

Forty-two years—and growing *by David Thorp*

Jesus proposed another parable to them. “the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the ‘birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches’” Matthew 13:31-32

While we often look back at the February 1967 weekend student retreat at The Ark and the Dove Retreat in Pittsburgh as the beginning of the modern Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a grace of God present worldwide that has touched tens of millions of people, that retreat must have seemed just like a mustard seed. So few were gathered for the retreat, the setting was not a famous shrine or holy site, the students were unknown, their school (Duquesne University) not recognizable worldwide. And yet, all kinds of “birds” have come to dwell in the branches of the great bush that the Lord has nurtured and watered and pruned. All kinds of birds have been hatched to new life in the branches of the Renewal. Could this have been imagined? Only in the wondrous mind of the Lord!

I admit to little knowledge of mustard bushes/trees. But that doesn't stop me from being caught up by the parable. After all, Jesus did not speak it to increase our agricultural knowledge but to stretch us to be open to the amazing—and surprising—things that the Lord can do.

Another image catches my imagination as I think about the forty-two

years of growth in the Renewal from the tiny seed of that first retreat. It is the banyan tree which I've seen just once. Standing under it I was mesmerized. Where did it begin? Where was it going next? How great was it going to become? These trees can grow so large that they can cover an acre of land with a single tree! But it's not only their immense size for which the banyan trees are known. What really fascinated me was that from certain branches of the tree I could see shoots. These are



Banyan Tree

actually roots. Once these roots make it to the ground (or sometimes just to another branch below) they quickly begin to grow, absorb water, and develop into massive roots-trunks themselves. Eventually these banyan trees can grow many hundreds of root-trunks. With these new roots and new trunks, the banyan tree can grow in many different directions, occupying more and more land.

After the “Duquesne Weekend” the students continued to meet. They told their story to friends at other universities who told friends, who told...you know how that goes. As others experienced a fresh Pentecost in their lives, other groups began to meet. Soon

weekly prayer meetings were being held in increasing numbers of Catholic settings: schools, retreat houses, parishes and homes. Some kinds of structures emerged. The meetings became more stable groups, with identifiable leaders, a format (certainly flexible) songs that became standard repertoire, explanation talks, handouts. The tree was growing, more birds were being attracted by the shade and rest it provided. Some people thought, “*This is the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.*”

Then, like the banyan tree, from one of the growing branches, a new aerial root sprouted. I got bigger as it sank its roots into the ground (dare I say the Lord who is our ground). And a new trunk began to emerge; covenant communities where the members sought to live a deeper and more formal commitment to one another and to particular missions. While it still looked like a whole new tree, one could still trace back to that original planting. From this new trunk, there was growth, in some places maybe even eclipsing the growth of prayer groups.

The growth did not stop with just one root/trunk. Book publishers, tape ministries, new covenant communities from older covenant communities, sprouted.

While the continued support of the National Service Committee and the annual conference at the University of Notre Dame assisted in the growth of the Renewal, the rapid proliferation of prayer groups saw new local roots/ trunks sprouting. In regions

and dioceses around the country, leadership groups began to emerge with the goal of connecting and serving groups. Renewal centers and offices that provided leadership days and local conferences were established. Bishops appointed liaisons to help them to provide pastoral guidance for those in their diocese who were part of the growing movement. An Association of Diocesan Liaisons was formed, which remains to this day as a fellowship of these men and women serving the local church.

But the mighty tree was not finished growing. The seeds of the Renewal were spread by the wind of the Holy Spirit to countries on every continent. As these new roots/ trunks were established by God in a great variety of cultures God did new and astonishing things among people with different languages and customs and colors.

Here in the united States healing ministries emerged and grew in ways that were different from prayer group and community growth. Even within some of the covenant communities, new roots shot off. Men and women, sensing a call to remain "single for the Lord," formed households separate from the family households with the communities. Some of these groups have now become established as religious communities in their own right (Brotherhood of Hope, Servants of God's Love). Other religious communities have also grown from the Renewal.

Does it end? No, not yet. There are Bible schools, schools of evangelization, radio and television ministries, ministry to women, music and teaching ministries, missionary organizations, more roots/trunks. More awesome growth!

And still more: Houses of Prayer have been established, ministries that serve the poor throughout the world. There are ministries for priests, helping them to continue serving the Lord and His people with enthusiasm. Ministries to youth are other grace-filled roots/ trunks. All of these are just the

beginning of anything remotely approaching a comprehensive exploration of the wondrous growth that the Lord has guided since he planted the small seed—with immeasurable potential—in the small group of students on retreat.

Regrettably, with the new roots/trunks, a competitive spirit sometimes emerged, "We're the *real* Renewal. We are really doing what the Lord wants now." Or, there were experiences of hurt, "Why are you leaving us? Are you saying we're not growing in the right way? You're leaving the Renewal?" Or, on the other side, "Why are you throwing me off this branch? Why does it seem you are cutting me off?" Some roots/trunks lasted only for a short while, having growth for a period of time before becoming "mulch" for other growth. Perhaps our lack of maturity was like scales that prevented us from seeing the new things the Lord was doing. Often we failed to celebrate the new roots/ trunks. And failing to see or celebrate we refused to cooperate with or spoke ill of, or sometimes even denied connection with each other.

Sometimes tracing the "family tree" back to that original seed planed by the Lord is difficult. The new roots have spread so far and some trunks are now "acres and acres" away from the original trunk. It seems like a jumble. But it is not. And the effort to go back through this "family tree" is worth it. It will mesmerize you even more that the banyan tree did me. Even more than the joy in the Lord when I stood under that tree, there will come the rightful praise of God's wondrous ways. We will know the proper—and hopefully ceaseless—thanks for once again exceeding our imaginations with all that the Lord has caused to grow from his original planning in and through the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

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NEWS

NOTES



✘Please remember in your prayers, one of the long-time leaders of Staten Island, Jean Kavanagh, who died in September. Jean was a humble servant of the Lord, who will be missed by her many good friends in the Renewal.

✘Pray for the final planning for our annual Charismatic Conference, to be held on Nov. 14, at St. Helena's Church in the Bronx. Main sessions will be taped (CD's and video) and there will be a book table. This year, we are adding a track for youth—teens 13-19 years old at only \$5. Encourage a young person to attend—you will come for free!

✘If you have never been to the Holy Land, please read the notice on the facing page, announcing a Pilgrimage sponsored by the National Service Committee and led by Fr. Patsy laquinta, former chairperson of the NSC. All such tours are routed through safe areas. To walk where Jesus walked is an experience never to be forgotten.

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)

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

...Advent Day of Prayer, Sat. Dec. 12, 9 AM to 3 pm, call for details and to register (by Dec. 10)

...New Year's Eve, 8 pm to 1 AM, 11 pm Liturgy celebrated by Fr. John Gordon, call to register (by Dec. 29)

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

...Cluster Prayer Meeting, Thursday, Apr. 29, 2010, 7:45 p.m. Fr. Augustine Addai, St. Patrick's Parish Center*

...Healing Mass, Nov. 16, 7:30 pm, Fr. Bill Madden, MM, Holy Rosary, Hawthorne, call Anne, 914-768-4067

...Healing Mass, Nov. 19, 8 pm, Msgr. Dermot Brennan, St. Patrick's, YH, call Joan 914-526-6538

...Healing Mass, Mar. 8, 7:30 pm, Holy Rosary, Hawthorne, call Anne (above)

...Healing Mass, Mar. 18, 8 pm, St. Patrick's YH, call Joan (#above)

...Healing Mass, May 20, 8 pm, St. Patrick's, YH, call Joan (#above)

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

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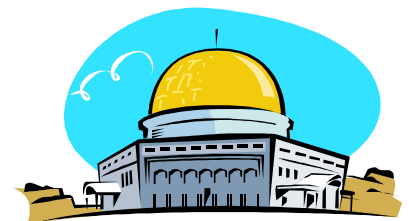
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Plan to attend !! Third Annual NY General Conference



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

**St. Helena Church, Bronx, NY
1315 Olmstead Ave., Bronx NY 10462**

“Fanning the Flame of the Holy Spirit”

**Day begins at 8:30 AM with Registration and Continental Breakfast
Emcee for the Day: Sr. Nancy Kellar**

**General Session Speaker: David Thorp & Voice of Praise Music
Teens (13-19) Youth Track: Mark Nimo & O.L. of Peace Music Group**

AM Sessions from 9-12:15, Lunch 12:15 to 1:15; Afternoon sessions from 1:15-3:00

Closing Liturgy celebrated by Fr. Steve Norton at 3:30

Call: 914-725-1773; 845-215-5501

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www.CatholicCharismaticNY.org