

# Ignite

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## THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL: **Its nature and structures** by Jim Murphy

Recently a priest and I were interviewed by a newspaper reporter who had come to report on a charismatic conference that was taking place in their town. The reporter listened with wonder as the priest and I described the events of the conference, the phenomenon we referred to as Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the fruit born from living a life in the Spirit. The reporter was amazed. She asked about healing, charisms, a renewed love for Scripture, conversions, a new immersion into the Eucharist, the thrust toward evangelization, a genuine and deep love for other members of the Church, and greater loyalty to the Church. After hearing about this long list of things, she looked in amazement at the priest and me, and with wide-eyed awe asked:

“But this sounds wonderful! When did this begin to happen in the Church?” My priest friend smiled wryly and asked her. “Ever hear of Pentecost?”

While the Charismatic Renewal (CR) as a movement, may have begun in the 1960’s, the experience of CR (being renewed in the charisms of the Holy Spirit) is as ancient as the Church herself. In fact, you cannot separate the action of the Holy Spirit from the Church. It was the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost that literally brought the Church to life!

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nature of the Charismatic Renewal is the presence and the activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of men and women who have committed their lives to Christ! The CR really is more about the action of God than the efforts of man. Books have been written by those in the renewal who give testimony to the extraordinary action of the Holy Spirit in their lives; amazing conversions of difficult people, miraculous healings, prophecies and “words of knowledge” that have actually led people into God’s plan for their lives! People talk about insights gained in prayer, a quiet word “whispered” by the Holy Spirit into the depths of their heart that changed everything. Truly, the testimonies of the men and women who have experienced the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives sound like something taken from the book of Acts! It’s about wisdom, power, and love. It’s about the work of the kingdom going forth in extraordinary ways, in amazing circumstances and with miraculous results. It’s about the Holy Spirit

## ICCRS Leaders and “12 Days of Blessing”

In September, 1100 Leaders from 73 countries met in the Mariapolis Center in Castel Gandolfo, just outside Rome. Participants spent the first two days in the leaders’ consultation portion of the conference. Former President of ICCRS, Charles Whitehead and current president Allan Panozza, spoke about the grace of this renewal, its significant characteristics, and the call to “put out into the deep” in its efforts to be a leaven for change in the Church.

During the retreat days, Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa was the retreat master, offering talks on the call to holiness, as well as the major helps to our growth in holiness, including growth in personal prayer, fervent use of reconciliation and devotion to the Eucharist.

Special guests, Chiara Lubich, founder of the

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working in men and women today to make fresh the message proclaimed so long ago “The Kingdom of God is at hand, and Jesus is Lord of that Kingdom!”

But God in his wisdom knows that human beings cannot live in a spiritual realm only. We need practical help to keep good order in the body of Christ. So Jesus established Peter as the leader of the Church and the apostles appointed deacons to help with with the many practical needs of the young community. St. Paul also called for discipline and order in the groups he served. Just as fire is helpful in a stove, God in his humility and wisdom allows the awesome power of the Holy Spirit to work within human structures and organizations.

In the early years of the Church there was a group of people known as Gnostics. They rejected the structures of the Church because they felt they didn’t need to work with “mere mortals.” They believed they could operate only on revelation and living “super spiritual” lives. The Gnostics went way off track, causing a lot of trouble for the Church, eventually destroying themselves. Even in our day, people are tempted to scoff at the structures within the Church and the Renewal as merely human fabrications and bureaucracy. They feel that truly spiritual people are above this kind of structure and need only to be led by spiritual insight. Let the lesson of the Gnostics be a warning to us! While structures within the renewal and within the broader Church are not perfect, God is working within them for the good of the Church and the world. As long as humanity is involved in anything, including the Church, there will be the sad reality of sin, foolishness, and bickering. But do not let human frailties blind us to the fact that God is in, and mightily at work within the Church.

The Charismatic Renewal is part of the broader Church; it is not an entity unto itself. As such it needs to be in good order with the structures of the Church, both on local and universal levels. Practically, this means that we must be faithful and obedient to the Holy Father and the teaching Magisterium of the Church. It also means that we must be in good order with our local bishop. It means that we must be cooperative with our parish priest. In short, there needs to be among us a spirit of mutual support for other organizations in our dioceses that serve the Church.

Most dioceses and countries include some kind of structure for the CR. There is usually a service team at a local and national level. Often, the bishop has established a liaison with the CR to undertake joint work.

In all these interactions among groups and people, humility, charity and patience must prevail. It is easy to get frustrated with individuals and groups who do things differently from us. Perhaps the people we interact with are less than perfect but we must trust that God can work perfectly...even through imperfect people!

We in the CR have the wonderful opportunity of helping to spread the flames of Pentecost within the entire Church. Let us remember that the Spirit is already there and at work! If we are faithful to what God has given us, but open to what He is doing throughout the Church, then both the CR and the broader Church will benefit from the Fire above.

*Jim Murphy is the U.S. representative to the ICCRS Council. Reprinted from ICCRS Newsletter, May-June 2003*

## **IGNITE**

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## **NEWS NOTES**



- Be sure to visit our website: [catholiccharismaticny.org](http://catholiccharismaticny.org) It has expanded and has much more information. It is also linked to the Archdiocesan website.
- Copies of Sr. Nancy’s growth seminar book There’s Always More: Expecting New Fire are available at the House of Prayer. Call 914-723-0533.
- The Peace of Christ Prayer Ministry founded by Fr. Peter McCall and Maryann Lacy has closed. Please pray for Maryann who has relocated to Florida. The ministry will be continued at St. Mary’s Church, Mt. Vernon. See the mini-calendar for details.
- Send events or other Newsletter material by Dec. 1 to be included in the Winter 2003-04 issue.

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Focolare Movement, and Andrea Ricciardi, founder of Sant' Egidio Community addressed the conference. Chiara stressed the importance of the shared experience of the Holy Spirit among the many ecclesial movements and new communities. Andrea spoke of the work of Sant' Egidio among the poorest and most marginalized, and their efforts to broker peace agreements between warring nations.

Music ministry was provided by members of the Malta Charismatic Renewal

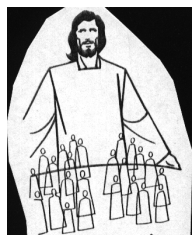
and Eucharists were celebrated by Fr. Cantalamessa, Bishop Joe Grech of Australia, and by Bishop Stanlaw Rylko and Cardinal Francis Stafford, the directors of the Vatican Office for the Laity.

A highlight of the conference was the "parade of nations" before the closing Liturgy, in which representatives were

their native costumes and marched into the hall, singing and praising the Lord in many languages.

600 pilgrims continued on the third part of the conference, visiting San Giovanni Rotundo, Lanciano, the catacombs, and St. Peter's Basilica.

Another major experience for all who were part of this international event, was the power failure on September 28th which plunged all of Italy into darkness. But this was just another opportunity to sing: "Shine, Jesus, Shine" SPC



## Where Two or More Gather

by Aggie Neck

Do you remember your first prayer meeting? I certainly do. I knew nothing of the Renewal, for it was only five years old at the time. I experienced a wide range of emotions, feeling uncomfortable, apprehensive, and uncertain that I should be there. Yet even as I left I knew I wanted to come back. I wasn't sure why, but I felt drawn to return.

That was thirty-one years ago. How I thank God that someone invited me. How I thank God that I responded. My life took on new meaning and I was changed. The prayer group that became my "family in the Lord" has supported me, uplifted me, prayed with me and prayed for me. The people in my prayer group allowed me to grow and stumble in the process. I know they love me.

Prayer groups are truly a gift from God. I would not have known on my own that praising God was so uplifting and exciting. Now, I don't mean just saying, "Praise the Lord." I mean

centering our lives around the God we have encountered in such a powerful way that praising him becomes as natural as breathing in and breathing out. You become aware of God's goodness in everything, and gratitude and thankfulness are the natural results.

We find spiritual friends who believe as we do—that God loves us, gifts us, and calls us to step out and be a witness for him. We learn to listen together knowing that God is speaking to us in varied ways. I never knew God spoke to us so personally as in prophecy, scripture passages, words of knowledge and words of wisdom until I was baptized in his Holy Spirit and experienced these things at prayer meetings.

Prayer groups are places of refuge where we are nurtured back to wholeness after being wounded. Personal prayer is ministered by caring people who really do love you and want to see you healed, and who believe it will happen. Prayer groups are schools for growing in holiness. They are places to learn about and experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are a preparation for learning to witness and to evangelize.

When we gather together the words of Jesus are truly realized: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I

in their midst." (Mt.18:20). It never ceases to amaze me that the God of all creation wants to be, chooses to be present when we come together as his people. Even the desire to praise him is his gift. Even the joy that bursts forth in our praise is his gift. And, yes, even the desire to worship that fills a room with holy silence is his gift.

Do we need this prayer group experience to grow, to progress in our journey, to keep the fires of the Holy Spirit burning brightly? St. Paul certainly thought so. "We must consider how to rouse each other to love and good deeds. We should not absent ourselves from the assembly, as some do, but encourage one another; and this all the more because you see that the day draws near" (Heb.10:24-25). We also read in Hebrews 6:11, "Our desire is that each of you show the same zeal to the end, fully assured of that for which you hope." May God grant us such a zeal. Let us reach out and invite someone to share this gift we have received.

*Aggie Neck is Chairman of the National Service Committee. She co-directs Servant House, a Catholic Charismatic House of Prayer in Marksville, Louisiana. Reprinted from Pentecost Today, July/Aug./Sept.2003*

## MINI-CALENDAR

Staten Island Conference, varied events, call 718-987-8175...

...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

...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 212-213-9150

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

Hope Healing Ministry, Oct. 21 and Nov. 4, at 12:30 P.M., St. Mary Church, Mt. Vernon

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

...Oct. 18, Sat. Brunch, 9 AM-12:30 PM, "Contemplating the Face of Jesus", Sr. Mary Benedict

...Nov. 22, Sat. Seminar, 9 AM - 4 PM, "More wisdom through Discernment", Sr. Nancy Kellar

...Dec. 13, Sat. Brunch, 9 AM - 12:30 PM, "Journeying in Prayer: Highway to Love", Sr. Bernadette Brennan

...Dec. 31, 8 PM - 1 AM, Welcome the New Year, Prayer, Intercession, Liturgy, Fr. John Gordon

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

..Mass, First Thursday of month, 8 PM, Graymoor, Garrison, 6th Fl. chapel, Fr. Walter Gagne, 845-424-3671

...Oct. 30, Cluster Meeting, St. Patrick Center, 7:45 PM, Edward Mulholland, "Proclaim the Gospel of Life"

...Growth in the Spirit Seminar, Sept.4-Dec.4, Thursdays, 8 PM-9 PM, St. Patrick Center

Rockland Cluster meets first Monday of the month, 8:15 p.m. Call 914-623-6503 for location

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

...Oct. 17, St. John the Evangelist, Centerville

*See the "Out & About" column of Catholic New York for more current information on events.*

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