

CHARISMATIC RENEWAL OFFICE NEWSLETTER

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August/September 1999

ANNOUNCEMENT !!!

The Charismatic Renewal Office is seeking applicants for a paid part-time office administrator position which will be for 20-25 hours per week. Wages would be \$10.00 per hour. The duties include: answering phone calls, handling correspondence, working on bulk mailings, and planning events. Training will be provided. Anyone interested should call Barb at the CCRO at (612) 721-2543 for additional information.

Calling Others Into Service

by Sr. Nancy Kellar, S.C.

"The son of man came not to be served but to serve"
(Mt 20:28)

When visiting prayer groups I often hear from leaders: "No one is willing to serve. There is no commitment". On the other hand, sometimes in the same group, members would say: "It's always the leaders who are doing everything. Why don't they give other people a chance to serve?"

I. DELEGATING: GIVING AWAY RESPONSIBILITY

A key aspect of calling others into service is the attitude of the veteran leaders. Often such leaders are the founders of the group who initially may have had to do almost everything themselves. They sometimes failed to see the need to let go as others showed their willingness and gifts. We need to recognize that service is meant to be shared for the sake of commitment in the group.

Even a team of leaders, who do everything themselves, should be able to see that they may be standing in the way of others growing in the Lord and in commitment. Leaders need to learn to give away their jobs, not to retire from the prayer group, but to move on to the "more" the Lord has in mind for them in pastoring, teaching and evangelizing in so many other ways. New people then can move into their responsibilities and grow in a sense of belonging as

they serve. Often "burn out" in leaders comes from holding on to the "good thing" of yesterday while missing the "God thing" of today.

II. HOW TO CALL OTHERS INTO SERVICE

A. A Clear Sense of Mission

Leaders are called to have and to be able to impart to prayer group members a clear sense of vision and a clarity about the mission of the prayer group. The vision must be great enough and clear enough to warrant full commitment. No one will jettison other things unless they see something worth it! A vital reason for Jesus' success in calling disciples into service was that he came with a divine purpose. He was the possessor and proclaimer of a clear spiritual vision.

B. Intercession

Leaders should specifically pray that the Lord will call new people into service and invite the prayer group members to join that intercession. In Acts the elders of the temple were amazed at the self-assurance of Peter and John, "since they were uneducated men of no standing." Then they recognized them as "having been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13-14). Leaders need to look for the men and women growing in love, peace, and humility because they "have been with Jesus."

Some spiritual characteristics of potential servants of God would include: people who are growing in loving others as Jesus loved us; men and women who are peacemakers, building and maintaining right relationships; servants who are humble, depending on God's power, not their own.

C. Establishing Personal Relationships

It is important for leaders to establish a personal relationship with prayer group members. Jesus' bond with his disciples--his "core group"-- was a personal relationship, not a professional one. The service they performed flowed from their being known and valued by Him as persons.

We cannot call forth someone we do not know. We cannot help people discern their gifts if we do not know them. If people don't feel loved by us they will fear taking the necessary risk of coming forward to serve.

D. Teaching

Providing teaching on a variety of topics can help move others into service. Teachings on the following subjects are important.

1) The value and variety of service. People must be brought to believe that they will be most blessed as they seek to be a blessing to others in their service. Most people don't step forward because they don't believe they are an asset. "As each has received a gift employ it for one another" (1Pt 4:10). Leaders need to help people not to talk themselves out of being included in the "each." Service is not a reward for holiness, but a means to it.

2) The various gifts for service. Potential servant leaders are called to learn about the variety of gifts for service if they are going to be able to yield to their gifts. They need to be helped to look at their natural abilities and talents and at the types of service they have done in other situations. We need to be careful not to let people expect a ministry to "fall" upon them or to rely on prophecy to identify a gift. The *need* is the *call*! It is important to teach about the effective working together of gifts of vision and discernment with those of pastoring and administration.

3) Ordering priorities. People will not be able to discover their gifts if their commitment is partial. Immediately before his discussion of the gifts Paul says, "Present yourself as a living sacrifice to God" (Rom 12:1-8). On the other hand, it is vital to teach people how to balance the various demands on their time if they are going to be able to serve without overcommitment.

III. DISCOVERING GIFTEDNESS

A. Call People Forth

Prayer group members often will not volunteer. Leaders need to call them forth. The personal affirmation that comes from being called forth inspires confidence in them.

"Nancy, I want you to give your witness." Years ago, Fr. Jim Ferry used these words to call me into service. I was sitting in the second pew of a church eager to hear the speakers at the parish mission which Fr. Jim was leading. After the main talk he came from the altar, asked me to give my witness, and returned to the altar without waiting for my response. He used to say, "Think yes." He was too far away for me to argue with him, so I gave my witness to six hundred people. If he had said to me, "When you are ready, let me know," I would never have come forward and I would not be teaching and leading as I am today. Sometimes we need to call others into service by giving them this kind of push from behind.

B. Short Term Commitment

We can move people into service by starting small, asking them to do specific jobs with clear expectations. We can offer them the opportunity to make short term commitments. They need to know to whom they are accountable and to be able to receive help in evaluating their own effectiveness. People are ready to serve when they are ready to be discerned in that service. We need gifted people who are teachable.

C. Give Encouragement

Veteran leaders and prayer group members should affirm and express gratitude frequently and generously if we expect new leaders to remain fruitful and happy in service.

Still another element leaders should consider is the faith-sharing necessary among them that fosters and deepens relationships as well as offers a vehicle for working out the tensions that will inevitably arise.

D. Ongoing Formation

Leaders, both veterans and newcomers, must stay in touch with the church and the wider Renewal if they are to maintain commitment. They need to receive ongoing formation and to be challenged by the broader vision of what God is doing.

When we have done all that we are commanded to do, let us say, "We are merely servants: we have done no more than our duty" (Lk 17:10) and be available for the "more" to which the Lord is calling us in serving His people.

Editor's Note: The above article is reprinted from the ICCRS Newsletter with permission.

All that God has to Offer

by Larry Nawrocki

I first became involved in a prayer group in 1973 when I was still in the Navy. Becoming comfortable with the charisms and charismatic spirituality was a different and difficult experience for me. After all, I had been honing the concept I had had of God for almost 27 years, and it seemed to be working fine. And here comes God telling me, "I want you to see me in a new way; I want you to see a side of me that you've never imagined; I want you to see me in a way that will bless you with special gifts." Well, I wasn't exactly Mr. Flexible at that time in my life.

There were struggles, and it took a long time to come to grips with what God was offering me. Nevertheless, through His grace, I was able to remain open-minded, and eventually things started to sink in. I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, and, while tongues is only one aspect of

charismatic spirituality, I feel it important to mention that I came to praise God in tongues.

With the exception of a period of about four years when I was in law school and not attending prayer meetings, I grew in charismatic spirituality from my initiation in 1973 until 1984, and charismatic spirituality to the exclusion of other types of spirituality offered within the Church. Then in 1984 a couple in our parish started bugging me and my wife about something called “Cursillo”. At first, I wasn’t particularly interested. After all, God had accomplished a great work in changing me and the direction I had been going, and He wouldn’t call me to something new and different after only 11 years... would He? Some of my friends in the prayer group made the decision to attend a cursillo weekend, however, and, after hearing their rave reviews, I started to feel a little left out. Besides, one lesson I had learned from my 1973 conversion experience was how important it is to be open to all that God has for you.

There was still the difficulty of giving up time from Thursday evening until late Sunday afternoon, the time-frame in which a cursillo is offered. It always seemed that, when planning out into the future months, there was something conflicting with a scheduled weekend. What finally hooked me was a Monday night call from the people who had been bugging us telling me that there had been a cancellation opening up one spot for the men’s weekend starting three days thereafter. “Would it be convenient for me to attend?” Maybe I didn’t think fast enough to come up with an excuse; maybe I just knew that it was time for me to make a cursillo. In any case, I said that I would go, and I have never regretted the decision.

Without going into great detail, I will say that both my wife, Mary, and I received great blessings on our respective men’s and women’s weekends. We experienced sharing about life’s trials, genuine concern for those hurting, growth of a sense of fellowship, teaching about mechanisms for spiritual accountability, some wonderful “surprises”, ...and, oh yes, Christian love. Now, it’s not that any one of these blessings is not experienced within covenant communities or charismatic prayer groups. To the contrary. It’s just that the cursillo packaging is different, and that makes the experience of the “cursillista” unique. There is one God but different experiences, and charismatic spirituality and cursillo spirituality are different experiences.

During these past 15 years, Mary and I have accepted as good all the ongoing tools for growth that the Cursillo Movement offers: weekly small

accountability group meetings, monthly regional “ultreya” meetings, teaching seminars, sponsoring new candidates for weekends, and working candidate weekends.

Unfortunately, because of time demands placed on our lives by church, family, prayer group, etc., we have not used some of these tools as much as others. I have been very faithful to my Friday morning men’s small grouping for almost 15 years now, Mary and I have sponsored numerous couples and individuals over the years, and, on infrequent occasions, we have attended the monthly “ultreya”. We have never attended a large seminar nor, until very recently, had either of us worked a weekend. Our non-use of some of the tools has not been because of any perceived lack of value. It’s just that there are only so many minutes in the day and only so many days in the week. Life is very busy, and a person can only do so much.

Because of the differences between charismatic renewal and cursillo experiences, I have, at various times over the years, felt a need to understand and explain, at least to myself, the nature of those differences. I tend to be a person who tries to resolve and harmonize. I like everything to fit in a nice package; I like to see the pieces of the puzzle fit together. I have, therefore, tried to reconcile the two movements; I have tried to define God’s purpose for one as compared to His purpose for the other.

My first attempt saw cursillo focusing upon the person of Jesus Christ and charismatic renewal focusing upon the person of the Holy Spirit. I came, however, to see the invalidity of this theory. While we do, in charismatic renewal, heavily emphasize the person of the Holy Spirit, the essentiality of the work of Jesus is never downplayed. Similarly, while cursillo does give a central role to Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying our lives is also a basic tenet.

After trying for a long time to make this resolution work, I decided to change my theory. It became that cursillo focused on an all-loving God while charismatic renewal focused on an all-powerful God. Love and power: both attributes of the triune God; that should work, ...but it doesn’t. I can tell you that, in the prayer community of which I am a member, “love” is a very common theme of the weekly teaching, and the last issue of this NEWSLETTER was dedicated exclusively to an article on 1 Corinthians 13, the “expose” of love. I can also tell you that the power of God is a very common theme in cursillo. The fires of this mental debate were recently stoked when, for the first time in 15 years since I made my cursillo, I worked a weekend.

Mary and I had, because of her fluency in Spanish, been invited to be on the men’s and women’s teams for the

first Spanish language cursillo offered in the Twin Cities area for more than 15 years. The weekend was a special blessing to me, as my first weekend in 1984 had been. God showered me with gifts throughout the weekend, but it was during a chapel prayer time on Sunday morning when I was trying to understand how charismatic spirituality is different from cursillo spirituality that the revelation came. Why had I spent so much time and mental energy trying to understand the differences rather than seeking to see how the two movements are similar? Why had I been looking at these movements almost as if they were mutually exclusive? Why had I been focusing so much on the gifts and so little on the love of the giver?

In the time of the apostle Paul, jealousies and rivalries arose among the early Christians. It seems that they were each choosing an influential minister to whose teachings they would subscribe.

Chapter 3 of the First Letter to the Corinthians tells us how someone would say, "I belong to Paul," and another "I belong to Apollos." Paul, in response, instructed them that he had planted, "Apollos watered, but God caused the growth." Both Paul and Apollos were merely clay to be used in God's hands; God was the potter.

It seems that, in today's church, while God may use a particular movement to work a conversion in us, we can end up following the movement rather than following God. "I am a cursillista!" "I am a charismatic!" Let us stop and realize that it is only the Lord whom we seek and it is only He who will satisfy our longing. Movements are good, and many are ordained by God. We must remember, however, that they are merely means to an end, eternal happiness.

The board of directors of the local Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office has been grappling with the issue of establishing a dialogue with cursillo and other movements. I believe that we who have been blessed with having been baptized in the Holy Spirit and have been gifted with charismatic gifts can commence our own dialogue with "cursillo"; if we haven't yet made a weekend, we can make arrangements to do so. In the charismatic renewal movement, we owe a debt of gratitude to the cursillo movement; many of the early leaders in charismatic renewal were active cursillistas. More importantly, we owe it to ourselves to see and appreciate all that God has to offer.