

May / June 2024

Charismatic Renewal and Christian Unity

By Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa OFM.Cap

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal has a specific vocation and responsibility in regard to the unity of Christians. Its ecumenical vocation appears even more evident if we think back to what happened at the beginning of the Church. What did the Risen One do to prompt the apostles to welcome the Gentiles into the Church? God sent the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his household in the same way and with the same manifestations with which he had sent the Spirit on the apostles at the beginning. Peter could therefore only draw the conclusion that "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17). At the Council of Jerusalem Peter repeated this same argument: God "made no distinction between us and them" (Acts 15:9).

Now we have seen this marvel repeated before our very eyes, this time on a worldwide scale. God has poured out his Holy Spirit on millions of believers who belong to almost all the Christian denominations and, lest there be any doubt about his intentions, he has poured out his Spirit with the identical manifestations, including the most striking one of speaking in tongues. We too are left to draw the same conclusion that Peter did: "If God then has given them the same gift he gave us, who are we to continue to say that other Christian believers do not belong to the body of Christ and are not true disciples of Christ?"

I have always been struck by the similarity between the experience that brought the Pentecostal leader Vinson Synan, who recently went to the Lord, to welcome Catholics into his communion and the experience that brought me to welcome Pentecostals into mine, namely, the discovery that the same Spirit operating in us was also operating in them. We need to look at what the charismatic path to unity involves. St. Paul outlined this plan for the Church: "speak the truth in love" (see Eph 4:15). What we must not do is bypass the issues of faith and of doctrine in order to be united in the sphere of shared action in evangelization and social issues. Ecumenism experimented with this path at its beginning early in the past Century, and experienced its failure. Divisions inevitably resurface quite soon, even in the sphere of action. We must not substitute charity for truth but rather aim for truth with charity. In other words, we need to begin to love one another in order to understand each other better.

The extraordinary thing about this ecumenical path based on love is that it is possible at once; the way is completely open before us. We cannot "cut corners" concerning doctrine because there are indeed differences that are to be resolved with patience in the appropriate settings. However, we can skip some steps concerning love and be united right now.

It is the only "debt" that we have toward others (see Rom 13:8). We can welcome and love one another despite our differences. Christ did not command us to love only those who think the way we do and who fully share our creed. If we love only those people, he warned us, what is special about that since the pagans also do that? (see Mt 5:46)

We can love each other because what already unites us is infinitely more important than what divides us. What unites us is the same faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Lord Jesus, true God and true man; the shared hope of eternal life; the common commitment to evangelization; the shared love for the body of Christ, the Church.

Dear Readers of The Flame,

The original Pentecost was an event that was amazing, transformative and prophetic all at the same time. First, people were amazed at the signs and wonders that accompanied the coming of the Spirit. There was a strong driving wind, tongues of fire resting on 120 disciples of Jesus and a polyphony of voices and many languages proclaiming the praises of the Living God.

And Pentecost was certainly a transformative event. We see the effects of the Spirit in the lives of the apostles in three distinct ways.

- 1. The Holy Spirit transformed the apostles thinking. In Acts 1:6 we hear the Apostles ask Jesus, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" They were asking the wrong question! They seem to be still looking for something of an earthly Kingdom for Israel. After the coming of the Spirit they understood what Jesus had done by his death and resurrection. They understood Him and they knew what they were to be about: witnessing to Jesus to the ends of the earth.
- 2. The Holy Spirit transformed the apostle's approach to life and ministry. During the passion and death of Jesus we see that the apostles ran and hid from Jesus. And even after Jesus was raised from the dead, the apostles were still a bit timid. It was not until Pentecost that they proclaimed Jesus Christ with assurance and boldness (Acts 4:13).
- 3. The Holy Spirit also transformed their way of relating to each other and to people. Before Pentecost, their relationships with each other seemed to be infected with a bit of self-service and rivalry. (See Mark 10:35-45). After Pentecost, they stood with each other. Acts 2:14 says that "...Peter stood up with the Eleven..." and focused on the ministry at hand. They sought to wash each other's feet and live out the command of the Lord, "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." (John 13:34)

Finally, Pentecost was a prophetic event. The signs and wonders of that Sunday morning point to creating the world all over again. The "rushing wind" hearkens back to the creation of the world (Genesis 1:2). Pentecost is the beginning of the New Creation. The "tongues as of fire" point us to Mt. Sinai, where Moses received the Law amid thunder, lightening and a smoking mountain. The Spirit, who inscribes the New Law on the hearts of believers, comes with a fire that purges the heart of the 120 gathered in the Upper Room.

Finally, the Spirit inspired the praise of God in many languages. This prophetic action tells us of the undoing of Babel (Genesis 9). At Babel, God punished people's pride by creating many languages. Unable to understand each other, people became divided. At Pentecost, people of many languages were united by the truth of God's glory in the person of Jesus Christ.

The focus of the Catholic Renewal Ministries conference this summer underscores this unitive work of the Holy Spirit. *One Body, One Spirit* is a phrase from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians 4:4. The whole passage reads:

...striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:3-6)

St. Paul's description of this unity is not some sort of amorphous feeling. He describes this unity in seven ways by using the word "one". It is to be a unity of one: body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism and God the Father.

Yes, we need the work of the Spirit to transform our thinking and embolden our timid hearts. However, I believe we especially need this uniting work of the Spirit. Much of the divisiveness of our time is rooted in a philosophy called *dialectical materialism* by Karl Marx (Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto*) and Friedrich Engels that pits people against each other (rich vs. poor, race vs. race, gender vs. gender, et cetera). Dialogue seems to have been replaced by accusations and hatred. This seems to have become the norm in our society.

As Catholic Christians filled with the Spirit, we need to become agents of unity. This requires a transformation of heart and mind. By God's grace we need to root out fear and prejudice from ourselves. We need to work at understanding people even when we will be misunderstood. We need to be especially observant to love our brothers and sisters, our fellow Catholics and Christians in other communities.

In the early Church, Christians were accused of all sorts of things, like starting a catastrophic fire in Rome (Nero's accusation in 64 A.D) or cannibalism (referring to the Eucharist). However, they responded with love. They sought to forgive their persecutors. And unbelievers noticed how they cared for each other. In the second century unbelievers noted, *See how they love one another!* (from the writings of Tertullian, 197 AD).

As we approach Pentecost, let us pray that the Holy Spirit renew us and the whole Church. Enlightened and empowered by the Spirit, let us become fountains of charity and instruments of unity.

In Christ, Fr. Bob Franco



PS: I encourage you to participate in the upcoming CRM events. The Pentecost Mass in May, June Charismatic Mass, and the July Conference. More information is found in this issue of the Flame as well as the CRM website: www.crmweb.org.

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- Ham on Croissant, Lettuce, Tomato, Cheese, Honey Mustard and Mayo on the side
- Chicken Salad on Croissant, Lettuce, Tomato, Cheese, Mayo on the side
- Vegetarian on Ciabatta Bread, Lettuce, Tomato, Cheese, Ranch on the side
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- SALADS: GF House Salad, Broccoli Salad

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Prayer Group Information

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. 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

The Community of Praise Prayer Group meets at St. Paul Catholic Church, 241 South Main St., North Canton, OH 44720. Their prayer meetings start at 6:30 pm on the second Monday of each month. Upcom-

ing dates are: December 11, 2023 and January 8, 2024. They meet inside the main church in the area of the "old Sanctuary". Parking is behind the Church, and there is an elevator to the upper level where the Main Church is located. For more information contact Don and Rosemary Pfiffner at 330-499-9371 or email: pfiffner67@gmail.com

Our Lady of Angels Prayer Group meets on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 – 9:00PM in the Primary Building of Our Lady of Angels School (behind Linus Hall) 3600 Rocky River Dr., Cleveland, 44111. We are a growing community who love to worship Our Lord in song, praise, silence, and move in the Spiritual Gifts. Each week we have a topic of teaching or a

witness. Refreshments and fellowship follow each meeting, along with an opportunity for personal healing prayer. We are in the planning stages for a Life in the Spirit Seminar beginning in early September. Please phone Tom Stamper with questions or for more information 216-536-6495.

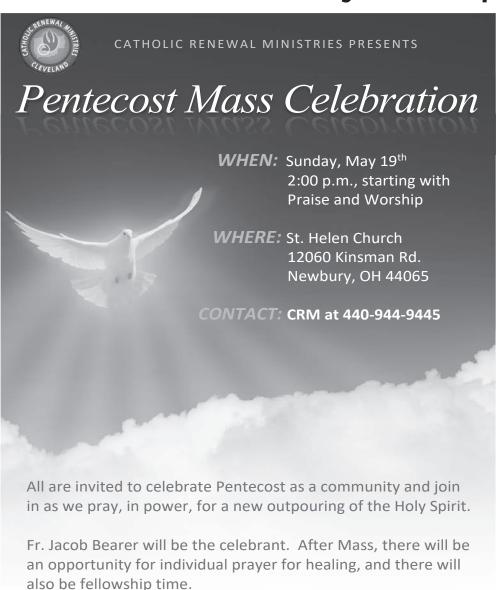
The Living Word Healing Prayer Ministry at St. Ambrose Parish in Brunswick meets face to face on the first and third Tuesdays of every month from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in our Chapel. We allow the Winds of the Spirit to flow over us as we praise the Lord through music, sharing, and group reflection. Every 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!

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 7:00 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 at 7:00 p.m., we celebrate a mass followed by a healing service. For more information, please contact Rudy and Fe Fontilla at (440) 403-5719 or email: rudyfefontilla1975@yahoo.com.

The Holy Spirit Prayer Group of St. Mary Church in Hudson is a Charismatic Holy Spirt led prayer group that meets the first and third Saturdays of 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

Holy Spirit Prayer Group meets in the Fairlawn and Akron area. For information about dates, times and locations, please call Jim McGuire at 330-612-5969.

CRM and Prayer Group Events



Catholic Renewal Ministries will host a charismatic Pentecost Mass Celebration, Sunday, May 19th, at St. Helen Church 12060 Kinsman Rd., Newbury, OH 44065. The celebration will start at 2:00 p.m. with praise and worship. Fr. Jacob Bearer will be the celebrant. After Mass, there will be an opportunity for individual prayer for healing, and there will also be fellowship time. For more information, please contact CRM at 440-944-9445. All are invited to celebrate Pentecost as a community and join in as we pray, in power, for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Catholic Renewal Ministries' Traveling Charismatic Mass for June will be held at St. Peter Parish on Friday, June 21st, 7:00 pm. Fr. Bob Franco will be the celebrant. Praise and worship will begin at 7:00 and the liturgy will start at 7:30. Healing prayer teams will be available after mass for individual prayer,

and there will also be a social after mass. The church is located at 35777 Center Ridge Rd., North Ridgeville 44039. For more information, please contact CRM at 440-944-9445. Come, Sing and Praise God with Joy!

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. We encourage you to submit your prayer requests to healing-prayers@stmaryhudson.cc. St. Mary Church is located at 340 N. Main St., Hudson 44236, Tel: 330-653-8118. Our prayer teams will be available to pray for the healings of your body and spirit. Fr. Larry will, depending on his availability, offer an anointing for those seriously ill, preparing for surgery, or weak with aging.

The Living Word Healing Prayer Ministry at St. Ambrose Parish in Brunswick offers a monthly Healing Prayer event which takes place in the Church after the 4:30 p.m. Mass on the third Saturday of every month. Healing prayer ministers are available to offer prayer for spiritual, emotional, or physical healing. Please join us so that the Spirit of God can touch you with healing love!

Holy Family Healing Prayer Group (Stow) offers Healing Prayer after all masses the second weekend of the month (Saturday 5:00 PM, Sunday 7:30, 9:00 and 11:30 AM masses) and after Tuesday and Friday 8:00 AM daily masses. Prayer teams will meet you in the back of the church. If you are unable to attend one of the masses, we offer homebound private prayer. Private prayer for physical, inner healing and Unbound can be scheduled by calling 330-686-0017. Jesus is Alive! Come experience His healing power.

SAVE THE DATE!

All are invited to attend Catholic Renewal Ministries' 41st Annual Conference to be held on Saturday July 27, 2024 at St. Albert the Great Parish Life Center, 6667 Wallings Rd., North Royalton 44133. This year's theme is "One Body One Spirit". Guest speakers will be Alicia Hartle who serves as executive director of Pentecost Today USA (the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the US), Graeson Dall, a national speaker who ministers with zeal and drive to awaken the universal church to the transformative love of the Holy Spirit, and Fr. Bob Franco, the Bishop's Liaison for Charismatic Renewal in the Cleveland Diocese. Fr. Damian Ference will be the celebrant for the Vigil Mass, and Matt Fafrak will lead us in contemporary praise music throughout the day and evening.

Visit the CRM website: www.crmweb.org or call 440-944-9445 for more information. Advance registration postmarked by Wednesday, July 17th, is \$35, and at the door \$40. Come, as we praise and exalt Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and celebrate this year of Eucharistic Revival.

(Continued from page 1)

Another important thing also unites us: the shared suffering and shared martyrdom for Christ. In so many parts of the world, believers from different churches are sharing the same sufferings and enduring the same martyrdom for Christ. They are not being persecuted and killed because they are Catholic, or Anglicans, or Pentecostals or from some other denomination, but because they are "Christians." In the eyes of the world we are already one single group, and it is a shame if we are not also that in reality.

How do we concretely put into practice this message of unity of love? Let us recall St. Paul's hymn of charity. Each of his phrases acquires a new significance when applied to love among the members of the various Christian churches in ecumenical relationships:

Love is not boastful. . .

Love is not rude. . .

Love does not seek its own interest (but seeks the interests of other churches as well). Love keeps no record of wrongs (keeps no record of wrongs suffered from other Christians, but rather of the wrongs done to them) (see 1 Cor 13:4ff).

St. Francis in one of his Admonitions says, "Blessed is the servant who rejoices in the good that God does through others as if he had done it through him." We can say, "Blessed is that Christian who is able to rejoice at the good that God does through other churches just as he is for the good that God does through his own church."

We should always remember however that Christian

unity, before being a duty to be accomplished, it's gift to be implored. The unity of the Church comes about in the same way that unity in the Trinity does: "The Father and Son," St. Augustine writes, "have willed us to be in communion among ourselves and with them by the same bond that unites them, namely, the love that is the Holy Spirit" (Sermon 71,12, 18).

It's the shared experience of the Holy Spirit that explains why the liveliest and most constructive ecumenical dialogue is currently the one between two Christian groupings that are the farthest apart in terms of signs, structures, and ministries but closer in their common experience of the Holy Spirit, that is, between the Charismatic movements of the traditional churches on one side and the Pentecostal and Evangelical churches on the other.

Let us conclude with some famous words of St. Augustine: "Just as at that time the languages of all nations indicated the presence of the Holy Spirit, in the same way, he is now indicated by the love of the unity of all nations. The time you can be sure you have the Holy Spirit is when you consent through sincere charity firmly to attach your minds to the unity" (Sermon 269, 2, 4).

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Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM.Cap is Preacher to the Papal Household since 1980 and Ecclesiastical Assistant of CHARIS. He is a ten-year member of the Catholic delegation for the Dialogue with the Pentecostal Churches. He is frequently invited to speak at international and ecumenical conferences and rallies.

CRM Volunteer Opportunities

The Catholic Renewal Ministries Service Committee is looking for volunteers who would be willing to usher at the various events during the year including Charismatic Masses (usually on Friday nights), Healing Services, special events, and the annual Conference. You would not be required to serve at every GSC event during the year but would be called upon to serve as an Usher for various events at your convenience. Prayer groups please ask and encourage your members if they would help out in this ministry of service. If you are willing to Usher, please send your name, e-mail address, and/or phone number and what prayer group you are associated with. Even if you are not currently attending a prayer group, please consider helping out with Ushering.

Carolee and Rich Zentkovich, 440-221-8169, cjzentkovich@gmail.com Prayer Group Coordinators Usher Ministry



Thank you.

WANTED - GENERAL SERVICE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Catholic Renewal Ministries is looking for a few new members for the General Service Committee. We meet once a month, usually the third Monday of the month, to discuss plans and events for the Renewal. Members are encouraged to provide ideas for the growth of the Renewal in the Cleveland Diocese, and to provide help as needed. Current committees are: Conference, Prayer Groups, Healing, Hispanic, Program, Music and Word Gifts.

If you are interested or have questions, please contact Ken Posavad at 440.319.9646 or kposa@sbcglobal.net



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