

World & Nation

Catholic charismatics take 'fishing' lesson

By Leslie W. Bertucci
New Orleans (NC) — Catholic charismatics were among the 35,000 people learning to fish at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans July 22-26.

"We are to be fishers of men, as Jesus said. The first job is to catch the fish. They can then be cleaned and sorted out later," said congress chairman the Rev. Vinson Synan, former general superintendent of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

Catholics made up 51 percent of the congress, which was sponsored by the North American Renewal Service Committee, an umbrella organization representing 40 denominations. More than 15 denominations, fellowships and ministries were represented in New Orleans.

The gathering was preceded by an October 1986 leaders' congress, which brought together 7,500 people. Dr. Synan called these events the first steps in an attempt to "present to Jesus the gift He desires most on his 2000th birthday — a world where a majority of the people are Christian."

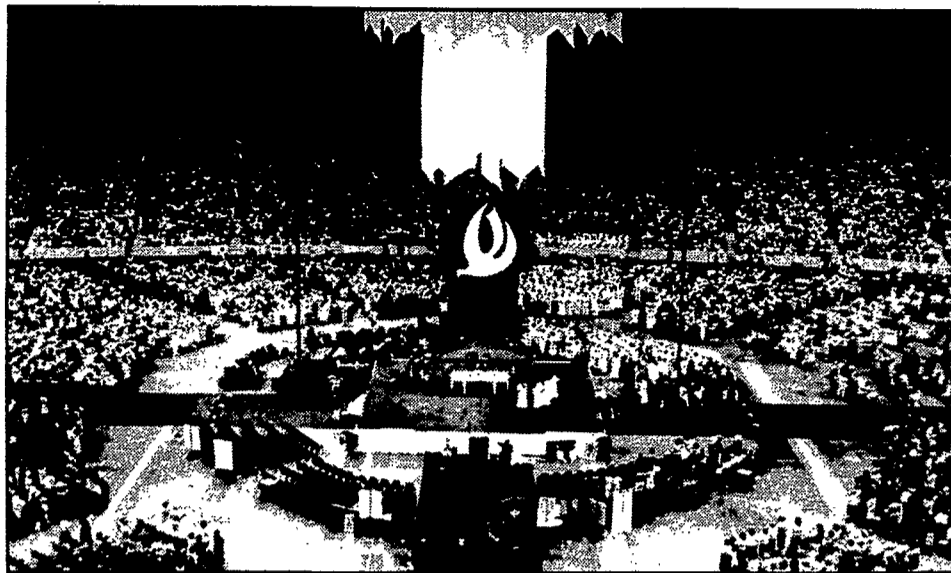
Auxiliary Bishop Joseph C. McKinney of Grand Rapids, Mich., concelebrated Mass with Archbishop Philip M. Hannan of New Orleans and other bishops at the conclusion of the congress.

In his homily, Bishop McKinney told the congregation that Pope Paul VI said the principal agent of evangelization is the Holy Spirit.

"The grace of Pentecost is not just to receive the Holy Spirit, but to go out and proclaim the Holy Spirit," he said, adding that Catholics should not wait for priests to do all the work.

"As I once heard someone say: Shepherds don't make sheep. Sheep make sheep," he said.

Redemptorist Father Tom Forrest, former chairman of the International Council for Catholic Charismatic Renewal, replaced Father John Bertolucci as the key speaker July 24.



Frank Methe/NC News
Praising the spirit. 35,000 charismatics from 15 denominations gathered at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans for the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization. More than half of the participants were Catholics.

Father Bertolucci resigned from his television ministry in early July and said he would give up speaking at conferences "for the time being" because of near exhaustion, his parents' failing health and the high cost of TV ministry.

Father Forrest's address covered the themes of evangelization and ecumenism. Referring to the theological arguments that often take place between Christians of different denominations, he said, "We've got a devil to fight. Why are we fighting each other?"

"Let's stop the kid stuff and go out and do the job," he said.

The congress participants were encouraged to attend morning denominational sessions each day. At one of the Catholic sessions Father Forrest said, "The good news is Jesus

Christ. The bad news is we're not proclaiming him.

"If we're failing, as Catholics, at evangelization, we're failing at the biggest job we have," he said. "There will be a great global celebration on Jesus' 2000th birthday. We have the job of getting the invitations out. God said, 'I want my house to be full.' Our job is to fill it up!"

The Rev. Bob Mumford, a California author, pastor and Bible teacher, said Christians have five things to offer God: a flowing river of living water, a sacrifice of unity, the joy of answered prayer, biblical behavior and hope in the future.

"I know that nuclear war is possible, that AIDS is loose on the land, and I also know the economy is in bad shape, but I also know that the Lord is sovereign," he said.

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By: John Crandall —
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