

The Flame

March/April 2022

The Path toward Unity Begins in the Heart

by John Gresham

Pope Francis is calling the Charismatic Renewal to remember our ecumenical roots and renew our commitment to pray and work toward Christian unity. To answer this call, we would do well to return to Pope St. John Paul II's encyclical on ecumenism, written 25 years ago, *Ut unum sint* (that they all might be one). In that encyclical, John Paul II emphasized that the path toward unity begins in an interior dialogue with God: before we engage in ecumenical dialogue with other Christians, we must first enter into a "dialogue of conversion" with God. In this dialogue of conversion, Christians are drawn into a "completely interior spiritual space in which Christ by the power of the Spirit leads them all to examine themselves before the Father." In this interior encounter with the Lord, we learn to repent of our own sins and experience healing of memories associated with past divisions.

The shared proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit to an unbelieving world is a rich opportunity for ecumenical cooperation.

From this interior encounter with the Lord, we are drawn by divine love to prayer in common with other Christians. In this common prayer we experience Christ's own presence and that of his Spirit drawing us toward unity: "When Christians pray together, the goal of unity seems closer... In the fellowship of prayer Christ is truly present; he prays "in us", "with us" and "for us". It is he who leads our prayer in the Spirit-Consoler whom he promised and then bestowed on his Church in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, when he established her in her original unity." Out of this experience of prayer, we learn to see those other Christians with new eyes. We contemplate the "mighty works of God... examples of holiness... immense riches" wrought by the Holy Spirit among other Christian communities. We not only admire their gifts, we receive them to our

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Dear Readers of the Flame,

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul writes: *For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.* (Romans 11:29) The context of this short verse is the mystery of the Gentiles welcoming the gospel of Christ while many of the Jews are rejecting Christ. The context is verse 28, which reads, *In respect to the gospel, they (the Jews) are enemies on your account; but in respect to election, they are beloved because of the patriarchs.* God has not written off the Jews. He does not stop calling them.

I share this principle in order to help us understand the gifts and call that we have as Catholic Christians who have experienced the charisms of the Holy Spirit. I believe the same principle applies. *The gifts and call are irrevocable.* This truth is both comforting and frightening.

What do I mean? It can be comforting to know that the charisms of the Holy Spirit can be active when I minister to others even if I missed my prayer time or had an argument with my spouse. If God has given us a gift, the Lord will use us even if we do not feel “spiritual” or sense God’s nearness. We must remember, *we walk by faith, not by sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7). If we have a gift of healing, we act in faith, laying aside our own personal feelings and weaknesses. We simply want to serve those who seek help in their needs.

The truth that “*the gifts and call of God are irrevocable*” can also be sobering and even frightening. People can effectively minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. They can exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit that genuinely touch lives. However, ministerial effectiveness does not validate their personal walk with the Lord. People can be in serious sin and still do good in the name of the Lord.

We see this in the Old Testament. Solomon was the successor to King David. As a young King, sensing his inadequacy, he prayed for an understanding heart (1 Kings 3:9) and God granted him unrivaled wisdom. Solomon would go on to organize the Kingdom, expand its borders and lead it into prosperity. He built the Temple and organized its liturgical worship. Solomon enthralled hearers near and far with his wisdom. However, Solomon had many foreign wives (around 700 wives and 300 concubines!) These wives turned his heart toward their idols. Solomon was not completely with the Lord. His gift of wisdom was evident. However, his sin would bear bad fruit in the next generation. (1 Kings 11:1-13)

Similar things have seen this in the history of the Church. At times, corrupt leaders have accurately passed on the faith and celebrated the sacraments. They did not benefit from these. Perhaps they scandalized more people than they helped save. However, their ministrations still made God’s grace present. Even in our own day, especially among some of those who pioneered televangelism, there have been those who preached with power and exercised true gifts of the Holy Spirit, but lived scandalous lives. They misused funds and sinned against the sixth and ninth commandments.

The Church recognizes this phenomenon and constantly calls each person to grow in holiness. And when the Church investigates a person’s life for canonization, the Church does not give undue attention to any signs and wonders the person may have performed during their earthly ministry. Those signs and wonders are not validations of holiness. They are gifts of the Spirit given to benefit the common good. The Church investigates whether a person has lived a heroically virtuous life.

St. Paul reaffirms this truth when he exhorts the Corinthian Church to earnestly seek spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1) However, in between those two verses, St. Paul penned one of the most famous passages in the bible: 1 Corinthians 13. In this discourse on Christian love he reminds us:

And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:2-3)

He goes on to describe love as patient, kind, not jealous, rejoicing, not with wrongdoing, but with the truth.

Finally, Jesus himself warned us:

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?’ Then I will declare to them solemnly, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.’ (Matthew 7:21-23)

The clear teaching of our Lord is somewhat frightening. Somehow, we can prophesy, do mighty deeds and drive out demons in the name of the Lord and miss the boat! Signs and wonders and calling out “Lord, Lord...” take a second place to the will of the Father. And what is the will of the Father? Our Lord’s words from the end of Matthew 7 are preceded by chapters 5 through 7, the Sermon on the Mount. These words call us to a purity of heart, a simplicity of lifestyle and a love that reaches out to one’s enemies.

This does not mean that we should stop our earnest seeking of spiritual gifts. However, we must more earnestly pursue holiness, virtue and charity. Spiritual gifts are effective tools for evangelizing and building up the body of Christ. Their time is now and they will not be needed in eternity. Purity of heart, virtue and charity actually pave the road to eternal life with God who is love. (1 John 4:8)

Do you have a spiritual gift? Cultivate it for the glory of God and service of his people. However, make sure you are pursuing holiness of life and charity toward friend and foe. This is the aroma of Christ that attracts those open to Christ and nauseates those who oppose Him. (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). As we enter the season of Lent, let us pursue the Lord with purity of heart! As we die to our sins and fears we will rise with Him who has conquered sin, Satan and death!

In Christ,

Fr. Bob Franco

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CATHOLIC RENEWAL MINISTRIES PRESENTS:

Rejoice ALWAYS Pray WITHOUT CEASING IN ALL THINGS Give Thanks



EVENT DATE

**Saturday
July 16, 2022**

St. Albert the Great Reception Hall

6667 Wallings Rd, North Royalton, OH 44133

Lunch and Dinner Options Available
with Registration!

EVENT ACTIVITIES

- Morning Prayer
- Praise & Worship
- Dynamic Teaching
- Healing Prayer
- Saturday Vigil

and

**Contemporary Christian Music
with Matt Fafrak**

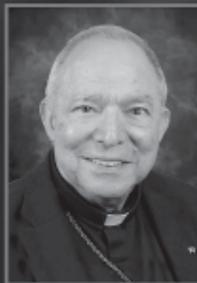
EVENT SPEAKERS



SISTER MARIE FIDELIS

was 16 when she had an encounter with God. On a youth retreat, Jesus in the Eucharist spoke to her heart: "I am the truth that you are looking for." She studied Theology and Catechetics at Franciscan University of Steubenville, where she was

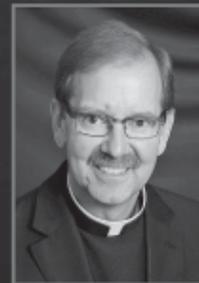
immersed in Catholic culture. When she was 20 years old she began asking God what He would have her do with her life. In response to Matthew's scripture "*The Rich and the Kingdom of God*", she "sold all that she had" and decided to follow Jesus. She entered the Franciscan Community, Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and has had great joy and fulfillment in living as a Bride of Christ!



MOST REVEREND SAM G. JACOBS

was ordained in 1964 and became bishop of Houma-Thibodaux in 2003. Reverend Jacobs has a Masters Degree in Philosophy and Education/Administration. He was past chairman of the

USCCB Ad Hoc Committee on Catholic Charismatic renewal, and served on many committees including: Home Missions, Vocations, Family Life and Youth. He also served as Director of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Lafayette and currently is on the Arise International Board of Directors and the John Paul II Healing Ministry Board, also serving as the International Chaplain to Legatus.



REV. ROBERT FRANCO

has been active in the Charismatic Renewal since he was 19 and states that his vocation flowed from it.

He has been the Bishop's Liaison for the Charismatic Renewal in the Cleveland Diocese since 1992. He served on the Fraternity of Priests Board of Directors as member, chairman, and editor of the Fraternity's Newsletter, *The Visitation*. He is currently the pastor of St. Peter Parish in North Ridgeville.

Check website www.crmweb.org mid-April for registration details

e-mail: crmcleland@gmail.com

Catholic Renewal Ministries Events

Prayer Group Information

Our Lady of Angels Prayer Group continues to meet to praise our Lord through the Holy Spirit with worship, singing, gifts of the Holy Spirit, sharing stories, and teachings. We meet in the auditorium of the Primary Building behind Linus Hall of Our Lady of Angels Parish at 7:30 PM every Tuesday evening until 9 PM. Refreshments, fellowship, and prayer teams immediately follow. All are welcome. We are also on Zoom. Please phone Don Lawrence, 1-740-424-4707, for updates and more information (leave a message!) or email DonLawrence603@gmail.com. Thank you.

SS. Cosmas and Damian Charismatic Prayer Group meets every Sunday at 7:00 p.m. in the church gathering area under the Holy Spirit Dove. The prayer meeting is also streamed live on SS. Cosmas and Damian Facebook page. Come and experience vibrant praise and worship, intercessory and healing prayer, and scripture sharing.

Do you want to know Jesus in a deeper way? Are you looking to go deeper in your faith? Come and check out our church community of believers. To contact us or be on the prayer group email list call 330-310-2595 or email dennycarleton@sbcglobal.net

St. Hilary's Prayer Group in Fairlawn is meeting face-to-face (masks and distancing optional) from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. on Tuesdays either in the parish library on the first floor of the church or downstairs in the gathering area. There is an elevator to that level. Questions? please call Jim at 330-612-5969.

The **Holy Spirit Prayer Group** of St. Mary Church in Hudson is a Charismatic Holy Spirit led prayer group that meets the first and third Saturdays of the each month year around. We meet from 10am to 11:30 am in the chapel. The main focus of our meeting is to praise and worship the living God. We ask the Holy Spirit to minister to us and take us to the heart of the Father. We not only offer praise and

worship but also periods of silent prayer to seek and hear God's words and His messages to us. We share words of God, share stories, and offer intercessory prayers for hurting and suffering brothers and sisters.

Our prayer group offers a monthly healing prayer service also. For further information, please contact us at: HealingPrayers@stmaryhudson.cc.

The Holy Spirit Prayer Group of St. Mary Church hosts an in person **Healing Prayer Service** on the first Sunday of each month, except in July and September of this year. For those months the service will be held on the second Sundays. The service will be held in the chapel from 12:30-1:30 pm.

Our prayer teams will be available to pray for the healings of your body, body and spirit. Fr. Larry will, depending on his availability, offer an anointing for those seriously ill, preparing for surgery, or weak with aging.

We encourage you to submit your prayer requests to healingprayers@stmaryhudson.cc. St. Mary Church is located at 340 N. Main St., Hudson 44236, Tel: 330-653-8118.

The **Living Word Healing Prayer Ministry** at St. Ambrose Parish in Brunswick is now meeting again face to face. Our meeting days have changed from what they were previously. We are now meeting on the first and third Wednesdays of every month from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in our Chapel.

We allow the Winds of the Spirit to flow over us as we praise the Lord through music, instruction, and group reflection. We allow time for God to open our hearts and our minds as we listen for His Word both through Scripture and Word of Knowledge. Every meeting ends with healing prayer as we ask Jesus to come to us in a special way to heal our brokenness and touch us with His Love. All are invited to join us as we praise and worship the Living God!

For more information, please contact Marian Iglai at: marianiglai@gmail.com.

Catholic Renewal Ministries Events

(Prayer Group Information continued)

The **Bukas Loob sa Diyos** (BLD) or in English - **Open in Spirit to God** (OSG), is a Filipino Catholic Charismatic Covenant Community. While the majority of BLD members are from the Philippines, it also includes other brothers and sisters of many nationalities and heritage backgrounds. We meet every Thursday, at 7:30 pm at the Mary Queen of Peace Chapel, 4423 Pearl Rd, Cleveland, OH 44109. We hold weekly praise and worship service in-person. Also, on the first Thursday of each month, we celebrate a mass followed by a healing service.

We are a communion of families and a community of persons called together as one people through the moment of encounter and a process of renewal to a relationship of faith, hope, and love with God. We conduct marriage encounter programs, solo person encounters, single encounters, family encounters and life in the spirit seminars.

For more information, please contact Rudy and Fe Fontilla at (440) 403-5719 or email: rudyfontilla1975@yahoo.com.

Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth Chapter of Magnificat, a women's ministry modeled after the Visitation, invites you to a **Breakfast on Saturday, March 19th** at Walsh University, Barrette Center, 2020 East Maple Street, North Canton, Ohio. Join us in a special time of fellowship and sharing. Fr. Jay Clarke & Fr. Tom Bishop will be the guest speakers.

Option 1: \$22 Mail-in - Go to magnificatstark.weebly.com/mail-in-reservation

Option 2: \$23 Online - Go to magnificatstark.weebly.com/online-reservation

RESERVATIONS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER MARCH 5th.



Open seating. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. with Breakfast at 9:00 a.m. There will be an optional Mass at 8:00 a.m. in Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel at Walsh University. For further information call Rosemary Pfiffner at 330-904-6096.

CRM and Prayer Group Events

SAVE THE DATE!

All are invited to attend **Catholic Renewal Ministries' 39th Annual Conference** to be held on **Saturday, July 16th, 2022** at St. Albert the Great Parish in North Royalton. This year's theme is "Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks". Guest speakers will be Bishop Sam Jacobs, Sr. Marie Fidelis from the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Community, and Fr. Bob Franco. Visit the CRM website: www.crmweb.org, for more information as it comes available.

Please save the date and get the word out to your friends and family. Come, experience the healing power and gifts of the Holy Spirit!



VISIT US ONLINE:
crmweb.org

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. (JN 3:16)



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own edification. John Paul II reminds of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that “whatever is wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brothers and sisters can contribute to our own edification.” Ecumenical dialogue is transformed from a mere exchange of ideas to a mutual exchange of gifts. In the words of Pope Francis, “If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us.”

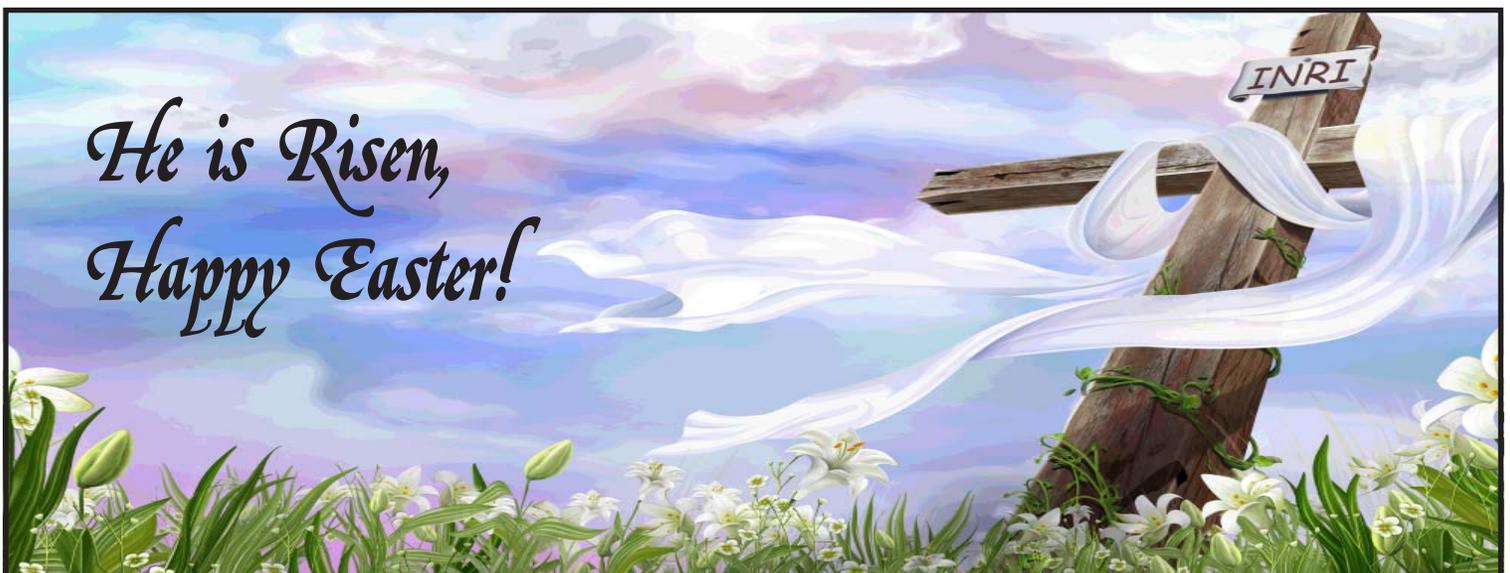
I have experienced both the joy of sharing and the joy of receiving in this ecumenical exchange of gifts. I was part of a Catholic Pentecostal dialogue at the Assemblies of God seminary in Springfield Missouri when the conversation turned to the topic of Spiritual Direction. I was amazed at how enthusiastically these Pentecostals embraced the value and benefits of this Catholic practice. As for gifts received, I have been blessed for the past few years to be part of the Alpha program in a couple of different Catholic parishes. This evangelistic program developed by an Anglican church has been a great gift to

Catholics. Alpha helps us with that very first step in evangelization - the proclamation of Christ and the invitation to accept him as Savior and Lord. This initial proclamation is neither uniquely Catholic, nor Protestant, nor Pentecostal but merely Christian. The shared proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit to an unbelieving world is a rich opportunity for ecumenical cooperation. May such cooperation grow and increase!

Despite the blessings given and received in the ecumenical exchange of gifts, many obstacles to unity remain and it is easy to become discouraged. John Paul II concludes his encyclical encouraging us to have “hope in the Spirit” and to remember the angel’s message to Mary, “with God nothing is impossible.”

John Gresham is Executive Director of the Institute for Catholic Studies and Formation in the Diocese of Venice, Florida. He is author of Jesus 101: God and Man and Holy Spirit 101: Present Among us. He has served on the NSC (Pentecost Today USA) Council since 2015.

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