

## Aging and Disappearing Prayer Groups,

*God's desire, or our need for fresh fire? By Deacon Chuck Matzger*

### *Eavesdrop with me:*

**To some comments from prayer group members:** "It is hard for me to drive at night-no one helps me get here." "We don't do Life in the Spirit Seminars any more." "We rely on the Spirit to bring people." "We don't pray in tongues so we don't offend or scare anyone." "Did anyone speak to the new people here tonight?"

**To visitors to the meeting:** "Best kept secret in the Catholic Church." There is no one here my age." "I don't feel like I belong-there is an in-group and then the outsiders."

Any of these sound familiar? These are just a few of the reasons why prayer groups diminish, grow stagnant, or even disappear, yet we can learn from these comments.

What should we do? I believe that our first posture *must* be one of hope. Prayer groups are meant to be vibrant places of praise that act as a well from which the grace of the baptism in the Spirit, the grace of Pentecost, flows and where the charisms are made real and witnessed to in community for the up building of the Church and for the evangelization of society. As Sister Nancy Kellar once said, "the meeting place is the learning place for the marketplace."

If God wants a prayer group to cease, it will, but let it not disappear because of our failure to do our part consciously and in prayer. Our spirituality is an incarnational one, and God acts through us and with our cooperation. So, let me propose four "prisms" to help us look at our prayer groups with wisdom from the past, to avoid mistakes in the present and in the future.

They are designated by the words KNOW, SHOW, SOW AND GROW. How well, as prayer groups, do we:

KNOW— who and why we are

SHOW—tell others who and why we are

SOW—the grace given the grace of Pentecost.

GROW— in community, holiness, numbers and zeal for mission.

KNOW who and why we are

Unless this is done, we float without a compass. So we must ask: Do we have a mission? Do we foster the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), which empowered the members of the early Church at Pentecost; live life in the Spirit; evangelize, grow in the use of the charisms, etc.

Are we fully Charismatic? Are the charisms eagerly sought, taught, used and discerned at the meeting? Or have we become a Rosary or Eucharistic Adoration group—all wonderful, but not our mission.

Are we really Community? Life in the Spirit is best fostered in community where people support and care for one another. Do we welcome the stranger and invite him or her to be a part of us, to serve with us?

Can we call ourselves "a charismatic community, a body of Christ with a mission?" or are we simply a "once a week" prayer meeting—revolving door of IN and OUT?

SHOW others that we exist

God can and does sovereignly bring people to our meetings, but this does not absolve us of the common sense work of inviting them, of telling as many people as we can that "a charismatic community is here and you are invited." We can do this through personal invitations; advertising our existence and events everywhere; invitation

## *What is your vision and mission? By Fr. Richard Loch, Chairman, NSC*

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal has touched the lives of millions of people throughout the world over the past forty-two years. It is impossible to calculate the ways in which people's lives have been changed that make us more aware of the everlasting love of the Father, the magnificent grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and generous gifts of the Holy Spirit.



I think of how the CCR began before RCIA. Communal celebrations of the Anointing of the Sick, parish greeters and hospitality committees and parish Pastoral Outreach ministries ever existed. I experienced the zeal of prayer group members who were drafted by pastors or volunteered to lead or be part of these ministries. The Charismatic Renewal has had a major impact on parish life in the Church.

Very often the Renewal isn't given the credit for our zeal in bringing a deeper involvement of the faithful into their parishes. We know what we have done. Let us give the Lord the credit for all that he has done which has allowed us to give so much in return to the life and mission of the church. There is a temptation to rest on the laurels of our past and grow comfortable with the present, and we have to be

cards; websites and many other ways. To adapt St. Paul's words from Romans 10:14 to this case: "*How can they come if they have not heard, and how can they hear if we do not invite them?*"

*SOW the grace of the renewal through prayer meetings, outreaches and ministries*

The grace of baptism in the Spirit must be given away. We are called to sow this grace into the field of the world. The Sea of Galilee remains fresh and full of life because it has an outlet; the Dead Sea is dead because it has no outlet, and keeps all the water for itself. We are meant in humility to "give the grace away."

How can we do this? Primarily through being a prayer meeting where God's presence and power are sought and experienced and lives are changed.

**Other ways:** Life in the Spirit Seminars; Workshops on the Gifts of the Spirit, Confirmation preparation, prayer teams for special needs after Masses; Workshops on Evangelization: and much more!

GROW in unity, community, holiness, life in the Spirit, zeal and numbers.

If we KNOW, SHOW and SOW, growth should be taking place. But more is needed. Commitments to daily prayer and the Sacraments are essential to seek God and His will. A prayer to the Holy Spirit is a great way to begin the day or any activity.

Conscious and continual community building is **absolutely vital**. For example, make hospitality a priority at the prayer meeting: greet and recognize newcomers; send cards to those who are ill or have had a significant life event; call or send cards to those who have not attended in a while; have monthly pastoral team meeting; quarterly CORE (regular attendee) meetings; frequent teachings on the group's mission; retreats; community events ( game nights, picnics, etc.); invite *all* into some ministry in the prayer group (use them or lose them); invite people to attend Charismatic Conferences to see the big picture; and much more!

Holy Spirit, send us fresh fire! Help us to KNOW, SHOW, SOW and GROW so we may proclaim in power and with renewed zeal that **Jesus Christ is Lord!**

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careful not to give in to this temptation. As Catholic charismatics we can look to a proud past, but we must also look to a promising future.

The Church and the world of 2009 are quite different from those of 1967 and we are faced with the challenge of bringing this mighty move of the Holy Spirit in ways that are probably quite different than the way in which we were brought to this experience and grace. In our last issue, we introduced the revised Vision and Mission Statements of the National Service Committee and Chariscenter, USA. These came about after almost two years of prayer, discussion, debate, revisions and discernment. Ultimately we are confident that this is what the Lord is calling the NSC to be and to do right now.

I recommend and urge every Catholic charismatic group to take the time to pray and reflect on the Lord's vision and mission for you. It's not an exercise that must be done quickly but one that requires prayer and reflection, listening and sharing. It would also be a good exercise for each of us to write our own personal vision and mission. What is the vision and mission of the Lord for me?

When Pope Benedict XVI met with the Bishops of Brazil during his journey there in May of 2007 he told them, "Jesus attracts us by his will, his filial will, and so he leads us to salvation. By freely accepting the will of God, in union with Jesus Christ, we open the world to God's kingdom."

If we are attentive to God's will for us, both as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and as individuals we will discover the vision and mission he has for us. When we do this people will be attracted to us because the presence of Jesus and the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be so evident in our lives.

**IGNITE**

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# NEWS NOTES



✠ You will note that the lead article as well as the secondary one address the need for us to focus our vision and mission as prayer groups and members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Leaders are urged to gather for reflection on the state of the prayer group and take time to "re-group" and "re-vision" their mission to proclaim the grace of Pentecost.

✠ Four new NSC leaflets are now available:

Introduction to Teachings at Prayer Meetings

The Word of Knowledge and the Word of Wisdom

Healing Prayer

Catholic Charismatic Renewal Terms and Phrases

Call 1-800-338-2445

✠ "A New Pentecost" DVD presents the move of the Holy Spirit in our time. Call 1-800-338-2445

✠ In this Year of the Priest, we encourage members of the prayer groups to offer intercession for our priests as part of personal and communal prayer.

SPC

# MINI-CALENDAR

Staten Island Conference, varied events, call 718-987-8175 for all, except where another number is given

...Healing Mass, 3rd Tues., 8 p.m., St. Joseph Church, 40 Poplar Ave., Call Nanie, 948-2049

...Healing Mass, 2nd Tues., 8 p.m., O.L. Star of Sea, 5371 Amboy Rd., Call Rita, 984-4144

...Healing Mass, 3rd Sat., 8 p.m., O.L. of Mt. Carmel/St. Benedicta, 1235 Castleton Ave., Call Victor 494-1860

...Healing Mass, 4th Wed., 8 p.m., Holy Child Church, call Sr. Jean, 718-356-5890

...Weekly Mass - Wednesdays -Lamb of God, Mt. Manresa, 9 P.M. (following 8 P.M. prayer meeting)

...Unity Night, Fall date to be announced

...Revival Under the Stars, August 23, 3 pm—6:30 pm, Mt. Manresa

S.I. website: <http://siconf.tripod.com>

...St. John the Baptist P.G., 210 W. 31 St., Healing Mass, third Tuesday, other events, call 212-686-1016

Life in the Spirit Seminar, April 28-June 23

...O.L. of Peace Prayer Community, 237 E. 62 St., NYC, 212-838-3189...call for current events

Hope Healing Ministry, 12:30 P.M., 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, St. Mary Church, Mt. Vernon, 914-664-5855

...St. Mary's Prayer Group, 8 pm, Wednesdays

St. Paul the Apostle, 77 Lee Ave., Yonkers, call Sr. Eileen, 914-969-3480

...Charismatic Holy Hour, 1st Tues., Prayer Meeting, 2nd Tues., Healing Mass, 3rd Tues., Prayer Meeting, 4th Tues.,

Prayer Meeting & Bible Teaching, Fr. James Villa, 5th Tues.

St. Elizabeth Seton House of Prayer, Scarsdale, 914-723-0533

...Thursdays of prayer, begins with IHM parish 9 AM Mass (or Noon Mass) to 1 PM with lunch) call to confirm

...Brunches and Saturday Seminars to be announced

Northern Westchester/Putnam Vicariate Cluster - Mary Jane -914-737-4286 for general info\*

...Cluster Prayer Meeting, Thursday, Oct. 29, 2009, 7:45 p.m. St. Patrick's Parish Center\*

...Healing Mass, Aug. 20, 7:30 pm, St. James the Apostle, Carmel, Fr. John DeBellis\*

...Life in the Spirit Seminar, Sept. 10, 17, 24, 7:30 pm, Chapel of Life, St. James, Carmel

...Healing Mass, Sept. 17, 8 pm, St. Patrick's, Yorktown, Msgr. Joseph Martin

...Healing Mass, Nov. 19, St. Patrick's, Yorktown\*

Ulster Healing Masses, Fridays, Music at 7 pm, Mass at 7:30 pm, Call 914-626-7477;

..1st Sunday of month, Prayer Meeting, 1:30 p.m., St. John the Evangelist Church, call 845-246-9581

*See the "Out & About" column of [Catholic New York](#)  
for more current information on events.*

*or log onto the NY Charismatic Renewal website: [catholiccharismaticny.org](http://catholiccharismaticny.org)*

## Equipping for the Mission

**2009 Leaders' & Ministries' Conference**  
**October 23-25, Raleigh, N. Carolina**

### Main Speakers:

**Ralph Martin, David Thorp,**

**Aggie Neck, Mark Nimo, Fr. Bob Hogan**

**Judith Hughes and others...**

**You're invited if serving in your prayer group, parish or diocese.**  
**SPECIAL SUMMER RATE \$79, \$145 (couples)**

**Available until August 31**

**For more info: go to [www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org) or 800-338-2445**



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**DATED MATERIAL**

**SAVE THE DATE !! Third Annual NY General Conference**

**Saturday, November 14, 2009  
9 AM—5 PM**

**St. Helena Church, Bronx, NY**

**“Fanning the Flame of the Holy Spirit”**

**General Session Speaker: David Thorp & Voice of Praise Music  
Youth Track: Mark Nimo & O.L. of Peace Music Group**

Registration brochures will go out to all who receive IGNITE in early September

Fill out the information below for anyone else who wishes to receive information about the Conference.

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_ **City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

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