

Be Hopeful! Be Joyful!
Christ is with us.



The Spirit Makes the Difference

In his series of articles on the “visitation message” which we carried in the last three issues of *The Visitation*, Fr John Dreher reminded us of the graces with which the Lord has gifted His Church for the present moment, through the Charismatic Renewal and, indeed, through the Fraternity of Priests. He said in October:

God is ... visiting His people by the outpouring of the anointing graces of the Spirit. I believe the Church cannot be renewed and fulfill its mission in the modern world without them. For these reasons, I believe the Fraternity is right in making responsiveness to anointing graces, especially baptism in the Spirit and use of the gifts a major charism.

Recently, Fr Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J., a member of the Washington, D.C. Fraternity sent us the results of a survey done by the Charismatic Renewal Office in Bloomfield, Connecticut, which lends support to this view. Fr DeGrandis, a priest of 43 years, tells us that he drew courage from the survey. His hope, and ours, is that through its publication here, many readers will receive new enthusiasm for the Church.

As we draw close to the end of a year of much pain and sadness, it is important that we listen attentively to what God is saying and become even more receptive to His blessing.

—The Editor

The results of the survey:

1. Time spent in daily prayer:

Prayer before	Prayer after
20% spent no time	0% spends no time
65% spent 15 min. to 1 hr.	90% spend 30 min.- 2 hrs.
15% no response	10% no response

2. Time spent daily reading the Bible:

Bible before	Bible after
75% spent no time	15% spend no time
25% spent an ave of 30 min.	85% spend an ave of 30 min.

3. How often the person received Eucharist:

Eucharist before	Eucharist after
30% did not receive	4% do not receive
70% received weekly	96% receive weekly
(of this, 10% received daily)	(of this, 68% receive daily)

4. Received the Sacrament of Reconciliation yearly:

Reconciliation before	Reconciliation after
30% never went	15% never go
45% went 1 to 3 times	25% go 1 to 3 times
25% went 4 or more times	60% go 4 or more times

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The Fraternity has always promoted the Life in the Spirit Seminars, seeing them as a way in which the Lord is visiting His people and as a means of responding to His visitation. But how important are these charismatic experiences really to our Catholic communities and the life of its members? A recent study indicates that we dare not neglect these seminars and the accompanying experience of the release of the Holy Spirit.

Catholics who participate in the Life in the Spirit Seminar where they experience the release of the Holy Spirit show significant progress in their spiritual development through prayer, the sacraments, reading the Bible and spiritual books. They also become far more active in their parish’s spiritual and social ministries.

For the study, the Charismatic Renewal Office of the Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut, surveyed parishioners in 15 churches in many different towns throughout the archdiocese. Respondents had been attending charismatic prayer meetings when they participated in the seminars; by the time of the survey participants had spent 10 years in the Charismatic Renewal, on average. The questions focused on their spiritual life BEFORE and AFTER the release of the Holy Spirit.

Of the 100 persons who responded to the survey, 25% said they spent an average of 30 minutes daily reading the Bible (75% spent no time) before the seminar; after the seminar the percentage spending an average of 30 minutes in daily Bible reading increased to 85%.

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The time of Advent waiting is at hand. The Lord's birthday is on the horizon. It is too bad that what should be a time of quiet and patience is in reality a hectic time, even a frantic time, for everyone. I suppose it is the nature of the season, and to bemoan this yearly reality isn't going to change anything. However, I believe there are little things we can do, mindsets we can assume, which can make our Advent preparation more profitable.

In my previous assignment (in rural Rhode Island) our parish music ministry offered an annual Advent concert. One of the songs performed had a refrain which went: "Patience, people, the Lord is coming!" I have often found myself reflecting on this line when I was in one of those crazy traffic situations around the mall, or when the line at the cashier seemed about a mile long (I exaggerate, but it was long). Rather than "fry" inside or get antsy, I would start to pray and begin to anticipate the coming of Patience Himself.

I often try to imagine the incredible patience of God who, in spite of our gross infidelities over the centuries, still loves us, forgives us and seeks to heal us. I have often seen myself as a somewhat patient person, but in all honesty, thank God I am not God because I would have run out of patience and given up on me years ago. How to become more God-like in this area of my life is always the question and the prayer. In spite of us God chooses to remain "Emmanu-el"—God-with-us.

People often comment negatively on the early illumination of Christmas displays and trees (just after Thanksgiving or sooner), But I've always loved that stuff. Just think, at the time of year which is often the coldest, and when daylight is the shortest, we are reminded that Jesus, the Light of the World, is coming to us. He who came to dispel our cold and darkness, He who is our Light, is with us. All those lights I see bring a sense of hope and joy to me. He still loves us, He still chooses us, He still seeks us and comes to us. One can't help but sing, "Joy to the world!"

My reflection continues in that I am supposed to be like one of those Christmas lights—light in the darkness, a symbol of joy to the world. One great way of doing that, of being light, is to practice "Patience, people, the Lord is coming." When you look at all those harried faces in the mall, don't add to their numbers, be light! In the check out lines, in traffic, be light!



When I was a kid the nuns used to talk about putting fresh new straw in the manger of my soul for Advent. That is where Jesus chooses to be born and to stay—His dwelling. All these things we've spoken about can truly freshen the place where Jesus chooses to rest His head. Be light!

We of the Fraternity of Priests wish you and yours the brightest, most patient and peaceful Advent Season and a truly merry and holy Christmas. As once again we celebrate the birth of the Messiah, may He truly be born in you. May His choicest blessings and grace be yours. Once again, thank you for your generous intercessions and donations—we are grateful. Be assured of our prayers for you and your intentions. Please remember to pray for your parish priest—be light to him. Thanks again and have a merry and holy Christmas Season.

In Christ,



Fr. John

From the VISITATION HOUSE Mailbag

Fr Piotr Hewelt writes from Berdychiv in the Ukraine:

Here I enclose some impressions about our biggest feast in the year, Our Lady of Mount Carmel. I'm still surprised at what happened at our shrine on July 20 and 21. It was the series of events preceding the feast and during it that makes me wonder.

I gave an interview a few weeks before the feast. The journalist insisted on the spiritual meaning of the shrine of Our Lady whereas I was busy with more "material" issues of organization. She forced me to think about the spirituality of the coming event so I uttered some words about the shrine as a place which helps people to have stronger faith, to be more receptive to God's grace, a place in

which people can expect a special touch of His Spirit. I stressed the Carmelite character of this shrine, expressing hope that Our Lady will be a teacher of spiritual life for pilgrims coming here.



Inspired by this accent on the spiritual, our parish started to pray for the pilgrims from the beginning of July.

At the end of June a young lady who used to play the organ at our church resigned. Three weeks before our feast we were left without any person in charge of music. It was disastrous! But a solution came almost immediately. Sr Olga, who worked in the sacristy, took responsibility for the choir and organ. She gathered a choir of about 25 young people and worked hard with them for the whole of July. She created a great atmosphere of joy during the rehearsals and we saw her gift of working with young people.

On Sunday, July 21, the Nuncio, Archbishop Eterovych from Croatia, gave a homily in which at least 60% was about the spirituality of Carmel, of the prophet Elijah and he spoke with a prophetic power. The buildings of the streets around the monastery echoed his words and strengthened them. For 20 minutes no one in the crowd (between 13,000 and 14,000) made the slightest move.

One of the pilgrims said: "I used to walk to Berdychiv several times, always considering the pilgrimage itself (and not the celebration in Berdychiv) the most important thing. This year I've experienced for the first time God at work during masses in Berdychiv."

I thank Our Lady personally for these days. It was like a kind of anointing for a custodian of a shrine.

(Fr Piotr Hewelt stayed at Visitation House for one semester in 2001 while attending the University of Steubenville.)

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5. When asked if the Fruits of the Spirit (... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control cf. Galatians 5:22-23) changed **after** the release of the Holy Spirit:
 - 10% remained the same
 - 30% increased moderately
 - 60% increased significantly

6. Time spent reading spiritual books per day:

Spiritual books before	Spiritual books after
70% spent no time	19% spend no time
30% spent 5 min. to 1 hr.	81% spend 15 min. to 2 hrs.

7. When asked if their faith increased **after** the release of the Holy Spirit:
 - 2% remained the same
 - 23% increased moderately
 - 75% increased significantly

8. When asked if the release of the Holy Spirit inspired them to become active in their parish's spiritual or social ministries:
 - 82% answered **YES**
 - 18% answered **NO** or did not respondOf those who answered **YES**, the time spent in the ministries follows:
 - 26% did not enter time spent
 - 40% spent 1 to 3 hrs. per week
 - 16% spent 5 to 10 hrs. per week

**We pray for a blessed
and holy Christmas
season to all of
our friends and
benefactors!
*From all the members
of the Fraternity***

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

Jesus, Eternal High Priest, live in (name of priest), act in him, speak in and through him. Think your thoughts in his mind, love through his heart. Give him your own disposition and feelings. Teach, lead and guide him always. Correct, enlighten and expand his thoughts and behavior. Possess his soul, take over his entire personality and life. Replace him with yourself. Incline him to constant adoration and thanksgiving; pray in and through him. Let him live in you and keep him in this intimate union always.

Mary, Immaculate Conception, Mother of Jesus and Mother of priests, pray and intercede for (.....). Amen.

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