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Jesus (Jim Caviezel) in the carpentry scene from The Passion of The Christ, a film by Mel Gibson. ©2003 Icon Distribution Inc. All Rights Reserved. A Newmarket Films release. Photo credit: Philippe Antonello.

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

Executive Director
Walter Matthews

Editorial Board
Virginia King
Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner, SSND

Editor
Sr. Martha Jean McGarry, IHM

Production Manager
Jean Beers

For Your Information

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NSC-Chariscenter USA
PO Box 628
Locust Grove, VA 22508-0628
Tel. (540) 972-0225
www.nsc-chariscenter.org

National Service Committee members:

Aggie Neck (Chairman)
Josephine Cachia
Fr. John Gordon
Rosbel Hernandez
Chuck Hornsby
Virginia King
Fr. Richard Loch
Mark Nehrbas
Sr. Mary Anne Schaezner, SSND

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Chairman's
Corner
.....
by Aggie Neck

To know Jesus Christ

"No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). I remember very well the first time the realization of the awesome uniqueness of Jesus as God and Lord and Jesus as Man became an awakening moment in my mind, heart, and spirit. I was reading an article on the divinity and person of Jesus. It was as if a veil had been removed from my mind, and my understanding of Jesus. I wanted to shout "Hallelujahs." I wanted to jump for joy. It was the clearest revealing moment for me of the wonder of who Jesus was and what Jesus did by becoming Man.

This moment would not have been possible had I not first been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This moment was the direct result of the power of the Holy Spirit leading me into the knowledge of Jesus as Lord, Jesus as Savior, Jesus as the one who conquered sin and death, Jesus as the risen Lord of glory. It was the moment when I could have answered the question "Who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). Without hesitation and without doubt I would have given the same positive response with the same boldness as Peter.

Perhaps even today we could ask the question with a different thrust. If we say that Jesus is Lord, and if we believe that he is the hope of the world, then how do we live that and how do we proclaim that? Are we as bold with this statement outside of the prayer meetings? Are we as eager to make this statement in the face of opposition? Are we so rooted in the truths about Jesus that nothing can shake our faith or our declaration of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

What happens to each of us, as we become alive in this knowledge, is that we have an unshakable faith that is the foundation for

the way we live our lives. There is an awareness of how much we really do love Jesus. It is a constant presence of love that causes us to desire to be holy, to conform our lives to the will of God, to be willing to say yes to anything and everything that he would ask of us. There is also this hope that drives us forward knowing there is a goal, knowing there is a vision and a mission. St. Paul says it so powerfully "The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I will not treat God's gracious gift as pointless" (Gal. 2:20-21).

In his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Pope John Paul II writes: "In Christ, religion is no longer a 'blind search for God' (cf. Acts 17:27) but the response of faith to God who reveals himself. It is a response in which man speaks to God as his Creator and Father, a response made possible by the one Man who is the substantial Word in whom God speaks to each individual person and by whom each individual person is enabled to respond to God. What is more, in this Man all creation responds to God. Jesus Christ is the new beginning of everything. In him all things come into their own, they are taken up and given back to the Creator from whom they first came" (Par. 6).

When we sing the song "Lift Jesus Higher, Lift Jesus Higher, Lift him up for the world to see," we are singing words that are proclaiming our mission. We have indeed been commissioned by the Lord Jesus to "go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." "Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20).

There are many who are searching for something to hope in, to believe in. We have what they are searching for. We have the Good News of Jesus Christ in our hearts. Let us continue to be attentive as the Holy Spirit shows us ever new ways to proclaim the Gospel!

Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee.

Are you looking for more?



by Mary Ellen Rossman

Autumn and Winter are times in the year when we stand back and reflect on the past to see what we have, and still want to accomplish before the year's end. As I look back over the years the one thing I am most grateful for are the trials and tribulations that brought me to my knees to ask God for more.

Each time of crisis brought me closer to God because he was able to teach me something new and wonderful about his love for me and his wisdom in dealing with me. I found that he could accomplish an even greater good or deeper revelation if I just let him. Being raised in a Catholic environment I had loved the Lord and tried to be a good Catholic. I followed all the rules and regulations but felt by the time I reached my 30's that there had to be more.

God's word says that when his people cry out to him, he will answer. It doesn't say when we think about our problem he will answer. It says, **cry out**, and that's what I did. At that time I was a mother of four young children. I was juggling food shop-

ping, laundry, cooking, changing diapers, loving and caring for the needs of my husband and children. It was then that I realized I didn't have what I so desperately needed - to be able to go beyond my own love. I knew I needed more love, more patience, more joy, more peace. I was doing everything right, but I just didn't have it. It was then that I cried out to God and told him I needed a practical God.

Through various circumstances God began to reveal to me that I was right in believing I didn't have what I needed. He began to show me it is not about doing everything on my own. He wanted to be a partner with me. He wanted to lead me in the power of his Holy Spirit. I had been working very hard in my flesh, but He wanted to empower me in his Spirit. Jesus told the Samaritan woman (John 4) that the time was coming when true worshippers would worship the Father in Spirit and truth and the Father would seek out people such as these. Saint Paul in Romans 8 explained that we could operate on our own (in the flesh) or in the Spirit.

Looking back over the years I am most grateful that Pope John XXIII prayed for renewal when he called on the Holy Spirit to bring life to the Church as by a new Pentecost. It was shortly after Vatican II that the Holy Spirit began to give me the more I so desperately needed. It was at a

**It says, cry out,
and that's what I did.**

charismatic conference at Notre Dame that Ralph Martin explained about the gift of Divine Love and the critical importance of surrendering our lives to the Lordship of Jesus. The Spirit gave me a revelation of who Jesus is, and what he did for me in taking my just punishment upon himself on the cross. Jesus proved his love for me and now I am able to love with his love. The Holy Spirit empowered me to surrender my life and all I owned and loved to the Lordship of Jesus. In doing this, he gave me a hunger to read and understand his word, the ability to thank, praise and worship him at all times and in all circumstances and to live my life in the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit.

It is no wonder that the scripture I love the most is Matthew 3:11. John the Baptist was explaining to the Pharisees and Sadducees that he came to baptize with water for repentance, but the one (Jesus) whose sandals he was unfit to loosen would baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire. It all stems from Jesus giving his Holy Spirit. It is from the Spirit we receive our ability to live and share the gospel message and to be made holy in the refining fire. Without the Holy Spirit we can never know the more—the love of our Heavenly Father in sending us his son, Jesus. ♦



Mary Ellen Rossman serves on the Archdiocesan Service Committee in San Antonio, TX. Her new book There's So Much More has just been published.

The Holy Spirit and the person of Jesus

"On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, 'Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture says: Rivers of living water will flow from within him.' He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified."

by Fr. Bruce Nieli, CSP



Jesus (Jim Caviezel) in the crucifixion scene from *The Passion of the Christ*, a film by Mel Gibson. © 2003 Icon Distribution Inc. All Rights Reserved. A Newmarket Films release. Photo credit: Philippe Antonello.

Who can forget the powerful scene in the movie "The Passion of the Christ," where the centurion throws the spear into the side of Jesus, only to fall on his knees under the outpouring of the water and the blood gushing forth from the Savior's pierced heart! This outpouring is the "living water" promised to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:10). These are the "rivers of living water" poured out to every thirsting soul. This is the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who brings us face to face with Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit, the "Divine Matchmaker," who draws us to fall in love with Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit who, as St. Paul says, is the "love of God poured out into our hearts." (Romans 5:5). He is the love that makes all love possible, because he is the Love who brings us to Love Incarnate.

There are, in fact, four "rivers of living water." These are the rivers that lead us to fall in love with Jesus. The names of these rivers I borrow from a community of 19th century American seekers known as the Transcendentalists. They included such famous movers and shakers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Louisa May Alcott, and they explored the thirst of every human soul for the Absolute. They sought a spirituality without a religion. Living among them was a famous convert to the Catholic faith, Isaac Thomas Hecker (1819-1888), the founder of the Paulist Fathers, America's first Catholic religious congregation of men. He was led to fall in love with Jesus and the Catholic Church by jumping into these four rivers. Through the Holy Spirit he connected his love for Jesus and his love for the Catholic Church with his already passionate love for America.

River of unity

The first of these rivers is the river of “unity.” I like to call this one the river of intimate love. Isaac Hecker felt a lifelong conflict with loneliness, and his solution was devotion to the Holy Spirit, the only one capable of completely filling the loneliness void. This devotion brought him to a mystical union with Jesus Christ, exemplified by the following quotation:

“O dear Christ! Oh sweet Christ! Oh loving Christ! O more than brother - friend! Oh more than any other being can be!...Oh draw me nearer to thee. Let me feel more of thy love, more of thy purity. Oh baptize me with thy Spirit and loosen my tongue that I may speak of thy Love to man...”

River of truth

The second river is the river of “truth.” This is the river of endless love. As Jesus says, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will not pass away” (Matthew 24:35) and “Consecrate them in truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17). Jesus will be with us always, “until the end of time” (Matthew 28:20). Isaac Hecker, came to see that all the great religious leaders of the world “are included in Jesus Christ” and that the Catholic Church “unites, coordinates, and binds together” all philosophies and religious systems into a coherent synthesis which will not pass away. Jesus is the fullness of truth; the church is the fullness of Jesus; the Catholic Church is the fullness of Church.

River of goodness

The third river is the river of “goodness,” which I like to call sacrificial love. Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” who “lays down his life for His sheep” (John 10:15). Isaac Hecker, a would be New York politician who sought to correct the evils of slavery and oppressive labor practices, came to believe that Jesus was the true liberator and that the religious orders of the Catholic Church were

the true utopian communities capable of bringing about the common good —liberty and justice for all. After all, I would ask, isn’t it true that the author of “Utopia” was St. Thomas More, a man who died for his Catholicism? Isn’t it true that a Catholic Cardinal and Archbishop, Stephen Langton of Canterbury, was the author of the Magna Carta, the document that gave birth to democracy in the western world? The monks and nuns of the religious orders of the Catholic Church were, according to Father Hecker, the ones who founded the universities, the hospitals, and the social reform movements giving birth to “modern civilization.”

River of beauty

The fourth river is the river of “beauty”, the river of universal love. St. Francis of Assisi, in his thirst for beauty, composed the “Canticle of the Creatures - All Creatures of Our God and King,” the first major poem written in the Italian language. Father Hecker loved the beauty of music, art, poetry, and like his Transcendentalist friend Thoreau, nature. What can be more beautiful than the beauty of Jesus in the transfiguration, unless, of course, his beauty in the crucifixion? “By his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). It was this beauty that led Hecker to the sacramental beauty of Catholicism.

May we all plunge into the four rivers of living water, the paths of the Holy Spirit, and be led, like the centurion at the cross, to bend our knees to the person of Jesus. ♦



Fr. Bruce Nieli, a Paulist priest, is the former Director of Evangelization for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Based in Memphis, TN, Fr. Bruce preaches missions and retreats throughout the United States.

Photo: Comstock

Prayer group self-assessment

A tool for revitalization

by Sister Martha Jean McGarry

Have you been looking for a tool to help rejuvenate the Renewal in your area, to strengthen your prayer groups and leadership?

We found an instrument developed for the National Service Committee to be an excellent resource to assist us in our efforts to strengthen the Renewal in our diocese. This Prayer Group Self-Assessment tool became part of our process to bring new life into our ministry as Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Are our groups really vibrant? What are their prayer meetings like? Are the charisms being used? What are the ages of those involved in the Renewal? These were some of the questions we looked at with the leadership of each prayer group. The process as we used it has been three-fold:

Prayer—seeking his face—receiving his power. This was done through prayer, retreat days, and working with the Self-Assessment tool as a Diocesan Pastoral Team.

Administering the Self-Assessment tool to prayer group leadership by meeting with each group's leadership.

Follow-up process—using what we learned to generate a stronger Renewal.

Such a process takes a commitment of time and enthusiasm for the mission that is ours. Our Diocesan leadership team of nine took six months to complete use of the self-assessment instrument with our 52 prayer groups. We are still involved in step 3 of this ongoing process that includes:

Reporting back to the Prayer Group leadership a summary of our findings.

Planning initiatives for the coming year that will meet the needs of prayer groups, specifically in areas of vision, praise and worship, charisms, teachings, and Life in the Spirit Seminars.

Calling forth anointed leadership discovered in the groups to assist in the broader renewal.

Following through with individual group requests for specific help or materials.

Although the desired fruits of our efforts are far from being realized at this early date, we have **already been blessed** in the following areas:

■ We all have been challenged to refocus on our primary mission.

Are our groups really vibrant?

What are their prayer meetings like?

What are the ages of those involved in the Renewal?

Are the charisms being used?

There is a growing willingness and new energy to work together to accomplish the mission God has given us.



Welcome back Sister Martha Jean

The Editorial Board of *Pentecost Today*, on behalf of the National Service Committee, welcomes Sr. Martha Jean McGarry as the Editor of *Pentecost Today*.

Sr. Martha Jean is the Director of the Catholic Charismatic Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico and the associate Liaison for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. She has been a Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary since 1955.

Sr. Martha Jean was a member of the National Service Committee from 1990–2001 and served on the Editorial Board from its inception in 1991, chairing the board from 1994 until her NSC membership ended.

Sr. Martha Jean is a well traveled conference speaker and teacher, and has edited the local newsletter of the Renewal “New Pentecost in New Mexico” for years.

May the Holy Spirit guide her in this new work.



Prayer Card



God our Father
Complete the work
you have begun and
keep the gifts of
your Holy Spirit active
in the hearts of
your people.

Make us ready to
live the gospel and
eager to do God’s will.

May we never
be ashamed
to proclaim
to all the world
Christ crucified
for us and risen.
Amen.

*Prayer Over the People
Adapted from
Rite of Confirmation*

■ The relationship between prayer groups and diocesan leadership has been clarified, strengthened, and re-vitalized.

■ Leadership has a clearer understanding of the needs of the groups so as to help them become more vibrant and re-establish their focus. The types of programs, teachings etc. that are needed are more apparent.

■ The Lord has placed some really gifted and anointed people in the prayer groups whose potential has not yet been tapped for building up the body. We know we need to look into how we can further develop these treasures with which God has gifted us.

■ There is a growing willingness and new energy to work together to accomplish the mission God has given us.

■ Together we have come to grasp the strengths and weaknesses of the Renewal in our area.

■ God is working in new ways among us and we have come to see the graces being manifested both in our diversity and our common vision.

This Prayer Group Self-Assessment tool is available for your use and can be downloaded from the Chariscenter website www.nsc-chariscenter.org. ♦

Sister Martha Jean McGarry is Director of the Catholic Charismatic Center in Albuquerque, NM.

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