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Renewal

Continued from page 1

for special events such as the Mass, he said.

Father William Moorby, parochial vicar of the Northern Cayuga Cluster and parttime spiritual director for the Rochester Charismatic Renewal, pointed out that when the movement first began, a number of strong leaders emerged to lead the groups. But, he observed, no process was developed to encourage and develop new leadership as the movement continued.

"I think when strong leaders would drop out," Father Moorby observed, "there was no one to continue, and groups started to dissolve."

Indeed, it remains possible that the movement itself may cease to exist, observed Father Valentine Welker, coordinator of the Charismatic Renewal Pro-

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gram for the Diocese of Buffalo.

"I think eventually it will be phased out and replaced with something else," Father Welker predicted. But, he added, the movement will most likely cease to exist because of its success.

"We've always seen the charismatic renewal as a revolving door," Father Welker explained. "It's not been the end to bring people to the prayer meetings. It's always been to bring people to Christ and to the church."

Many of these people went on to serve the church in a variety of ministries, Father Welker said. For example, he said, when the Buffalo diocese launched its Renew program several years ago, the leaders were chosen from among the leaders of the charismatic renewal. Other people who had been involved in the movement now are serving the church as deacons, eucharistic ministers, religious educators and in RCIA programs.

In addition to those who have moved on into church ministry, the movement has had a direct impact on the worship life of the church, Father Gaffney noted.

Healing Masses have become more common. Songs and musical styles originally associated with the renewal can now be heard in most churches. Many parishes offer Scripture study groups, and prayer groups have developed separate from the

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movement. Parish retreats often include charismatic elements, calling participants to develop personal relationships with Jesus.

Bishop Joseph McKinney, chairman of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops ad hoc committee on the Catholic charismatic renewal and auxiliary bishop of the Grand Rapids diocese, pointed out that the renewal also helped to return emotion to the worship life of the church.

"One of the blessings of the charismatic renewal was that (people in the movement) felt it was legitimate to express faith in an emotional way," he remarked.

That the renewal will be fully absorbed by the church is not a forgone conclusion, however. Within the Rochester diocese, in fact, the movement has experienced a small renaissance during recent years.

Three years ago, diocesan officials formed a liaison team consisting of Don Germano, Paul Gerwitz and Frances Thomas to serve as a resource for parish prayer groups.

When team members first looked at the situation in the diocese, they discovered a number of stagnant groups and leaders who were not receiving the support and guidance they needed, Germano said.

"In a sense, we really were in a crisis situation," Germano said. "We had weak groups and we had leaders who were in a long time."

The team directed its energies toward the leaders, seeing them as the key to reenergizing the groups. Now leaders meet once a month for prayer and instruction about how to run prayer groups.

That one step has helped reverse the renewal's downward trend in the diocese, Germano said, noting that during the past three years no groups have dissolved, and, in fact, several new groups have formed. The number of people attending meetings has also begun to rise, he said.

The team also encourages renewal groups to better prepare for the future. Thus groups are urged to review their leadership approximately every two years to help discern problems and to discover potential new leaders. Groups are also encouraged to develop not only leadership teams, but also core groups to help spread responsibilities around.

To help improve prayer groups' relations with their parishes, the team also suggested that group leaders meet periodically with their pastors to report on their efforts and to seek suggestions. Such meetings have helped to encourage acceptance of the movement by priests, Germano noted.

He also observed that cooperation and open communication/between those in the renewal and the rest of the Catholic Church is important.

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"The renewal should not be separate from our normal faith walk," Germano said. "We all have charismatic gifts. The only difference between the Charismatic Renewal and the (other) people in the parishes is that we are willing to attempt to use the gifts."

Bishop McKinney pointed out that members of the Charismatic Renewal are seeing now more clearly than in the early days of the movement that they must "fit into the church, and ... how they can best serve the church."

One path for the renewal to flourish, the bishop said, is through efforts to develop prayer communities. In addition, he said, the renewal is helping to develop patterns for alternative lifestyles. He compared the charismatic renewal's potential influence to that of the Franciscan movement of the 13th century, credited by some historians with revitalizing the church.

Matthews pointed out that while the renewal has had a significant impact on the U.S. Catholic Church, its work is not completed.

"I think what you hear today is a much watered-down version of the vision (of the renewal)," he stated.

To illustrate his case, Matthews recounted the substance of a homily he had recently heard. The priest began the homily by preaching about the need to develop a personal relationship with Jesus and to serve the Lord. But the homily's closing words undermined the whole message, Matthews declared.

"He said, 'And what I want to leave you with is there are many things you give your heart to. The Lord just wants a small piece of it," Matthews reported.

"I wanted to stand up and shout, 'No! He wants it all." Matthews continued. "He wants people who are totally given over to him.

"The challenge ultimately is: Will the church as church open more to its charismatic inheritance and to the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" Matthews asked.

DiDonzio Eur

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