

CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL ... **SERVICE COMMITTEE**

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Statement on behalf of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Service Committee
by Kevin M. Ranaghan

(Kevin M. Ranaghan, Ph.D. is a member of the national Catholic Charismatic Renewal Service Committee, and President of Charismatic Renewal Services.)

This week I returned from the International Congress on the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church held in Rome, to find that sweeping criticisms of the Catholic charismatic renewal and the national Service Committee were passing across the bishops' desks and filling the columns of national and diocesan weeklies. William G. Storey, a former participant in the movement, has issued a rather broad disapproval in the May 24th issue of A.D. Correspondence. I wish to make a preliminary response to his statement.

The wonderful success of the Rome Congress and the warm welcome given us by the Holy Father as we visibly placed this movement under his direction at the heart of the Church ought to be reassuring to all Catholics. I know that the bishops receive critiques of all sorts almost every day. Without wishing to enter into a major controversy, I do want to present to the bishops and the public the Service Committee's side of the story. I would like to begin with several general points and to follow them with some specific comments on the Storey interview.

1. The Catholic charismatic renewal is a broad, diverse, and considerably unorganized movement in which a variety of ideas and practices are current.
2. The national Catholic Charismatic Renewal Service Committee, which has a long record of open communication with the American bishops and the Holy See, attempts to take an overall pastoral concern for the movement and to develop principles and teachings which may be beneficial to local charismatic prayer groups.
3. In a movement as large and fluid as the Catholic charismatic renewal, theological and pastoral problems undoubtedly do arise. It is our opinion that occurrences of faulty teaching and practice when they have been dealt with by the national Service Committee have been handled intelligently, responsibly, and in conformity with the Catholic tradition.
4. We are sure that the work of our committee, as the work of all the dedicated men and women in the charismatic renewal, is not perfect. It can benefit, as the whole Church can benefit, from constructive criticism and from the pastoral direction of the hierarchy.

5. The Service Committee has always cooperated with theological and hierarchical inquiry into the renewal. We would continue to welcome theological, canonical, pastoral, etc., inquiry established by competent ecclesiastical authority.

6. Dr. Storey alleges serious theological and pastoral mistakes to be the belief and practice of this Service Committee. Our belief is that these allegations are basically ill-founded and seem to be based on misinformation and impression rather than on fact.

7. Perhaps the most unfortunate element in the Storey critique is the threat that the Catholic charismatic renewal at the level of its national leadership is imminently schismatic. While I find this personally offensive, I also believe it is perfectly groundless. It is our conviction that the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in general is characterized by a more than average, active fidelity, loyalty and obedience to the Roman Catholic Church in its hierarchical authority, sacramental life and spiritual tradition. While aspects of the charismatic renewal may be controversial, may demand vigorous debate within the Church, and may need the corrective discernment and guidance of our bishops, the overwhelming majority of participants and leaders are deeply, personally and totally committed to the Catholic Church. To talk of schism as any kind of real possibility is in my opinion patently ridiculous and highly irresponsible.

Since each of the bishops has received a copy of the Storey interview in A.D. Correspondence, I would like to make some specific responses to some issues raised therein.

1. Dr. Storey alludes to a serious moral situation pretty widely known within the movement which was dealt with by the leadership but was, he says, concealed from the local Ordinary. This statement is so misleading as to be erroneous. The facts are these: the national Service Committee was asked to advise a local charismatic group about a serious moral problem within the group. The question was raised, is it the responsibility of the Service Committee to inform the local Ordinary? After considerable discussion the Service Committee agreed not to directly inform him for two reasons: a) a local priest who was a confessor and spiritual director in the matter insisted that such communication with the Ordinary was his prerogative and responsibility and not ours, and b) we were subsequently assured by members of the local group that the auxiliary bishop, the vicar general, had been informed of the situation. We did, however, directly advise Bishop Joseph McKinney, the Service Committee's episcopal advisor, who regularly handles liaison between the Service Committee and the hierarchy. These being the facts, I wish to deny that the national Service Committee sought to conceal this problem from the local Ordinary.

2. An implication runs throughout the Storey interview to the effect that the national leadership and their communities are hypocritical. It is suggested that we say and do some things in public and others in private. That we put on displays of authentic piety for bishops and theologians, but engage in highly questionable personality manipulation sessions in the secret recesses of our homes. This attributes a deviousness to us which we deny. The basic teaching which we support about life in Christ and in the Spirit, about practical steps for effective Christian life, how to deal with temptation, how to deal with the devil, how to repair wrongdoing, how to work out right Christian relationships, the roles of leadership in prayer groups, communities, households, etc., have

all been published in printed form or on tape cassette and are readily available to be studied by anyone wishing to do so. This does not mean that there have not been abuses in certain areas in the brief history of the Catholic charismatic renewal, what it does mean is that a) we have been completely open about our positions, b) we have labored with considerable effect to correct abuses where they have occurred, and c) our theology and practice have been available to any people seeking to examine them. To the best of my knowledge, which is extensive, lists of "spirit-filled" or "spiritually authorized" priest confessors, the psychological manipulation of the "breakthrough ministry" and any large scale preference of prayer meetings over the Eucharist have never been widespread in the Catholic charismatic renewal and do not presently exist. Certainly they do not exist in the communities to which the members of the Service Committee belong.

3. Dr. Storey is uninformed when he says that the national Service Committee is a small, closed group of seven persons. The Service Committee is, in fact, an expanding group involved in a process of growth to keep up with the demands for pastoral care in the renewal. The rapid expansion of the renewal coupled with changing pastoral situations has led us to expand and to seek to be more representative of the movement as a whole. The members of the Service Committee are:

Mr. William Beatty, Augusta, Georgia
Mr. Jack Brombach, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Rev. Harold Cohen, S.J., Chaplain, Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana
Mr. Stephen B. Clark, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Dr. Paul DeCelles, South Bend, Indiana
Rev. Thomas Forrest, C.Ss.R., Aguas Buenas, Puerto Rico
Dr. Kerry Koller, San Francisco, California
Mr. Ralph Martin, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Dr. Kevin Ranaghan, South Bend, Indiana
Rev. Michael Scanlan, T.O.R., President, Steubenville College, Ohio

The Most Reverend Joseph McKinney, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Episcopal Advisor
Rev. Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., Collegeville, Minnesota, Theological Advisor

4. Dr. Storey alleges that in the ecumenical communities of the national leadership there is a great dilemma about the Eucharist. There is in fact, no dilemma about the Eucharist. Many Catholic prayer groups and communities regularly celebrate the Eucharist together. The ecumenical communities of which he is speaking clearly state and support the teaching of the Catholic Church on intercommunion. Since members of these communities are also members of local parishes and congregations, it is there, in those local parishes and under the authority of the Church, that they celebrate the Eucharist. To imply that we are non-Eucharistic or otherwise anti-sacramental because we do not celebrate the sacraments as independent communities is clearly wrong. We are highly Eucharistic and sacramental in conjunction with and as members of the broader Church to which we belong. This clearly must be seen as a sign not of schism but of integration.

5. Dr. Storey alleges that we promote in our Communication Center Catalogue fundamentalist books on exorcism or deliverance from evil spirits, books not in conformity with Catholic tradition. He singles out books by Don Basham and Derek Prince. It is possible that such books were sold at a specific conference in response to a bibliographic request by a speaker. However, the books of Derek Prince and Don Basham on this subject are not now listed in the Communications Center Catalogue and never have been. I say this not in any way to criticize Derek Prince and Don Basham, whom I believe to be outstanding Christian ministers with much to say to the whole Church, but I say this as further indication that the Storey interview is based on faulty information.

It is also ill-founded to say that we actively promote a Hutterite style of community life through sale and promotion of a particular book. The book, "The Joyful Community", is only one of many books and tapes on community that we carry. While it is an interesting sociological study, it has not had any significant impact on the formation of charismatic renewal communities.

There is much more that could be said and that probably will be said about the Storey interview in the days to come. This has been intended merely as a preliminary response and as an indication of our belief that the criticisms raised by Dr. Storey are grossly exaggerated and substantially unjustified. May I reiterate the openness of the Service Committee to constructive criticism from all quarters of the Church, and our willingness to cooperate fully with competent ecclesiastical investigation of this renewal in general and in particular of those teachings, publications, and events for which we are directly responsible.