

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

Healing the land

There are many facets to healing: healing of the mind, healing of the soul or spirit, physical healing, healing of the emotions, and inner healing. There is, however, another type of healing: the healing of the land.

Webster's Dictionary offers some insights. "Heal: To restore to original purity or integrity. To return to a sound state." Our nation and our world are in need of such a healing: a restoration of original purity and integrity, a return to a state of soundness and wholeness.

How often do we quote 2 Chronicles without really paying attention to what is implied? "And if my people upon whom my name has been pronounced humble themselves and pray and seek my presence and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from heaven and pardon their sins and revive (heal) their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

In the interpretation offered in his book, *Praying for the Government*, Derek Prince points out that this passage is not for all people. This passage is directed to the "people upon whom my name has been pronounced." That is those who know the Lord, those who have accepted him as their Lord and Savior. That is us.

"Does any other nation change its gods?—yet they are not gods at all! But my people have changed their glory for useless things. Two evils have my people done: they have forsaken me, the source of living waters; they have dug themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that hold no water" (Jer. 2:10, 13).

This nation has strayed too far from God. This nation has allowed an expression of religious freedom for things that are no gods at all while placing the one true God on trial. This nation seems to be "at war" with Christianity. Those things that have been held dear to our ancestors and to us are being torn

down, symbols removed, sin justified and values ridiculed. Those who speak out against sin are declared judgmental. If you proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord you are considered out of touch with "reality." We must continue to declare the reality of the spiritual realm. The real world is the kingdom of God and this world is passing away.

Many times in prayer I cry out to the Lord for his mercy and his peace for this nation and for all the nations. I ask him to grant us this, even though we don't deserve it. I ask that for the sake of the righteous God would spare the nations. I know that when Abraham asked God's mercy for Sodom and Gomorrah, he bargained and God agreed to spare them for the sake of ten righteous. I try to calculate how many righteous it would take for the whole world to be healed, to be restored to its original purity and integrity. Then I realize it is all grace.

Does this mean we don't do anything? Certainly not. In the apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Pope John Paul II has proclaimed, "The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living" (n. 30).

A healing of our land is a healing that deserves our utmost attention, our zealous efforts and our passionate prayers. Those of us who have become temples of God's Holy Spirit, are not only called upon by God to proclaim the good news of his kingdom, but qualified by God himself for such a mission. Let us stir into flame the gift of God's Holy Spirit and rouse each other to fervent intercession for the healing of our land.

Hear the cry of your people, Lord. Have mercy on us and heal our land. ♦

Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee.

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Restoring the gifts of healing

Reflections on thirty-five years of healing ministry

by *Barbara Shlemon Ryan, RN*

Healing services have become commonplace in Roman Catholic Churches throughout the world. It is not unusual to learn of someone with a terminal illness being declared “healed” by the medical community after receiving the “laying on of hands.” Recently a couple brought their 3-year-old son to a Eucharistic healing service where the pastor and several prayer ministers prayed for the child. He had been diagnosed with a malignant tumor of the bladder and surgery was scheduled for the following day. When the surgeon performed the procedure he was astonished to find the tumor had completely disappeared and there was no trace of cancer in the boy’s body.

The opportunity to attend healing services in the Catholic Church was not always as readily available as it is today. The first seven years of the modern

Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement were devoid of any form of healing services on a national level. Teachings on the reception of spiritual gifts placed strong emphasis on the charisms of speaking in tongues, interpretation and prophetic words, but gifts of healing were generally avoided in prayer meetings and national conferences.

The reason for this oversight by Renewal leaders was an expressed fear that people might focus on a “selfish need to get healed” instead of the “more important need for spiritual growth.” Teachings on healing and healing services were not encouraged in the early years of the Renewal. When someone with the gift of healing was invited to speak to a charismatic gathering, the leaders would program much praise, worship, witnessing and teachings into the event and ask the healing minister to give a short and

The charism of healing came out of the closet, never again to be “on the fringe” of the Renewal!

simple service in order to avoid focusing on this charism. Thus healing remained on the fringe of the Renewal and continued to be equated with saw-dust-floor tent meetings.

Francis MacNutt is credited by many with breaking the taboo against this charism. As a Dominican priest his workshops and seminars on healing began to break down the barriers of ignorance and misunderstanding among Catholics. His insistence on the centrality of healing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ eventually influenced the National Service Committee to permit the first national public healing service to be held at the 1974 Na-

From the beginning of my personal spiritual journey in 1965, I was convinced that healing prayer was an integral component of the medical profession.

tional Conference at Notre Dame. The persons who participated in that historically memorable event were: Bobbie Cavnar, Fr. Tom Forrest, Fr. Francis MacNutt, Fr. Michael Scanlan, Sr. Breige McKenna and myself. At least 30,000 were present in the Notre Dame football stadium that weekend and many were healed (including one legally blind woman who had her sight restored). The charism of healing came out of the closet, never again to be “on the fringe” of the Renewal!

The Catholic Church has a long history of legitimizing the charism of healing. More than one hundred years of Lourdes pilgrimages plus the many miracle cures associated with the saints makes healing prayer less suspect and more acceptable than in some mainline Protestant churches. However it is important to note that Protestants anointed with gifts of healing (i.e., Kathryn Kuhlman, Agnes Sanford, and Tommy Tyson) were very influential in launching many Roman Catholics into healing ministries.

In recent years, a renewed appreciation of the healing power of the Eucharist has prompted the scheduling of regular healing Masses in nearly every diocese in the United States. Participants in these services are often reminded of the prayer recited prior to receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ: “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.”

Recently I received a letter from a woman who was given a diagnosis of an aggressive form of breast cancer necessitating

chemo and radiation. The first chemo treatment knocked her out for two days with nausea and exhaustion. Before the second one, she went to the chapel and asked to receive Holy Communion. As she received the sacred host, she said, “Jesus, I’m sorry to be medicating your body in a couple of hours, but would you fight tooth and nail with your glorified body so the side effects are minimal? Thank you in advance.”

She says, “It was so marvelous how I never again got sick even one more time, nor was I ever so weak that I had to miss Mass.” She also says, “Every Catholic should think about receiving Communion before any medical procedure.”

Catholic belief in the power of blessings brought the use of sacramentals (i.e., blessed salt, water and oil) back into common usage. The early church encouraged Christians to routinely bless their sick family members with oil and there is a current trend back to this tradition.

From the beginning of my personal spiritual journey in 1965, I was convinced that healing prayer was an integral component of the medical profession. As a registered nurse I often prayed with my patients and they frequently reported feelings of peace and serenity. Even if the medical diagnosis remained critical, their faith level seemed to increase. It is interesting to note that the medical community in the United States has begun considering the importance of spiritual care of the sick. Nearly all medical schools include a course on spiritual healing in

which the students are encouraged to look beyond current medical treatment.

“We want to tell patients that they can have a medical approach, a spiritual one or a combination”, says Dr. Dale Matthews, an internist at Georgetown University. “There is a growing sense that traditional medicine is coming to its limits,” he states. Several years ago Matthews started asking patients if they wanted to pray with him. “If there are no atheists in the foxholes, then it is unethical for doctors to ignore a person’s religious beliefs,” he reasons.

What about those who retain their infirmities despite repeated prayer efforts? Years of experience have taught me to stop expending energy asking, “Why aren’t they all healed?” and to recognize the problem is too complex for my mind. I have learned to direct my efforts toward praying for the sick, leaving the results up to the Creator who is all-knowing and all-loving. I have absolutely no doubt that God wants wholeness for all of us and I await the day when “there will be no more death, no more mourning or sadness, the world of the past has gone” (Rev. 21:4). ♦

A registered nurse, Barbara Shlemon Ryan is President of Beloved Ministry. One of the founding members of the Association of Christian Therapists, she travels nationally and internationally as a retreat director, conference speaker and author. Barbara and her husband, Tim, reside in central Florida.



In the palm of God's hand

by Fr. Richard J. Loch

Jwent to my first charismatic prayer meeting during my freshman year of college. Like so many others who were drawn to the Renewal in the late sixties and early seventies, I was attracted to the experience of God's love. I already loved God and the church, and I had answered God's call to serve by entering the seminary after high school. Something happened when I started attending the prayer meeting and the Life in the Spirit seminar. When I was prayed over for baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gift I received manifested itself with tears. I realized for the first time how much I was loved by God and I was overwhelmed. My experience echoed the First Letter of John, "... not that we have loved God, but that he loved us..." and it dramatically changed my relationship with God. My love and work were no longer only attempts to please God, but became my response to the love God pours out on me.

Our God is a loving God who generously pours out his gifts upon us. I was amazed at the beauty and power of these gifts. The gifts of praise, prophecy and tongues united, uplifted and empowered our prayer time. After the prayer meeting there was time for ministry. We prayed over the sick for their aches, blood pressure and successful surgery. God's gift of healing became more and more believable as we heard testimonies from those who claimed to be healed.

When I was ordained a priest I experienced the great joy of celebrating the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and did so with the faith that it truly is a sacrament of healing. Over and over again I have been amazed at the hopeless situations that have been drastically turned around after receiving this sacrament. People have recovered from serious surgery, survived head trauma, and pulled through chemotherapy.

I have also had times when I stood in disappointment because the miraculous healing I had so fervently prayed for

and desperately hoped for did not happen. These are the times that call for real faith in knowing what to say or not say in the midst of disappointment and grief. The darkness of those moments could easily overshadow the light of Christ's victory, but for me there was always at least a flicker that moved me to go on and not lose faith.

My own time to cry out for healing came on November 27, 1991. I had gotten up that morning and was about my usual routine of prayer and preparation for the day. There was a little votive candle that I lit while I prayed. At one point as I walked from my bathroom into my bedroom I smelled smoke. I continued into my study where I saw a small fire burning in the corner of the room (at least I perceived it as being small). My initial impulse was to run back into the bathroom and fill a wastebasket with water. By the time I came back the entire side of the room was engulfed. I threw the water on it, but it did little good. Then I went for the door. The door would not open. I pulled and pulled but it would not budge. There was no place to go.

This was the most terrifying thing I have ever experienced. I remember thinking, "It's all over," and "I can't believe my life is going to end this way." I sat on the floor, began to say the Act of Contrition, braced my leg into the door frame and grabbed the door knob for one last pull. It opened!

I looked at my arms and realized that the skin on my arms and hands had melted and was hanging from me like melted wax. The janitor soon arrived and took me to the ER. A few hours later the hospital determined that the burns were too much

When I pray over someone I do so with gratitude in my heart for what the Lord has done for me, and I ask the Lord to do the same for the one I'm praying with.

[See Palm page 10](#)



Abounding hope: 2003 National Conference renews participants

by Virginia King

“Remove all bounds to hope—bring to life the culture of Pentecost in the power of the Holy Spirit.” This was the powerful theme for the National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference which was held in San Antonio, May 30–June 1, 2003. As is true each year, when we show up, the Lord does a mighty work!

I was filled with hope simply by being in the presence of hundreds of people who had gathered to praise Jesus, the source and summit of our hope. I was filled with hope when I listened to a testimony of a San Antonio teen-ager who was prompted by the Holy Spirit to come to the convention center, even though she didn’t know anything about Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and whose faith was enlivened during the weekend.

I was filled with hope even as the Lord challenged me through the presenters to

deeper commitment, even to the point of praying for the grace of martyrdom. Each of the testimonies and teachings contributed an important piece to the big picture.

I bought three copies of the tape of the talk given on Sunday morning by Fr. Fio Mascarenhas. I knew I needed to have extra copies to give away! His testimony of being transformed from total despair to radiant hope by the power of the Holy Spirit was one of the most inspiring I have ever heard. If this had been the only message of the weekend, it would have been worth the time and expense to attend. But it was just one of many such messages!

There were many highlights of the weekend including having both Archbishop Patrick Flores and auxiliary Bishop Tom Flanagan, of the San Antonio Archdiocese, presiding at the opening and closing Masses respectively. What a welcome the people

of San Antonio gave to all the attendees at this National Conference!

We were blessed with an outstanding bi-lingual (Spanish and English) music ministry, with edifying testimonies and with energetic and challenging teachers. There were, at certain times, three different sessions simultaneously in Korean, Spanish and English. In addition there was a Youth Explosion for the teen-agers and Children’s Ministry for the younger ones.

Even before the Conference officially began, there was a small group of pilgrims who spent three days touring the missions of the San Antonio area, praying and preparing for the blessings of the Conference. In addition, there was a Day for Clergy which attracted seventy priests and deacons to a time of teaching and ministry led by Fr. Bob DeGrandis. Forty-nine religious education directors and other parish personnel

attended a day of teaching about integrating the Life in the Spirit Seminar into parish Confirmation preparation programs.

Tapes of the sessions at this conference may be ordered by contacting the San Antonio Renewal Center at 210-226-7545.

Now is the time to mark your calendar for the 2004 National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference which will be held in Lowell, Massachusetts, June 25–27. It’s worth the effort and expense to gather together once a year with so many wonderful brothers and sisters! I hope to see you there! ♦

A member of the National Service Committee, Virginia King serves as Director of Western Washington Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the Archdiocese of Seattle.



Spiritual Formation

by Dorothy Ranaghan

Greater Works

What are the works of Jesus? The answer to that question is daunting enough, until we try to make sense of this promise of Jesus: “Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing...[in fact,] he will do even *greater* things than these, because I am going to the Father...” (John 14:12). Whoa! That’s staggering. The works of Jesus, according to his own words, were to “preach the good news to the poor...proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed” (Lk. 4:18). His actions show him doing all that and more—healing the deaf, the crippled, the lepers and the possessed. Even the dead were raised. How are we supposed to top that?

Traditionally, the answer to that question has been that through the power of the Spirit, whom Jesus sent after his return to the Father, our greater works are not in the nature of the events themselves, but in number and scope. For example, more people were brought to life in Christ after the initial sermon of Peter at Pentecost (three thousand in one day) than is recorded for Jesus during his entire ministry. This view sees the “greater works” in reference to the immense multitudes brought to the Lord by the ministry of the apostles. Their influence covered the whole Roman world, while Jesus never traveled beyond the boundaries of Palestine.

Logic carries the weight of that argument. Yet I would be leery of limiting the power of the Holy Spirit. In the power of that Spirit, Christ continues his ministry today—in me and in you—and I don’t think we have begun to tap that power. We, who are collaborators of Jesus in his work, act as Christ, in Christ. What does Christ in us wish to do? “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you” (Jn. 15:7). What is the “whatever” that we wish?

It has been thirty-six years since we began to experience healings and miracles in the wake of the great Pentecos-

tal movement known as the Charismatic Renewal. We have come to know that there is more power in the life of the Spirit—and greater works for us as Christians—than we had previously come to expect. But in the last five years, it has become abundantly clear that there is still...“more.” Much more. The Lord seems to be stirring a renewal of expectant faith and signs and wonders. I have seen more healings in the last few years, hundreds of them, than I did in the previous thirty years of charis-

If faith is the key, then the door through which we unlock the miraculous is compassion.

matic life. In my own community, the People of Praise, it is linked to the increasing awareness of our being Christ

in and for the world. Boldness and compassion are more evident as that realization deepens. The end result is doing more of what Christ was doing—and wants to continue to do—with power.

Some of the recent healings I have seen include the restoration of sight to a girl blinded in an accident, deliverance of a young man from alcohol and cocaine addiction, reversal of a heart condition, the straightening of a ureter coiled dangerously around an artery, healing of an infection in an arm that was scheduled to be amputated, and miraculous healing of both a baby with a life threatening disorder and a man with a terminal illness. If not greater works than Jesus did, these results of prayer are certainly greater works than *we* have done before. There is always “more.”

The works of the disciples, which proceed from the Holy Spirit, continue the ministry of Jesus. It isn’t over. Christ lives in us by the power of the Spirit. Do we believe that? Does it change the way we think and act? Expectant faith is clearly a key to miracles, those signs of the revelation and salvation of Jesus. I find myself echoing the words of C.S. Lewis: “A far inferior degree of faith is, I hope, acceptable to God. Even the kind that says, ‘Help thou my unbelief.’”

If faith is the key, then the door through which we unlock the miraculous is compassion. When a believer is moved by genuine compassion, he/she is moved by God’s love. Scripture seems to indicate that if we follow that



prompting, we will see miracles. If we ignore it, we frustrate the plan of God. The heart of Christ was moved with compassion when he healed the blind beggars, cured the sick, fed the multitude. He wept with compassion for Lazarus. Then he raised him from the dead. "Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing."

I want to be an "anyone." It means putting on the mind and heart of Christ, letting him be formed in us, so that we want to do what he wants to do. Then, when we pray, the Father will dance and rejoice over his Son, whom he will not refuse. "Signs will accompany those who believe" (Mk. 16:17).

How is our faith? Do we believe we have power over our situation, over sickness, nature, even death? Do we believe that we have the power to calm wind and waves, to change governments, to turn back armies, to do whatever has to happen, to do whatever the Father wants to do?

Do we ache with compassion to do the very things the Father desires? We may see mountains move when we do. Don't worry. I've read the scholars. I know all about Semitic hyperbole in biblical language. But, the Hebrews believed that the mountains held the sky in place, like pillars defining their universe. When Jesus talked about moving mountains, therefore, some believe he was implying that he and his followers could undermine the foundation, and change the very shape of the world. I believe such greater work is not only possible, but that it is our task. Are the desires of our hearts one with those of God, or are our puny, hardened and divided hearts limiting the work of Christ? When both we, and the mountains, begin to sense the presence of Christ within us, the trembling will begin.

HOLY SPIRIT POWER CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

By Bob Williams

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Outline

- A. Doing "greater" works than those of Jesus—the standard explanation of the text.
- B. Charismatic Renewal has taught us not to underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit.
- C. The role of expectant faith and compassion in experiencing "more."
- D. Moving mountains; changing the world.

Discussion Questions

- ▲ What does expectant faith mean to you?
- ▲ In what way is compassion a precursor to miracles?
- ▲ Since Christ is in you, how should that affect your prayer to the Father?
- ▲ What things could be involved in changing the world as we know it?

This column concludes our twelve-part series on Spiritual Formation. The Editorial Board wishes to express its deep appreciation to Dorothy Ranaghan for sharing her gifts and wisdom over these past three years. ♦

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