

# CHARISMATIC RENEWAL OFFICE NEWSLETTER

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## Mission Statement:



*Our mission is to help people submit to the will of the Father, respond to the call to conversion to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, to facilitate transformation through Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and to assist in the spiritual renewal of people and parishes and the wider Church.*

### Editor's Note:

The following are excerpts of an article originally published in Oct./Nov./Dec. 2007 issue of Pentecost Today, reprinted here with permission. The article fits perfectly with our theme for this year's Annual Teaching Conference. **Register for the conference today and plan to attend!**

## *How to Strengthen Ecclesial Maturity in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal*

*by Alan Schreck, Ph.D.*

When I wrote the first draft of this article, I assumed that everyone reading it would understand what "ecclesial maturity" means in the context of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. However, when a visiting in-law asked me what I was writing about, she thought "ecclesial maturity" referred to the Church's hierarchy being mature enough to recognize the charisms of the laity and allow them to be exercised. Not a bad interpretation. Then I explained that I was writing about how the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, as a movement, was to become mature in its attitude and contribution to the Church. This seemed to help, but the discussion then shifted to what it meant for a movement to be "ecclesial mature" and why this is important. I referred to Pope John Paul II's address to the gathering of the movements in Rome on Pentecost, 1998, where he spoke of a "new stage [that] is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity," which is "a challenge....a road to take." Since this papal address, many have written about "ecclesial maturity" and how this might be pursued and achieved in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In this article, I simply wish to contribute a perspective on the issue, and to make a few suggestions on how we might grow in "ecclesial maturity." There is, I believe, a particular challenge that the charismatic

renewal faces in pursuing "ecclesial maturity." I believe that there is still widespread misunderstanding (or differing understandings) of what the Charismatic Renewal movement is all about – even among "charismatics." What is the goal of the movement? What are its essential characteristics? And further, in spite of all that Vatican II, Pope Paul VI, and Pope John Paul II taught about what the "charisms" are and how they are part of the Church's nature and essential to her life, there still remains a widespread view among Catholics that "charisms" are just for participants in a particular movement – the "charismatics" – but certainly aren't for everyone. In fact, some Catholics view focus on the charisms or the use of charisms as something intrinsically immature – identifying these gifts of the Holy Spirit with a particular type of religious experience or religious emotionalism that they see in prayer meetings where people are "carried away" with raising their hands, swaying to emotionally charged music, and even praying or singing aloud in gibberish that they call the "gift of tongues."

To speak of ecclesial maturity for "charismatics," for many Catholics, is to insist that they put aside this "emotionalism" and grow up spiritually into sober, mature Catholics whose faith is not emotional or experiential, and who do not need "charisms" to live a good Catholic life and build up the Church. In short, to be "spiritually mature," in this view, means to stop being "charismatic"!

Even after forty years, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal still faces two challenges with regard to her acceptance by the Catholic Church (and here I mean by the "average Catholic" even more than the hierarchy): 1) enabling Catholics to understand that being "baptized in the Holy Spirit" (or whatever name you prefer) is a grace of

renewal of life in Christ that God offers to all, and that is beneficial to all, and 2) that “charisms” are not the marks of a particular movement, but that every Christian receives charisms (gifts of the Spirit for the building up of the Church and for the spread of the faith) and needs to learn how to recognize one’s own charisms and to use them in order for the Church to function properly and fulfill her mission. To say that a Catholic is “charismatic” should be accepted in the same way as it may be said that a Catholic is Eucharistic, sacramental, Marian, pro-life, socially concerned and so on.

In summary, “ecclesial maturity” means, for those involved in Charismatic Renewal, not to identify this renewal with a particular charism or charisms (such as the gift of tongues or prophecy), nor to equate being “baptized in the Holy Spirit” with a particular type of experience of God that all must have. “Ecclesial maturity” means, for those Catholics not involved in the charismatic movement, to recognize that the Church is “charismatic” (as it is sacramental and hierarchical), which means that each Catholic possesses charisms to be discovered and used for the service of the Church and the world. It also means that every Catholic ought to desire and to seek a fuller grace of the Holy Spirit to deepen and enliven the relationship we have with Jesus and with the Father, a relationship which began at our baptism but must continue to grow. Hopefully Catholics will also come to understand that this is basically what “charismatic renewal” is really all about – a renewal of something that is essentially Catholic and Christian.

Two principles are the foundations of ecclesial maturity: holiness and humility. “Strive for peace with all... and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). Growth in ecclesial maturity is only possible and attainable as individuals and groups are seeking that ongoing deepening of our relationship with God, and transformation into the image of God in his Son Jesus Christ, that we call the pursuit of holiness. “...as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct” (1 Pt 1:15). Ecclesial maturity cannot be strengthened or attained in any movement, community, prayer group or parish unless the members understand that their *goal is to be holy*: to be progressively transformed by grace into the image of Jesus Christ; to live godly and God-like lives.

We all are tempted in our lives to act immaturely – to squabble and fight over things and issues that we shouldn’t be, to hold grudges, to engage in “turf wars” and seek recognition or position for ourselves or our friends, and so on. We all are sinners. But if we stop to ask ourselves, “Is this the way that holy people (or

people seeking holiness) should act or think?” then the Holy Spirit would have an opportunity to speak to us and lead us to greater maturity and holiness.

This quest for holiness requires humility. It is maturity that recognizes that the revelation of sin and sinful attitudes is actually the mercy of God at work, inviting us to repent, to change, and to attain holiness. Humility, which includes conviction of our sin and the need to repent, is the only path to holiness.

There are a number of results or “fruits” of the pursuit of holiness through humility that are signs of personal and ecclesial maturity. One of these is openness to the presence and work of the Lord in other movements and in the broader Church. Openness to the work of the Holy Spirit outside of Charismatic Renewal breaks down barriers and helps overcome “labels” that tend to divide instead of unify. Openness to the grace of God in the broader Church is a sign of ecclesial maturity.

Respect of others is a sign of maturity, even when others act or speak in ways that are difficult to respect. We are called to respect others because of the image of God in each person. We respect leaders in the Church (even lay leaders properly appointed) by virtue of the position or office they hold. We may disagree with certain of their statements, actions or views, and may express this in an appropriate way at the proper time, but we respect their person and their office. At the University where I serve, I believe that I have done more to promote the Charismatic Renewal by showing that I value and respect other employees than by any talks or conversations on the Holy Spirit or Charismatic Renewal. I believe that we are called to be “peacemakers” who are signs and instruments of the peace of Christ wherever we go. “Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding... (Romans 14:19); “...agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you (2 Cor 13:11).

The next sign of ecclesial maturity should not be surprising: service. One of my favorite Biblical texts is the end of Galatians 5:13: “For you are called to freedom, brethren, only to not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love be servants of one another.” Whatever we do, we do in imitation of Jesus, “the Son of man [who] came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28). Charismatic groups, as well, should be ready to serve the needs of others and of the wider Church, as directed or guided by their pastors and by the local bishop.

Finally the last element that reflects ecclesial maturity is the ongoing pursuit of education. Education does not guarantee holiness or virtue (“knowledge puffs up, but love builds up”, as St. Paul warned in 1 Cor 8:1). However, if we desire to grow to maturity in Christ, those involved in the Charismatic Renewal would benefit from education in the true Catholic understanding of God’s revelation as presented in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The Church communicates God’s revelation to us in many ways, such as in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, papal teachings and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Sacred Tradition also is expressed in the lives of the saints and in the study of the Church’s history.

I have been enriched, over the years, not only by my own study of Church history and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, but also by the work of Charismatic Renewal leaders such as Ralph Martin, who in recent years has presented in a very understandable and powerful form the teachings of the great Catholic mystics. He has presented those both in his tape series, distributed by Renewal Ministries, and in his recent book, The Fulfillment of All Desire (Emmaus Road). I have also been struck by the increasing number of lay Catholics pursuing advanced degrees in Theology, such as through our distance learning degree program at Franciscan University of Steubenville. Through education in Scripture and the tradition of the Church, we can truly grow into fuller maturity in Christ!

So here is our challenge, to grow in ‘ecclesial maturity’ through the pursuit of holiness and humility, with openness to all the Holy Spirit’s working in the Church with sincere respect for others and how the Holy Spirit is working in them, especially in our ordained leaders, in service to the Church and to our neighbor, and always seeking to grow in wisdom and maturity through ongoing education. May the Lord enable us through his Holy Spirit to strive for this full maturity in Christ! ■

### **LIFE IN THE SPIRIT SEMINARS**

A 7-week Life in the Spirit Seminar will be held at the Church of St. Mary in Willmar, Thurs. evenings 7-9pm, starting February 23. For more information and to register, call Geri at 320-222-3434.

Also, the St. Francis Prayer Group at Lumen Christi in St. Paul is sponsoring a **one-day** Life in the Spirit Seminar on Saturday, March 17. For more details and to register, call: Jack 651-699-7098 or Anita 651-690-2553.



## **CCRO WINTER TEACHING CONFERENCE**

***“Let Us Then Pursue What Leads to Peace  
and to Building Up One Another”***

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18**

Epiphany Church  
Coon Rapids

**You still have time to register for this exciting mid-winter event!** This fast-paced one-day conference is chock full of wonderful talks with information and resources you can use in your Lenten journey and beyond! It’s a day to focus on using the gifts of the Holy Spirit and developing more of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Our keynote speaker will be **FR. GREG PAFFEL**, pastor of Our Lady of Victory in Fergus Falls. Besides the opening and closing general sessions, you will have a variety of workshops to choose from each hour.

Epiphany has a Saturday morning parish Mass at 8:00a.m. Everyone is welcome to attend prior to the conference. Registration opens at 8:30. Coffee and rolls will be served. Praise and worship will begin at 8:45, and the day will conclude by 5:15p.m., in time for the 5:30 parish Mass if you want to stay. **Lunch is included in the day, so PREREGISTRATION IS A MUST!** Call **SONIA** at 952-431-2372 or **ARLENE** at 651-633-1286 to reserve a spot. Freewill offering.

**Spread the word!** ❄️ ❄️  
**It will be a great day!**

### ❄️ **FOODSHELF DONATIONS**

Please remember to bring non-perishable food items along to the Teaching Conference for the FRANCISAN BROTHERS OF PEACE foodshelf. Many thanks!

### ❄️ **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

Please call the office if you can volunteer at the Teaching Conference. We need people willing to serve in the hospitality, publicity, prayer, set-up/clean up, and registration ministries. It’s a very short time commitment, and you won’t miss any of the talks.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Healing Masses**

**February 7** – Tuesday – **St. Peter’s Church**, No. St. Paul; Rosary at 7:00 pm; Mass at 7:30 pm. Celebrant: Fr. Jim Livingston. *Info: Peter at 651-353-4311 or Deacon Bob 651-777-4406.*

**February 13** – Monday – **Divine Mercy Church**, Faribault. Celebrant: Fr. Jim Livingston. Rosary 6:30; Mass at 7:00 p.m. *Info and directions: Bernadette 507-334-2266 ext. 23.*

**February 17** – Friday– **St. Nicholas Church**, Carver - Rosary 6:30; Mass 7:00pm. Celebrant: Fr. Jim Livingston. *Info: Jodee at 952-448-2345.*

**February 20** – Monday – **Lumen Christi**, Cleveland & Bohland Aves., St. Paul (Highland) – Rosary 7:10; Mass at 7:30 p.m. *Info: Jack 651-699-7098 or Anita 651-690-2553.*

**February 21** – Tuesday – **St. Joseph’s Church**, Hopkins. Rosary 7:00; Mass 7:30 pm. Celebrant: Fr. Jim Livingston. *Info: Call Barb at 952-933-8423.*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

➤ **NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND FASTING**

For several years the Gathering of National Leadership Groups has encouraged a **National Day of Prayer and Fasting** for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the United States on the Friday before Ash Wednesday (this year February 17). The focus of the prayer is to beseech the Lord together for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church in the United States, and that we continue to foster Life in the Spirit Seminars during Easter Time.

➤ **PRAYER GROUP LEADERS:**

Please notify the office in advance as far as possible if your group is planning to sponsor a Life in the Spirit Seminar, so we can help get the word out. People often inquire about when the next one will be taking place. See inside this issue for two starting soon. Thank you.

**Your ongoing donations are needed to help keep the office operating. Know that they are appreciated. Thank you for your continued prayers and financial support. God bless you.**

**COMING FEB. 18th...  
The Winter Teaching Conference!**