

PENTECOST *Today*

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The gift of life-giving water

Grace! Grace is a word with many definitions but the one that I think is a spiritual eye-opener comes from a footnote for Revelation 7:17: "Life-giving water: God's grace which flows from Christ." Scripture is filled with verses that invite us to partake of this life-giving water. One of my favorites is in John 7:37-39: "If any one thirsts let him come to me; let him drink who believes in me. Scripture has it: 'From within him rivers of living water shall flow'. Here he was referring to the Spirit, whom those that come to believe in him were to receive." Grace—life-giving water.

Grace is defined in *Webster's Dictionary* as "unmerited divine assistance given for our repentance or sanctification; a virtue coming from God." It further defines the word *graceless* as "lacking in divine grace, void of attractive qualities."

As we look at these definitions it causes us to reflect on the many facets of this wonderful gift that God has given to us because of his love for us. Truly, Webster's definition of "unmerited divine assistance" strikes a chord. Unmerited indeed is this gift of grace, this life-giving water flowing from Christ to us. Yet, God gives freely, without hesitation to all who come to him, to all who call upon him, to all who seek him in truth.

We all know people who reflect this quality of grace. They wear it like a garment; it radiates from their words and actions. Grace lived is to receive that unmerited divine assistance as the anointing of God that enables us to

minister in love, to proclaim the Gospel in truth, to bring healing, and to comfort those who mourn.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 1810) describes it this way: "Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God's help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of good. The virtuous man/woman is happy to practice them." Thus we can see that everything we are is purified, elevated and even anointed when we bring it to God.

We all also know people who are "graceless," who are lacking in divine grace. Noticeable characteristics are "void of life, of love, of goodness." These are the people God calls us to reach out to, that we might help them find the fullness of grace. Our reception of grace brings a responsibility to be heralds of the good news that declares the joy of being a recipient of this unmerited gift.

"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' Let him who hears answer, 'Come!' Let him who is thirsty come forward; let all who desire it accept the gift of life-giving water" (Rev. 22:17). May we be those who cry, "Come" and accept this gift of grace, the living water which flows from Christ. ♦

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PENTECOST *Today*

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Amazing Grace

The primacy of grace and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

by Walter Matthews

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.*

These words, penned by John Newton over two hundred years ago, contain a perennial truth. St. Paul expressed it this way:

But God being rich in faithful love...brought us to life with Christ—it is through grace that you have been saved—and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus. This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how extraordinarily rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit (Eph. 1:4-9).

How often we forget the *sine qua non* of grace in our lives and in the ministry we do in this Renewal, not to mention, the church's struggle throughout the ages. That is why, in his apostolic letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Pope John Paul II writes about "an essential principle of the Christian view of life: the primacy of grace" (n. 38).

There is a temptation which 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" (cf. Jn. 15:5) (n. 38).

How does our Holy Father's exhortation about the primacy of grace apply to us and to this Renewal?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines grace as "favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life" (n. 1996). In the sacraments of initiation we receive grace to become sons and daughters of the Father, sharing the divine nature (cf. 2 Pt. 1:4). Through sin, however, this grace can be lost and this relationship fractured. Even without serious sin, we can fail to grow in this life of grace. The baptism in the Holy Spirit we experienced in this Renewal is a re-energizing of grace in our lives. It is, as *Fanning the Flame* asserts, "a key to living the Christian life to the fullest" (p. 9).

We who have experienced this release of grace in our lives and profess being baptized in the Holy Spirit should manifest a freedom from legalism and from trying to earn salvation on our own, a certainty of our identity as members of the body of Christ and as sons and daughters of a loving Father. "Abba, Father" should be as much on our lips as "Jesus is Lord" and "come, Holy Spirit."

The primacy of grace in our spiritual journey also impacts how we think about the call to holiness. Archbishop Paul Cordes, in his book, *Call to Holiness: Reflections on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*, addresses this challenge:

When Jesus is heard saying, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48), many are discouraged because they misunderstand the nature of holiness, thinking it primarily the result of personal asceticism. On the contrary, it is first of all a free, unmerited gift. "The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given us" (Rom. 5:5). We are invited to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect because we carry within us that life of the Father given through Christ in the Spirit, given without cost to us. We start at the top of the ladder, not at the bottom (p. 7).

This image of the ladder is vivid. So many see themselves at the bottom striving to get to the top by their own efforts. We make progress, then fail, and we see ourselves at the bottom again. After years of this struggle many give up and settle for a mediocre Christian life, even a mediocre charismatic life. Instead, the Archbishop suggests, if we see ourselves at the top—"holy," because the Holy Spirit lives in us through grace, because the church is holy (see *Catechism* n. 823)—then our ascetical and devotional practices are not means to an end, only attainable by a few saints. Rather, they are expressions of our response to God's presence in us.

If the primacy of grace is to be lived in our daily lives as sons and daughters growing in holiness, how might this challenge of our Holy Father affect those of us involved in Charismatic Renewal?

First, we must confront what Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa addresses in an article entitled, "The Temptation of Renewal"—the temptation to end in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit. This drift to the flesh has affected and infected the two primary vehicles of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal: Life in the Spirit seminars and prayer meetings.

Excerpts from the Documents of Vatican Council II

Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and “makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth!” (*Dei Verbum*, n. 5)

The church, to which we are all called in Christ Jesus, and in which by the grace of God we acquire holiness, will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things (Acts 3:21). At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly reestablished in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:10-13). (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 48)

Christ is now at work in the hearts of men by the power of his Spirit; not only does he arouse in them a desire for the world to come but he quickens, purifies and strengthens the generous aspirations of mankind to make life more humane and conquer the earth for this purpose. (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 38)

Whether it aids the world or whether it benefits from it, the church has but one sole purpose—that the kingdom of God may come and the salvation of the human race may be accomplished. Every benefit the people of God can confer on mankind during its earthly pilgrimage is rooted in the church’s being “the universal sacrament of salvation” at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God’s love for men. (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 45)

In the first place, many prayer groups have given up even doing Life in the Spirit (understood generically) seminars. Fr. Cantalamessa refers to this as a weariness, where “baptism in the Spirit has passed to the second place,” where “there are groups in which a few have received it and in which people believe that it is not so important in the life of the Renewal.” He continues, “It is from this weariness...that the flattening of the Renewal starts.”

The solution Fr. Cantalamessa offers is that “we must begin again to use this gift better, to run seminars with effective baptism in the Holy Spirit.” This does not mean leading people to a limited “emotional experience of the divine” (Pope John Paul II to Italian charismatics earlier this year), or yielding to only one of the wide spectrum of charisms, or encouraging people to pursue religious experience for itself. Rather, “we must awaken Christian lives which are dormant or spent” (Cantalamessa) and help people understand that a more authentic sign of being baptized in the Spirit is “a life of converted Christian discipleship” (*Fanning the Flame*, p. 12).

What of our prayer meetings? Fr. Cantalamessa is brief but incisive: “a certain ritualism comes to the surface: we do the same things of the past, but without the power of past times, because inside there is no Spirit and no life.”

How do we get unstuck? We must begin with praise and thanksgiving. Even the smallest of groups can begin to thank and give praise.

Our Holy Father in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* speaks of “the duty of praise; this is the point of departure for every genuine response of faith to the revelation of God in Christ” (n. 4). He continues in the section on the primary of grace: “It is prayer which roots us in this truth. It constantly reminds us of the primacy of Christ and, in union with him, the primacy of the interior life and of holiness. When this principle is not respected, is it any wonder that pastoral plans come to nothing and leave us with a disheartening sense of frustration?” (n. 38). The antidote he suggests is “a renewed listening to the word of God (n. 39) which echoes St. Paul: “Let the Word of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other in all wisdom” (Col. 3:16).

These two pillars, praise and thanksgiving, and listening to the word of God (I include here the discerned prophetic word and, of course, the authentic teaching of the church) will help every prayer group, and the Renewal as a whole, live the primacy of grace.

Finally, what of our church in the present moment? It is battered by the revelation of scandals new and old. It struggles with the loss of faith in the core truths of Catholicism: the virgin birth, the resurrection, Scripture as the word of God, the real presence and so on. It is attacked on the left by those who would change the church into the image it desires, and on the right by those who want to reject the breath of the Spirit in the Second Vatican Council who want to turn the altar around, insist on certain sameness in gestures and devotional practice, and in general oppose anything spontaneous or emotional.

Let us, with Fr. Cantalamessa, “have a great desire in our hearts that the Renewal be, or be again, that place where the Risen One may proclaim his unchallenged ‘I Am.’” Let us hear again, believe and live the words of our Holy Father to the Italian Renewal, “Yes! The Renewal in the Spirit can be considered as a special gift of the Holy Spirit to the church in our time.”

The primacy of grace we have experienced in baptism in the Holy Spirit, nourished in prayer and in an authentic understanding of holiness challenges the church (us) to put out in the deep, to go forward in hope and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“This is the moment of faith, of prayer, of conversation with God, in order to open our hearts to the tide of grace and allow the word of Christ to pass through us in all its powers: *Duc in altum*...As this millennium begins, allow the successor of Peter to invite the whole church to make this act of faith, which expresses itself in a renewed commitment to prayer” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 38). For it is fatal to forget, personally or communally, that without Christ we can do nothing. ♦

Walter Matthews is Executive Director of the National Service Committee.



The grace of letting go

by Michele Needham Greisbar, Ph.D.

In his apostolic letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Pope John Paul II describes the primacy of grace as “an essential principle of the Christian view of life” (n. 38). Without the belief in grace being the core of our behavior, our spirituality—and indeed our acts of worship—become reflections of our own wills and we engage in self-salvation.

Perhaps because most of us have been born in the United States, we have also inherited the Puritan work ethic, which characterized our founding fathers. “God helps those who help themselves.” However, to translate that concept into the spiritual realm of Christian faith (our Roman Catholicism) is to deviate from the foundational truth that it is God who has saved us and continues to save us through the mystery of Jesus’ dying and rising. “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

As we mature in our personal lives, we find the importance of individuating, of becoming our true selves, of not acting out of codependency on others’ desires or needs. As infants we depend on others to meet all

our needs. As we grow we progress to independence; we begin to find our own voices and choose our own lives. For many, that development is a hard-fought battle, and it is very difficult to surrender that independence even to God. It may be midlife before we (hopefully) begin again to acknowledge our powerlessness in decisive situations and our constant dependency on God.

“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” (n. 38). In reality, our triune God has determined to guide and strengthen us in our daily spiritual walk. The Father has given his Son (Jn. 3:16) to be Emmanuel, God-with-us, and their Spirit to remain with us as Jesus returned to the Father (Jn. 14:16). We are not abandoned to find our own pathway.

Jesus says, “Come to me all you who labor and are tired, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28). At times, when we most need to lose ourselves in the arms of our God, we struggle to maintain our independence.

Our guarantees are in Jesus’ words: “I will give you rest.”

See **Letting go** page 13

You shall be my witnesses

From near-death to life in Christ

A story of grace



by Christine Watkins

I was raised in an anti-religious home, and I did not like Christians. I was never going to be a Christian—of that much, I was sure. In my youth, I also perfected the fine art of worrying and suffered from very low self-esteem and mild depression. I did find joy, though, in ballet and practiced it diligently for years with such commitment and passion that I ended up dancing professionally with the San Francisco Ballet Company. At age seven I decided that I was going to be a professional ballet dancer, and I became one. I was going to dance until approximately age forty, so I planned. Ballet was my destiny. Nothing else even remotely satisfied me.

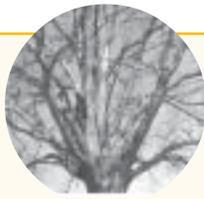
Not having been raised in a religion, I did not know there was a God; so, for me, ballet quickly became my personal god. At the height of my dancing abilities and fully in love with my profession, I suffered from foot injuries and had three foot operations. This ended my career and took away the only god I ever knew. Devastated, I grew depressed, lost my identity, and lost my hope.

I would not be alive were it not for divine grace, unmerited and unasked for.

In my sadness I looked for comfort in intimate relationships and sank ever deeper into a mire of sin. I felt temporarily filled with life when I was in a relationship, but when things failed—as they inevitably did—I was left with an even larger, empty, dark and lonely hole within me. I was always searching outside myself for something to make me happy, and I never truly felt a sense of inner peace. I did not think of changing my behavior. One summer I ended up very sick with cervical cancer—a disease with no known cure. I had approximately six weeks to live. My hair was falling out, I was bleeding internally and vomiting often. With no energy, I often collapsed with fatigue. Worst of all, I felt sick inside my soul. At times I called out in guttural despair; at times I could not stop crying once I started.

My tears were cathartic. I was searching desperately through New Age spirituality for answers and wanted nothing to do with Jesus or Mary. For years I had wanted nothing to do with them. I remember seeing a picture of the Madonna and child which made me so angry that I wanted it taken down. I also remember reading a self-help book that I enjoyed except for its fleeting references to Jesus. I knew that Jesus and Mary were fanciful figures for the hopeless and misguided.

[See Life in Christ page 13](#)



Spiritual Formation

Grace

by Dorothy Ranaghan

One of my granddaughters is named Grace. The mother of Jesus was termed “full of grace.” And for most of my adult life I’ve been reminded that I could have wound up in every sort of evil “but for the grace of God.”

So what is grace? There are, of course, official definitions: “grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us... participation in the life of God himself (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1996, 1997). Grace is *charis*, which comes from *chairo*, “to rejoice, be glad,” which is quite fitting since grace—that free expression of God’s *hesed*, his loving kindness and mercy—fills us with joy and gladness. Our response to grace should always and everywhere be gratitude.

I’ve had very human experiences of grace in my life that have taught me at least analogously what free and undeserved help looks like. A few years ago my husband and I were visiting New Orleans, and while we were there a friend handed us two (impossible to get and very expensive) tickets to the Superbowl, and also treated us to a gourmet dinner—over \$100 apiece—at a famous local restaurant, Louis Quatorze. Even the memory of that weekend still fills me with awe and gratitude. We didn’t deserve any of that. It was all grace. That is the simple and compelling reality of grace both human and divine.

Reading the long history and theology of grace can tend to make us forget the simplicity of God’s lavish gift. One of the most famous controversies about this doctrine was waged by Augustine and Pelagius. Their differences seem to stem from a radical disagreement about human nature itself. Pelagius believed humans could become perfect through their own efforts. Augustine saw human nature as a mass of sin, and said that without grace (received in baptism) we remain only sin and incapable of good. He called grace a gift of the Spirit.

To Augustine, grace was so irresistible that he sometimes seemed to overlook free will. He never went as far as to say we had to respond to grace of necessity, but he certainly leaned in that direction. In the Reformation there was a return to strict Augustinianism on the part of Luther.

Today we are no longer fighting old Reformation battles about grace. One of the greater miracles of the ecumenical movement occurred on October 31, 1999, in Augsburg, Germany. The Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation signed an historic agreement about the nature of grace. Breakthroughs in biblical studies brought greater understanding on both sides, and eventual accord. The key passage in the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” reads:

Together we confess: by grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping us and calling us to good works.

Good works are seen as a response to grace, not the cause of it.

Our response to grace should always and everywhere be gratitude.

Grace, the loving favor of God, comes to us in the sacraments, which were often called “channels of grace.” Today we prefer to think less in terms of physical analogies like channels, which tend to make grace sound like a liquid that flows in and out. Rather, we see it as a quality of a relationship. In this view, sacraments are “encounters with Christ,” and it is Christ who is the favor, mercy, gift, love and grace of God incarnate. Jesus was and is grace in the flesh. No wonder the angel greeted Mary as “full of grace.”

It is Jesus who is the point of contact between two worlds. In baptism, we become one with him by grace. In baptism, the Father sends the Spirit to make us one with Christ by his grace, so that in Christ the Father re-establishes the communication, the relationship between himself and us that was lost in the “fall.” The life of grace means that we live “in” Christ, “as” Christ, that he is “in us” and we, “in” God. It is a profound unity.





Spiritual Formation

Living in Christ we are now called to be “channels,” sacraments, signs, instruments, enfleshments of grace in this world. Grace in and through us changes this world so in need of the love and mercy of God. It forgives those who have been sexual abusers, racists, unfaithful spouses, murderers, rapists, terrorists, all who do not deserve or merit such love, such mercy, such grace. Grace is shocking. Does the world experience it in and through us? Does the world see us lavishing grace?

Theology may be complicated, but grace is simple, is freedom, is love. Walker Percy once wrote that “The old words of grace are worn smooth as poker chips and a certain devaluation has occurred.” He is correct. Most of the old debates and many of the older ways of thinking and speaking about grace fail to



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speak to modern ears. Christian writers like Flannery O’Connor, who believe that the modern world has resolved the ancient debate on nature and grace by eliminating grace altogether, make the struggle with grace central to their fictional characters. O’Connor locates the mystery of grace in the “solid flesh of our experience,” (cf. Peter Hawkins, *Language of Grace*, p. 22) and doesn’t mind shocking people with her dark stories to highlight the presence of grace, to prove her point that the vulgar world is sacramental, and the place where God and grace is present. In that insistence she actually repeats the sentiments of the great theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas, who said: “The whole of creation is a theater of grace, embodying and mediating the presence and saving activity of God on our behalf. It is the stage on which the drama of salvation continuously unfolds.”

Through the ages the ancient hymn *Amazing Grace* exalts the truth of grace.

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
and grace my fears relieved.

How precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed...

’Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

We should never doubt it. Our simple acceptance of such amazing grace is all that is required. Scrupulosity and worry about whether one is “in the state of grace” or not, has no place in our relationship with God. We can take our cue from the wisdom of Joan of Arc. Asked if she knew she was in God’s grace she answered: “If I am not, may it please God to put me in it; if I am, may it please God to keep me there” (*The Holiness of Saint Joan of Arc*, Etienne Robo). ♦

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Grace

Outline

A. Grace defined:

- favor
- free and undeserved help from God
- participation in the life of God

B. Human analogy

C. One controversial historical question: human nature and grace

D. Jesus: the grace of God incarnate

E. Sacraments: encounters with grace

F. How we are to live in grace grace changes us, and through us changes the world

G. Contemporary explanations of grace

H. Signs of being in the “state” of grace

Questions for reflection

1. What do you think of when you hear the word *grace*?
2. What does it look like to participate in the very life of God himself?
3. The Catechism says: “God’s full initiative demands man’s full response.” What does that mean?

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Depending on God for vision and direction

Helping a group live “in the Spirit”

by Virginia King

Consider the image of the Christian as an athlete in training. Jesus is our coach and we are on an athletic field, running around a track, following him. Under his guidance, we are learning the necessary skills and building up our strength and endurance. Eventually, when we are ready, Jesus no longer has us running around the track. He asks us to follow him out into the world, to do the things that he has done and even greater things (Jn. 14:12). After Jesus leads us off the track and out into the world, the muscles continue to be exercised and often are tested in ways that they never were when we were simply in training.

Living “life in the Spirit” day-by-day is an exercise in trust. It really is an *exercise*; that is, it is something that you work at repetitively in order to strengthen the “trust-muscles.” And the more you do it, the easier it becomes. But it never ceases to require that we put forth reasonable and consistent effort.

If this is true for our lives as individuals, I believe it is even more so in the case of any group or community. For us to be a group or community which functions “in the Spirit” we need to exercise trust. We need to



To be a group or community which functions “in the Spirit” we need to strengthen our individual and corporate trust in God and we need to strengthen our trust in one another.

strengthen our individual and corporate trust in God and we need to strengthen our trust in one another.

There are many different settings in which we might find ourselves leading a group or community which is striving to live “in the Spirit.” There are prayer meetings, various parish or community fellowships, study or work groups, conference or retreat planning committees, diocesan service teams, and the gatherings of people at special events. There are times when we come together to discern God’s vision and direction for our group and other times that we come together to implement something that had been previously discerned.

What does it look like for a group to live “in the Spirit”? I think it looks like Phil. 2:2-5: “Make my joy complete by your unanimity, possessing the one love, united in spirit and ideals. Never act out of rivalry or conceit; rather, let all parties think humbly of others as superior to themselves, each of you looking to others’ interests rather than to his own. Your attitude must be that of Christ...”

When I am leading a group, my first priority is to develop that sense of trust which leads to true unity. My role as leader is primarily to serve the group in building this unity.

By way of example, when I bring together a group of people to discern the pastoral plan for our annual conference, we begin by acknowledging that our first priority is to seek the Lord’s plan for this event. It is not our plan but God’s plan.

We begin each meeting with a significant time of prayer, perhaps even as much as half the time of the entire agenda. This assures that we are not just giving “lip service” to prayer. We expect the Lord to change our hearts during prayer, to inspire us, to join us together in unity of mind and heart. This time of prayer includes worshipping the Lord, interceding for the graces we need to discern his will for this meeting, and listening to any “word gifts” that might come forth during this time.

The next step is to establish the framework for discussion and brainstorming so that we

are all focused in the same direction. Then we take time to do the brainstorming. Initially many ideas come forth. Sometimes we seem to get bogged down and we take a few minutes of quiet to allow us to hear ourselves think and to hear the Lord speak to our hearts. We try to honor the different personalities of those present by giving specific windows of opportunity for the quieter people to collect their thoughts and to present their ideas. And we trust that the Holy Spirit is present and active at every stage of the prayer and discussion.

When we come to a point of decision making, our goal is to find consensus. In this context, I always take this to mean that the decision is one that everyone in the room is comfortable putting their support behind. It may not be everyone's favorite choice, but no one has a strong objection to the decision.

We specifically ask for any dissenting opinions. I firmly believe that if one person feels very uncomfortable with an option, we need to revisit the decision. Sometimes it is a lone voice that is speaking the Lord's mind to us. We need to listen to each person's concerns.

If we are unable to reach consensus on an important issue, we go again into a time of prayer. We avoid taking a vote as such. We might tally up people's preferences to see where the dominant opinion lies. But if someone says they really can't live with a part of the plan that everyone else agrees to, we don't include it. Or, conversely, if only one person feels very strongly about a particular thing and no one else has an objection, we will include it.

On an important issue, like the pastoral plan for a conference, we might spend several meetings doing brainstorming and discussing. Once the consensus is reached, we commit ourselves to following through on this decision. Our confidence isn't in ourselves or our great wisdom but it is in the ability of the Holy Spirit to make his will known to us through the use of the minds, hearts and charisms that he has given to us.

Now, I am the first to admit that even in this very prayerful process it is possible for us to make a mistake. We are not infallible. But even in this I trust that the Lord is able to turn our mistakes into good (Rom. 8:28) and to direct

our paths if we are about to turn in error to the right or to the left (Is. 30:21).

This trusting in the Lord is something that we need to develop. Even more difficult is trusting in one another. Ultimately, to trust in another human being requires an even greater act of faith in God—acknowledging God's ability to work through "earthen vessels." Our fellow human beings will surely disappoint us at some point—just as we will surely disappoint them. We simply are not trustworthy in the way in which the Lord is trustworthy. But it is essential, if we are going to live "in the Spirit", that we "think humbly of others as superior to ourselves, each looking to others' interests rather than to our own." Again we need to remember that ultimately our trust is in the Lord and in the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ. ♦

Virginia King is a member of the National Service Committee and Director of Western Washington Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the renewal center serving the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Aggie Neck elected National Service Committee Chairman



At its meeting in San Antonio in January, the National Service Committee elected Aggie Neck as its new Chairman. She replaces Fr. Patsy Iaquina, whose terms as NSC

member and as Chairman ended with the January meeting.

A member of the NSC since 1999, Aggie and her husband, Clyde, live in Marksville, Louisiana. They have three adult children and three grandchildren, with a fourth expected soon. For the past thirteen years Aggie has served as Co-director of Servant House, a Catholic Charismatic House of Prayer, where she ministers in spiritual direction, prayer for healing and inner healing, and conducts Bible studies. She has also served as Chairman for the Diocesan Service Committee for the Dio-

cese of Alexandria, and was a member of the Advisory Committee from 1994 until her election to the NSC.

During her tenure as a member of the National Service Committee, Aggie has served on subcommittees for Regional Leaders Gatherings, Finance, Leadership Formation and National Conferences. For the past two-and-a-half years she has written the Ministry Update column for *Pentecost Today*. She served as a host for the NSC-sponsored pilgrimage to Catholic Italy and has spoken at countless conferences across the country and internationally.

In reflecting on her election as Chairman, Aggie writes:

God does indeed have a vision for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in America and all over the world. This grace of Pentecost was given for a plan and a purpose and it will not return to God uncompleted. If we, the people graced with baptism in the Holy Spirit, do not bring to comple-

tion this vision and plan, someone or something else will. We must lead, we must proclaim truth, we must not hesitate. This task is for the body of Christ, not just a few leaders. This task is for me and for you. It is with a heart full of gratitude that I stand before God praying and asking that we his people will know, see and understand the vision, and together bring it to fulfillment. Will you join with me and the members of the National Service Committee to pray for this intention? Would you please pray for me and the members of the NSC? May God anoint and empower us to fulfill his perfect will.

Aggie is the tenth Chairman of the National Service Committee. She is the fifth lay person and the first woman to be elected to the position. While her primary responsibilities as NSC Chairman center on the mission and ministry of the Committee, she will also work closely with other national Catholic Charismatic Renewal leadership groups. The term of Chairman is for three years. ♦

NEWSBRIEFS

ECCLE XVII gathers in Georgia

by Teresa Rosero

You are the salt for the earth...you are light for the world. (Mt. 5: 13-14)

This was the theme that was developed, lived and celebrated by about 230 Hispanic leaders from across the nation who gathered for ECCLE XVII (*Encuentro Carismático Católico Latino Estadounidense*) in Conyers, Georgia, on the weekend of April 19-21. Hispanic youth gathered one day earlier to have teachings and dialogues oriented to meet their needs. They later joined the adults.

The main talks were given by Salvador Gomez, from Guatemala. Salvador is not only a gifted preacher; but he also has an extensive ministry of teachings on audio-cassettes and books. In addition, he has also formed a team of preachers. People were touched and encouraged by his lively talks.

Six workshops were offered during the weekend: "Praise and Adoration" given by Marilyn Kramer; "Gift of Tongues" by Danilo Chamorro; "Intercessory Prayer" by Msgr. Joseph Malagrecia; "Gift of Prophecy" by Carlos Hernandez; "Discernment of Spirits" by Esther Garzon; and "How to Organize a Children's Ministry" by Teresa Rosero and Monica Almeida.

The gathering was organized by the National Hispanic Committee in conjunction with the National Hispanic Youth Committee. Both committees have five members. Msgr. Malagrecia is the Spiritual Advisor for both.

National Service Committee and NSC Council meet

About forty members of the National Service Committee and the NSC Council met in Buffalo in April. The meeting centered around time to reconvene the Working Groups formed at the NSC/NSC Council meeting in October 2001. More than idea generating bodies, the Working Groups are designed to take concrete actions in a number of key Renewal areas. These include healing and deliverance, intercession, leadership, praise and worship, and prayer groups. A new Working Group on youth was added at this meeting.

In a unique moment on Saturday morning the attendees found themselves affected by an earthquake that did damage hundreds of miles away in northeast New York. Needless to say, the prophetic words spoken during the

There are also seven representatives from the eight regions that comprise the structure of the Hispanic Charismatic Movement in the United States and the northern part of Canada.

The number seventeen in ECCLE XVII tells us that we are growing in unity, strength and love. We have come to the recognition that we need each other not only to strengthen our faith and our commitment; but also to celebrate the presence of the Holy Spirit in each one of us, and in the Charismatic Renewal across our nation. With the conviction that we are salt for the earth and light for the world, we renew our mission of being salt and light in our midst. May the Lord help us to accomplish our mission. *¡Que el Señor nos ayude a ser sal y luz!* ♦

morning prayer referred to being shaken and/or acts of nature. Typical was, "My people, you are awestruck by my acts of nature, by my acts of power. I would ask you to be awestruck by how I can move anyone from darkness to light. I want to do it, my people. These signs of nature are just a sign of my power. Do it, my people. Be changed. Go forth."

Several new members of the NSC Council were present for the first time, including Mother Nadine Brown (Intercessors of the Lamb), Mother Lucy Lukasiewicz (Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ), Maxine Powers (Catholic Charismatic Center, Columbus, Ohio), Zack and Barbara Richard (Lake Charles, Louisiana) and Jess Romero (Los Angeles, California).

After the NSC Council left, the Service Committee continued meeting for a day. This was the first in-person meeting for the three new members of the NSC

elected in January: Fr. Richard Loch (Scranton, Pennsylvania), Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner (Rosemount, Minnesota) and David Thorp (Boston). The focus of the Committee's time was to move the Working Groups forward. For example, the praise and worship Working Group intends to write a letter to prayer groups encouraging them to send representatives to the praise and worship workshop at the National Conference.

The Committee also agreed to publish the proposed *Prayer Journal for Baptism in the Holy Spirit* by Therese Boucher. The Committee prayed, discussed and strategized about the future of NSC finances. Finally, the Committee discussed plans for 2003 and 2004.

The NSC and NSC Council will meet again in September after the 2002 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in Pittsburgh. ♦

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35 JUBILEE

CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

Friday Pre-conference Sessions

9 A.M. to 5 P.M.

- New Life in the Spirit Seminar, *Therese Boucher*
- Sharing the Torch: Ministering To and With Young People, *Fr. Dave Pivonka from Franciscan University and Team*
- Day for Clergy, *Fraternity of Priests*
- The Ark and the Dove: Women and the Holy Spirit, *Magnificat*
- Living Community in the Power of the Holy Spirit, *Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships*
- Christ in the Marketplace, *Christians in Commerce*

NSC Conference Saturday Afternoon Workshop Options

- Praise and Worship Until Your Hearts Are Full, *Mark Nehrbas and Bill Richart*
- Say But the Word and I Shall Be Healed: Sacraments and the Power of the Holy Spirit, *Fr. Patsy Iaquina*
- Here I Am, Send Me: The Prophetic Call, *Fr. Larry Carew*
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Fire in the Heart, *Deacon Bill Brennan*
- Doing the Works of Jesus: Bringing Life Into Your Day, *Judith Hughes*
- Empowered to Bring Good News to the Poor, *Marybeth Greene*

Celebrate Together: Go Forth in the Spirit

2002 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference

September 13–15

To celebrate 35 years of the move of God's Holy Spirit called Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a number of leadership groups, ministries and ethnic constituencies will come together for the 2002 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference, September 13–15, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. With the theme, "Go Forth in the Spirit: Charismatic Renewal Jubilee 35," the Conference is designed not only to celebrate the past, but to challenge participants to go forth in holiness, in power and in faithfulness.

Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte (At the Beginning of the New Millennium)*, writes of the Jubilee Year 2000, "the experiences we have had should inspire in us new energy, and impel us to invest in concrete initiatives."

So, too, should the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

Now is not the time to pull back or to end in despair. Rather it is time to "go forward in hope" as the Holy Father has exhorted us. He continues: "The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians; we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew sustained by the hope 'which does not disappoint.' (Rom. 5:5)."

Conference speakers include Ralph Martin, Bishop Sam Jacobs, Bishop Stanislaw Rylko from the Vatican, Sr. Nancy Kellar, Tom Curran, Aggie Neck, Fr. Mario

Castaneda from Columbia, Tammy Everard, Msgr. Joseph Malagrecia, Bob Canton, Bishop Donald W. Wuerl, Laurette Felix, Jim Murphy and many others.

Three general sessions will focus on holiness, power and faithfulness. During the morning and afternoon on Saturday there will be conferences for Filipinos, Haitians, Hispanics, children and youth, as well as the NSC-sponsored sessions. Youth sessions will be led by a team from Youth Arise, a ministry to youth from Tempe, Arizona. The children's sessions will be led by the Franciscan Sisters of Penance from Toronto, Ohio.

A number of workshops will also be offered Saturday afternoon in the NSC-sponsored sessions (see sidebar).

There will be a time for ministry of healing and empowerment on Saturday evening.

In order to provide Conference attendees with a rich array of teaching, there will be several pre-events held on Friday, September 13, involving a number of the ministries that have arisen in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the past 35 years (see sidebar).

A website with more information and registration is available at www.nsc-chariscenter.org.

Come to Pittsburgh to receive—then leave Pittsburgh empowered and enlivened to proclaim with even more zeal that Jesus Christ is Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit! ♦

Letting go from p. 5

If we only say a certain novena, or follow a prescribed prayer formula, all will be well. But, there are no guarantees attached to these. Our guarantees are in Jesus' words: "I will give you rest."

Each of us is uniquely gifted by God. Our intelligence, personalities and abilities, when united with him, can accomplish unimagined results. Apart from his grace, we may achieve success in the eyes of the world, but we deviate from his plan of divine rootedness. We build on sand, and in the end it will all be swept away (Mt. 7:27).

Life in Christ from p. 6

For me, their names and images evoked ire. I disliked them intensely.

But Jesus decided to save me, a sinner. I will never know why he chose me and I do not have words to express my gratitude. I would not be alive were it not for divine grace, unmerited and unasked for. When I was staying at a friend's house one day in the summer of 1994, I lay down in his room and felt the presence of God within and around me. I then felt a loud "pop" sound within me and knew that the cancer was gone. My friend then told me that Mary, the Mother of God, spoke to him, telling him that she saw me stumbling through life like a fish that could not find water. She said that she took great pity on me and asked her Son to save me. Later Jesus spoke to my friend and told him that I should sin no more, join the Catholic Church and help bring to it "compassion, love, kindness and generosity." I had never before set foot in a Catholic church, but I quickly researched how I could "sign up."

I should not be here on earth; I should not be alive. Mary and Jesus saved my life. Even though I had hated them, they had always loved me.

After I was cured, I remember hearing a symphony. I was in my friend's room and thought that perhaps the radio was on. I checked everywhere—in the hall, out the window, under the bed, even in his desk drawers, to see where the music might be playing; but I soon realized that the beautiful music was coming

"It is prayer which...constantly reminds us of the primacy of Christ and, in union with him, the primacy of the interior life and of holiness. When this principle is not respected, is it any wonder that pastoral plans come to nothing and leave us with a disheartening sense of frustration?" (n. 38).

Moving into God's holiness, we can abandon our own need for control. If we truly believe that a loving personal God is in control, then we can let go. When we surrender to his wisdom, we no longer need to keep our fists clenched, ready for battle. We no longer need to insist on *our* plans if God leads in other ways. Embracing God-with-us, we are free to

receive him. United to God, our minds and bodies are no longer filled with fear.

With him, we can push out in our boats into the Sea of Galilee that is our life. With him, we can stumble along our own way of the cross. With him, we can celebrate his rising and living in our brothers and sisters. ♦



A therapist in private practice, Michele Needham Greischar is a member of the National Service Committee.

from within me. I realized then that heaven was rejoicing because one sinner had been saved, and the heavenly hosts were letting me join in the celebration.

I now know where mortal sin leads, and I never want to go there again. I also now know where grace can lead. It can lead us away from where we think we are going. It pulled me away from ballet, what I thought I loved most, and it guided me to what I found I loved even more—dedicating my life and ministry work to Jesus. My life is not mine any more. It is

God's. It was God's all along. Being a Christian means everything to me. It means the difference between life and death. ♦

Christine Watkins currently works as a spiritual director, grief counselor, mission preacher and workshop conductor. She received a Masters in Theological Studies from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and a Masters in Social Welfare from the University of California at Berkeley.



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From the
Director

by Walter Matthews



Grace amidst difficulty

The present moment for the church in the US is a time of grace. “God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for. This is a true saying” (Titus 3:6-8a).

At the recent NSC/NSC Council meeting (see article p. 11) we received several prophecies about being shaken (understandable since we had been mildly shaken by an earthquake in upstate New York). One member recalled a prophecy at an NSC/Advisory Committee meeting in 1980 that spoke of a time of “judgment and purification.” It had echoed a prophecy spoken in St. Peter’s in 1975 during the first International Conference on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a prophecy that was never adequately discerned.

Prophetic words aside, it does not take much to see that the Lord has chosen this time to bring to light “deeds done in darkness” and to cleanse the infection that has been hindering the church from fully being all that the Lord wants it to be as we move into this new millennium. Our Holy Father described this time as “the new springtime of Christian life which will be revealed by the Great Jubilee if Christians are docile to the action of the Holy Spirit” (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, n. 18).

The new springtime, as Sr. Nancy Kellar has often pointed out, is not only a time to enjoy the new life we see around us, but also a time for harvesting the winter wheat and for planting new crops. Both require work amidst uncertainty and ambiguity.

Deacon Bill Brennan, Professor of Russian History, captured this uncertainty and ambiguity in a paper for the 1996 Association of Diocesan Liaisons’ Symposium when he wrote about seasons of renewal: “God calling his people back to him through repentance leading to restoration...Historically such periods have on occasion been rather lengthy, i.e., it would take several centuries for some of the reforms of the Council of Trent to reach their peak...In each case, there has been an in-between time, so to speak: that period in which the response to the call to renewal has begun and that time in which it could be said that the project reached completion.” We live in such a time, and it is difficult.

The Service Committee, in this season of renewal, continues to press on. Within the next few months we intend to publish three booklets we hope will help in strengthening the Renewal to continue to be a grace for the church in the US:

✦ *There’s Always More: Expecting New Fire*, Sr. Nancy Kellar, SC, has compiled a nine-week growth seminar which can be given in three-week modules;

✦ *A Prayer Journal for Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, Therese Boucher has completed this booklet which can be used with Life in the Spirit Seminars, as a format for Pentecost preparation or for personal spiritual renewal;

✦ *Faith Sharing in Small Groups: the Vision and the Tools*, Sr. Nancy Kellar, SC, and Sr. Justin Wirth, SSND, have revised their original booklet to help prayer groups and others strengthen this crucial dimension of our lives.

Beyond these works, the Service Committee has had a dream for a number of years: a Center for the Renewal in the US that would be a place to train individuals in leadership skills and in the charisms that often accompany the call to leadership—a place to develop programs that could be taken on the road literally or by air, web, or radio—a place to train pastors in how to bring the grace of

Pentecost into the life of parishes. Eleven years ago we wrote in *Fanning the Flame*:

The introduction of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the charisms into the ordinary life of the parish will require great care, sensitivity, patience and discernment. Such introduction needs careful catechesis and appropriate timing. Consultation with an experienced pastor is recommended. This should not, however, discourage or prevent efforts toward the baptism in the Holy Spirit and charisms becoming accepted in the life of the parish (p. 23).

We continued:

An indispensable element in a renewed parish is ongoing conversion in the lives of the pastor and parish staff. Pastoral leaders must have not only the vision for spiritually-renewed parish, but the personal experience that will enable them to witness and minister the life of the baptism in the Spirit to others. This points to the vital importance of the formation of seminarians and the ongoing spiritual formation of parish clergy and staff in the baptism in the Spirit (p. 23-24).

Finally, “the recovery of the baptism in the Spirit and the charisms is needed in all the institutions of the church, religious orders, Catholic universities, associations of the faithful, specialized movements, all need this touch of the Holy Spirit today” (p. 23).

Allow me in this moment to be even more bold: I believe it is time for the Charismatic Renewal in the US to start a seminary for candidates for the priesthood. Several years ago, a top Vatican official told me in so many words that what the Renewal in the US needed was such a seminary. Such a seminary, amidst all the necessary instruction in church teaching and practice, would also focus on personal holiness and on how to be led by the Spirit.

Isn’t it time, in this season of renewal, this new springtime, this moment of grace amidst difficulty, to make such vision a reality? ♦

Friends of the NSC

By the time you receive this issue of *Pentecost Today*, the NSC will be halfway through our fiscal year. As of this writing, we are somewhat behind our budgeted income goals for 2002. If you did not receive or have not yet responded to our Pentecost appeal, we would like to hear from you.

Every donor and every gift enables this work of fostering the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church to continue. Please think of us during these summer months.

Fanning the Flame Partners

Last fall we launched Fanning the Flame Partners to stabilize our income for our ministry in the church. Simply put, Fanning the Flame Partners make a five-year pledge which can be paid annually, quarterly or monthly. There are various giving levels beginning at \$300 a year. If you are interested in more information, please give us a call at 1-800-338-2445.

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We ask that you please consider us, the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the United States, Inc., or Chariscenter USA, when you have your will drawn up or updated. A bequest to the National Service Committee will help continue the work of evangelization and service to the church and the Charismatic Renewal. ♦

Thank you!

Having served on the National Service Committee for about eighteen months, I have grown in my appreciation of the importance of the work we are doing—and in the recognition of the immensity of our task. Our vision statement, which you read on the front cover of each issue of *Pentecost Today*, is: “Renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church.” Each of those who serve on the NSC is committed to this vision. Each of us has experienced this “grace of Pentecost” in a unique way. Each is committed to offering his or her time, energy and giftedness for the sake of this vision.

Part of the role of the NSC is to articulate this vision in such a way that others “catch” the vision, that it is seen to be a work that is undertaken by many people, groups and communities. It is not simply the work of the NSC. It is not simply the work of Chariscenter USA. It is not simply the work of a few “leaders.” Rather, it is the work of all those who have experienced the transforming power of a “personal Pentecost”—baptism in the Holy Spirit—which renews, revives and rekindles the effects of our sacraments of initiation.

The most obvious and important way that we all can participate in this work is to *pray diligently* that the grace of Pentecost will be renewed in the life and mission of the church. Please include this intention in your daily intercessory prayer.

In the last issue of *Pentecost Today*, you were introduced to our three newest NSC members. This month I asked each of them to reflect on the work of the NSC and on this vision statement.

Fr. Richard Loch, from the Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania, writes:

I am grateful for the work of the NSC in “renewing the grace of Pentecost” because it reminds us that the Holy Spirit is always with us. The grace of the original Pentecost event was not just for one time or one group of people, but for all believers throughout time. We are so distracted by all that is going on in the world, and by the proliferation of the “self-help” gospel that fools us into think-

Ministry Update

by Virginia King



ing that we can solve all problems with our own inner strength. We can easily lose sight of the great gift of the Holy Spirit. The grace of Pentecost is the gift of the Holy Spirit who gives us strength far beyond what we can do ourselves. I am grateful that the NSC continues to proclaim the message that Pentecost is here.

Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner, SSND, from the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, writes:

The grace of Pentecost is dynamic. God explodes the seeds of a new springtime into the world through us. We are compelled to share what we ourselves experience: intimacy with God, a new or deepened experience of God’s love, forgiveness and guidance; a desire to hear from God in prayer, through Scripture and through community; a desire to praise and worship God and a willingness to be used by God in ministering love, mercy and healing. I am grateful for the grace of Pentecost, for the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon us and for the fruit that grows within us.

David Thorp, from the Archdiocese of Boston, Massachusetts, writes:

I’ve heard or read thousands of testimonies from people of all ages, from lay and religious and ordained, from every continent. People speak of their lives being revived and having new meaning, of marriages being saved, of vocations being received or renewed, of growing deeper in love with God, of being called and empowered for service to the church and the world. They speak of things both great and ordinary being done in and through them as they gave themselves to God. They speak of entering the fountain of God’s Pentecostal grace in Catholic Charismatic Renewal as the crucial event in their lives. I am committed to “renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church” so that others, thirsting for renewal, can be refreshed by that same fountain.

Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth! ♦

NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL CONFERENCE

September 13-15, 2002
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



Nancy Kellar, S.C.



Tom Curran



Bishop
Donald Wuerl



Msgr. Joseph
Malagrecia



Bob Canton



Ralph Martin



Aggie Neck



Bishop
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