

Publication of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

# PENTECOST *Today*

October/November/December 2002  
Volume 27, Number 4



**One body ..... 3**  
Vatican Council II envisions the church as a community which ministers both to itself and to the world. **Fr. Patsy Iaquina** looks at how baptism in the Holy Spirit empowers us make that vision a reality.

**Love ..... 7**  
“The capacity to love as God loves is offered to every Christian,” writes **Dorothy Ranaghan** as she explores this central mystery of our faith.

**Experiencing communion in our everyday lives ..... 5**  
**Victor Leuci** describes how the spirituality of communion is lived out in our families, parishes and beyond.

**Day to day grace upon grace ..... 6**  
**Fr. John Esper** shares how baptism in the Holy Spirit has helped him surrender more fully to the ever-present grace of God.

Chairman’s Corner ..... 2

From the Director ..... 13

Friends of the NSC ..... 14

Ministry Update 14

2002 Index..... 15

## LEADERS FOCUS

**Serving the community of our parish ..... 9**  
**Dean Condon** offers three steps to help charismatic groups be more effective in serving the needs of their parishes.

**Newsbriefs ..... 11**

**Pope addresses leaders ..... 11**

photo. © Dan Karmasek

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



## Chairman's Corner

by Aggie Neck

# Coming together to reflect the light of Christ

“The gift you have received, give as a gift” (Matt. 10:8). “As generous distributors of God’s manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another” (1 Pt. 4:10). We are called to be gift. We are gifted to be gift—gift to the church, gift to each other, gift to the nations. No one group or individual has all that is needed. Each gift is like a piece of a puzzle entrusted to God’s people. Alone we cannot be the full picture; alone we cannot accomplish every task. That is why we must work together.

“There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is over all, and works through all, and is in all” (Eph. 4:5-6). When every member of the body works with the realization that each member has a contribution and each member is given a gift for the whole body, we “form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature” (Eph. 4:13). The fullness of truth is in the body of Christ and not in any one group or individual. When we come together as that body, firmly united under the headship of Christ, we will see that “through Christ the whole body grows, and with the proper functioning of the members joined firmly together by each supporting ligament, builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:16). “If all members of the body were alike, where would the body be? There are indeed, many different members, but one body” (1 Cor. 12:19-20).

“By making himself known, Christ has not left us alone. The new people of God are born in the Spirit because it was God’s wish to sanctify and save mankind not individu-

ally, without any link among themselves, but he wanted to form them into a people who would recognize him in truth and serve him in holiness” (Pope John Paul II, Rimini, May 1, 2000).

The body of Christ can be compared to a precious stone with many facets. Each facet shows forth a portion of the light of Christ. Each facet manifests a portion of the giftedness that the Holy Spirit gives to the church. Together we bring the treasure of these gifts to enrich the church, to enrich each other, to enrich the nations. There can be no jealousy, no competition, no rivalry among the facets, for when there is, the light of Christ is dimmed and becomes shadowy.

“Whatever shape the Charismatic Renewal takes—in prayer groups, in covenant communities, in communities of life and service—the sign of its spiritual fruitfulness will always be a strengthening of communion with the universal church and the local churches” (Pope John Paul II in his audience with the ICCRS Council, March 14, 1992).

“A new century, a new millennium are opening in the light of Christ. But not everyone can see this light. Ours is the wonderful and demanding task of becoming its reflection” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 54).

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This is a publication of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the United States, Inc. The mission of the NSC is to stir into flame the grace of Pentecost within and beyond the church, to broaden and deepen the understanding that baptism in the Holy Spirit is the Christian inheritance of all, and to strengthen the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

The National Service Committee-Chariscenter USA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Contributions to defray the cost of this publication are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please mail to:

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# One body

by Fr. Patsy Iaquina

**A**s the vision of Vatican II continues to unfold, Charismatic Renewal is an integral part of this unfolding. In preparation for the Council, Pope John XXIII asked Catholics throughout the world to pray for a renewal “as by a new Pentecost.” The Council was an answer to that prayer. It has not changed the mission of the church to renew the face of the earth, but has spoken to how we are to carry out this mission. This mission is based upon participation—participation in the life of the Trinity. The community of God—Father, Son and Spirit—is impacting the earth in a new way at this time. The Lord Jesus has chosen us to enter this mystery wherever we find ourselves.

Prior to Vatican II most of the ministry was limited to what came from holy orders. During the Council the Holy Spirit, in one of the

many delightful surprises, made it very clear that the basic sacrament for ministry is baptism, not orders. The laity are called to participate in the life and mission of Jesus. The priesthood of the faithful is unfolded and the people of God are to mature and assume their roles in the marketplace. The laity are to proclaim God’s good news at all times and in all places. The laity are to be responsible stewards of the Spirit’s gifts, given for the benefit of all peoples. (The sweep of the Spirit was so strong that it even affected the bishops in attendance. The debate over collegiality was about to split the Council. Yet when the vote took place, ninety percent of the bishops voted for collegiality rather than curial centralization.) Participation in the life and mission of Jesus permeates the documents and affects everyone baptized in the Lord Jesus. This fact would not change even if the number of priests tripled tomorrow.

Photo: Dennis Alderson

## Excerpts from the Documents of Vatican Council II

It is not only through the sacraments and ministrations of the church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the people...Allotting his gifts according as he wills, he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices for the renewal and upbuilding of the church...Whether these charisms be very remarkable or more simple and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation since they are fitting and useful for the needs of the church.

*Lumen Gentium, n. 12*

The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the church. Through baptism and confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself...The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become salt of the earth.

*Lumen Gentium, n. 33*

From the fact of their union with Christ the head flows the laymen's right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to this apostolate...The Holy Spirit sanctifies the people of God through the ministry of the sacraments. However, for the exercise of the apostolate he gives the faithful special gifts...From the reception of these charisms, even the most ordinary ones, there arises for each of the faithful the right and duty of exercising them in the church and in the world...in the freedom of the Holy Spirit...in communion with his brothers in Christ and with his pastors especially.

*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, n. 3*

## The grace of Pentecost has made us bold to reach out with the gifts of God.

For the people of God to be who God calls us to be, we need evangelization which calls forth conversion. This is not merely church attendance but honest conversion, a transformation of mind and heart. We are to be firmly rooted in Jesus, to have a personal relationship with the Lord, individually and communally. Everyone is to be evangelized, including the people in the pews. Charismatic Renewal truly has been an instrument of God in this area. In baptism in the Holy Spirit we have been lifted from our pews much like the dry-bones-army of Ezekiel. Through the Holy Spirit seminars millions of people have come into a relationship with the Lord and his people. We have been challenged to move deeper in prayer. We have gathered together for prayer, witness, sharing, encouragement, support and teaching. Our music has helped the church make joyful praise to the Lord. Knowing that we are a gifted people, we share our giftedness with brothers and sisters. It is said that a relationship with Jesus is caught more than taught; and, certainly, the fire has caught and taken hold.

Along with RCIA and other renewal communities, Charismatic Renewal has developed a love for and study of the sacred scriptures. On fire with God's love, the scriptures help us to "put on the mind of Christ." We come to understand that the interior life and the external mission are one and the same. It is the great command of Jesus. Love of God and love of neighbor calls forth community. This is not an option, for the very nature of God is community. Where two or three come together in the name of Jesus, the Lord is present. It is the Spirit who calls us together. Whether informally or formally, large or small, structured or loose-knit, intense or relaxed, Christians are drawn together because of the one Spirit. This is where we share our common life and grow in relationship. From small faith communities to large covenant communities, there is a hunger to share the presence of Jesus among us.

The Christian community ministers to its own members and to all people beyond the community. The ultimate call is to bring all under the lordship of Jesus. Therefore gifts are called forth, developed and used for the common good. The people of God benefit from practicing the gifts within community, knowing that mistakes will be made and correc-

tion applied. Healing and wholeness come about in this process. The grace of Pentecost has made us bold to reach out with the gifts of God. Because we are growing at the same time as we are learning to use the gifts, there will be distortions now and then. When Paul tells us to correct, forgive and encourage one another, he is stating that the need is there to do this. The life and mission of Jesus is not tidy and neat, but messy and dirty. After all, conversion could very well begin with acknowledging sin and then moving from sin and its effects into the acceptance of the love of God. But the blessing is that we are progressing in the way, the truth and the life.

Putting out into the deep—as Pope John Paul II invites us to do in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*—we recognize the impossible task given us.



The potential is infinite, the gifts are unlimited. On a human level we are destined to fail, but this is not a human endeavor. With the Spirit of God we have been empowered for the impossible and we are assured of victory.

*Former Chairman of the National Service Committee, Fr. Patsy Iaquina is Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Bluefield, West Virginia.*

# Experiencing communion in our everyday lives



Photo: www.comstock.com

It is the heart's contemplation of the Trinity dwelling in us that enables us to see those around us as a gift from God and to make room for them.

by Victor Lenci

I would like to start by giving you three examples that illustrate the “spirituality of communion” that John Paul II talks about in his apostolic letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (see n. 43-45).

**T**he first took place one evening as my wife was saying prayers with our daughter just before going to sleep. Her kindergarten class was learning the Our Father and the Hail Mary and the parents had been encouraged to help their children learn these prayers. But, when my wife tried to get her to say the prayers before bed, she refused. Instead of trying a “blunt force” approach, my wife suggested that they sing the prayers, to which our daughter readily agreed, and they still sing these together most nights.

**T**he second took place on a college campus at the beginning of the winter semester. After an open invitation was given by a prayer group member at the end of Mass, I, a sec-

ond-year graduate student, decided to go and see what this “prayer meeting” was about (the bulletin had it lasting a half hour). While I found the exuberant prayer different (and somewhat uncomfortable) and the meeting rather longer than a half hour, it was the sense of community, of love for each other, present in those at the prayer meeting that drew me back again the next and the following weeks.

**T**he final example took place at a parish meeting for parents who had children attending the local Catholic school. At this meeting the school board representative for my parish shared that while there were serious discussions about school issues, there were no “arguments”—that each person present was focused solely on what was best for the children and acknowledged that everyone else there was also focused similarly, giving them a sense of solidarity, of communion, with each other. She also shared that that sense of communion was also strengthened by

everyone’s acknowledgement that the board’s function was to advise the pastor and not to set policy.

The final example agrees with Pope John Paul II’s call that we “know how to ‘make room’ for our brothers and sisters...resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy” (n. 43) and that “the structures of participation envisioned by canon law...are consultative rather than deliberative; yet...[no] less meaningful and relevant. The theology and spirituality of communion encourage a fruitful dialogue between pastors and faithful” (n. 45).

In the second example, my experience when first attending prayer meetings was that those present were living out “a spirituality of communion” which “indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also

[See Communion page 12](#)

You shall be my witnesses

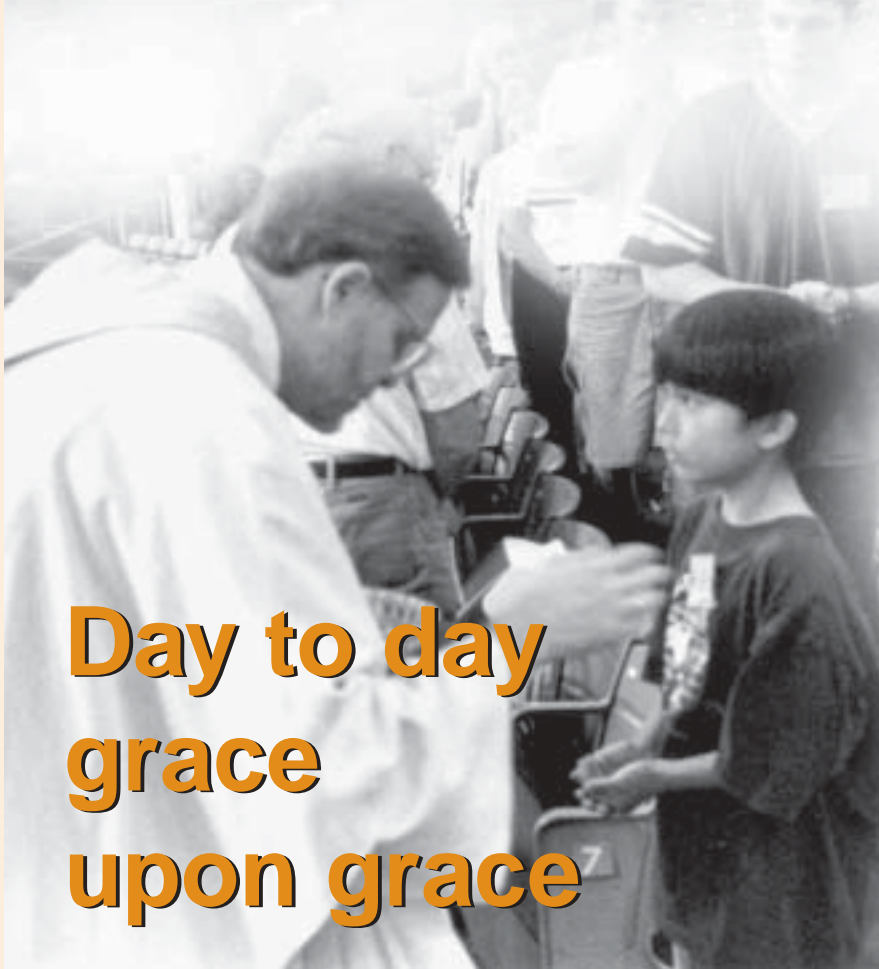


Photo: Vicki Williams

## Day to day grace upon grace

**Though more fully realized and embraced in this present day, the grace of my baptism was active and effective from the day of its reception.**

by Fr. John Esper

**G**iving witness to the Lord has always impressed me as better coming from those who had been around the block a time or two—having seen and done things along the way that made coming to the Lord interesting, or at least considered by most as a big change of heart. My story is not so much like that, but I claim the path God has me on as my own and, as such, as worthy of telling. I am unique enough as things go, but I suspect the value of my story will be that others may, in some small way, see themselves in it and realize how faithful and constant God has always been for them.

I was born in the early fifties and seven days later baptized into Christ Jesus in the Catholic Church. Unaware, but not knowing otherwise, that was the day I was saved and the day I claimed—through the faith of my parents—Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Admittedly not a personal acceptance of Jesus, it was nonetheless the day of my salvation because it was what God had done for me in Christ Jesus on the cross. It was God's gift and nothing I gained by my own merit. Though more fully realized and embraced in this present day, the grace of my baptism was active and effective from the day of its reception.

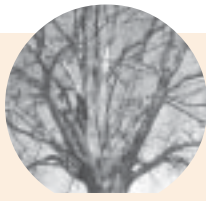
As I look at my life it is clear to me that God has always been with me and I have always tried to be present

to God. I was taught to love God, keep the commandments and value the gospel. I was taught that Jesus loved me and that he died to forgive my sins. I believed what I was taught and have tried to love Jesus, as I knew him, mindful that I needed his forgiveness.

**M**y sins and resistance to the love of Jesus (I was not yet mindful of the Holy Spirit) was not so much the kind of sin made on trips around the block. What had kept me from a fuller and richer awareness of this love is what I believe keeps most of us from a deeper walk with Jesus: I didn't believe in or trust myself. I lived behind a mask of fear and the defenses that those with wounded self-esteem normally hide behind. I believed sin was greater than grace and I acted as such. Now I know otherwise. Grace is always the greater. Love overpowers sin—always.

I continued to grow in age and in wisdom (though more quickly in age) and knew that God was with me. After college and in my late twenties I went to the seminary and began to discover and accept my true inner self. Grace and salvation became more real and could be applied in a real way to my personal struggles. I learned the language, I suppose, that taught me that God was actively working in my life and was in fact using me for his purposes. Grace became real because I knew that

[See Grace page 12](#)



## Spiritual Formation

# Love

**M**y father had such large, strong hands. The fingers were long, the nails square and the veins prominent. On our many long walks, I was at eye level with those hands. In them was captured both his strength and tenderness, and holding on to his hand, I was free, safe and loved.

God is love. Those of us who have known the love of an earthly father have inched closer to an experience of our Father God, and have an obligation to share that with others. If we love God at all it is because he first loved us. Being the child of a loving father teaches that to us. As children we may have confused our response of love with our parents' knowledge, wisdom, power and authority. Adolescence breaks that illusion for us. Teenagers often see both mom and dad (alas rightly) as basically flawed. Yet those who are most loved usually come to see that the "no strings attached" parental love is present to them even when they least deserve it. Yet, scripture says that even if these desert us, God cannot. We are graven on the palm of his hand. Our Father can't help it. His steadfast love lasts forever. This *besed*, this faithful covenant love of God, is who he is.

Our Father so loved us that he sent us his only Son. To love our Father in return with all our heart and soul and strength means to love him revealed in Christ with Christ's own love in the power of the Holy Spirit. God would not be love without being all three of these persons. Love requires a lover, a beloved, and their relationship. Dom Chautard prays this truth:

Father all holy, thou dost contemplate thyself forever in the Word, thy perfect image—thy Word exults in rapt joy at thy beauty—and, Father and Son, from your joint ecstasy, leaps forth the strong flame of love, the Holy Spirit.

The wonder is that in baptism, our Father makes us one with his Son, which draws us into his own love life. Why is this such a big deal? All who are baptized have waltzed right into the extraordinary freedom of the sons of God. Freedom and love go together.

**F**or many years, one of my favorite rock singers has been Sting. Originally a member of the group "The Police," Sting, who writes most of his own songs, eventually branched out as a solo performer. His lyrics are often profound. One of his more famous songs has this refrain: "If you love someone, set them free...free, free, set them free." His grammar may drive me crazy, but the thought behind his words is exactly right. Love is initiated in freedom, and it results in freedom. In John's Gospel (8:26) we read that if the Son has set you free, then you are free indeed. In him we are free of sin and death, and even better, in him we are made sons and daughters of his Father, our Father, which puts our hand in his. Our daddy loves us. To recognize this "truth" is staggering in its consequences.

I watched a TV program a few months ago about a man who had been wrongly accused of a murder over twenty years ago,

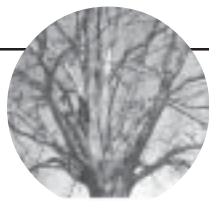
but who now, because of new evidence that had surfaced, had been released from prison. He was beside himself with joy. He was filled with emotion and gratitude. He forgave all those who had been involved in his wrongful imprisonment, and

said he just wanted to live his life in the freedom which he had learned never to take for granted, in whatever time he had left. I felt I was a kindred spirit to that ex-prisoner. When I think of the fact that the Father loves me enough to want to set Christ free to live his life in and through me, I feel sprung from the prison of the law that accuses me daily with the realization that I am not worthy or holy enough. True as that may be, it doesn't matter. My Father loves me. I don't have to earn God's favor. I already have it.

**H**aving a heart for evangelization may well mean that I have experienced the power of God's love freeing me to the point where I want to go out to others and open prison doors and set the other captives free. Love by its nature is shared anyway, and we wouldn't want to stand accused by the words of 1 John 4:20: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his



**All who are baptized have waltzed right into the extraordinary freedom of the sons of God. Freedom and love go together.**



## Spiritual Formation

brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.” We love God if we keep his commandments, and his greatest commandment is that we love him the most, and others as ourselves. This capacity to love as God loves is offered to every Christian. He not only requires that we love, but he makes it possible. He puts his incarnate love into us directly through the Holy Spirit.

**S**t. Francis used to tell his brothers: “Preach the gospel everywhere. If necessary, use words.” Even if we are not great preachers and feel intimidated by the word “evangelist,” that is how the world will come to know God—by our love. We get love freely and it frees us to give love away. Alone, of all that we do with our

lives, love will survive. Buildings decay. Careers end. Books crumble. The greatest brains can be consigned to oblivion. Only love and what love forms endure. Peter Kreeft puts it succinctly. Love, he says: “...is like a ball in a game of catch. Throw it and it will come back to you. Hold onto it and that ends the game.” Love is like having a game of “catch” with your dad, one with big, strong, yet tender hands. ♦

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## Love

### Outline

- Knowledge of an earthly father’s love helps us understand the love of God.
- We love God because he loves us first.
- God is *hesed* (faithful covenant love).
  - We love him back with his own love.
  - To say *God is love* implies a Trinity.
- In baptism we are drawn into the love life of God.
  - We become “sons and heirs.”
  - We become free.
- Evangelization is sharing that freedom with others. Love must be shared.

### Discussion Questions

- Little children sing the song “Oh, how I love Jesus...because he first loved me.” What is your response to the theology behind that song?
- If God is a triune love relationship and we are made in his image, what does that say about how we should live so as to best reflect his image in the world?
- What is the relationship between love and freedom?
- What does love from God and for God have to do with love for others?