

CHARISMATIC RENEWAL PRAYER GROUPS

I. THEOLOGICAL BASIS

As a movement within the Church, the charismatic renewal is rooted in the witness of the gospel tradition: Jesus is Lord by the power of the Spirit to the glory of the Father.... Insofar as the charismatic renewal makes its own this primary reality of the Gospel, it witnesses to elements of the Good News which are central, not optional: the covenant love of the Father, the Lordship of Jesus, the power of the Spirit, sacramental and community life, prayer, charisms and the necessity of evangelization. Insofar as the renewal makes its own what is central to the enduring reality of the Gospel, it cannot be dismissed as peripheral to the life of the Church.

(A Pastoral Statement on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal: A Statement of the Bishops' Liaison Committee with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, approved by the Administrative Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, March, 1984, No.1 and No. 3)

II. NATURE OF CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUPS

Charismatic prayer groups are a form of ecclesial community. These prayer groups may be parochial, inter-parochial or ecumenical. The message, doctrine and morals are in the Catholic tradition. The prayer meetings are subject to the authority of the bishop and the pastor of the parish in which they are located. The Bishop of Las Cruces has approved the existence of charismatic groups in this diocese and has established diocesan structures to communicate with them.

III. GOALS AND MINISTRIES OF PRAYER GROUPS

- A. There are two kinds of ministries. Those which benefit the internal life of the prayer group are called the internal ministries. Those which benefit groups and activities outside of the prayer group's usual functions are the external ministries.
- B. The internal ministries of a prayer group serve the local church by achieving the goals of charismatic renewal:
 - 1. To hold an open prayer meeting regularly to praise and worship God in the Holy Spirit through Jesus the Lord;
 - 2. To evangelize through giving Life in the Spirit Seminars;

3. To lead the participants to an authentic experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit;
 4. To promote the correct use of the charismatic gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. 12;
 5. To follow up the Life in the Spirit Seminars with sessions on Christian growth;
 6. To develop continuity in lay leadership for the group;
 7. To develop and model such gifts of service within the prayer group as intercessory prayer, healing prayers, teaching, administration, book ministry, leading prayer meetings, etc.
- C. The external ministries develop from the internal life of the prayer group and relate to the needs of the local church. Members are moved by the Holy Spirit
- to participate in church activities over and above the minimal attendance at Sunday Eucharist and the sacraments,
 - to assist an activity as a direct response to a one-time need,
 - to develop an on-going outreach in social justice and other ministries,
 - to further the seven goals listed above (III, B) in circumstances outside the prayer meeting itself.
- D. Pastoral care of the charismatic groups necessitates that the priests encourage the groups to fulfill their internal ministries well so that there will always be fresh and continuous resources for the local church.

IV. INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF LOCAL PRAYER GROUPS

- A. The local leaders of the prayer groups and the prayer meetings are usually laity. The internal structure of organized groups (15-40 regular members) includes the following: a Lay Pastoral Team (usually 2 persons), a Core Group (usually 5 or 7 persons), coordinators of ministries, and the regular participants. For a more detailed description of the internal workings of a prayer group and prayer meetings, see Prayer Group Leadership Development Program by Ron Ryan, published by Western Washington Catholic Charismatic Renewal, 936 N. 143rd St., Seattle, WA 98133. Also available throughout the Pecos Benedictines.
- B. Direction is provided by the Lay Pastoral Team to the prayer group.
- New leaders for the Lay Pastoral Team are usually chosen from the Core Group. Terms for Pastoral Leaders are for three years. They can be re-elected, but should not serve more than two terms. The new leaders:
- Serve as a contact person between the diocesan liaison and the Core Groups,
 - Maintain open communications with the local pastor,
 - Together with the pastor participate in decision making.

- C. The "Core Group" (*Grupo Timon*) is a group which attempts to:
- know the needs of the members of the prayer group as well as the environment around it,
 - be in touch with the resources to meet those needs,
 - act as an instrument to help the Pastoral Team and the prayer group by their counsel, prayer, experience and discernment.

These functions together with the Lay Pastoral Team, like a rudder in a boat, assist in giving direction to the group.

- D. The Local Treasurer
1. The treasurer is usually not a member of the Lay Pastoral Team.
 2. Neither the treasurer nor a leader can independently spend money without the authorization of the Core Group.
 3. Whenever money is collected from an event, it is counted in the presence of at least two people.
 4. The treasurer submits a written report of income and expenses to the Core Group and the local pastor at least once a year.
 5. The local Core Group covers its own operating expenses as much as possible.

V. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARISH PASTOR AND LAY PASTORAL LEADERS

- A. The Lay Pastoral Team Leaders of the prayer group are to reach a mutual understanding with the pastor on the use of facilities. If the weekly prayer meeting is not on parish premises, dialogue takes place to further the mutual understanding of the ecclesial relationship between the pastor, the parish and the prayer group.
- B. It is highly recommended that the pastor and the charismatic leaders, who meet routinely for evaluation of the relationship of the prayer group to the church, keep in mind that a charismatic group already has goals which are compatible with the evangelizing mission of the church.
- C. When possible, the local leaders of the prayer group seek the advice of the pastor as part of the discernment process before the election of the local charismatic leaders every three years.
- D. In order that priests have a pastoral understanding of charismatic practices, it is recommended that on occasion they participate in prayer meetings. Catholic charismatics are often stereotyped as being non-Catholic, or accused of not honoring Mary. Such stereotypes can prevent many people from seeking a more personal relationship with Jesus, especially if clergy reinforce these stereotypes.

VI. REGIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

- A. The process of designating the regions and liaisons:
 1. After regional consultations, the bishop divides the diocese into as many regions as are needed.
 2. The bishop appoints a spiritual director for each region.
 3. After a nomination process, the bishop appoints a liaison or a liaison team for each region.
- B. Those liaison-nominees who were not appointed liaisons become members of their respective regional teams.
- C. The details about qualifications, terms and process of nomination can be found in "Guidelines for Charismatic Offices in the Diocese of Las Cruces."

Duties:

1. Represent the bishop to the charismatic prayer groups in the region.
2. Provide appropriate communication between the prayer groups and the bishop.
3. Coordinate the prayer group leaders in the region.
4. Organize or coordinate Jesus rallies, retreats, workshops, seminars and conferences. Facilities should be made available for any of these functions with the approval of the appropriate pastor, administrator, or person in charge.

VII. FINANCING

- A. The offices of the appointed liaisons and spiritual directors may be supported by the diocesan budget, by funds received throughout the prayer groups, and by those being served. Expenses such as travel to meetings and expenses for speakers are covered. Conferences, Jesus rallies and other events may be used as a source of income.
- B. Each year the Diocesan Finance Office will receive a budget request compiled by the regional liaisons.

VIII. HOW TO REVISE THIS SECTION OF THE DIOCESAN MANUAL

- A. A liaison or a spiritual director may initiate an amendment or revision. There should then be a consultation process including all prayer group leaders, liaisons and spiritual directors.
- B. The proposed amendments and revisions are submitted to the bishop who will direct them to the Presbyteral Council and the Pastoral Manual Review Committee before inclusion in the Pastoral Manual.