



Learn a little what it is to love. It isn't often difficult to find value and charm in children. It is easier to get tripped up in other parts. The challenge: finding value where it seems well-hidden. (NC)

## Your Faith and Community

By DR. MONIKA HELLWIG

Everybody wants to be wanted, to be greeted with a smile of recognition and called by name. People want and need to live in a community that makes them feel at home and appreciated.

In our times there is a great swing towards communal living by young people. Some attempt communes in the full sense. Groups live together trying to share everything — their property, their activity, their way of life, their goals in life.

Too often they also share drugs and sexual promiscuity only to find later that they have destroyed the delicate balance of community life and driven themselves to despair.

Besides the communes, there are many other attempts at communities. There seems to be a great need for the young people to get together to search for the meaning of life, to find goals that make it worth while living. They sense that it takes a community to pass on the experience of what makes life worth while.

The hippie generation is not the first one with the idea. Christian history is full of attempts to form a brotherhood that is really effective. In Catholic history this has been the role of religious communities and sodalities and various movements of piety. In Protestant history this has been the role of the sects, more particularly those that live strictly separated from the rest of society outside the sect.

We do not usually think of the hippies and the religious communities in the same category, but in many ways they are in pursuit of a common goal. They "drop out" of the ordinary pattern of society with its competitive, impersonal, exclusivist

ways of dealing with people, and they start over again with the goal of becoming a fully cooperative, fully personal, fully inclusive group within their own ranks.

Their aim, however, is not to stop there, but that their community should witness to the rest of society what it experiences in its own circle, so that the rest of society will change to be more cooperative, more personal, more inclusive.

This, of course, is the task of the church as a whole. Many groups in the history of mankind have achieved a high degree of brotherhood, but it has always been a closed community, maintaining itself by keeping other people out.

This is why many people are perfectly content with denominational division and exclusiveness in their churches. They feel they belong and that they are "in" because someone else is "out".

If that is all we are about in our community of faith, which is the Church, then Jesus said about this, "Are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not?" (Mt. 5:47).

The earliest Christians gave as testimony of the truth of their faith in the resurrection, the unique quality of their community life. This is how new converts became aware of the faith. From the earliest times they spoke of this uniqueness in terms of the open character of the community. It was to exclude no one, it was to be potentially universal.

They see Jesus as the cornerstone of reconciliation, because in him we need no longer look for a division of the "in" group from "out" group to feel at home.

Paul wrote, "You have put on a new self which will progress toward true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator; and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man. There is only Christ; he is everything and he is in everything." (Col: 3:10-11).

As Paul saw it, exclusiveness and classes and rivalries among people were utterly incompatible with faith in Christ, the image of the one God, Father and Creator of all. Catholic schools or neighborhoods that exclude black students or residents, or make them feel second class, are directly in line with the things Paul most bitterly condemns.

But the basic understanding here is not only negative. In the course of time it became more and more clear in Christian tradition that a church that is mainly concerned with promoting church membership and perpetuating its own structures, could not possibly give the witness Jesus asked. The unique open quality would be missing. It would be maintaining itself by feeling superior and exclusive about other people.

The Second Vatican Council, reflecting on this, gave us a new formulation of the universality of the Church. It must be a seed of unity and hope for all mankind (Constitution on the Church, No. 9).

Christians must live as a witness community, but they must accept public responsibility for the greater unity of mankind and its future. They must be open to the world and involved in it in practical ways — in cooperative, personal, inclusive ways.

## PENTECOST:

### The Church and You

By FR. JOHN T. BARNÉ

We know what a "pentecostal community" is from the account in the Acts. (1:12:2:1-3) After the Lord's ascension, the 11 Apostles with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brethren and the holy women who had attended on him, gathered together in an upper room of a house in Jerusalem, a company of about 120 (Acts 1, 15).

Ten days later, at about nine o'clock in the morning, a sound like that of a strong wind blowing filled the house, and what seemed to be tongues of fire came down on each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in strange tongues, as the Spirit gave utterance to each (Acts 2, 3-4).

In thinking about this account several ideas come to mind. One of them is that the Spirit is given not merely to the Apostles, but to all the 120. The primary purpose of the sending of the Spirit is not the sanctification of the individual only, but the uniting together of all in the one Spirit — that is, the formation of the Community in and through the Spirit.

The Spirit gives many charisms or gifts and these differ to different people as St. Paul tells us in his Epistles. Each one of these gifts or charisms should be used for building up the Community which is the Church.

The role of the prophet for instance is to speak out and exercise the critical function of discerning and discriminating between the nature of what ought to be and what in fact is. This may cause some one member of the Church to responsibly and prudently criticize someone in authority.

Yet it does not mean that the person in authority ceases to rule or exercise this authority, since authority or office in the Church is a charism also — given for the good of the entire community. The prophetic voice must responsibly criticize only a particular exercise of authority (or lack of it.)

Authority itself cannot be disdained or belittled any more than prophecy can. Each has its role in the Church and neither

must interfere with the other. Prophetic criticism should not aim at the weakening or lessening of authority or the diminution of its effectiveness. Nor should authority aim at the elimination of the prophetic voice.

And of course charity which is the greatest gift of the Spirit must be present in the exercise of all the other gifts — otherwise they are counterfeit.

Certainly this last statement is one that should make all of us pause and think. The lack of charity manifested in the Church today between polarized groups is an appalling reminder that much of what is being said and done is not the work of the Spirit.

This of course is not something new and it may make us less distressed by our present state if we remember this. If one reads the Epistles of St. Paul he can surely see that gifts of the Spirit and distinguishing between what was true and what was counterfeit was one of the real problems. Times have not changed very much.

The "New Pentecost" of Vatican II has re-kindled these conflicts. What we must have is hope that out of the tension and confusion some good will come.

A rather prominent person mentioned as part of the Pentecostal Community was Mary, the Mother of Jesus. It was rather appropriate that she be present at the time when the Spirit was to breathe life into the Community which was to be the Church. She with the Apostles and the rest of the 120 received the Spirit who made them realize the meaning of what they already knew about Christ.

For the Spirit does not teach men what they have never been taught before; he teaches them what they have been taught before but have failed to assimilate so fully as to be possessed by the truth in mind and heart alike.

It is the hearts of men that the Spirit instructs; and instructs not only by an external voice but by his indwelling presence, by being for them precisely the breath of life.



Learn a little what it is to love. People want and need to live with others who make them feel appreciated. This can lead to "in" groups and "out" groups. Does it have to be this way? (NC Photo, John Sullivan)

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