

PENTECOST *Today*

October/
November/
December
2010

**Living your charisms,
Renee Marazon p 3**

**Walter Matthews on the
culture of Pentecost p 4**

**The prayer group
journey p 6**

**Prayer groups:
Positioned to be
a blessing
Rita Guinaugh p 8**

**Pentecost
in Assisi
Tammie Stevens p 10**

Francis,

rebuild

my

church

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



NSC Executive Committee Corner

by Judith Hughes

I am in awe of the way God works!

I received a call in late May from Fr. Richard Loch, Chairman of the National Service Committee. He wanted to share a life changing decision. After many years of being a priest in Scranton Diocese, he felt called to become a Benedictine monk. It was a joy to hear the excitement in his voice. He would be entering the monastery July 1st.

As the elected member of the Executive Committee (Fr. Dave Pivonka is the appointed member of the Executive Committee) I would now be responsible for chairing the NSC meetings until a new chairperson is elected in January. When I fully realized what was happening, I was really shaken!

I began to review the times I had said “yes” to God, not thinking where he would place me. Looking back over the past 35 years I know that when I experienced prayer meetings and then Holy Spirit Seminars, I fell in love with the Lord—could not get enough prayer, scripture or Eucharist to satisfy my hungry heart and spirit.

The Charismatic Renewal Center opened in my Diocese. Volunteers were needed. After prayer and discussion with my husband, I became a dedicated and committed volunteer. What an opportunity God had provided for me.

Twenty-six years ago, my husband died at age 52. I now needed a job to support my family. Where was I going to

get a paying job? One of my favorite Scriptures was Jeremiah 29:11. God has a wonderful plan for my life if I seek him with all my heart, he will provide. That became my prayer: seeking, asking, show me Lord, provide for me. One day the Bishop called and offered me a paying job to work full time continuing my work in the ministry of Catholic Charismatic Renewal. My prayers were answered.

My job grew in responsibilities, eventually becoming Co-Director. I became involved in many outreaches traveling throughout the country and within our Diocese. Each time I said “yes” to God, he stretched me and took me to places I never dreamed possible.

I was a member of the Association of Diocesan Liaisons which was a gathering of priests, deacons and lay people working in Charismatic Renewal in their Arch/Dioceses. I received so much from this wonderful group of people and was always ready and willing to serve them in any way.

Being elected to the NSC has been another blessing for me. I have been challenged and have learned to serve with a Committee of dedicated and committed members to serve the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

I continue to learn the true meaning of “Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.” I look forward to the months ahead with excitement and enthusiasm to what God is going to do. He keeps moving us forward as we are willing to trust in his plan for us. May your “yes” to God, as well as mine, bear much fruit. ♦

Judith Hughes, from the Diocese of Norwich, Connecticut, serves on the Executive Committee of the NSC.



Editor's Desk

by Sr. Martha Jean McGarry

Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices...

Once again we turn to God with hearts of thanksgiving for the graces we have received through the years of our journey in the Renewal. Several articles in this issue turn our attention to prayer groups and the blessings they have been and continue to be, not only to the Renewal, but to our Church. Are prayer groups still vital today? You will want to read *Join the Journey* article on pages 6–7 and **Rita Guinaugh's** challenging article.

What does “renewal of the grace and culture of Pentecost” mean for us? See **Walter Matthews' reflection** on this dimension of our Mission Statement on pages 4–5.

Tammie Stevens gives us an excellent overview of the *School for Intercessors* held in Assisi this past year. Those involved in this ministry will particularly glean nuggets of wisdom to strengthen their ministry.

In their booklet, *Fanning the Flame*, Frs. George Montague and Kilian McDonnell state: “A life baptized in the Spirit is marked both by an experience of dynamic union with God and an experience of charisms given by the Spirit.” In this issue we begin a series on how our ministry can be empowered by the charisms we have received. **Renee Marazon's** outstanding introduction of the topic sets the stage for us. ♦

Praise God for his wondrous deeds! Together let us praise his holy name for his countless gifts of love.

Cover photo: Tammie Stevens. A replica of the San Damiano Cross before which St. Francis had his vision to rebuild the church.

The pathway to ministry and service: Living your manifestation of the Spirit —your charisms!

by Renee A. Marazon

To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit (1 Cor 12:7). Do you know what your manifestation is? In other words, do you know how it is that the Holy Spirit works through you to bring Christ to the world and the world to Christ?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to the manifestations of the Spirit as “charisms” and on two occasions, charisms are spoken of in combination with the word “ministries.” First, in the following passage, “The Church...is the place where we know the Holy Spirit...in the charisms and ministries by which the Church is built up” (CCC #688) and again in this passage, “The laity can also feel called, or be in fact called, to cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, for the sake of its growth and life. This can be done through the exercise of different kinds of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord has been pleased to bestow on them” (CCC #910).

These two passages situate charisms at the heart of all ministries. In fact, our ministries are to be carried out according to our bestowed graces and charisms, never apart from them. Yet, few of us truly know about and intentionally operate in our Spirit-bestowed charisms. To be unaware of these two realities in our lives is to truly miss the special blessings and graces given to us for ministry and service in the Church.

Each of us has been anointed to carry out our ministries using the charisms

we have been given for, as St. Paul says, some benefit. This benefit is indeed for the fulfillment of the Church’s mission—to bring Christ to the world and the world to Christ. Our ministries are not our work but rather the work of the Spirit in us and through us. This is precisely why, the more aware we are of our own manifestations of the Spirit and those of others, the more prepared we are to give God all of the glory for our ministry work and the more prepared we are to bear witness to his work in us and through us as we minister.

Ask the Holy Spirit to bring his light to bear on your charisms as you read the following statements. Also consider the ways you have operated in your charisms in the past and the ways you may be called to operate in your charisms in the future within your various parish ministries and service to the Church. Where and when have you in the past, and will you in the future, express your charism of:

Administration by using your organizational skills to promote the success of God’s work in your parish and in various ministries.

Discernment of Spirits by talking with others about your sense of God’s goodness, the tendency of the world to steal away our peace, or the devil’s tactics to lead us into sin.

Encouragement and exhortation by sharing words of encouragement and hope with others and by communicating God’s ways, his love and his divine providence to them.

Evangelization by telling others about the Lord and the teachings of the Church, inviting others to worship with you.

Healing by offering to pray with others for healing whenever they express a physical, spiritual or emotional need to you.

Leadership by communicating a vision God has revealed to you for your parish, pastoral team, or a specific ministry and by helping others to discern and use their charisms in ministry.

Mercy-giving and compassion by ministering to the poor, the disabled, the homeless and those who are spiritually void.

Music by playing an instrument, singing or playing a music CD to draw others into deeper worship during prayer services and liturgies.

Pastoring by being an active listener and engaging facilitator of scripture, the *Catechism*, or spiritual topics for discussion in small group settings.

Indeed, to each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for some benefit (1 Cor 12:7). Here we have mentioned a few. What an incredible reality it is to know that each one of us has a way that the Holy Spirit is manifested to others through us, so that Christ might be manifested to the world! Charisms of the Holy Spirit are your pathway to ministry and service in the Church. ♦

Renee A. Marazon is a Catholic author, consultant, workshop and retreat presenter.



Renee serves as the Coordinator of the Diocese of Toledo Ministry to Catholic Charismatic Renewal Healing Ministry and Outreach to Parishes Ministry.



Renewal of the grace & culture of Pentecost



The grace of Pentecost is an unveiling of the real behind the shadows and distortions of life lived on the surface.

by Walter Matthews

The grace of Pentecost is a life transforming experience of God's love, presence and power. It is a call to discipleship and mission. As a new Pentecost in our day, Pope Paul VI called it, "a new outpouring of the gift of God." The grace of Pentecost is an unveiling of the real behind the shadows and distortions of life lived on the surface. It is the culmination of God's plan to restore humanity to himself. On the day of Pentecost, "the Holy Trinity is fully revealed. Since that day, the Kingdom announced by Christ has been open to those who believe in him: in the humility of the flesh and in faith, they already share in the communion of the Holy Trinity. By his coming, which never ceases, the Holy Spirit causes the world to enter into the 'last days,' the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 732).

Photo: Alex Uchoa World of Stock

When we proclaim the Gospel in all its fullness—the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the Person, presence and the power of the Holy Spirit—there is for those already baptized, who hear and respond, a renewal of the grace of Pentecost for the individual, for the Church and, through the Church, for society.

For those who have never heard the Gospel proclaimed and for the unbaptized such proclamation is a call to faith, to baptism, and to receipt of the gift of the Holy Spirit: "Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn" (CCC, 1287).

The Church teaches that "Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Holy Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us" (CCC, 2003). The coupling of grace with Pentecost in the phrase "grace of Pentecost" underscores and highlights that the Pentecostal experience is a gratuitous gift, that we cannot earn it. It is an action of God to pour out his Holy Spirit to all who ask him, "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Lk 11:13).

The phrase is a corrective to a narrow understanding of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, as if the latter only means going through a Holy Spirit Seminar and praying in tongues.

The full effects of the grace of Pentecost are multiple and varied. Let me highlight three of the effects.

First, although we do not "see" it in the Pentecost account in Acts 2 we have the witness of Paul who wrote, "the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom 5:5) (see 1 Jn 4:7). This experience of the love of God, of course, takes many forms: a healing, a word of consolation in a time of need, an answered prayer. It can be profound: "a genuine dialogue of love, to the point of reducing the person wholly possessed by the divine Beloved, vibrating at the Spirit's touch, resting filially with the Father's heart" (Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 33).

Often accompanying this experience of love is the experience of joy. St. Hilary of Poitiers wrote in the 4th century, “We who have been reborn through the sacrament of baptism experience intense joy (maximum gaudium) when we feel within us the first stirring of the Holy Spirit” (*Fanning the Flame*, pp 16-17).

A **second effect** of the grace of Pentecost is an awareness of the Person and presence of the Holy Spirit. Before our “personal Pentecost” (Pope Paul VI) the Holy Spirit was a dove or a dogma to be believed in. Afterwards we came to know the Holy Spirit in the Spirit’s uniqueness as third person of the Blessed Trinity. “I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth whom the world can never accept since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him because he is with you, he is in you” (Jn 14:16-17).

The **third effect** is an experience of the power of the Holy Spirit. “We know, brothers loved by God, that you have been chosen, because our gospel comes to you not only in words, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with great effect” (1 Thes 1:4-5). Charisms of all kinds (prophecy, healing, mercy, leadership, and administration, to name a few) are all manifestations of the Holy Spirit given to individuals for the building up of the Church and for our mission in the world.

Pentecost, and the grace of Pentecost, is more than a onetime religious experience or an emotion. It is a way of life: living Pentecost. It releases in us an awareness and experience of the full role of the Holy Spirit: union with God; inner transformation; ministry empowered by charisms for evangelization and service; and the building of communities that witness to renewed Catholic life.

The grace of Pentecost is a call. As Pope John Paul II said, “Pentecost was not only a moment of intense emotion; it was the start of a dynamism of supernatural origin, which developed through the Church’s history. As on the day of Pentecost, so in our times the Holy Spirit continues inwardly to inspire missionary enthusiasm and to give hierarchical and charismatic gifts...” (*L’Osservatore Romano*, April 1995). We are to be witnesses and we are to be in mission.

Thus the grace of Pentecost leads to the enlivening of the Church and the transformation of society. In 2002 Pope John Paul II said to the Italian Renewal and to us: “In our time that is so longing for hope make the Holy Spirit known and loved. Help bring to life that ‘culture of Pentecost’ that alone can make fruitful the civilization of love and friendly

co-existence among peoples. With fervent insistence never tire of praying, Come Holy Spirit! Come! Come!” Pope Benedict XVI has taken up this call, “I hope the Holy Spirit will be evermore welcome in the hearts of believers and that the ‘culture of Pentecost,’ which is so necessary in our day, might continue to spread” (General Audience, September 28, 2005). For Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI “culture” is certainly more than prayer meetings or even other religious activities. It embraces all that the Church is! Pentecost is to be a living, experienced reality within the Church and through the Church in our society, in our economics, politics, international relations, and, of course, our “culture” in the sense of the arts, music, film and so on.

This is a mission of global proportions. It moves us from our daily lives of witness to lives that, to quote the bumper sticker, think globally and act locally. This mission needs to become part of our very souls. We are called and challenged to move beyond our comfort zones.

“We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16). This zeal for souls is stirred up by the grace and fire of Pentecost.

This zeal for souls, as it flows out in our witness and in our daily lives, must be accompanied with a passion for a “culture of life” to replace the current and growing “culture of death”; with an uncompromising commitment to the human dignity of all persons; and a passion that true justice, with mercy and love, be available to all.

Having experienced it ourselves, we are called to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the Person, presence and power of the Holy Spirit—the full Gospel—so that others may experience a renewal of the grace and culture of Pentecost personally and collectively, that the Church will once again be on fire acting to transform our society.

As Pope Benedict XVI boldly proclaimed in St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York in 2008, “Let us implore from God the grace of a new Pentecost for the Church in America. May tongues of fire, combining love of God and neighbor with zeal for the spread of Christ’s Kingdom, descend on all present.” And on us! ♦



Walter Matthews is Executive Director of the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.



Charismatic prayer groups

Charismatic prayer groups have long been, and continue to be, among the blessings of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. They have offered their participants a place to form community, to grow in the life of the Spirit, to experience opportunities for service and the impetus to share their gifts in parish and Church life. Most prayer groups are parish groups although there are a number of groups that are not attached to any particular parish for one reason or another. In celebrating the gift of prayer groups and what they can mean in the life of the parish and the greater Church we have asked three individuals to share their reflections.

A Diocesan perspective shared by Sr. Martha Jean McGarry, IHM Renewal Centers and Offices

Besides their local parishes, prayer groups are frequently supported by local Renewal Centers or Offices. These usually act as the leadership and unifying body of the local Renewal and have sprung up from the needs and initiatives of local prayer groups and/or a diocese's desire to provide pastoral care. For example in the diocese in which I served it was the prayer groups who purchased the Center and discerned its initial leadership and vision. It is their Center and thus they share their gifts in helping to live out its mission. This is accomplished by assisting in providing ministry development: leadership, hospitality, prayer, healing, teaching, and Holy Spirit Seminars, just to name a few. They also participate in workshops, teachings and conferences that are offered to bring Renewal members together for visioning, growth, encouragement, service and evangelization. Prayer groups, whether large or small, wisely

take advantage of the programs, events, and guidance offered by their diocesan leadership in order to grow and become sources of new life in their parish and communities. In the parish, we see prayer group members sharing their gifts in ministry, prayer, sacramental programs, evangelization, and Holy Spirit Seminars. By their faithfulness they continue to make an impact on Church life as well as be a great support to the Renewal in their area.

The parish prayer group by its openness, invitational spirit, and appreciation of the blessings of other parish groups and ministries are a welcoming and fruitful presence in their parish and for the Church. It is important for them to stay connected and use whatever means the Lord has provided to make them strong and vibrant groups for the building of the kingdom of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Together they are a formidable group of disciples who continue to be a grace for the Church and for one another.

A prayer group leader's perspective shared by Deacon Bill Brennan Challenges and Opportunities

Most, perhaps all, prayer groups that are located in parish settings have a desire to see their parishes become openly charismatic. They long to share the fire and power of Pentecost with everyone with whom they worship and pray. They yearn to see the Lordship of Jesus proclaimed loudly and clearly. And, I suspect, they would love to see the Renewal affirmed in their parishes as a grace for the new springtime. Here are a few practical tips on how prayer groups have gone about being a blessing in their parishes and remaining in the heart of the parish life:

First, keep the proper perspective when it comes to life in the Spirit. The parish, for example, is the normal gathering place of all God's people, and they represent a wide variety of experiences and gifts. In that light, it is not the job of the prayer group to make the parish be charismatic. That is God's job, if he should so choose. The prayer group's purpose is to pray and provide an environment in which that prayer can be fostered and developed. It should also be the place where people who are living life in the Spirit can celebrate the wonders of God's love in their lives. In the words of one bishop to me, "If you want people to respond to the Renewal, then live the Renewal." That is good advice for all of us.

Second, remember the basic call that has been given to every one of us, no matter how gifted we may be. That call is to faithfulness before anything else. That means following Jesus wherever he leads and letting him do the leading.

Third, be ready to serve the parish. This could mean active participation in various parish programs and encouraging prayer group members to use their gifts in service.

Fourth, be ready always to invite the parish to join the prayer group in special events such as Life and Growth in the Spirit Seminars, days of renewal, teaching days, speakers, even the prayer meeting itself, etc. Advertise such events frequently and use all means available to let others know about them. And do not forget the personal invitations.

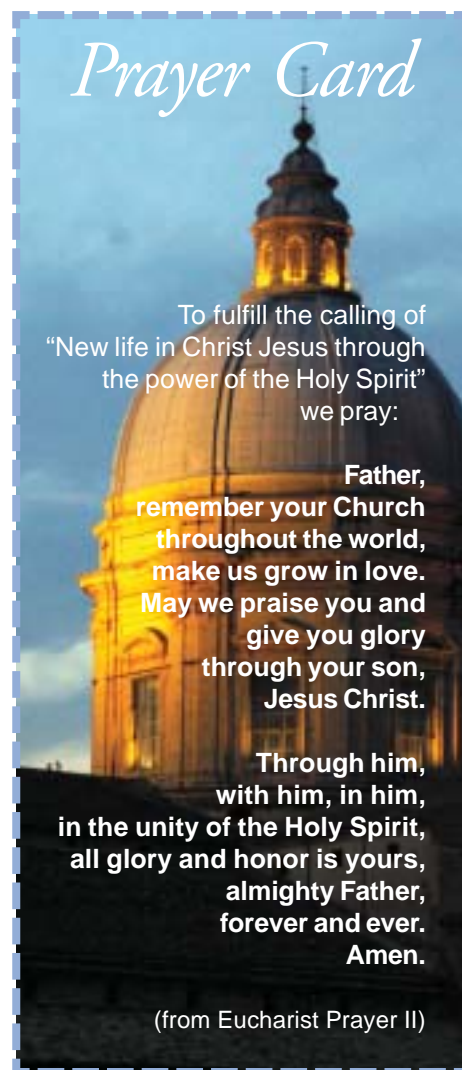
Fifth, keep the pastor involved, or at least aware of what the prayer group is doing. Pray for him and the parish regularly and lovingly support him as the shepherd of the whole parish.

Finally, never give up and never let the naysayers stop the prayer group from living out the amazing grace we have been given. If scripture proclaims it, the teaching of the church confirms it, and our experience underlines it, what further proof do we need that we have been extraordinarily blessed by our God?

Following these simple steps will help any prayer group continue to be a grace for their parish and also avoid the fatal temptation of becoming inwardly oriented and isolated. Every parish needs to experience the building up of the Body of Christ by the free and generous sharing of the charisms of the Holy Spirit. Freely our prayer groups have received and freely they share the treasure God has given them. Praise God for the gift of so many prayer groups and their authentic living out of God's call and mission!

A parish priest's perspective shared by Fr. Will Combs, BBD Prayer Groups and Parishes

The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Body of Christ (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #797). Likewise in many ways prayer groups can be the soul of a parish. I have been blessed these past ten years to belong



Prayer Card

To fulfill the calling of
"New life in Christ Jesus through
the power of the Holy Spirit"
we pray:

**Father,
remember your Church
throughout the world,
make us grow in love.
May we praise you and
give you glory
through your son,
Jesus Christ.**

**Through him,
with him, in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
almighty Father,
forever and ever.
Amen.**

(from Eucharist Prayer II)

to an inner city parish in San Antonio, Texas. We have two prayer groups, one in English and the other in Spanish that meet on the same night and come together once a month for a bilingual healing Mass. Serving in both groups, I have seen and heard of many people being touched by the Spirit at our parish. Victor and Lubivina Rodriguez for instance, were unable to conceive children for 17 years. They came seeking the Lord at one of our healing Masses and are now helping to lead the music with two beautiful children of their own. Praise and worship followed by opening ourselves to the prophetic touch of the Spirit with testimonies and teachings, fellowship and formation set us free to love one another and share that love of God with the whole parish.

See [Prayer Groups](#) page 8



Positioned to be a Blessing

by Rita Guinaugh, MPH

Father God, Creator of the Universe, creates Spirit-filled prayer groups. He positions us where he needs us, to fulfill the plan of salvation. He positions us as perfectly as the point is positioned on a spear. We're purposefully positioned to bless others in our church, family, friends and acquaintances; to save souls for the glory of God. We must not get lost or veer off the appointed path.

How many of us have driven on the highway, and having gotten into the wrong lane, were forced to take an unfamiliar road, and wound up in a neighborhood or town miles from where we wanted to be? Do we turn back? Do we keep going forward even though it doesn't "feel right?" We missed our destination, all because we were positioned in the wrong lane.

The Israelites thought they were at a dead end, but God purposefully positioned his followers to lead his people. God said to Moses in Exodus 14:15: "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on." God faithfully led Moses, Joshua, Peter, Paul, Pope John Paul II, etc. and continually leads Pope Benedict XVI and all men and women. God leads US! When we heed God's counsel, he is able to

position us exactly where we need to be at the appointed time.

The Lord positions us within a parish, prayer group or community, and we need to believe that God has given each of us a divine appointment. To accomplish his purpose, God positions us to bless. We need to accept our position without questioning his motives. Sometimes we seem to be placed in a pit instead of being positioned to give glory to God, but we continue to trust in the Holy Spirit.

You remember Joseph (Genesis 30). His earthly father favored him, and God favored him as well. Joseph received prophecies from God that he, the 11th of 12 sons of Jacob, would be a leader of God's people.

But what did Joseph do? He lorded the prophecy God gave him over his brothers and misused the love he was given from his father, instilling hatred within his brothers' hearts toward Joseph. He was thrown into a pit, and his brothers sold him into slavery. To rise to the powerful position God planned for him, Joseph needed to humble himself, be rid of pride, and receive the authority God planned for him to bless his people.

Please pray with the National Service Committee for the following intentions.

1. That new life will be experienced as people are called into a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord.
2. For all the conferences and Holy Spirit seminars that will take place this Fall and Winter. For the preparations, presentations and follow up, that many lives would be transformed by a new awakening to the presence, power and charisms of the Holy Spirit.
3. For fruitfulness in all NSC sponsored endeavors: Leaders' & Ministries' Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota on Oct 29-31; Day of Teaching and Ministry in the Diocese of Helena, Montana, October 8-9; Youth Ministers Retreat, New Orleans, October 15-17; Gathering of National Leadership Groups: Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Tampa, January 17-19.
4. That the Lord will raise up a new generation of leaders to carry on the work of Catholic Charismatic Renewal and that the present generation will be generous in sharing with them encouragement, support and wisdom.

Prayer Groups from p. 7

ish. Many others as well who have participated in our prayer groups are now serving our parish as catechists, musicians, faith sharing leaders, coordinators of adoration and in other ministries. Of course there are some tensions and difficulties. Some want more music, while others want more preaching or prayer or sharing. At times selfish interests and the need for leadership development have stunted our spiritual growth. Such weaknesses remind us how much we need the Holy Spirit and the whole body of Christ to be complete. The fire of prayer groups feeds on the fuel of parish life, while the parish is fuel waiting to be set aflame by the Spirit. Both body and soul, may our Church be fully alive. ♦

If we, too, knew what God had in store for our prayer groups and us, perhaps we would be more apt to prepare for our destiny or assignments and stay on course.

Most athletes know the importance of positioning. Does a diver dive into the water without positioning himself squarely on the diving board? We know a racer takes his position solidly on the starting block before a race.

A surfer friend explained how “catching a wave requires positioning, experience, knowledge as to how the waves are approaching, obeying safety rules, knowing your own ability, familiarity with the area, where you are positioned in relationship to other surfers and watching wave sets as they approach.” Our prayer groups need to be positioned to “catch the wave” of the Holy Spirit.

Are we following the Holy Spirit’s leading? Are we hearing his counsel? God places us where he needs us according to our gifts and abilities. The stance we need to take in order to hear the Lord is “on our knees.” Pray for an anointing to serve. Pray to hear God’s direction. Pray to hear where we are being positioned to bless and whom we are called to bless. Wherever we are in God’s kingdom, we didn’t get there by our own devices. As the saying goes, “If you see a turtle on a fence post, he didn’t get there by himself.” Draw near to God, and he will draw near to us” (James 4:8).

How is our prayer group being positioned by God to assist the parish and diocese? Is our prayer group fulfilling God’s purpose?

Seize an opportunity to fill a need. Be servants of the Lord. Our statewide

Renewal Services has provided books from our book ministry to a local prison chaplain. And our local prayer group has been able to assist Family Promise Hawaii, a “network of interfaith congregations that utilizes church facili-

How is our prayer group being positioned by God to assist the parish and diocese?

ties to provide homeless families with a safe place to sleep, enjoy meals and hospitality. Guests stay at a host site for a week then move onto another host site.” Our prayer group has provided several meals for Family Promise weekends at our parish.

Look for areas to serve in your parish. Prayer groups in some parishes provide intercessory prayer after specified Masses for those in need. This is a perfect opportunity to be in a position to bless others, use our gifts, and be visible to the greater community. Where is the Lord calling us to serve the Body of Christ?

Thriving prayer groups should work together to assist dioceses. Working together within our Catholic Church strengthens our prayer group. Our Bishops realize the extreme importance of healthy marriages and families, and our prayer groups can help. The USCCB.org website (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops), provides a *For your Marriage* webpage. The webpage states: “In the National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage (NPIM), the U.S. Catholic bishops call attention to the meaning and value of married life for the Church and for society. Bringing Catholic belief into dialogue with contemporary needs, the bishops urge the Catholic Church to become a community of hope and help for marriages and to join others in building a culture of marriage.”

Prayer groups can help by using charismatic gifts to promote the healthy well being of marriages and families. We might offer workshops to enable couples and families within our prayer groups or church community to learn Godly communication skills.

We may provide Spirit-filled retreats at local hotels or retreat centers for married couples where on-going prayer and reflection is offered. Rather than choose one person to lead or serve in ministries (prayer, music, hospitality, administration), prayer groups may elect or select a husband and wife team. This would allow couples to work and serve together, rather than spending time apart.

If we want to strengthen our prayer groups, we need the favor of God. “Doing it God’s way” brings divine favor. Come together in unity, with all parts working together to serve the parish and our dioceses, stand together, locking elbows with one another to stand firm and protect one another from the onslaught of the enemy.

Catch the wave! Live a surrendered life in the Holy Spirit and strive to be in a position to bless others. “Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that of ourselves we are qualified to take credit for anything as coming from us; rather, our qualification comes from God” (2 Corinthians 3:4). ♦

Rita Guinaugh is the Vice Chair of HCCRS (Hawaii Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services). She has a Masters Degree in Public Health. Rita is the wife of Deacon Dan Guinaugh, Diocesan Liaison. She has 2 daughters and 5 grandchildren.

