

personal
summary

the last in a series on covenanted
communities and leadership in the U.S.
charismatic movement.

By Rick Casey
NCR Special Correspondent

ON — The charismatic renewal is
an exciting, vital, joyful thing hap-
pening in the church today. It is also the
most exciting.

A handful of people in 1967, the
movement has grown to hundreds of
people attending prayer meetings every
week with an enthusiasm that spills back
into parish life. People are lost in
prayer who hadn't prayed in years.

The movement continues to grow at
a rapid pace. Sales of books and cas-
setapes of members of the movement have
increased each year for the past several
years. According to Andrew Coles, control-
Charismatic Renewal Services in
Ann Arbor, Mich. He said this year's \$1.3
million isn't expected to double next
year.

Those involved, the movement has
lives radically, in many cases giv-
ing and commitment to troubled
and abused persons.

It is frightening. Frightening in its
intellectual fundamentalism, and
in its growing strain of spiritual

movement may be "an outpouring
of spirit on the world," as its leaders
claim with evident sincerity.

It may also be a man-made response
to the human hungers that have led
thousands of others to join such groups as
Sun Myung Moon's Unification
Movement or the fanatic Children of God, or
to follow like Rennie Davis, the teenage
"master," or to take courses in
Control.

The dangers involved are intense, and
established churches nor other
institutions have been very success-
ful in trying them.

The hunger for community. With
the "peace," the new liturgy has
not met this hunger, but only token ef-
forts have been made to meet it. As apart-
ment and suburban living spread,
isolation grows stronger, and few par-
ishes are equipped to deal with it.

A charismatic prayer group, however,
a participant finds a joyful group of
people ready to accept him, act lovingly
toward him, pray over him for all things
he needs to take a personal interest in his

prayer groups have formed them-
selves as "covenanted communities,"
(continued on next page)

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SCHOOL CRISIS COOLS: Security was relaxed some-
what as the second week of the Phase II court-ordered
busing in Boston's public school system began. There
was an apparent marked increase in attendance at the

schools, particularly among white students. Here,
a black student and a white student clasp hands
through a window as a bus pulled up in front of
racially-troubled Charlestown High School. —RNS

Church on racism? 'Disinterest deafening'

By Robert L. Johnston
Special to the National Catholic Reporter

WASHINGTON — Catholic response to
racism has been relegated to the "back
burner" of the church's agenda for social
justice, a priest who heads the National
Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice
(NCCIJ) declared here.

"The disinterest is deafening," said a lay
member of the Paulists who attempted to
organize a national NCCIJ conference in
August which never materialized.

Nevertheless, "the human suffering of
racism is still with us," said NCCIJ execu-

tive director Father James J. Sheehan, who
called for a revival of concern for racial
justice among Catholics and others in this
country, particularly at the local level.

He cited the violent reaction to school
desegregation and busing in Boston, a
largely Catholic city, and other major
urban areas of the U.S., and warned that
the "institutionalized violence of racial
discrimination" has not abated but has
simply been neglected in favor of "softer"
social justice concerns.

The Detroit priest, now headquartered
here, said the cancellation in August of the

NCCIJ's national conference points up the
stark reality of the lack of Catholic response
to the racial question.

The conference was scheduled for New
York City and was to have dealt with "The
Church and the City: Strategies for Ser-
vice." It was not held because of poor reg-
(Continued on page 4)

Senate unit kills pro-life amendments

By Richard Rashke
NCR Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON — The Senate Subcom-
mittee on Constitutional Rights last week
dashed the hopes of anti-abortionists to
overturn during this congressional term
the Supreme Court's decision legalizing
abortion on demand.

But the tie vote on one of the eight
amendments under consideration left
the door open for more lobbying by pro-
life and pro-freedom of choice groups.

Said pro-life lobbyist William Cox of the
National Committee for a Human Life
Amendment: "We are disappointed. It's a
setback but only a short range one. We'll
be back and next time, I think we'll win."

Said freedom of choice lobbyist Karen
Mulhauser of the National Abortion Rights
Action League: "It was a clear victory for a
woman's right to choose an abortion, but

(Continued on page 18)

This issue

Books Books Books

John Delaney of Doubleday tells
why Catholic publishing just plods
along. Page 7.

Helen C. Jones looks across the
counter and surveys — pungently —
changing book tastes and changing
Catholics. Page 9.

J. Carl Cook bursts into the books'
boudoir with his review, and many
more NCR reviewers flex their pens
from pages 7 to 14.

...

Jack Hanrahan of Burbank and the
back page of NCR gears up to award-
ing the Crooked Crozier to those
needing a prod and a smile.



My favorite authors? Sure. Dear Abby, Art
Buchwald, Helen Porter, William Buckley,
Al Capp, Chic Young, G. B. Trudeau. . .



GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY: Seven hundred Medical Mission Sisters will celebrate the 50th anniversary of their founding Sept. 30. Three of the first four members of the community, Sister Laetitia Flieger, Mother Anna Dengel and Sister Agnes Marie Ulbrich, above left, gathered in Rome in 1974

to begin the golden jubilee year. The fourth original member, Dr. Joanna Lyons, joined a contemplative order of sisters in 1932 and died Sept. 1, 1975. At right, Medical Mission Sister Andrea Serafini directs the delivery of health services in some of Bombay's slum areas.

Vatican gives reply on altar girl function

WASHINGTON (NC) — The Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship has replied to a request by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) for clarification on the question of altar girls, spokesman for the U.S. bishops said here.

No comment on the clarification nor publication of its contents will be made, however, until after the October meeting of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Liturgy, said the spokesman, Father Robert Rotelle, executive director of the committee secretariat.

In April, the NCCB inquired about functions a girl or woman can perform at the altar in addition to lector and extraordinary minister of the eucharist.

Girls have functioned as servers at Mass in several parishes in the United States.

Charismatics offer 'support environment'

(Continued from page 1)

where the most totally committed members live communally, share their finances, and accept an extraordinary amount of direction over their lives by community leaders.

A second hunger is for radical commitment. There is a need to find something worth committing one's life to. For many young people, this something seemed to be a political and cultural revolution. But civil rights and antiwar protests burned out, Charles Reich's consciousness III got co-opted, and the Beatles split up.

The commitment charismatic leaders call for is radical. It calls members to step outside a culture filled with materialism and cheap eroticism to a life focused on the "elders' concept of Jesus and their interpretation of God's will. It calls for a radical rejection of the "idols" of sex, wealth, personal ambition, or any other value which serves to turn one away from "God's plan."

By offering a supporting environment for this radical commitment, covenanted communities make it seem not only possible, but enticing.

A third hunger is for prayer and the inner peace it gives. It's the same hunger which induces thousands yearly to take courses in transcendental meditation. But while many turned eastward, Catholic Pentecostals turned southward.

They found an American style of prayer they believe to be the way of the early church. Jesus is praised joyfully in strange tongues. Prophecies — usually pious platitudes about God's love but sometimes stern exhortations to abide by "God's will" or warnings almost apocalyptic in their severity — are intoned in the first person. Hands are laid on the sick for healing. The Bible is opened at random to see if the Lord has a special message.

But the main thing is that the person praying feels a new closeness to God, a direct communication. It is not uncommon for charismatics to relate messages that "the Lord told me."

These messages and direction given by charismatic leaders appeal to still another hunger, the hunger for answers. It is as though the existentialist demand to find one's own meaning in life is too much work, the confusion too exhausting. People are weary from a decade of challenging all the conventions.

The charismatic movement, through its tapes, books and conferences provides answers. Leaders speak of God's plan and how he wants us to live with a certainty that would embarrass most modern bishops and theologians. The charismatic leaders have the answers for the big questions, like what God wants from his church in these times, and for the little questions, like what is proper clothing for women.

The movement has a number of frightening aspects. Perhaps this is natural for a movement which by its very existence stands in criticism of a church grown safe.

Much of the criticism is undeniably on target. Charismatic writers object to "Sun-

day Catholicism," to a prayer life turned routine, to the failure of parishes as communities, and to the clerical system which asks priests to step into leadership roles in communities they are not part of.

Charismatic leaders' answer to these problems has been the growth of zealous faith communities begun in joy and forged in discipline. This discipline, this emphasis on "headship and submission," is one of the movement's most frightening aspects.

The power given to men (and forbidden to women) who in charismatic communities tell members what God wants is virtually unqualified. The potential abuses were seen at the now-defunct True House community in South Bend (NCR, Aug. 22). National leaders seem to have done a remarkable job so far of avoiding similar abuses, but human nature is a constant threat.

There is much talk in the movement about the "power of the Lord." A considerable amount of power is generated by the movement. This is reflected in the radical changes made in individuals' lives. It is also reflected at the mass meetings of thousands of enthusiasts held nationally and regionally.

An NCR reporter covering the national conference at Notre Dame in the summer of 1973 said a crowd of 25,000 "acted as though they were one person" in response to direction from the platform.

It would be easy for critics to make invidious comparisons regarding the fervor generated in these crowds. It is startling when a charismatic priest enthusiastically does so.

Writing in *America* magazine, Father John Healey of the Brooklyn diocese, tells of standing on the edge of a crowd in Rome in the 1930s.

"I can still recall the feeling of restlessness and expectancy in the crowd as they kept chanting 'Duce! Duce!' And I remember well the shouting and applause that accompanied the first glimpse of 'the leader' coming out onto the balcony. As he spoke they hung on his every word. Meanwhile, a few hundred miles to the north, similar scenes were being enacted to cries of 'Fuehrer! Fuehrer!'"

Healey wrote that he has used that story in sermons, making the point "that it is not wrong to 'follow the leader,' but that it is dangerous to follow the wrong leader."

Noting that Mussolini and Hitler "somehow instilled in their followers a sense of corporate power," Healey lamented that in his preaching he "never presented the Good Shepherd as a leader whose power might draw others enthusiastically after him — at least not in the way he did in his mortal days when he healed everyone in town who was sick, cast out demons, raised the dead to life and 'got to' his followers so deeply that they tried to make him king."

Healey goes on to describe the power he saw in charismatic gatherings around the world and triumphally closes his article with a chilling ejaculation: "Duce! Duce! Duce!"

The fears such talk produces is not alleviated by the rhetoric coming from national leaders in announcing a new direction for the movement.

One of the most recent books published by the Word of Life press, publishing arm of Charismatic Renewal Services, is Ralph Martin's *Fire on the Earth: What God is Doing in the World Today*.

Martin is one of the top three leaders of the Word of God community in Ann Arbor. He is also a member of the Charismatic Renewal Service Committee and is seen by many as one of the movement's leading "prophets." His "head" (person to whom he submits himself) is Steve Clark, regarded as the movement's most influential thinker. In his book, Martin may be presumed to be speaking with the approval of Clark and other top leaders.

The book is a clarion call to "aggressive spiritual warfare." The first seven years of the movement, writes Martin, were necessarily an apologetic phase spent establishing its validity. "A new phase, a prophetic phase, is opening for the Catholic charismatic renewal; a phase that demands we boldly proclaim God's word of restoration and reunion to the church."

Martin writes: "God is bringing the world to its knees, where it will be able to see clearly and to choose clearly life or death, God's ways or man's ways. But first God needs a people whom he can depend upon to present that choice to the men of the world. He must first renew his church,

and equip his people for spiritual warfare and a mighty evangelistic outreach."

And referring to the Word of God community, he writes: "I can see more and more how our community and other communities and Christians are being prepared to take part with Jesus in the coming spiritual warfare, functioning as the effectiveness of an army."

This is strange rhetoric in these times, coming from a man who was a conspicuous objector during the Vietnam war.

Martin is not unaware that enthusiasm can be misdirected. Noting that charismatic leaders and leaders such as himself constantly re-examine their attitudes and objectives, he adds, "The Pharisees misread God, but so also did the Zealots."

But the rhetoric remains zealous regional conference in Detroit last month. Martin told nearly 6,000 participants "accusations and slanders" made it imperative that charismatics "know who our brothers are and who our enemies are."

At the same conference another national leader, Kevin Ranaghan of South Bend, Ind., declared, "We are embarked on a time of serious spiritual warfare and I am the general who has won a major victory on the cross and at Calvary."

So the Prince of Peace, who would be a king, is now being fashioned a general.

This is the stuff from which crusades are made. And crusades have not been Christianity's finest hours.

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