# PENTECOST *Today*

January/February/March 2012



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*New life in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.*



## Chairman's Corner

by Fr. Bob Hogan



## Standing on Holy Ground

I would like to share with you a few of the many insights and graces that moved me at our National Conference in Baltimore, “(We are) Standing on Holy Ground.” Ralph Martin said that our times require from us courage, clarity of mind and holiness to stand in the midst of the influences of evil. We need to be eager to live a life of holiness: Be people who do God’s will; being what he wants us to be; who resist his grace in nothing; but say “yes” to grace, and keep saying “yes,” to every invitation, inspiration and stirring by God! Ralph shared Pope John Paul II’s spiritual principles:

- The spiritual journey is totally dependant on the grace of God.
- Our effort is necessary, but insufficient.
- There are painful dimensions that can lead to purification and letting go.
- No journey is more worth making! (A spiritual marriage leading to fruitfulness.)

Neil Lozano helped us to understand that deliverance ministry is a way of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus and applying it in people’s lives. His “Five Keys for Being Unbound” give us a whole approach to receiving the gospel, being set free and transformed, and being empowered as a child of God. We can all use these in our daily lives and ministry:

- 1) Repentance and Faith,
- 2) Forgiveness,

- 3) Renunciation,
- 4) Using our Authority in Christ,
- 5) and The Father’s Blessing of our identity and purpose.

Charles Whitehead’s topic was “Sent Forth in Holiness.” He mentioned that Pope John Paul II said that all pastoral initiatives need to be set in relation to growth in holiness. We need to say “yes” to God’s grace. Grace is “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.” We say “yes” by not tolerating any practice that is not compatible with a holy God; by facing and addressing these practices; and by being very practical in seeking a pure walk, talk, thought and sight. Leaders need to realize that we are in a spiritual battle. We cannot compromise to make ourselves more acceptable, but we must speak and act in love and holiness. Charles concluded by saying that we should ask God where we are called and how to live holiness there.

As individuals, couples, and families, as well as prayer groups and communities, we need to regularly focus on growth in holiness. Let us help each other to discern God’s call in our lives and then pray for the graces of holiness and the empowerment of the charisms to live what God has called us to do. At times we give up too easily. Be faithful to your daily prayer time, seeking regularly God’s call for your life, and responding with obedient love. ♦

*Fr. Bob Hogan, BBD is Chairman of the National Service Committee.*



## Editor's Desk

by Sr. Martha Jean McGarry

*But, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, for it is written, “Be holy because I am holy.”*  
(1 Peter 1:15-16)

Our call to holiness—what does it mean to us? How does it shape our daily choices and dreams? In this issue several articles will draw our attention to our spiritual journey.

In continuing to explore the depths of the NSC Mission Statement **Chuck Hornsby** details on the role of the Holy Spirit in transforming our inner selves leading to personal holiness.

**(We Are) Standing on Holy Ground** was the theme of the National Leaders’ and Ministries’ Conference held in November. Highlights of this conference are shared by **Tammie Stevens** on pages 10–11. **Fr. Bob Hogan** adds his reflections in his chairman’s corner on page 2.

The charism of Invitation is a great tool in our ministry of evangelization. In her article on page 3 **Sister Magdalena Casas-Nava** encourages the use of this gift to build up relationships and the Church.

**Caroline Gambale-Dirkes** challenges us to offer opportunities for the whole family in our efforts to evangelize and nourish others in the love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Don’t miss her article that begins on page 6.

Raising up leaders for our prayer groups may be difficult at times. **Gary Whitlock**, in his article *Building Prayer Group Leadership—Small Style*, shares with us how one group responded to their leadership need. ♦

*Cover photo: Tammie Stevens*

# The Charism of Invitation

by Sister Magdalena Casas-Nava, DLJC

What is the charism of Invitation? We will begin with a simple definition: the charism of Invitation is a gift or anointing of the Holy Spirit to request from others their presence or participation in building up the Kingdom of God. As with any charism, its effectiveness goes beyond human ingenuity. Another trait of this charism is its eminent personal character. It usually appeals to the individual person for a particular mission.

*The invitation of Barnabas was the beginning of the ministry of the great Apostle to the Gentiles.*

A man or woman may have a natural ability for being welcoming, inviting, or persuasive; but an anointing of the Holy Spirit is manifested when a person is inspired by the Lord to invite another person for a particular purpose in the Kingdom of God.

How do we know if the inspiration comes from the Lord, or from a merely human sympathy, or from the devil? There is need for discernment here. We in the Renewal tend to attribute to the Lord any inspiration or idea that crosses our minds, and many times it could be true, but the discernment of the origin of any inspiration is not completed until further examination. Is it directed towards the building up of the Kingdom of God? Are its effects beyond human ingenuity? Sometimes we would not know these until we have acted upon the inspiration. Let us further comment on these criteria for discernment.

For an invitation to be directed towards the building up of the Kingdom of God it must be focused on growth in charity, the increase of the holiness of the Church, and/or a change in the world towards a more evangelical society. In other words, the invitation must be connected to evangelization by making Christ more present to the person, helping the person grow in his or her evangelistic effectiveness, or helping the person better live out the Gospel values in his everyday life.

The effects of the charism are the best means to assess the genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Most often this cannot be done before much time has elapsed, and the mustard seed has become a large shrub. The man who performed the original invitation may have not even been aware of the fact that it was the Holy Spirit at work in him. But when the effects are long-lasting, “a fruit that endures,” it is obvious that God empowered him. In the following scriptures we have some examples that help us illustrate this.

Saul, after his conversion from being a persecutor of the church, had great difficulty convincing fellow believers of his authenticity. It was not until Barnabas, presumably inspired by the Holy Spirit, went to Tarsus to find him and bring him to Antioch, where both taught the community for a year. (See Acts 11:25-26.) The invitation of Barnabas was the beginning of the ministry of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul became one of the most important people in spreading the Good News of Jesus in many places.

We can find in the Bible other stories of invitations directed towards the building up of the Kingdom, and which effects are long-lasting. Andrew invited his brother Simon to meet Jesus (Jn 1:41-42). Simon eventually became the first of an unbroken line of Popes. Philip sought Nathaniel and told him “We have found the Messiah... come and see” (Jn 1:45-46). Both eventually shed their blood for Christ. But the origin and greatest example of the charism of Invitation is the Lord himself who let the first disciples “find him,” and told them “come and see” (Jn 1:39).

The Lord was of course moved by the Holy Spirit in every single human act of his life—each one was directed towards the Kingdom of God, and their effects have been felt throughout history, even to our day and time. His explicit invitation to each person in the Gospel is a manifestation of the charism of Invitation. Those who accepted his invitation found their lives totally re-oriented towards

[See Invitation page 12](#)



# The role of the Holy Spirit — in transformation —

Inner transformation leading to personal holiness

by Chuck Hornsby

One phrase often heard in the early years of the Renewal said, “God loves us just as we are but he loves us too much to leave us there.” This phrase catches two important elements of the work of the Holy Spirit. The first element is the foundational truth of God’s unconditional love. The second element is that Love doesn’t simply accept, it also transforms. In this article we will examine the transforming role of the Holy Spirit and our role in the process of growing in holiness.

“Out of his infinite glory may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong.”

One of my favorite scriptures dealing with the Holy Spirit’s role in transformation comes from Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. He begins by saying, “Out of his infinite glory may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong.” Notice several things in this prayer. First, that the power source for transformation is unlimited. Secondly, that the Holy Spirit is the delivery agent for us to receive the power for transformation. Finally, that there is already something in us that is hidden that can be made strong.

Each of us is made in the likeness and image of God, but this image is hidden behind negatives that come as a result of the fall. Our fallen nature hides our real nature by the work of the world, the flesh and the devil. We receive the power from the Holy Spirit to overcome the obstacles that hinder us and to grow in the likeness of God to be all we have been created to be.

Paul’s prayer continues to give us insight into the nature of transformation. It indicates that as our hidden self grows strong, our faith increases and

we are more able to let Jesus take his rightful place in our hearts. We grow in our ability to both receive and give love. In other words, as our hidden self grows strong we become transformed by the Holy Spirit to be more and more like Jesus. The prayer concludes, “Glory be to him whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we could ask or imagine.”

Other scriptures say that we are God’s work of art and that God’s love for us is more important than our love for him. These all point to the primacy of God’s grace. Grace, faith and works are all important but it all starts with God reaching out to us with love through his Holy Spirit. As we receive that love through faith, we are empowered to make changes in our lives and live a life of holiness. If holiness is becoming more and more like Jesus, then what is our part in cooperating with this work of the Holy Spirit?

**The first thing we can do** to cooperate with our own transformation is to “get under the spout where the glory comes out.” Another way of saying that is to say that we need to make ourselves available to the means of grace. If grace is primary then doing whatever we can do to get more of it is our first work. For many of us being baptized in the Holy Spirit accelerated our spiritual transformation. Being part of a group that is involved in praise and worship and where the gifts of the Spirit are functioning imparts grace to us. A regular and thoughtful reception of the sacraments is efficacious and is essential for growth. Immersing ourselves in God’s word washes us with truth and grace. Studying the lives of the saints and Christian heroes of the past motivates us and models for us what holiness looks like. Sharing life with others who are seeking the way of holiness enriches and empowers our journey.

**S**erving others for the building up of the Church and the evangelization of the world is transformative for us as well as those we serve. Studying the Catechism, papal encyclicals, the documents of Vatican II, and other teachings of the Church forms our conscience and helps us make choices consistent with our real nature. Prayer rooted in our personal relationship with Jesus empowers us and keeps our spiritual growth rooted in our humanity rather than letting it become theoretical, formalistic, or self centered. It is not the idea of staying near the means of grace that transforms us. We must actually make choices and decisions that allow this to happen. Choosing to live a life of Christian simplicity in the use of our time and our money allows us stay near the means of grace. Using tools like setting priorities, budgeting, scheduling and making to-do lists help us live intentionally and makes room for us to cooperate with the means of grace.

**Another way of cooperating** with our own transformation is to embrace our vocation. The process of transformation and the life of holiness is lived within the context of our real way of life. One of the difficulties that lay people face is that most of the writings on holiness come from a monastic point of view. This results for some in a skewed vision of how they should be living if they want to be holy. Spiritual growth for a young mother may revolve more around learning how to pray while caring for a sick baby than how to establish a one hour prayer time. A husband's growth is often lived out in the context of "loving his wife as Christ loves the Church." To cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the work of transformation is to fully embrace the gifts and challenges that come from our particular vocations.

If becoming more like Jesus is the goal of transformation and the definition of holiness, then working to overcome the obstacles that block us is part of our

We also may need to forgive ourselves for the problems our younger self has caused and is still causing us.

role in our own restoration. These obstacles are often described in various ways. One way is to talk of the influence of the world, the flesh and the devil. Another is to divide the obstacles into four categories: sins, bondages, wounds and demons. A third talks about pride, vanity and sensuality. Our damaged wills cannot overcome these obstacles by ourselves. Seeking help through spiritual direction, the sacrament of reconciliation, counseling, and prayer ministry and then working hard to implement changes in habits of thought, speech and action are essential if we are to be transformed. We cannot usually change ourselves in many of these areas but we can make ourselves available to God's grace and the gifts available in the body of Christ.

A friend of mine who is Jewish was talking to me about the Day of Atonement. He mentioned that God would forgive anything but he would not do it if someone was holding a grudge. The parable of the unforgiving servant makes the same point. A big part of the work of transformation in many lives is for them to do the hard work of forgiving people who have hurt or wronged them. In some way, unforgiveness blocks grace and hinders the work of transformation. We cannot always be reconciled but we can and must forgive. We also may need to forgive ourselves for the problems our younger self has caused and is still causing us. Self acceptance is a beginning point for spiritual growth. By accepting ourselves as we are we take responsibility to move forward from this

point. Choosing to forgive our self and others is an essential part of our quest to be transformed and become more like Jesus.

**Finally, I want to mention** our need to embrace any crosses that are part of the context of our life. Difficult things happen to good people and part of the work of transformation is to make the best of these situations. My grandfather lost his leg in a train accident when he was in his twenties. He became a man with one leg, but he did not allow himself to be a one legged man. He embraced his cross and went on about living a very dynamic life. We will not know a world without suffering, sin and death until we cross the river and enter the New Jerusalem. These sufferings sometimes come in our own lives and sometimes in the lives of others with whom we relate. With a sacrificial docility to the Holy Spirit we can embrace these difficulties, whether traumatic or simply frustrating, as part of our path to holiness.

We have a wonderful God who is in the process of transforming us through the power of the Holy Spirit to be what he created us to be in the first place. We are fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image. We are each unique with our own DNA and our own fingerprints. All creation is groaning and moaning waiting for us to be all we can be and we are made to live forever. Let's cooperate with the process. ♦



*Chuck Hornsby is a member of the National Service Committee. He is a member of the Alleluia Covenant Community in Augusta, Georgia.*

# Evangelizing the family

**The Church needs to offer opportunities for the whole family, from toddlers to grandparents, to experience the saving power of Jesus Christ, together.**

by Caroline Gambale-Dirkes

**Can you imagine** seeing hundreds of new faces of *all ages* at your next Life in the Spirit Seminar, retreat or conference? In *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II states: *“It is, in fact, to the families in our times that the Church must bring the unchangeable and ever new gospel of Jesus Christ”* (#4). If you think about the Holy Father’s statement, it just makes sense. Many ministries in the Church today target only one demographic. CCD targets children, youth ministry targets teens, Spirit and Truth targets young adults, Knights of Columbus targets men, and the Rosary Society targets women. These are all great ministries that are needed in our Church but if you have a ministry that targets the whole family, you reach everyone. That is what is needed today. The Church needs to offer opportunities for the whole family, from toddlers to grandparents, to experience the saving power of Jesus Christ, together.

More than ever, the Charismatic Renewal is being challenged to respond to this call. *“At a moment of history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family. The church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all”*(#3-



*Familiaris Consortio*). In a time where families are in crisis, being baptized in the Holy Spirit can offer healing, new life, truth, and power that families are desperately seeking. The truth is that in order for us to do that successfully, we need to change our approach to doing ministry. It may require more organization, planning, volunteers, creativity, thinking outside the box, etc. It also may require a change in how we market our event, the location where we host the event, what we do at the event, and whom we invite. Change is not easy but if we dare to do it, we will see amazing things happen.

**In my own ministry journey**, I have experienced great fruits after shifting to an intergenerational ministry model. In my 18 years of youth ministry, I encountered parent after parent yearning for what their child was experiencing. Over the years, parents would confide in me about struggles with their faith, past abortions, marital discord, problems with their children, and other situations that required pastoral care. In many respects, I felt the parents

were worse off than the teens with whom I was ministering. At least the teens acknowledged they were broken, had the Church community, and received ongoing formation. The parents, on the other hand, lived their pain in secrecy and didn’t seem to have the formation, fellowship or spiritual support to work through their problems.

As a youth minister I was “on” 24/7 with the kids and had very little time to do ministry with the parents, but in my heart a seed was planted to do something in the future. In 2009, that opportunity presented itself when I received the new responsibility of being the Director of Evangelization at my parish.

The first event I scheduled was an intergenerational Life in the Spirit Seminar. There were many people on my committee that thought it could not be pulled off. They worried that we needed more time to plan it, that people were not going to come for six weeks on a Wednesday night, that the men of the parish wouldn’t attend, and that doing a Life in the Spirit Seminar would turn people off. The list went on and on but God gave me a vision for how this could be done. I decided to use all the successful principles that I learned in youth ministry and apply them to parish ministry. One specific way I did this was the way I marketed this event to the parish. We left no stone unturned: we put up a huge banner in the gathering space of the church, made personal phone calls, developed an attractive flyer, gave personal testimonies at all the Masses, set up a registration table for several weeks after Mass, did a mass mailing, and recruited key leaders in the parish to help.

**My strategy** was to make our event highly visible, appealing to all generations, and make it easy for

people to sign up. To make sure we were attracting young families and parishioners of all ages, we offered tracks for ages two and up, had a family rate, and had options for adults to sign up for couples or same sex small groups. When all was said and done, we had more than 100 people sign up from 1 year old to 84 years old. The parish I worked at was not very involved with Charismatic Renewal and it was not a place where parishioners traditionally came out in big numbers for an event. In fact the people who signed up for the Seminar had very little or no experience with the Charismatic Renewal. The Holy Spirit worked in a beautiful and powerful way among the people at my parish. Families were transformed and baptized in the Holy Spirit—families that would not have even attended if it was not made accessible to them.

Shortly after I did this Seminar, I was asked to do an intergenerational Seminar in a weekend format for the Diocese of Colorado Springs, Colorado. Deacon Chuck, the bishop's liaison for the diocese, did a genius thing when advertising the retreat. He obtained permission from the bishop to offer the Seminar as an option to fulfill the retreat requirement for Confirmation. It was a free retreat but the catch was that the parents had to come with their teen! These teens and parents had no idea what they signed up for, but they were in for a huge surprise.

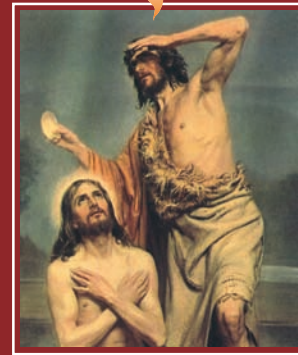
My husband and I came prepared. We adapted the Life in the Spirit Seminar to appeal to old and young alike by using engaging interactive illustrations, contemporary music, games, humor, video clips, and personal testimonies representing the different age groups in attendance. We also trained local leaders to lead small groups so the participants

would have adequate follow up and pastoral care.

**What struck me** about this particular Seminar was how God used the young people to help the parents be open to the fullness of the Holy Spirit. After the first night a young girl in 7<sup>th</sup> grade asked me on Saturday morning if she could give her witness. Unbeknownst to her, this request was an answer to my prayers because I wanted to have a young person give a witness on Saturday morning but the local leaders had trouble finding someone. This young lady had experienced a very powerful encounter with Jesus on the first night during a meditation. With no coaching or preparation, she gave one of the best witnesses I have ever heard about the transforming power of God's love. She shared vulnerably how she was not living for Jesus before the retreat and emphatically ended her witness by saying to everyone that Jesus came into her heart, that Jesus was real, and he wanted to do for everyone what he did for her. I could tell that the parents and teens were deeply moved and shocked that one of "their own" encountered God so powerfully and had the courage to share so vulnerably.

After that witness, everyone seemed to be more open to what the Holy Spirit was doing. When we prayed over everyone for baptism of the Holy Spirit, it was the teens' openness to the Holy Spirit that helped the parents to let go and experience the Holy Spirit themselves. We cannot underestimate the power of bringing old and young together in the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:17: *"It will come to pass in the last days, God says, that I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams."*

## Prayer Card



That all will find new life in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit we pray:

Eternal Father, in this 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year, fill us anew with your Holy Spirit, that we may keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the perfecter of our faith and the source of our holiness.

The good news is that when other leaders have heard and responded to the call, they have had similar results. My pastor had more than 300 people in attendance at our parish Seminar earlier this year. Recently, when I spoke at the Scranton Diocesan Charismatic Conference, I witnessed 2000 people as young as 5 years old attend the conference. Both events were family friendly and offered children's ministry. The truth is that if we do the extra work and welcome families, God will bless us abundantly. Let us join St. Paul in the prayer of Eph 3:14-16, 20-21: *"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be*

**See Family page 8**

**Please pray** with the National Service Committee for the following intentions:

Lord, bring unity within the Renewal as we give thanks for 45 years and persevere in running the race that lies before us, especially for all the preparations for the 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference in June.

Lord, make our families, our communities and our seminaries more open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, that we might be holy and zealous witnesses to the Gospel.

Lord, anoint and make fruitful all the National Leadership Groups of CCR—before, during and after their annual meeting in Tampa in January.

Lord, inspire thousands of people to join in the Day of Prayer & Fasting on February 17, to “unlock the power” of the grace of Pentecost in all aspects of life in our nation. (See ad on p. 12.)

Lord, gather your people to celebrate and be renewed for the new evangelization at Outreach Events in Nashville and Boston.



## Building Prayer Group Leadership *Small Style*

by Gary Whitlock

Our prayer group was looking at how to maintain good leadership. The model proposed to us in training was to seek replacement prayer group leadership about every three years, with existing leadership stepping down. We were never able to attain this ideal. Perhaps it worked in larger groups, but our group had grown merely from a half-dozen at the start to about 18 after ten years. What we needed was an alternate plan, based upon what God made fruitful.

In 1984 St. David Prayer Group was five years old, and the woman who had served as leader from the beginning was starting to feel burdened. Just in time, the Archdiocesan Catholic Charismatic Office offered a seminar on forming prayer group leadership. Several attended from our small group of a dozen. While this training did not at first raise up a new leader, it did establish a pastoral team consisting of co-leaders, teachers and worship ministers. Our leader was refreshed by this support and carried on for five more years.

The training offered to us in 1984 was not repeated, so after that date those who lacked the training felt unqualified. The few who could lead at the time had extremely demanding work or home situations that did not im-

prove until years later. As years dragged by without a new leader, the position gained an unwarranted respect that actually discouraged some from considering it. Others were simply too prudent to take on what appeared to be a never-ending role.

What was to be done about leadership when the ideal model failed? In our experience what God had blessed was a sharing of responsibility among a core group of committed people. The pastoral team that initially formed continued, some still serving now 25 years later. We never returned to the model of a single leader, but started with two, then three, then four pastoral leaders sharing duties. We retained the same worship leader but added two or more musicians, all serving as equals. The number of those who could teach or

### Family from page 7

*strengthened with power through his Spirit... Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

For more information on how to do intergenerational ministry, see the leaflet “Evangelizing the Family: A Multigenerational Approach,” [www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org). ♦

Caroline Gambale-Dirkes is a member of the NSC and cofounder of 2Tim4 Ministries with her husband, Daniel. They reside in New Jersey and have three children. To reach her, go to [2tim4.com](http://2tim4.com).





testify at prayer group grew, sometimes including over half the members. The four pastoral leaders took turns weekly leading the meeting and assuring that teaching would occur.

Because most of our pastoral team stepped up but never stepped down, we had always been keenly on the lookout for others who could take our place. This proved to be a very long term task, indeed. Several hundred people passed in and out of our small group over the years, and many of those that stayed did take on a role in ministry eventually. Many who came were still busy turning to the Lord, or turning away from their old life through healing or reconciliation.

What we were looking for in potential leaders were individuals who had:

- ✓ A heart for renewal through the baptism in the Spirit and charisms/spiritual gifts.
- ✓ The ability to love through serving without becoming too discouraged when times were difficult.
- ✓ A preference for pleasing God first within an open, supportive team.
- ✓ An orthodox, mature Catholic spirituality.

Over the years we saw many raised up to fulfill all of these criteria except for the first one, the charismatic one. People who would have made perfectly good leaders in our prayer group instead opted to become Permanent Deacons, or go into prison ministries, counseling ministries, ministries to the poor, or other worthy pursuits. While they did not abandon what they had come to learn about the Holy Spirit, they heard more urgently a call to serve some group other than the prayer group. Unfortunately, the urgencies they heeded usually meant they no longer had time to even attend the prayer group. The wider body of the Church

was built up (praise God!) but our small prayer group still struggled to find new leaders.

What became our alternate plan, based on what God made fruitful, was to keep people in leadership as long as they felt called. It depended on sharing responsibilities among as many people as possible, with as much support for one another as could be mustered. Our “service team” met monthly with an open invitation to anyone who had it in their heart to serve the prayer group. This worked to build up community love, but actually worked against the boldness needed to step into leadership by one’s self.

There were compensations to having a large leadership team in a small group. Working as a team promoted good discernment; any decisions acted on required consensus. Consensus fostered an appropriate humility and deference to others, as well as broad support for actions taken. People were also more comfortable joining and staying in a ministry that did not depend solely on them. Finally, no one who developed a heart for service ever needed to be rejected. They could fit in somewhere.

What was lost by having people persist in leadership without stepping down—we will never know. It might have been wonderful, or it might have been the end of our prayer group. It certainly would have been the occasion for something new, one way or the other.

Our group failed to develop leaders who would boldly take the helm with the confidence that another will do so in few years. But we have a scriptural motto to guide us in situations that appear beyond our control: Love never fails. We have found that the course that places the greatest value on our brothers’ and sisters’ well-being will do for now, until something better arises. ♦

*Gary Whitlock is a member of the service team for the Catholic Renewal Center,*



*Archdiocese of St. Louis. He serves the renewal by providing training, resources, and support for Life in the Spirit seminars area-wide. He volunteers in his parish for stewardship efforts, spiritual formation programs, and as one of the parish prayer group’s pastoral leaders.*

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