

PENTECOST *Today*

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



Chairman's Corner

by Aggie Neck

A new zeal

I am certain that if we questioned 100 people on what they think “ecclesial maturity” is, we would get 100 answers. For me ecclesial maturity is coming to know the truth of the gospel, the hope that is in it and living and ordering our lives by that. It is this maturity in our spiritual life that urges us to speak out.

Do you remember when you first experienced Jesus and were baptized in the Holy Spirit? We could not contain the joy we felt and we wanted to share this wonderful experience with everyone we knew. Time has shown us that our confident witness is what attracts others to want to know more. Then what happened. We became “sophisticated.” We took on a sedate persona and walked in ways that were “acceptable” and did not “rock any boats.” This is not the maturity to which God calls us.

Oh, woe to us who have tasted the goodness of the Lord and have kept this treasure locked up inside and deprived so many of the wonder of a Holy Spirit empowered life. We kept it for the few who already knew and we discuss it among ourselves in our gatherings. God is serious about what he asks of us and procrastination is not an option, for these are urgent times.

“The Christian message does not inhibit men and women from building up the world, or make them disinterested in the welfare of their fellow human beings; on the contrary it obliges

them more fully to do these very things” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 52).

I think that asking for a new zeal is a good way to start. It does take a heart that has zeal for the Lord and the fire of the Holy Spirit to begin the task, but also to bring it to completion.

In order to know the Lord and mature in our walk we must be with the Lord on a daily basis in prayer. Then we can hear, understand and feel the prompting of the Holy Spirit showing us what the Lord our God is asking of us. “Ours is a time of continual movement which often leads to restlessness with the risk of ‘doing for the sake of doing’. We must resist this temptation by trying ‘to be’ before trying ‘to do’” (*NMI*, 15).

I believe ecclesial maturity is fulfilled when we are rooted in and stand on the firm foundation of the truth in Jesus. It is brought to completion when we bring it into our society. It isn’t only head knowledge we are to teach and proclaim, but the experience of the life that is ours after we have encountered the living Lord.

Declaring that there is a need for witnesses to “the things above” the Pope said, “This requires that the groups and communities of the Renewal be ever more places of contemplation and praise, where the heart of man is filled with the love of God, opens up to the love towards his brother and becomes capable of building history according to God’s design” (John Paul II – 2001 – *And Then Peter Stood Up*). ♦

Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee.



Editor's Desk

by Sr. Martha Jean McGarry

The Renewal as well as other groups and movements in the Church have been encouraged by Pope John Paul II to strive for ecclesial maturity. Maturity is not always something with which we wish to deal. Remembering that growth often causes some pain we tend to turn a deaf ear to any encouragement “to grow up.” However, growing can be fun. Christians do it all the time. It brings new life!

In this issue our writers will do their utmost to bring some understanding to what is meant by “ecclesial maturity” as well as present us with some practical and exciting means to achieve it.

Dr. Alan Schreck's article is challenging and full of insights. Check out his “HORSE” to get you moving in the right direction.

Charles Whitehead encourages us to embrace our mission and keep moving in the Spirit. Looking at stumbling blocks on our journey (**Michelle Moran**) and continuing the efforts to build community through the charisms we have received (**Fr. Bob Hogan**) are a couple of areas that would profit our exploration and reflection.

Marilyn Quirk gives witness to the movement of the Spirit through the *Magnificat* ministry and **Virginia King** unravels for us the charism of Word of Wisdom.

Our columnists, too, give us further thoughts on “ecclesial maturity.” Reading this issue I think you will find that it is not some kind of disease, but a blessing for each individual, the Renewal and our Church. ♦

Magnificat

A Ministry to Catholic Women

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. He who is mighty has done great things and holy is his Name.” (Lk. 1: 46-47, 49)

by Marilyn Quirk

Mary's beautiful hymn of praise has become the song of many of us who have been involved in *Magnificat, A Ministry to Catholic Women*, from its humble beginning in the Archdiocese of New Orleans on October 7, 1981. The Almighty has done great things for us and we know without a doubt that this ministry of his love and mercy to women was begun by God through the hands of Mary. Only God could have orchestrated and formed this beautiful work which has brought together and impacted the lives of tens of thousands of women and, through them, the lives of so many.

Magnificat draws its inspiration from the mystery of the Visitation (Lk. 1:39-56). We have tasted a portion of the joy Mary and Elizabeth experienced as they rejoiced together in the power of the Holy Spirit. Those of us who have had a personal encounter with the living God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit want to share this grace with our Catholic sisters. The gift we have received we want to give as a gift (Mt. 10:8).

Magnificat was born of the Charismatic Renewal and is nurtured by it. It was the inspiration of the late Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans, Stanley Ott, with the encouragement and approval

of retired Archbishop Philip Hannan. It is a private association of the Christian faithful, a canonical entity within the Catholic Church. Presently Magnificat has 70 chapters across the US, Canada, the Caribbean Islands, Malta, Poland and Africa. There are 15 chapters now in formation, including those in Ireland and Jerusalem.

Its primary mission is to evangelize and help Catholic women to grow spiritually into holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit. We do this mainly through a meal that can be simple or formal—a breakfast, a lunch, a tea or a dinner—in a relaxed social setting. There is time of prayer, fellowship, praise, intercession and a powerful testimony; usually from a woman whose life has been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Magnificat draws together women from all ages and socio-economic groups and many places in the Church. Many come who would never go to a prayer meeting or a charismatic event. Several priests are regularly in attendance, invited by friends or parishioners, and we often hear homilies based on their experience. We have found it to be a point of unity in the diocese, bridging many together within the Church. It is a door many enter to experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

John Paul II, in his apostolic letter to women, *“The Dignity and Vocation of Women,”* stated that it is only in the Spirit that women come to understand their true identity, their true femininity. He also quoted an excerpt from the message given at the close of the 2nd Vatican Council, December 8, 1965...“The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women imbued with the Spirit of the gospel can do much to aid mankind in not failing.”

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) wrote: “Woman is God’s weapon to combat evil... Her strength lies in an openness to the ways of the Spirit. Women who ‘forget themselves’ completely in imitation of Christ’s passion can change the face of the earth.”

Magnificat is not one person’s ministry, but the combination of a multitude of gifts placed at the service of God, with Mary, to make something beautiful for him. This woman-to-woman ministry, in the power of the Holy Spirit, has brought forth and embellished the unique gifts that God has entrusted to us as women for the building of his kingdom. It is not only a privilege to serve God in this exciting ministry, but also a blessing to be united in love and prayer with Godly women throughout the world. ♦



Marilyn Quirk serves as Coordinator of the Magnificat Central Service Team and has led this ministry for the past 25 years.

How to Strengthen Ecclesial Maturity in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal



Life in Community Acts 4, detail see page 9

by Alan Schreck, Ph.D.

When I wrote the first draft of this article, I assumed that everyone reading it would understand what “ecclesial maturity” means in the context of the Catholic Charismatic renewal. However, when a visiting in-law asked me what I was writing about, she thought “ecclesial maturity” referred to the Church’s hierarchy being mature enough to recognize the charisms of the laity and allow them to be exercised. Not a bad interpretation. Then I explained that I was writing about how the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, as a movement, was to become mature in its attitude and contribution to the Church. This seemed to help, but the discussion then shifted to what it meant for a movement to be “ecclesially mature” and why this is important. I referred to Pope John Paul II’s address to the gathering of the movements in Rome on Pentecost, 1998, where he spoke of a “new stage [that] is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity,” which is “a challenge. A road to take.” Since this papal address, many have written about “ecclesial maturity” and how this might be pursued and achieved in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In this article, I simply wish to contribute a perspective on the issue, and to make a few suggestions on how we might grow in “ecclesial maturity.”

There is, I believe, a particular challenge that the charismatic renewal faces in pursuing “ecclesial maturity.” I believe that there is still widespread misunderstanding (or differing understandings) of what the charismatic renewal movement is all about—even among “charismatics.” What is the goal of the movement? What are its essential characteristics? And further, in spite of all that Vatican II, Pope

Paul VI, and Pope John Paul II taught about what the “charisms” are and how they are part of the Church’s nature and essential to her life, there still remains a widespread view among Catholics that “charisms” are just for participants in a particular movement—the “charismatics”—but certainly aren’t for everyone. In fact, some Catholics view focus on the charisms or the use of charisms as something intrinsically immature; identifying these gifts of the Holy Spirit with a particular type of religious experience or religious emotionalism that they see in prayer meetings where people are “carried away” with raising their hands, swaying to emotionally charged music and even praying or singing aloud in gibberish that they call the “gift of tongues.” To speak of ecclesial maturity for “charismatics,” for many

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Catholics, is to insist that they put aside this “emotionalism” and grow up spiritually into sober, mature Catholics whose faith is not emotional or experiential, and who do not need “charisms” to live a good Catholic life and build up the Church. In short, to be “spiritually mature,” in this view, means to stop being “charismatic!”

Even after forty years, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal still faces two challenges with regard to her acceptance by the Catholic Church (and here I mean by the “average Catholic” even more than the hierarchy): 1) enabling Catholics to understand that being “baptized in the Holy Spirit” (or whatever name you prefer) is a grace of renewal of life in Christ that God offers to *all*, and that is beneficial to all, and 2) that “charisms” are not the marks of a particular movement, but that *every* Christian receives charisms (gifts of the Spirit for the building up of the Church and for the

spread of the faith) and needs to learn how to recognize one's own charisms and to use them in order for the Church to function properly and fulfill her mission. To say that a Catholic is "charismatic" should be accepted in the same way as it may be said that a Catholic is Eucharistic, sacramental, Marian, pro-life, socially concerned and so on.

In summary, "ecclesial maturity" means, for those involved in charismatic renewal, *not* to identify this renewal with a particular charism or charisms (such as the gift of tongues or prophecy), nor to equate being "baptized in the Holy Spirit" with a particular type of experience of God that all must have. "Ecclesial maturity" means, for those Catholics *not* involved in the charismatic movement to recognize that the Church is "charismatic" (as it is sacramental and hierarchical), which means that each Catholic possesses charisms to be discovered and used for the service of the Church and the world. It also means that every Catholic ought to desire and to seek a fuller grace of the Holy Spirit to deepen and enliven the relationship we have with Jesus and with the Father, a relationship which began at our baptism but must continue to grow. Hopefully Catholics will also come to understand that this is basically what "charismatic renewal" is really all about: a renewal of something that is essentially Catholic and Christian.

Having said this, I would like to reflect on how those in the charismatic renewal could grow in 'ecclesial maturity.' As a heuristic device, the word "horse" is an acronym for the goals I see. First, the letter "h" stands for two principles that are the foundations of ecclesial maturity: *holiness* and *humility*. "Strive for peace with all... and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). Growth in ecclesial maturity is only possible and attainable as individuals and groups are seeking that ongoing deepening of our relationship with God, and transformation into the image of God in his Son Jesus Christ, that we call the pursuit of holiness. "...as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct" (1 Pt. 1:15). Ecclesial maturity cannot be strengthened or attained in any movement, community, prayer group or parish unless the members understand that their goal is to be holy: to be progressively transformed by grace into the image of Jesus Christ; to live godly and God-like lives.

This quest for holiness requires humility. The greatest sin of members of the charismatic renewal (including me) for many years probably was *hubris*—pride. Charismatics

thought we were spiritually superior because God was working so evidently and powerfully among us in this renewal movement. We did glorify and praise God for this, but we were blind to the extent that it affected our attitudes. Then many communities and prayer groups experienced very dark and difficult times that brought to light areas of sin and weakness, including pride that "goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). However, it is maturity that recognizes that the revelation of sin and sinful attitudes is actually the mercy of God at work, inviting us to repent, to change and to attain holiness. Humility, which includes conviction of our sin and the need to repent, is the only path to holiness.



There are a number of results or "fruits" of the pursuit of holiness through humility that are signs of personal and ecclesial maturity. One of these is *openness* to the presence and work of the Lord in other movements and in the broader Church. A form of immaturity in the Catholic charismatic renewal is the failure to see God's 'hand' in other movements and in the broader Church. Ironically, sometimes Catholics could see the work of the Holy Spirit more

clearly in evangelical Protestant or Pentecostal churches than in other Catholic movements. The recognition of authentic workings of God in other Christian churches and communions is important for ecumenism, but Catholics in charismatic renewal must also recognize (and thank God for) how the Holy Spirit is at work in other Catholic movements and groups, 'even' in the 'normal' Catholic life of fellow Catholics in their parishes. Openness to the work of the Holy Spirit outside of charismatic renewal breaks down barriers and helps overcome "labels" that tend to divide instead of unify. Openness to the grace of God in the broader Church is a sign of ecclesial maturity and overcomes the "party spirit" that St. Paul once condemned in that very "charismatic" church in Corinth (see 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-9).

Related to this openness is the *respect* we must foster for other Catholics and especially for our ordained leaders: our bishops, priests and deacons. St. Francis of Assisi is an exemplary model of this respect. Despite the worldliness and dissolute lives of some of the clergy of his time, St. Francis always was obedient to and respectful of these 'elders' by virtue of their office and position. He chose to let the witness of holiness and poverty that he and his followers pur-

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Four blocks to ecclesial maturity

Sometimes, however we can be guilty of basking in the glory of yesterdays' Spirit and not making room for, or being open to, the new things that the Holy Spirit wants to do.

by Michelle Moran

Addressing lay movements and new communities at Pentecost 1998, John Paul II prophetically stated that a new stage was unfolding that of *ecclesial maturity*. He issued a challenge saying that “the Church expects from you the mature fruits of communion and commitment... there is an urgent need for powerful proclamation and solid in-depth Christian formation.”

St Paul wanted to feed the Corinthians on ‘solid food’ but found that they were immature and still needing milk (1Cor. 3:2). I remember meeting a priest in the early days of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Holy Spirit had really renewed his ministry and he was using the gifts to the full. However, when I met him several years later he told me that he had ‘moved on’ from the Renewal as he began to find it all a bit superficial. Clearly there is nothing lightweight about living life in the power of the Holy Spirit and using the charisms for the building up of the body of Christ. Sometimes, however we can be guilty of basking in the glory of yesterdays’ Spirit and not making room for, or being open to, the new things that the Holy Spirit wants to do.

Be open to the surprises of the Spirit In this year as we celebrate our 40th anniversary we need to be attentively listening to what the Spirit is saying to us in the Renewal. What are the Lord’s priorities for the next 40 years? Looking at the biblical pattern, after the liberation from slavery the Israelites were formed in the wilderness. They were being trained and moulded together as a community. Then when those who were still left crossed the Jordan a new era was inaugurated. They were now called to “take the land.” I am reminded of the words of Jesus, “to those who have been given much then much is expected” (Lk. 2:48). Through the graces of the Renewal we have all received so much and now is the time to allow the mature fruit to ripen.

Today I sense that there are four major blockages that can prevent us from fully embracing the ecclesial maturity to which John Paul II and subsequently Pope Benedict XVI have called us.

■ Spiritual gluttony

The culture in Western Europe and the United States is very materialistic. This has an influence on all of us, so in the Renewal, we too can adopt a consumerist mentality. We may have impressive collections of Christian books, CD’s and other resources. Many of us have frequently listened to some of the best preachers and teachers. We have attended numerous conferences and seminars. However, we keep on asking the Lord for more of his Holy Spirit. I firmly believe that the Lord has a lot more in store for us than we are currently seeing and experiencing but perhaps our spiritual gluttony blocks a more abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Maybe the Lord is asking us to look carefully at what we have done with the gifts and blessings that he has already bestowed on us. Have

we been good stewards using the gifts for the building up of the Church or do we need to repent because we have stockpiled the treasure in our own private storehouses?

■ Attachment to experience

One of the graces of the Renewal is coming to know Jesus in a personal way through the power of the Holy Spirit. However, in this experiential age where everybody is looking for the next buzz, we too, can become so attached to feelings and experiences that we are reluctant to move on. Like Peter and John at the Transfiguration we want to stay with the experience rather than letting the experience empower us for ministry. Imagine what would have happened if at Pentecost the disciples had just stayed with the experience! God wants us to grow up and know him as the God who transcends all experience. Indeed, sometimes to bring us to this place of maturity the Lord can seemingly hide his face from us. We remain steadfast to the Lord through faith not feelings. We are called, irrespective of our feelings, to proclaim the Good News and witness to those around us.

■ Tradition

Our 40th anniversary provides us with an opportunity to look back and give thanks for all that the Lord has done. However, even after such a short time there is a danger that we can become an established people of tradition. I visit some groups where the same people have been doing the same things in the same way for many years. When our programs, structures and organizations become too rigid then we can block the Spirit. We have taken control and there is often little room for the free reign of the Spirit to be amongst us. Consequently, the Renewal becomes old and stale and then with nostalgia we keep looking back to “the good old days.” The Lord has prom-

ised to make all things new. So we must seek the Lord to know what he is doing today and get behind it. We will then live the present moment with passion and look to the future with hope and confidence.

■ Comfort and complacency

In the early days there seemed to be so much excitement and so many new things to discover. Inevitably, with time, we can become comfortable or even complacent. This can lead to a lack of expectant faith and less receptivity to the new things of the Spirit. Then, instead of maturing, we grow old and tired. During the ICCRS 40th anniversary celebration at Pentecost 2006 Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, from the Pontifical Council of the Laity in the Vatican, gave us some timely advice. He said, “ecclesial maturity isn’t about growing old in the Spirit but about staying forever young. Never lose your youthfulness, your capacity to be amazed about the works of God and your commitment to the mission of the Church.” Clearly there is a difference between youthfulness and immaturity. Therefore, those who are elders in the Renewal need to show what it means to be forever young.

As we cross the 40-year threshold I believe that we are entering a new era of the Spirit. I am reminded of Psalm 1 where the tree planted by the living water yields its fruit in due season. For a tree to be healthy it needs deep roots. So ecclesial maturity is a call for us to continue to go deeper in the Lord and to grow tall with confidence. The graces that we have been given in Renewal are not for a fringe group of charismatics who like that sort of thing. They are for the whole Church. Archbishop Rylko told us that, ‘new movements are not just movements in the Church but the Church in movement.’ So as mature people let’s

Prayer Card



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

May the Holy Spirit who came on Jesus at his baptism open the heavens to those who do not know a living God. May the Spirit rest on them and may they hear the heavenly Father’s words of love.

May we allow the Spirit to lead us into the desert so that we can receive Jesus’ victory over our temptations and learn to live in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5: 22-23).

May we go forth in the power of the Spirit, anointed to bring Good News to the poor and liberty to captives.

not keep the graces of the Renewal to ourselves but let’s be willing to share all that we have been given with the Church and indeed with the whole world. ♦

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