

Features

Service team offers grassroots leadership to charismatics

By Robert Cullivan

Catholic Charismatic Renewal within the Diocese of Rochester is turning to its grass-roots leadership — parish prayer groups — for guidance in directing the movement, according to the renewal's top directors and prayer-group leaders.

Under its service team — consisting of Frances Thomas, Donald Germano and Paul Gerwitz — the renewal has experienced a shift in emphasis from a program run through centralized leadership to one relying on a decentralized structure. This shift was inspired, in part, by a decline in the number of prayer groups and members, but is also an effort to serve the wider community.

The service team, which was elected by the prayer groups, has been overseeing the renewal since Father James Connolly's departure from the movement in the fall of 1986. Father Connolly had been full-time director of the renewal, serving as its spiritual director, administrative leader and liaison to the diocese. Now Father William Moorby, parochial vicar of the Northern Cayuga Cluster, serves as its part-time spiritual director, and the movement relates to the diocese through the Division of Special Pastoral Ministries.

With more hours to devote to the movement, Father Connolly provided leadership distinguished by a hands-on approach. The current service team, on the other hand, relies more on the initiative and input of prayer-group leaders in running the movement.

"They are asking the prayer groups for direction," observed Marie DiRaimo, prayer-group leader at Christ the King Parish. "I think they're trying to get the grass roots going."

Louise Dale, leader of the prayer group at Good Shepherd Church in Henrietta, likewise remarked that the comments of prayer-group leaders are now receiving more attention than they did in the past.

The service team's new grass-roots approach is exemplified by how renewal members are counseled or "healed," Dale said. In the past,



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*Marie DiRaimo
Christ the King Parish*

members often would go to Father Connolly for individual assistance, whereas they are more likely to seek help within their own prayer groups today.

"It's a community-oriented approach now," Dale said. "We shouldn't get wrapped up in one-on-one ministry."

Among other changes made by the service team was the institution of monthly leaders' meetings at the renewal center, located at St. Monica's Church in Rochester. Using videotapes, prayer and discussion, the meetings focus on developing each group leader's abilities so that the prayer groups will become more self-sufficient and less dependent on the renewal center for direction.

"We're getting a lot out of the leadership meetings," said Kay Dianetti, prayer-group leader at St. Jerome's Parish in East Rochester.

The renewal center also serves as a resource for the groups, providing access to books, magazines and tapes, and also issues a monthly newsletter.

Yet leaders acknowledge that the center is not as well used as they would like, and speculate that some members may be reluctant to visit the center because of its Genesee Street location. At one point leaders considered moving the center to Good Shepherd, but Gerwitz indicated that a move is now unlikely.

Dale observed that members may not be aware of what the center offers, and suggested the possibility of an open house. "I think that if prayer groups were more aware of what's in the center, they'd use it," she said.

According to Gerwitz, the renewal now encompasses 15 to 20 prayer groups, with five to 50 members per group. In the years immediately following Vatican II, however, the Rochester movement numbered about 50 prayer

groups, ranging in size from 10 to 75 members, according to Sheila Cody, coordinator of the renewal office.

Leaders attributed recent years' decline in membership to several factors. Gerwitz said that many former members were attracted by public healing services, but lost interest as the movement's emphasis shifted to personal renewal in the Holy Spirit.

"I believe the people we have now are there for the right reasons," he remarked.

DiRaimo expressed similar sentiments, characterizing the struggles of recent years as "a dark night of the soul." The renewal movement has moved "from feeling to truth," she said. "I think God's been purifying the renewal."

Dianetti, on the other hand, remarked that some former members may have left to undertake other ministries. "Some are deacons," he said. "Others are doing other things."

At the same time, the renewal itself is also looking outward, with members venturing into the community to perform "apostolic works of mercy," ranging from evangelization efforts to visiting the sick, Gerwitz said.

"I see in the renewal a lot of the original people moving out into the community," DiRaimo remarked, noting that the charismatic approach aids members working in the mainstream Church.

Dale, Dianetti and DiRaimo said they were looking forward to the upcoming Billy Graham Crusade as a potential means for drawing new members to the Christian charismatic movement as a whole. Meanwhile, prayer-group leaders will continue to work with their small groups of committed members.

"I keep reminding myself that Jesus started out with 12 apostles," Dianetti concluded.

Bishop appoints Gifford to head division

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has appointed Rebecca J. Gifford to serve as director of the Division of Urban Services, replacing previous director Father John M. Mulligan, who last month was appointed vicar general of the diocese and moderator of the Pastoral Center.

Gifford has been employed by the diocese since 1984, serving first as a consultant. In 1985, she became associate director of the Division of Urban Services.

From 1978 to 1981, Gifford served as a member of the pastoral team at Corpus Christi Par-

Children's signing course set

The Rochester Public Library is offering a free sign language program for 3, 4- and 5-year-olds on Tuesday, July 19, at the library's main branch, 155 South Avenue, Rochester. From 2 to 2:45 p.m., the class will teach sign language through songs and games.

For more information, contact Barbara Billingsley or Alexandra Marris at (716)428-7630.

ish in Rochester. She left the parish to pursue a doctor of ministry degree at Catholic University in Washington. She completed the degree in 1985. She also holds a master's degree in theology from St. Bernard's Institute (1983) and a bachelor's degree in music from the Eastman School of Music (1978).

Gifford has also served on the staff of St. Bridget's Parish, where she worked with Rochester's black Catholic community, and gained experience of Hispanic culture and language while at Corpus Christi and in 1983 through a summer spent with the Sisters of Mercy stationed in Chile.

Gifford is a member of the adjunct faculty at St. Bernard's Institute, has worked with the Discernment for Ministry Program at Becket Hall, and is currently studying sign language through the assistance of parishioners and staff at St. Mary's Church of the Deaf in Rochester.



The PBS documentary "The Madonna of Medjugorje" shows Marija (left) visiting with pilgrims to the reported site of apparitions in Yugoslavia.

PBS stations to broadcast documentary on Medjugorje

Reports of visions of the Virgin Mary have attracted nearly five million Catholics to the Yugoslavian village of Medjugorje, creating dilemmas for officials of the Catholic hierarchy and the socialist state. "The Madonna of Medjugorje," which the Public Broadcasting System will air Friday, August 12, at 10 p.m. and Saturday, August 13, at 3 p.m. on WXXI-TV, examines the religious phenomenon and its sociological implications. The BBC documentary is presented by Detroit station WTVS.

Special group rates on tap for 'Nunsense' performances

The Downstairs Cabaret, which is featuring the revue "Nunsense," is offering special group rates through the summer to Catholic organizations. Groups of 20 or more will receive tickets for \$10 on any performances.

The Medjugorje apparitions, which began in 1981, are the longest in a series ever recorded, and continue daily for two of the six young visionaries. Reports of miraculous cures and strange phenomena in the sky around the village are increasing as Medjugorje — although not recognized by the Vatican — joins Lourdes and Fatima as important sites for Catholic pilgrims.

"The Madonna of Medjugorje" is produced by Angela Tribby. Narrator is Eileen Atkins. Executive co-producer is John Bird.

'Nunsense' performances

The summer schedule for "Nunsense" is Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8 p.m., and Saturday afternoon at 3 p.m. For information and reservations call (716)262-2300.

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