

INSPIRED WORD May 18, 2016

SHARING / EXHORTATION

Tonight we have four speakers with us here and they are: Bart and Cathy, Matt and Christina. They will be speaking to us a little bit later this evening and they will be talking about the week's course that they had attended in Seattle. How many here attended the Pentecost Vigil that we had this past Saturday night? It was extra powerful! We came and we asked the Holy Spirit to come, and He did come. Then in the second part of that vigil, we prayed for the Lord to take over this world, to take it back and reclaim it. So we have to believe that the Lord is going to do that! He wouldn't come in such a powerful way, and then leave His work half done. So I believe with all my heart that changes are in the wind, and for that, Lord, we thank You.

PRAYER

Lord, give us the courage to be salt and to be light in this world! Give us the courage to stand up to be salt and to be light, Lord. Help us, Lord, so that we don't run from those things which You call us to do. Help us to stand firm and be the people You want us to be for You.

CONFIRMATION / INTERPRETATION / EXHORTATION

I want to confirm what Ray just said. At the Pentecost Vigil we prayed for God to renew the face of the earth. We had a Word in Tongues after the prayer and there were many interpretations of that Word. A part of one interpretation was this: **"You prayed for Me to renew the face of the earth and I will do that, but know that you are a part of that renewal."** Just like the song said, 'we are salt and we are light, and we have to let our light shine for all to see it'.

PRAYER

Lord, we are Your salt and we are Your light, and we ask that You would use each of us in all of the ways You have planned for us. We thank You, Lord!

SHARING

Matt speaking: As most of you know, Bart, Cathy, Christina and I went to Seattle in April to attend the ICCRS Leadership Training Course. So ICCRS is the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Service. The course was a week long, and the point of the course was to cover a lot of things which take place in the Charismatic praise and worship groups like we have here. Some of the things that were discussed were about the music, tips for worshiping, some of the pitfalls of leadership, and what the elements of the prayer meeting should be. Every morning we started with Mass, and most of the nights we had a Holy Hour, and that was followed by reflections. We also got to go on a visit to two churches in downtown Seattle and to the university there. During that week, we did some praise and worship and we got to know a lot of people there. There were people there from North Carolina, New York City, Toronto, the Philippines, Haiti, and California, so it was a great opportunity for us to see what every one else was doing, and compare that to what we are doing here. I would say overall, we need to pray and be thoughtful about every aspect that we are doing here on Wednesday nights. What I mean by that is that this prayer group has been in existence for 30 years, and if we are doing the same things that we did 30 years ago, and we will still be doing the same thing 30 years from now, where have we grown? The impact that was put on us during that week is that we need to be prayerful in everything that we are doing and constantly look for opportunities to

transform. One of the speakers, (can't recall who it was at this moment), said that what we are doing right here is **not** a formation, its purpose is **not** for information, **but the purpose should be for transformation**. So if you are coming here for anything other than transformation, you are missing out on what this is truly supposed to be about. So all of the things we do – the prayer, the music, the teachings, the worship, and the fellowship – should be transforming us every week. Michelle, who is the president of ICCRS, told us that one of the things that Pope Francis had asked her was this: “What fruits can you show from what you have been doing?” Keep in mind that she is the international president of ICCRS; she has traveled the world and she has been to many, many countries, and Pope Francis asked her, “What fruits does she have to show?” So we have to think about what fruits we have to show from what we are doing here. There are a lot of good things that we are doing, but if Pope Francis was to ask us right now what fruits this group can show, what would we say? So we were asked and challenged about a lot of these kinds of things during the week – to really reflect on what we are doing, where are we having successes, and what can we do better. One of the personal things that I took from this course was about brokenness. Michelle and all of the teachers were telling us that we need to be open about our brokenness. There are people here who are suffering from addiction, from pain, from divorce, and many, many other things, so this is a very broken world and I don't think that is news to anyone. We come here and it is almost like we forget that the broken world is still out there. We forget that broken people are coming into this church. What are we doing about that situation? We need to show our cracks, we need to show our fissures, we need to show our wounds, and be in a place where we are okay and don't feel like we are being judged. One of the questions that was asked during this course was: “Why did Jesus resurrect and still have the holes in His body?” One of the reasons, which was proposed during this course, was that it is something for us to literally put our hands into and grasp it. If we are in pain then we can grasp into that. The example that was shared, and I don't know if it is a true story, a parable or what it was, but a man fell into the ocean. There was a tall cliff and he kept slamming into the wall. He kept trying to grasp something, but he couldn't feel anything and so he couldn't save himself from drowning until he reached in and felt the crack. Then he was able to lift himself up out of the water and save his life. So the point is this: Until we, as a group here, can really openly show our wounds, our hurts and our pains, and our ugliness, then the broken people coming here are not going to see that in us, and they will not have anything to grasp from this group. They will come in for a week, then leave and we will never see them again. This is a crazy statistic: **50 percent of active Catholics** right now in the world do **not** believe that we can, or do have a personal relationship with Jesus! This statistic was shared by Jim who is one of the leadership directors of the new movement. So we can assume that 50 percent of the people coming into this place to join us every Wednesday night do not believe in a personal relationship, or do not have a personal relationship with God. So what are we going to do about it? How are we going to reach them? We are going to show you a video of Michelle Moran; it is about 20 minutes long and it is her talk which pretty well summarizes the whole week. It is a challenge for us to go out and do something with the gifts we have been given! The last thing that I wanted to share from this course is that it is talking about the new people. What I mean by that is ‘the new generations’. We need to bring the new generations into this group; we need to be here for those who are 15 – 17 years old; that is a very important time in their formation. We can look around this room and we don't see a whole lot of people under the age of 20. So what are we doing to meet that generation? How are we welcoming them into this group? How are we going to be here to meet their needs? Michelle said, “Intentional efforts need to be made to bring new people to these seminars.” We have Life in the Spirit seminars and 80 percent of the people who attend are the same people who were there for the past five

seminars. We need to make that change **so that 80 percent are new people who we have never seen before in a seminar**, and 20 percent are those who come here every Wednesday night. That is how we will make the new evangelization happen! We need to be creative in how the content is delivered, and as Michelle said, “Content doesn’t always need to be changed, but the context does.” This world is constantly changing; we cannot say the same things that we were saying twenty years ago, because it would be irrelevant to the new people who are in pain today. We need to pray and review every aspect of what we are doing here. We have a call to make sure that we are doing the best that we can do here in this place. I know that Bart’s got some plans with music and he is trying some new things. I would just say that we need to embrace the changes that are taking place, and will be taking place.

Cathy speaking: The one thing we learned about Matt over the week is that he is the perfect person to talk first. He has a very good gift for organization. I don’t think any of us have quite as much as he does. So in this course, during the day we had lectures, note-taking, and all of those things. In the evenings we had our Holy Hour and then meditation. Some of those times spoke to me, and one was about Jesus, and that was palpable and awesome. To make it more life-changing, we were invited – two or three of us at a time – to approach the altar and the Monstrance there, and place our hands on the altar and gaze right up at Jesus. I just had the sense of sitting at the feet of my Master. I can’t put it into words, but it was just amazing! We had a talk on the Holy Spirit and He was calling us to venture deeper into the water. If you have never been to a beach, there is that point where you just wade in the water, it is comfortable and you can see the bottom. But God is calling us to go a little bit deeper in the water – it is still comfortable and you can still see the bottom, but you keep going a little deeper. Then you realize that you can’t see the bottom and wonder if you will step on a fish or a crab. As you go deeper, you can still touch the bottom, but when a wave comes, it is forceful. That is exhilarating! If any of you come here every week or as often as you can, every once in a while you step out of your comfort zone and maybe share a word or whatever God has placed on your heart. That is exhilarating too. But God still calls us to go deeper, to the depth where our feet cannot touch the bottom. I had this vision which reminded me of one of my kids – she is scared to float on her back in the pool. So if we are in the deeper water where we can’t touch the bottom, then we need to throw our head back, and stick out our arms and float. It is scary at first; at first it feels like you are sinking and you are not in control anymore. But we know that we are supported by the Holy Spirit and so we don’t need to be in control anymore. We can lay back and relax as the sun is shining in our face and you just let that current carry you wherever He wants you to go. We learned all of these technical things during this course, but the important thing is to have that ability to trust and completely let go.

Bart talking: A lot of the things that I picked up during this week were actually about music and were praise and worship oriented. A lot of those things I am purposely not going to say because we are trying to incorporate those over the next few weeks and months. Then we will see how it will all work out and how the Spirit works through some of these things. But, as Matt alluded to, there are some things which we have already done, like the format where we do praise and worship first and then we take time for teaching or sharing like we are doing now. We then have some time after that for all of us frankly to respond as a community and let the Lord lead our hearts in whatever direction He will take us. It is important to do that! So be open to the changes and we are open to your feedback on that. Most of the things that I picked up affected the music group, more than all of you. On the non-music side, one of the things that I prayed about, as I went into this week, was for a deepening of the spiritual gifts within me. I was

baptized in the Spirit back in 2007, but I didn't have time to start coming here regularly until 2012 or so. For me it was kind of looking for this experience of finding out what the Charismatic Movement was really about. Why it is called charismatic, what does that mean? . What is the Holy Spirit really all about; how is the Holy Spirit different from the Father and the Son? I heard a lot of these things intellectually, but my prayer going into this week was to experience that first hand – to let the Lord tell me, “This is what the Holy Spirit is, this is how it is different and how it takes you to the next level.” The one experience that I will share with you, before we watch the video, is about the meditation that we had on the third night which is the night we were invited to come up to the altar where the Monstrance was. We put our hands on the altar and as we were looking up at Jesus in the Monstrance, people came up and laid their hands on us as they prayed over us. I am one of those people who go to Adoration and I like it, but I don't really know what to do, so it is kind of weird for me. As I was being prayed over, I looked up and said, “Lord, what is it that You have for me tonight? What is it that You want me to experience and take away from this?” I will never forget this – I saw Jesus, the actual form of Jesus in the Host in the Monstrance. I am not a person who receives prophetic images, so that is why it was such a big deal for me. Jesus was reaching down from the Host to me, and I just remember having this special sense of renewed love that you could palpably feel. I wrote this down in my journal because I wasn't really sure what to do with receiving this image. As Matt mentioned earlier, we took a trip to downtown Seattle. The first church which we went to was an older cathedral which is now kind of known as the ‘church with the black gospel choir’. They encouraged us to walk around and look at the art work, the paintings and the statues. As I rounded the corner to the right and looked up, there was a painting on the wall which was exactly like the image I had received the night before. I took a picture of it and maybe will give you the chance to see the picture later. Those were the kinds of things that happened throughout this week for all of us. There was such an amazing group of people who were so open to the Holy Spirit. It was amazing to see how the Spirit was working in people and to see the gifts which were released during the week. It really was the ‘Current of Grace’ flowing there.

Christina speaking: Mine isn't so much an experience, as to what I felt God laying on my heart. It is like Matt was saying about evangelization. But for me more so, I felt God speaking to me about the youth. How do we reach them and bring them in as Michelle was telling us during that course. If we don't bring them in, then who are we going to have in 30 years? They are going to the families who will raise up next generation. They are the ones who will keep the Charismatic Renewal going. There are so many people who are hurting out there, that even I can't relate. It is overwhelming! The way in which we will present things will have to be in the context that they can grasp and understand. What will give them that relationship with God? I felt that God was telling us to do the best that we can, really the best that we can, and He will take care of the rest. I can't be someone else; I can't look to someone who I want to emulate, I need to be myself and not copy someone else. God created us all to be individuals anyway and that individual is going to be someone who calls someone else into the charismatic movement. God keeps reminding us to be ourselves and do the best that we can and He will speak to the people through us.

IMAGE / EXHORTATION

As we, the pastoral team, were praying in the back before this praise and prayer meeting started, I shared that I had an image in my mind that stayed with me over and over again. It was an image of Jesus standing in front of a group of people, like at the Sermon on the Mount. I could see Jesus moving His hands and I could see that His lips moving, but I couldn't hear

Him, nor could the people hear Him. Several times I asked Jesus what this image meant, but no answer came to me. Why does Jesus speak to a group of people, and yet no one could hear Him? As I heard the four people sharing with us a few minutes ago, and as I watched the DVD that was played, a question came to me. I will ask you the same question that I was asked. Is the reason why Jesus is not being heard because you are not speaking His Word to this world? I will repeat that question: Is the reason why Jesus is not being heard because we are not speaking His Word to this world?

SHARING

Regarding that image and why Jesus was not being heard, it is because we are His voice.

SHARING

We are also His hands, His feet, His ears, His eyes and His heart.

PRAYER

Lord, You call us to be Your voice, Your hands, Your feet, Your heart, Your eyes and Your ears. Lord, we accept that; we want to be Your voice in this world. We don't want to be a voiceless people. We want to be a people who share the things You want us to share, to do what You want us to do, to speak what You want us to speak, and to encourage when You want us to encourage. Lord, we simply ask for the trust, for the boldness, for the desire to be Your voice to this world!

SCRIPTURE / PRAYER

John 20: 19 – 21: On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." Lord, that is the message which You are giving us tonight, that **You do indeed send us**. You send us with the wounds that we have, as Your wounds were still there for them to see. But You conquered, You overcame, and You say to us, "Peace be with you", knowing that You will send us wherever You need us to go. Help us to understand that You will help us to know, with our whole hearts, that where You send us, You have already prepared the way. You have given us the words and that Your Spirit goes with us.

SHARING / EXHORTATION

I was thinking about the phrase "altar of our hearts". As I was thinking about this, these questions came to mind: What does the altar of my heart look like? What do I want it to look like? What do I want to have happen in my heart? What does all of this mean? After what we have just been talking about, what is the most significant thing that happens on this altar? We want to be changed. As the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus, we want to become Jesus to other people – the voice, the hands, the feet, the ears, the eyes and heart of Jesus. As Matt mentioned earlier tonight, we need to be intentional about all of this. We need to think about what we want to have happen on the altar of our hearts! What do you want the altar of your heart to do?

CONFIRMATION / EXHORTATION

I confirm what was just spoken about the “altar of our hearts”. I think that sometimes we don’t want to think about that, but that is something we have to do. There is a song that we sing here every so often and the words are: “Everything that I am, everything that I want to be, I lay it down at Your feet.” That is a challenge, but I think it is one that we all need to take!

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12: 1 – 2: I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

SCRIPTURE

I have another scripture reading: “Be merciful even as your Father is merciful.” **(Reference: Luke 6: 36)** Evangelization, sharing of our faith, and stepping out in faith are acts of mercy. Continuing in **Luke 6:** “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. ‘Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord’, and do not do what I tell you?’” **(Verses 43 – 46)**

SUMMARY / EXHORTATION / PRAYER

We heard newness, harmony, and mission! The Lord doesn’t give us a powerful night like this and just have us leave and go home, then come back next week and do it all over again. I believe that every word which we heard here tonight has touched us in a deeper way, a new way. It has touched us in a way to bring harmony, not only in this community, but also out there; to bring mission – to go out to other people. Fifty percent of the people don’t have, or think that they don’t have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is hard to believe, but it is a fact! If we say it is hard to believe, all we have to do is go out somewhere - a coffee shop, a restaurant, or a ball game – and listen to the way people talk, how they talk to each other and treat each other. We are called to make that change! We are called to be new to people, to bring harmony into their lives and to bring Jesus to them. That is what Jesus wants us to do! We are not to leave here and just go home and say, “What a great praise and prayer meeting we had!” The Lord challenged us deeply! He challenged us to our very core! All of the songs that we sang to Him can boil down to “Lord, we want to be salt and light.” So the question for us is: Do we **really want** to be the salt and the light that He is calling us to be? If we do, then we need to spend some time with Him this week – to speak to Him openly from the depths of our hearts, to tell Him our desires, to tell Him what our fears are, and what our hopes are. I think that we will hear His voice respond to us and say, “Peace be with you! Go and take My Word as I direct you to do!” That is all we need to do; that is what He is calling us to do! So, Lord, we thank You for that challenge, we thank You for Your Word, and we thank You for Your Presence here tonight. Lord, give us the trust, the courage, and the boldness to do what You call each of us to do. Amen!