

Prayer Meetings Grow In the Catholic Church

By JAMES ROMAN

Prayer meetings have become quite popular within the Catholic Church throughout the world in recent years. Although there is nothing unusual about prayer meetings as they have always been with us in one form or another, their evolution into the realm of charismata is unique.

In this sense, they originated in America in 1967-68 at the university campuses of Duquesne, Notre Dame, and Michigan State. The directory on this page lists those occurring throughout the Rochester area.

What is a prayer meeting? Why are they held and who attends? What does our Church say about this? The following information should be helpful in answering these questions.

The prayer meeting is, but one facet of the Charismatic Renewal, that is thriving in all Christian churches today. Archbishop John R. Quinn, head of a U.S. bishops committee that issued a report on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal last November, says the attitude of the bishops has shifted from the "wait and see" posture of 1969 to "basic approval." Pope Paul blessed and encouraged an international conference of charismatics in Rome, recently that was reported in the centerfold of the June 11 issue of the *Courier-Journal*.

The prayer meeting is a weekly ecumenical gathering of Christians trying to live an intense Christ-oriented life in the modern world. Its primary purpose is to praise and give worship to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Of secondary purpose is a) the

sharing of experiences of the Lord working in the lives of the participants, b) encouraging each other to continue to grow in grace before God and man, and c) praying for the needs of all.

Most people who attend these meetings are daily communicants, read scripture frequently, or are involved in active apostolates within their parish or community. The prayer meeting supplements the Mass by offering a chance for informal and spontaneous group prayer. It differs from the Mass though it has many features (scripture reading, public prayer, songs, thanksgiving) in common with it.

The prayer meeting is not a discussion group, a bible study, not a sensitivity session. The difference is that the prayer meeting operates upon our Lord's promise that "Where two or more are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20)

Prayer meetings are not one-sided where the participants do all the sharing. God shares as well and meetings are open to God speaking through the gifts that his Spirit inspires.

The ways that God speaks to men are given great honor and attention: scripture, teaching, events in daily life, and the charismatic gifts.

It is these gifts, especially, which mark contemporary prayer meetings as "different." The gifts are recognized as tools God has given for building the Church and as ways in which God speaks to men and are welcomed and encouraged. At a prayer meeting, the gifts of tongues with in-

terpretation and prophecy are especially encouraged (cf. I Cor. 14). All the gifts are recognized as having an important place in the Christian life (cf. I Thes. 5:19; Constitution on the Church 13 Laity, 3), subordinate to love (cf. I Cor. 13:ff), and subject to testing (I Jn. 4:1). God speaks at the prayer meetings and reveals his will and himself more fully. The prayer communities are beginning to learn how to use and respond to the gift of prophecy, the gift God has given to the Church. Through it, he may call the community to repentance, to greater faithfulness, to works of mercy, or remind them of his great love for them.

Of the entire meeting, it must be said that here God is not dead nor silent. He is present speaking with power and calling men more fully to himself. The prayer meetings are, in a sense, built upon this fact that God speaks to men through his living word as spoken through scripture and the teaching of the Church in the assembled community.

At prayer meetings someone may share an event which has happened during the week, another a text from scripture, another a prophecy, another a song, etc. The only "rule" is that all things should be done to edify — for the common good. This means that one ought not to speak lightly, but should pray first and try to speak prayerfully. Frequently the prayer meeting will include inspired preaching or a prepared teaching. Everyone is free to speak but nobody is expected to.

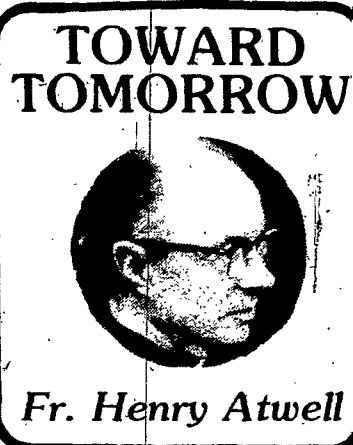
for true prayer, instruct them in Scripture, forge them into a community of people who care for one another and finally lead them to that brink where they can experience the presence of God.

No matter how well the choir sings, no matter how well the sermon is prepared, no matter how tasteful are the banners or apt the prayer and Scripture texts, all these are wasted in a vacuum if all the people do is pop in and out within a 45-minute hour and spend the rest of the day in frantic relaxation.

Some wag said an atheist is someone who doesn't know why Sunday is a holiday. I'm afraid that even church-goers don't know that it is a holy day — a full day for the Lord.

I realize we shall not go back to the Sabbath. Sundays our grandparents knew, with more-than-an-hour High Mass, religious instruction class in the afternoon and then Rosary, Vespers and Benediction at 5 p.m. But at this moment most of us have no notion at all what we should do to make a day holy in these final years of the twentieth century.

We who were brought up with the lesson pounded into us that we have "an obligation" to attend Mass on Sunday and that "unnecessary servile work" is a mortal sin were taught only the first fraction of an inch in a journey that is miles long — a journey not of rules and regulations but a liberating and humanizing time, a full day for love and beauty, a day to be what God intended us to be. Isn't it a pity that so many people, even Catholics who fulfill their Sunday Mass obligation, never take time to learn what God holds out to them?



Many Catholics will admit that, despite all the changes brought about by the Vatican Council in the past ten years, religion isn't much better now than it was ten years ago, perhaps even a bit the weaker.

This is especially true for the Mass, the most distinctive public feature of Catholic life. The altar has been turned around, the language has been changed, the music is drastically different, vast amounts of money have been spent in purchasing new books, missals, vestments and altar utensils. But faith and fervor seem little the better for it all.

Searching for a solution in this dilemma, experts and ordinary people will make "Sunday" the theme of a four-day meeting at Princeton University, August 11 to 14, the Thirty-first North American Liturgical Week.

They have posed as a question that needs answering, "Can we have good Sunday worship if we don't have good Sundays?"

We expect far too much from any ritual if we expect it in less than an hour to prepare people



Charismatic Gatherings

The following Prayer Groups are predominately Roman Catholic in attendance. This directory has been compiled and will be maintained by the Communication Committee of Catholic Charismatics in Rochester. Additions or deletions should be mailed to Mrs. Donald Mikel, 3000 St. Paul Blvd., Rochester New York, 14617.

SUNDAY

St. John the Evangelist (Spencerport)
60 Martha St.
Spencerport
Frank Ferris 352-4218 8 p.m.

MONDAY

St. Rose's Church (women)
1985 Lake Ave.
Lima
Jean LaBore 582-1319
following 9 a.m. Mass

St. Stephen's Charismatic Community
DeSole's High School
cor Pultney & High Sts.
Geneva
Mrs. San Venuti 789-8557 8:15 p.m.

TUESDAY

St. Augustine Rectory
410 Chili Ave.
Rochester
John & Betty Bunce 235-0235 8:30 p.m.

St. Michael's Prayer Group
3681 Lake Ave.
Rochester
William & Mary Buechel 663-7645 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Maranatha Prayer Group
7369 E. Main St.
Lima
Bill & Bobbie Buechel 624-4259 8 p.m.

Chadash Prayer Community
830 Clarkson-Hamlin Townline Rd.
Hamlin
Helen & Warren Lynch 964-2498 7:30 p.m.

Holy Cross School
4488 Lake Ave.
Rochester
Frank Kirchgessner 865-2650 8 p.m.

St. Michael's Prayer Group (women)
3681 Lake Ave.
Rochester
Mary Buechel 663-7645 10:30 a.m.

Bethlehem Prayer Community
479 Covewood Blvd.
Webster
Dick & Mary Mahany 671-1845 8 p.m.

Emmanuel
132 Illinois St.
Rochester
Judy Costello 654-9597 9:30 a.m.

Donald & Mary Lou Mikel
3000 St. Paul St.
Rochester
266-3749 8 p.m.

St. Pius X Prayer Community
3000 Chili Ave.
Rochester
Bob Dunning 247-3740 8 p.m.

THURSDAY

St. Anne's Prayer Group
1600 Mt. Hope Ave.
Rochester
Margaret Whitney 461-1656 8 p.m.

Santo Spirito
St. Francis (old school)
314 Bay St.
Rochester
Jose Malave 342-7759 7 p.m.
Israel Santana 482-1252 7 p.m.

All Christians interested in the Charismatic Renewal are welcome to attend these activities which are usually ecumenical. No admission is charged but a free will offering may be taken depending on the event.

July 4—Mass (First Friday), 8 p.m. St. Lawrence Church, 1000 N. Greece Rd., Greece, Sacred Heart Prayer Group.

July 16—Bergen Tent Meetings, 8 p.m. Father Edward Dillon OFM, guest speaker from Holy Name College, Washington, D.C., Bergen

July 18—Mass, 8 p.m. Father Alan Tammany, celebrant from Diocese of Albany, St. Lawrence Church, 1000 N. Greece Rd., Greece, Sacred Heart Prayer Group.

July 20—Movie GOSPEL ROAD starring Johnny Cash, St. Lawrence Church, 8 p.m., 1000 N. Greece Rd., Greece, Sacred Heart Prayer Group.

July 26—Picnic, 11 a.m., Hamlin Beach State Park, East Shelter, Parking Area 1, Bring own food, everybody welcome, Sacred Heart Prayer Group.

Listings for future events can be submitted to: Mrs. Frank Ferris, 31 Ballard Ave., Spencerport 14559.

Upper Room Prayer Group
St. John's School
W. DeZerg St.
Clyde
Joseph DiSanto 923-7865 7:15 p.m.

St. Charles Prayer Group
St. Charles Borromeo Church Nursery
3003 Dewey Ave.
Rochester
John Taffner 663-4851 8 p.m.

Women at the Well (women)
151 Dalia Lane
Rochester
Mary Termine 544-5211 12:45 p.m.

FRIDAY

St. Augustine Rectory
410 Chili Ave.
Rochester
Marty Lynch 385-1035 8 p.m.

Armand & Kathy Tanquay
311 Tobey Rd.
Pittsford
381-1949 8 p.m.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Prayer Group
St. Lawrence School
1000 N. Greece Rd.
Greece
Klaus Schulz 392-9646 8 p.m.

SATURDAY

Mr. & Mrs. Fred Burgess
W-Union St. Extension
Newark
337-3841 9 p.m.

St. Monica's Church
34 Monica St.
Rochester
John & Rita Donnelly 328-1332 4 to 5 p.m.

John & Rita Donnelly
9 Ellicott St.
Rochester
328-1332 8 p.m.

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