

Charismatics - Ranaghan replies

By Kevin M. Ranaghan

ASKED myself this morning, was I that I had invited Rick Casey to visit of God community and Charismatic Renewal Services in Ann Arbor? Well, his articles have not been exactly good. Readers who know me will not be surprised to find that I think the NCR on the charismatic renewal and other communities is somewhat unimpressive.

That Casey's facts as isolated facts are wrong. It's the way he's woven them together, the overall impression that he gives that disappoints me. Somehow these articles give the impression that the National Service Committee, Charismatic Renewal Services and covenant communities are the creation of a power hungry, male chauvinist clique, manipulating sums of money to their own and yet simple-minded ends.

One might react by trotting out my own set of facts, to present a quite different picture. I could establish points such as these: Two million or so American Catholics ought to be involved to some degree in charismatic renewal, only a minority participate in Service Committee conferences or receive instruction in New Covenant and Word of Life and tapes.

For anti-intellectualism, the Service Committee and Charismatic Renewal Service board and staff are crawling with MA's and an occasional Woodrow Wilson Danforth fellow.

The renewal as a whole, and in our country in particular, there is a deliberate respect and equality between men and women. Our work is characterized by brothers and sisters laboring together. Hundreds of women have come into Christian ministry, preaching, teaching, counseling; into positions of leadership and impact.

For fundamentalism, I would point to the publication of the Sponsored Theological and Pastoral Studies on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal; George Martin's Reading Scripture: The Word of God; and Franz Mussner's Did Jesus Teach About the End of the World?

One could go on in this vein and paint a different picture, one that I think would be more true to life, but I don't wish to use up this space to criticize Casey and ourselves. In fact, to answer my question, I am rather glad I invited him in to have a look around. I believe that for those readers who decide to take a serious look around for themselves, these articles, even if unbalanced, will lead to a deeper, truer understanding of what is going on in the charismatic renewal. It will be of significant benefit to the church and to the world.

Thank you for response. I believe the best use of the allotted space will be to lay out some of the basic principles of the charismatic renewal and covenant communities. The whole point of the renewal is that Jesus is a risen Lord and a living figure who is not a far-away historical figure shrouded in mystery, but quite simply the God made man, whose obedient sacrificial death and bodily resurrection made it possible for us to have a new life with God.

At the right hand of the Father, simultaneously present to mankind and his Spirit, in his church. The gift of His love is certainly available to every man as he continues to be present in the Spirit-filled body, the church.

Christians reading this will say, "What is different about the charismatic renewal and who needs it as a special movement? Well, that's what all Christianity is. What is different about the renewal is its comparison with average Christian life, is that through it, millions of

Kevin M. Ranaghan is a coordinator of the People of Praise covenant community in South Bend and a member of the National Charismatic Renewal Service Committee.

Christians are experiencing in concrete, life-changing, personally liberating ways, that this Christian faith need not be, just pious jargon, but the fiber of everyday life.

I am not saying that the renewal has a corner on this market. Many Christians, in times past and at the present, have come to this personal relationship with Jesus Christ by other roads. What I am saying is that today in contemporary America and around the world, millions of Christians are experiencing this grace-filled reality now, by traveling the road of the charismatic renewal.

Certain fundamental principles, which I believe are essential for full Christian life, are being promoted by the renewal. The first is the practical need for personal conversion. The gospel calls every person to acknowledge his sinfulness, his inner rebelliousness, his inability to live a life of love and justice by his own power.

Jesus calls us to a personal decision to make his death and resurrection, his atoning sacrifice, his forgiving love, the foundation of our lives. He calls us not only to accept this gift of new life, but to accept him as Lord and ruler of this new life. That lordship, that rule, is made present to us through his Word, and through his Spirit in his church.

Secondly, the renewal proclaims the call of Jesus that we follow him, living as he



JOYFULLY Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan join with fellow charismatics. -NC

lived, loving as he loved, thinking as he thought, serving as he served, cross and all. We are called to be his disciples, to realize our powerlessness to walk in his footsteps by ourselves.

The charismatic renewal cries out in today's church that Christian discipleship is possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit freely given to us in the sacraments of initiation is not some vague, illusive ether stirring in the recesses of our minds or flitting haphazardly about the world. He is the personal presence of God, the Spirit of the victorious risen Lord, indwelling, empowering, energizing and directing the life of every Christian.

The renewal proclaims that the power for discipleship has been given to us in the Holy Spirit. We are to take the Holy Spirit seriously, believe in his presence, expect his action. We are to look for his many gifts, his many ministries, and as we rise from the slumber of nonexpectancy, to recognize and use them as the tools of daily Christian life and service.

Thirdly, the charismatic renewal, particularly in our established prayer groups and covenant communities, reaffirms the new commandment that brothers and sisters in Christ are to love one another with the same kind of self-sacrificing, committed love that Jesus had for his disciples and has for us. The experiences of conversion and

(Continued on page 14)

The Challenge of Jesus by John Shea

"... a book about looking through Jesus into the mystery we share with him. Its presupposition is that words about Jesus are self-involving. We do not dispassionately chat about him and then go our various ways. To talk about Jesus is to reveal the nature and depth of our own investment in the human adventure."



Available from your Bookstore or:

THE THOMAS MORE PRESS
180 North Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60601

Please enter my order for _____ copy(s) of THE CHALLENGE OF JESUS by John Shea at \$7.50 each. (Postage & handling only 25¢ per book if payment accompanies order.)

Payment enclosed. Please bill my account # _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Ranaghan - prophetic call

(Continued from page 9)

discipleship have led us to gather together in communities so we can love one another according to the mind of Jesus.

Love here is seen as the commitment to lay down one's life in service of brothers and sisters. It is a determination to place one's natural abilities and spiritual gifts at the disposal of others for their benefit. It is a decision to resist the individualism, selfishness, competitiveness and materialism of contemporary society by forming a new society of Christians explicitly committed to live for Christ by living for one another and to offer that new way of life to the world.

These principles of conversion, discipleship and brotherly love sound grandiose. If they are not genuinely calls to action from the Lord, and the authentic work of the Holy Spirit, then they are presumptuous indeed. I believe simply that these basic thrusts of the charismatic renewal are the words and work of Jesus for the renewal of his church and the furtherance of his kingdom in our day.

It is in obedience to this call that we have set ourselves to the work of conferences, books, tapes, Life in the Spirit Seminars, the formation of households and communities. These things we have done with some outstanding success by God's grace, and with some bungling by our own weakness.

It is my impression that on the whole the renewal is succeeding within the Catholic church and other Christian communions. The objectives and goals of the charismatic renewal are being recognized as identical with the basic goals of Christian life and they are bringing forth new life in the church.

There are, I believe, few orthodox Christians faithful to scripture, tradition and the teachings of the church, who will take issue with personal conversion, discipleship, the exercise of spiritual gifts and the building of more committed Christian relationships.

Why then are we who have leadership roles in the Catholic charismatic renewal catching so much flak? One reason is that a lot of members of Christian churches find these basic principles unacceptable.

Their understanding of scripture and the Christian faith does not have much room for sin, and therefore, conversion; for personal relationship with Christ; for the actual presence of the Spirit of God in individual or corporate Christian life; for the value of prayer as the worship of a personal God who is Father; for the reality of the mind of Christ expressed through the teaching authority of his church; or for the reality of Jesus' resurrection and his divinity.

Then cross fire comes from those who are so embedded in the forms of their particular tradition that unfamiliar ways of praying or living and new cultural forms of faith expression are automatically unacceptable. They are orthodox enough, but their narrowness inhibits the freedom of the Spirit. Opposition from these two sources has been coming upon the charismatic renewal for the last eight years.

But now there is a new opposition, focused on different issues. Rick Casey has seen the issues, and they frighten him. I don't think he understands them, and I don't see how he could understand them without much deeper contact with them. These issues are the role of authority in Christian life, the roles and relationship of men and women, openness to elements of evangelical Protestant life, and whether or not Christian life is a spiritual warfare.

These issues are arising primarily in charismatic covenant communities. They are flowing from the experience of community life-based on the principles of conversion, discipleship and brotherly love. They are being articulated, studied and discussed by the same men and women who first identified the more fundamental principles of the charismatic renewal.

Casey, in my opinion, does not do a good NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER Page 14 October 17, 1975

job of presenting these issues, although he spends a great deal of time on them. Scattered facts and snippets of talks have been woven together to create a picture which does not resemble well the community life that we have been living for four years. The issues of authority, sexual differentiation, proper ecumenism and spiritual warfare are hot ones. With the exception of ecumenism, they are unpopular causes among many liberal Christians. And while ecumenism is all the rage, relationships with more conservative Protestants are often unwelcome.

I do not wish here either to explain or defend my own positions on these topics. I will, however, state my belief that what covenant communities are learning about these issues within the environment of genuine brotherly love, is of extreme importance to the survival of the church as the effective sacrament of Christ in an increasingly hostile world tottering on the brink of social, moral, political and economic disaster.

Just as we have had something prophetic to say in the church about the fundamentals of life in Christ and in the Spirit, we now have something prophetic to say in the church about God's plan for order, authority, relationship and love among his



PRAISE: A prayer of praise is proclaimed by a crowd of men and women, old and young, as they attend a service at the 1974 International Conference on Charismatic Renewal at the University of Notre Dame stadium. In the background is a sign that expresses the meeting theme, "Jesus Christ is the Light of the World."

people. We will have to work hard to make our voice heard above all the flak. I think it is of the utmost importance that we get a fair hearing. History teaches us to expect however, that prophets, with unpopular words can expect an avalanche of stones.

That is why the greatest consolation to me at this point is a spirit of deep union with and trust in the church. The charismatic renewal is in the church and seeks to serve the church. The renewal was born within the church and has been nourished and guided by her care, teaching and discernment.

Participants in prayer groups and covenant communities have everything to gain from an increase of oversight from the church and from the bishops in particular. Like anything else in the church, the charismatic renewal is not perfect. We need guidance and direction on the one hand and the freedom to develop and bear fruit on the other.

Leaders in the charismatic renewal, believe, will continue to be faithful to our prophetic call to the work of spiritual renewal and community building. I expect that the church will be a good mother to us; teaching us, encouraging us, correcting us, guiding us to grow more faithful according to the mind of Christ.

THE RESOURCE GUIDE
For Adult Religious Education

REVISED EDITION

The unique, single-source reference to materials needed in adult (and high school) religious education programs.

The *Resource Guide for Adult Religious Education* is an encyclopedic reference designed to provide you with the information you need about materials for virtually every kind of teaching situation.

Whether you need a single pamphlet on one subject, or a complete core curriculum, you will find the information in *The Resource Guide*.

Hundreds upon hundreds of good ideas for building and supporting adult education programs in dozens of subject areas can be found in this 208-page, 8½ x 11 inch book.

This second edition of the book, which leading educators have called absolutely indispensable for every parish adult and high school level religious education program, has been completely revised from cover to cover.

With the help of more than 25 experts and religious educators from throughout the country, *The Resource Guide* gives you accurate information about available materials, evaluates those materials and helps you decide what you need for your own teaching situation.

Wherever there is concern for the continuing growth in faith of adult Christians is where *The Resource Guide* belongs. Pastors and associates, men and women religious, directors of religious education, teachers, parents and others will all find *The Resource Guide* highly important in their efforts to encourage and service adult (and high school) religious education programs.

Just Released!

Use this unique new book to —

- Plan your Educational Programs
- Train your Teachers
- Centralize your Research
- Build your own Parish or School Library
- Guide your Parish Liturgy Committees
- Renew the Life of your Parish

The second edition of *The Resource Guide* goes beyond the first edition not only in its inclusion of hundreds of new entries, but also contains several new features:

- The nine categories (some with subdivisions) correspond to the current divisions of the forthcoming *National Catechetical Directory*, which is expected to be published in 1976. This structure makes your program planning easy and effective.
- Appendices containing a wealth of information have been added to the second edition.
- A "How To" section specifically on adult education.
- Special emphasis is given to resources related to the American Bicentennial.
- Repetitive material has been largely eliminated through compression and cross-referencing, opening up many pages of hundreds of new items and ideas.

Whether you need a single pamphlet on one subject, or a complete core curriculum, you will find the information in *The Resource Guide*.

Order direct or through your local bookstore \$9.95.

NATIONAL CATHOLIC
REPORTER

Publishing Company, Inc. Dept. C
P.O. Box 281, KANSAS CITY, MO 64141

Please ship me _____ copies of *The Resource Guide for Adult Religious Education* at \$9.95 each.

Name _____

Parish/Organization _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I enclose \$ _____ in full payment (NCR pays postage and handling)

Bill me (plus 75¢ for postage and handling)

I authorize you to charge my BankAmericard Master Charge/Interbank

Bank number from lower left of card _____

credit card number _____

expiration date _____ signature _____