

Before Duquesne: Sources of the renewal

Jim Manney, a member of The Word of God, in Ann Arbor Michigan, is on the editorial staff of New Covenant.

In the months following the retreat at Duquesne University a group of young men working in campus apostolate in Lansing, Michigan, and Notre Dame, Indiana, received some remarkable and disturbing letters from their friend, Ralph Keifer. Some had known Keifer while they were all students at the University of Notre Dame and they had remained in touch with him after he went to Duquesne to teach theology in 1965. They knew him as a sober, sophisticated lay theologian with a deep love for the Church and a commitment to its service.

These letters were extraordinary coming from such a balanced man, for they excitedly announced a spiritual transformation with little precedent in historic Catholicism. He and about 25 other faculty and students had received a baptism of the Spirit, he said, and it had altered their lives. In one such letter, he said: **We have found ourselves on a plane of Christian life all the textbooks call normal and all practice and expectation seem to deny. Our faith has come alive, our believing has become a kind of knowing. Suddenly, the world of the supernatural has become more real than the natural. In brief, Jesus Christ is a real person to us, a real living person who is our Lord and who is active in our lives. (Cf. the New Testament and read it as though it were literally true now, every word, every line.) Prayer and the sacraments have become truly our daily bread instead of practices which we recognize as “good for us.” A love of the Scriptures, a love of the Church I never thought possible, a transformation of our relationships with others, a need and a power to witness beyond all expectation, have all become part of our lives.**

The letter was not entirely unexpected. Some of the men in Michigan and Indiana knew that Keifer and William Storey, his friend and a Church historian at Duquesne, were investigating the baptism of the Spirit. Two books – *They Speak with Other Tongues* by John Sherrill and *The Cross and the Switchblade* by David Wilkerson – had aroused their mutual curiosity. Some of them shared Keifer and Storey’s conviction that contemporary Church renewal must restore the power of the early Church if it was to succeed.

When Keifer’s initial letter arrived, his friends were surprised, but they were also prepared to look into it. After some hesitation and investigation of their own, most of them sought and received the baptism of the Spirit themselves. They included Steve Clark and Ralph Martin, workers on the staff of St. John’s Student Parish at Michigan State University in East Lansing and staff members of the National Secretariat of the Cursillo Movement; George Martin (no relation to Ralph), working in adult education for the diocese of Lansing; his colleague Jim Rauner; Paul DeCelles, professor of Physics at Notre Dame; and a group of teachers and students at Notre Dame which included Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, Bert Ghezzi, Jim Cavnar, Gerry Rauch, and Kerry Koller.

These men, and others who soon joined them, have deeply influenced the development of the charismatic renewal. Other groups and individuals have had considerable impact, but these men are particularly responsible for developing the organizational structure and support services which have made it an effective and cohesive movement. They serve on or advise the Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal which operates the Communication Center at Notre Dame, *New Covenant* magazine and Word of Life publishers in Ann Arbor, the newly-opened International Communications Office, and the national and regional conferences which some 20,000 persons attended in 1972.

Through these services, and as prominent leaders of their own communities and prayer groups, these men have influenced the charismatic renewal in the same way that an earlier group of leaders shaped classical Pentecostalism in the first decades of the 20th century. The early Pentecostal leaders emerged from 19th century holiness movements; they stressed holiness of personal life, taught a Wesleyan doctrine of post-conversion sanctification, based church structure on the priesthood of the faithful, and were quick to leave the established churches when non-Pentecostal Christians criticized them. The leaders of the Catholic charismatic renewal, on the other hand, were formed in movements which stressed renewal of the Church. They were trained to evangelize nominal Christians and to encourage them to make a deeper commitment to the Lord, to integrate this new commitment into a vital Christian community, and to form leaders who would draw others to Christ.

Although their backgrounds are varied, they shared at least two common interests before experiencing the baptism of the Spirit; a fervent concern for a fundamental renewal of the Church along evangelical and communitarian lines, and a high degree of theoretical agreement about the right shape and strategy for this renewal. All were deeply influenced by the Cursillo Movement; they all shared an intense experience living and working together in a unique Christian community they formed at Notre Dame in 1964-66.

The Duquesne weekend was not an isolated event, a sudden eruption of Pentecostal fervor in the Church of Rome which spread through sheer uniqueness and force. We call it the beginning of the charismatic renewal because the baptism of the Spirit first experienced there quickly spread to these men. It animated the renewal movement they had long been advocating.

The men who formed around the Cursillo Movement at Notre Dame in the mid-1960's came from varied backgrounds with some significant common threads. They were all highly-educated intellectuals who achieved considerable academic distinction. Most professed a Catholicism of an orthodox type. They were concerned about liturgical and personal renewal, although several had acquired progressive theological educations and most had worked in social action and civil rights movements. Steve Clark and Dr. William Storey, a leader of the Duquesne group who later came to Notre Dame, were converts. They had the convert's appreciation for a Church examined and entered as an adult. George Martin's first conversion experience occurred at the age of 18 while he was making an abbreviated three-day version of St. Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises. After graduation from college, he joined the national staff of the social action-oriented Young Christian Students, then came to Notre Dame to study philosophy because he felt YCS's theoretical underpinning was vague. He did his doctoral thesis on Kierkegaard, as did Ralph Johnson, another leader of the group.

Bert Ghezzi had been drawn into renewal activity while an undergraduate at Duquesne and became the first president of the Chi Rho Society, the group which later made the famous retreat. Chi Rho was active in local civil rights movements in Pittsburgh and brought a number of progressive speakers to the campus, the theologian Hans Kung among them. Ghezzi was also concerned about a renewal in spiritual life and prayer generally. He brought these interests to Notre Dame when he enrolled as a graduate student in 1963.

There were some exceptions to this pattern. One was Ralph Martin, a brilliant philosophy student (Specialty: Nietzsche) and crusading campus editor, who had no concern for the Church at all. By early 1964, he finally felt free from the repressions of his Catholic upbringing, and had gained a reputation as an argumentative atheist around campus. The first time Martin met Steve Clark, they got into an argument about Christianity in a student restaurant near campus.

Martin's conversion occurred suddenly and dramatically during the second Cursillo at Notre Dame. It was a conversion so dramatic that Bert Ghezzi, who was there, at first doubted its authenticity. "I never saw such a complete U-turn in my life," Ghezzi says. "I didn't believe such things were possible." For his part, Martin describes his conversion as a radical breakthrough to existential truth, an awareness of his sinfulness and his full, gratuitous salvation in Jesus Christ. "I saw that I had arranged my search for truth in such a way that I would never find it. As soon as I got close to something that might be true – like Christ – I decided to try another direction."

A leader of the Notre Dame group was Steve Clark, a New Yorker, who had become a Catholic by 1960 while an undergraduate at Yale University. Clark was the organizer, theoretician, and, to many, the model during his two years as a graduate student in the philosophy department. The search for the elusive sources of the evangelical-communitarian Catholic Christianity which have congealed in the charismatic renewal may profitably begin with Clark. Says Bert Ghezzi: "Steve Clark came to Notre Dame with an amazing vision of pastoral renewal. I don't know where it all came from."

One important key to Clark's thinking is his experience of conversion to Catholicism. "I approach Christianity in an evangelical way because becoming a Christian made a big difference in my life and I wanted to share it with others," he says. "I knew that Christianity was true and I could see that other people who were in trouble needed it. My first big distress came when I discovered that other Catholics at Yale didn't agree. Like many people raised as Christians, they tended to feel that everyone was basically a Christian and that all that was needed was an improvement in society's moral tone. I didn't see things that way at all."

Clark noticed another tendency from the beginning: Catholics at Yale who associated with each other and joined Newman activities usually grew in faith and holiness. Those who took an individualistic stance and avoided specifically Christian involvements usually had a rough time spiritually and often fell away from the Church. This seemingly self-evident observation, which is surely true of any movement or religion, was the pragmatic basis for Clark's vision of the Christian community. A person will grow as a Christian if he is among a group of Christians who take a lively concern for each other's well-being. Left alone, his spiritual prognosis is gloomy. In a loose Christian environment – the average parish, for example – the Christian is more likely to be shaped by the dominant secular environment around him.

Over the years, this stress on the importance of community became much more than a principle of good pastoral practice. It became the keystone of an audacious strategy aimed at the radical Christian transformation of whole environments. In 1966, Clark and Ralph Martin, then on the staff of St. John's Student Parish at Michigan State University, proposed the creation of a network of small and large community groupings to make the secular university an environment where Christians would flourish. The difference between what they proposed to do and what frustrated priests thought was possible is spelled out in this statement of goals for MSU: **It is not enough to see the problems... We believe that it is possible to handle all the problems effectively... Most priests and lay workers are resigned to the fact that they are not going to do very much to "stem the tide." They therefore have resolved to do the best they can, to make some contribution. But they have not actually decided to "win," that is, to cope successfully with the whole situation, perhaps because they do not know how. We feel that this is the initial mistake that is made... The problems can be effectively handled, and it is necessary to begin by aiming consciously to solve them all.**

If the seeds of this vision can be found in Clark's first weeks and months as a Christian, his later apostolic experiences nourished and refined them. While still an undergraduate, he joined a student social action group and spent two summers working on projects in Mexico and Latin America. There, he saw that the most successful attempts at renewal in an area where the Church was under great pressure involved a restoration of the primitive Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles. After graduation from Yale, he took a Fulbright Scholarship and spent a year studying [philosophy and] theology at the University of Freiburg in Germany. Vatican II was underway in Rome at the time, and Clark welcomed the new pastoral ideas and approaches then emerging. He found the Church's traditional pastoral attitudes inadequate and personally frustrating to work with. Yet the progressive styles had their own limitations and dangers. "I was clearly a pre-Vatican II liberal," he says, "but one with faith."

By the time he returned to the United States, he was uneasy about the state of the Church. He was eager to develop a strategy for fundamental renewal, test it with others and put into practice. "I guess my travels and background gave me a special view of things," he says. "When I got back to America, I felt the Church was probably in the first stages of a nervous breakdown. Nothing really worked. There were only piecemeal solutions instead of effective plans. The edifice was starting to crumble."

The religious situation at the University of Notre Dame in 1963 was complex and gloomy. Some fresh progressive currents were there, but Clark, who had expected the premier American Catholic University to be in the vanguard of renewal, was shocked to discover that the dominant trend was towards spiritual collapse. Loyalty to the Church was ending, and students mocked and resented the traditional Catholicism that still ruled. Many students exhibited a Joycean psychology in their attitude toward the Church: a snobbish intellectual rejection masking an almost pathological fascination with Catholic forms, rituals, and taboos. Almost the only teacher at Notre Dame who was making an effort to affect students' faith strongly was an English professor named Frank O'Malley. However, his "Catholic Renaissance" approach consisted entirely of an intellectual appreciation of significant Catholic writers. It was pastorally ineffective.

In a paper, Clark and George Martin identified another problem at Notre Dame. They called it “renewal confusion.” They wrote: “A person looks at Christianity as he knows it and finds it bewildering. He listens to a variety of opinions and finds them conflicting or confusing. Then he instinctively takes the part of Christianity that makes sense to him and says that this part *is* Christianity... All of these distortions of Christianity...involve a turning away from the reality of God and his love.”

Almost as soon as he moved into an apartment near the campus, Clark left again, this time to make a Cursillo in East Chicago, Indiana. He saw immediately that this movement, still very new in the United States, was a practical instrument to bring about the changes he thought were desperately needed. The Cursillo offered the evangelical focus, communitarian, emphasis, and carefully-structured technique necessary for a fundamental renewal. When Clark started to work on Cursillos at Notre Dame, he found others who felt the same way. Bert Ghezzi, George Martin, and Phil O’Mara made the first Cursillo in South Bend in December, 1963. Ralph Martin and Paul DeCelles made the second. As the Cursillos unfolded, the Christian community at Notre Dame came into being.

The Cursillo Movement is a rarity in Church history; a unique approach to the formation of Christians, based on a fresh analysis of pastoral realities, devised by a group of prayerful, dedicated men in an almost entirely original manner. The Movement originated in the improbable locale of post-World War II Fascist Spain among a group of clerics and lay intellectuals. The founders were Juan Hervas, a Catholic bishop, Eduardo Bonnin, a psychologist and heir to an export-import fortune, and Juan Capo, a theologian. They were influenced by progressive European thinkers such as Cardinal Suenens, Abbe Michonneau, and Yves Congar, yet the strategy they devised was a new approach. The first Cursillo was offered in 1949, around the time that Billy Graham and Oral Roberts began their evangelical ministries in the United States.

The founders of the Cursillo felt that the actual state of the Church in the modern world was so grave that men “had no choice except either to abandon Christianity or to live fully a militant and conquering Christianity.” The mass of men were no longer Christian in the sense that Christianity was the operative ideal in their daily lives. The compromising and routine position of the Christian Church was doomed, “since it will inevitably be swept away by the intellectual and moral currents of a de-Christianized world and by the general state of minds and customs.” The urgent work of the Church was to teach Christians to live their Christian lives intensely, by restoring a fundamental understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

They found their model for a restored Christianity in the New Testament. The primitive Church was characterized by love and unity, a powerful apostolate, common life. The Church was a visible sign to the heathen world and conquered it by a radical personal and social transformation. In his book *Questions and Problems* Bishop Hervas said the re-Christianization of the world was possible if the Church returned to the same sources of life which animated the early Christians. He named these sources as “the life of grace truly centered in the adorable person of Jesus, in daily contact with Him, as with a living Person... Life in the Presence of the Most Holy Trinity as sons of the Father, brothers of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit, heirs of everlasting happiness and glory... By the spectacle of the early Christians’ lives and their ardent zeal, they continued their evangelization and transformed the world.”

The renewal the Cursillo founders foresaw was essentially a new Pentecost. Eduardo Bonnin said this explicitly in his analysis of the Church's failure: **Christianity, afterwards as before, is essentially an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is essentially the miracle of Pentecost. And where you cannot see the outpouring of the Spirit, there the "Counselor" has not passed. There you might find men who believe in the Father, and, because of an ingenious egocentricity, are convinced about a practice of Christianity when they go to beg gifts from the Father. You might also have men who believe in the "Word" and in the sense of all the things which have been revealed in Him. Inspired by their newly acquired ideal of Him, these men try to model their lives on His with a laborious fidelity. They are industrious men of moral probity. But they are not men of the Holy Spirit of overflowing love; they are not men with flashing eyes. For them, Pentecost has not yet come.** In more theological language, Bishop Hervas said that "it is necessary not only 'to receive Christ,' but also 'to receive the Holy Spirit.' and to submit to his influence, in order to be 'one in Jesus Christ.'"

When Steve Clark first heard about the Cursillos, this charismatic, Pentecostal element was evident. He was attending an orientation session on Latin America at the Maryknoll headquarters in Ossining, New York, before leaving for apostolic work in Mexico. At lunch, a Maryknoll priest told him about a Cursillo he had observed in Mexico City. Says Clark, "He described it in Pentecostal terms: men were filled with the Holy Spirit and became strong, dedicated apostles. Later I met some Mexican students who were cursillistas. They impressed me as being stronger Christians than the Americans I was with. I remembered the Cursillo as something that would probably be good for Americans too."

The strategy of the Cursillo founders was to form a body of mature Christian men who would be able to influence their environments, reach out and draw others to Christ, and thereby create a movement which would ultimately restore the Church. The founders' method was to draw men to an intense, compelling vision of the Christian ideal during a three-day weekend and then to sustain and nurture their faith through Christian community afterwards. The three-day weekend was a comprehensive and highly-structured presentation of a scriptural Christianity using a sophisticated understanding of group dynamics. Yet this was only the instrument to open men to the work of renewal. The whole strategy was aimed toward the formation of leaders, both in the choice of candidates before the weekend, and in the follow-up afterwards.

The Cursillo Movement spread rapidly, at first in the Spanish-speaking world, then throughout the Church. In 1957, two Spanish jet pilots in training near Waco, Texas, conducted the first Cursillo in the United States. In 1961, the first English Cursillo was held in San Angelo, Texas, and the movement is now established in most American dioceses. Bishop Hervas played a leading role at Vatican II; he was a member of the Liturgical Commission, and his writings on the Cursillo strongly influenced certain Council documents.

However, the Cursillo was also very controversial and, in America at least, received criticism which people active in the charismatic renewal will find familiar. Many found the Cursillistas' zeal, dedication, and intense spiritual life suspect. Fr. George Montague, professor of Scripture at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, recalls telling a priest friend in New York that he was in town to give an address on the theology of the Cursillo Movement. "My friend said, 'that's too bad. There isn't any theology is there? It's all emotion, isn't it?'"

This remark is revealing, for it highlights one of the problems the movement encountered in the United States. The Cursillo Movement tended to be identified with the three-day weekend, a powerful and often shattering experience of the reality of Jesus. The follow-up part – Christian community – was less dramatic and much harder to sustain. Other problems centered around many liberal Catholics' distaste for the evangelical orientation of the movement. Bishop Hervas was very clear about the need to stress fundamentals. He wrote: **“The Cursillo offers a radical and basic solution of all man’s problems... there is no direct and express treatment of the social, family, economic, or political questions and of their Christian solutions, but of fundamental Christianity, the basis that is the essential and radical principle of every human and Christian solution.”** Nevertheless, some used the tool of the three-day weekend to promote non-Christian and partially Christian ideas. The hackneyed cliché, “find Christ in other people,” first gained currency through the Cursillo Movement.

Among the most vocal opponents of these trends in America were none other than Steve Clark and Ralph Martin. As staff members of the National Cursillo Secretariat, they gave dozens of leaders' workshops throughout the United States from 1965 to 1970. Their main purpose was to defend and develop the founders' original conception of an evangelical movement locating Christian life within community. They insisted that the Cursillo was a comprehensive renewal of fundamental Christianity, and that the basic task, as the founders properly claimed, was creation of a Christian environment.

The impact of this Cursillo experience on the development of the charismatic renewal has been decisive. From the beginning Clark, Martin, and the other leaders have hammered away at the need to integrate the experience of the baptism of the Spirit into the community where the Christian grows, receives healing and support, and draws others into the joyous life that he lives.

The haphazard, almost accidental Christian community which emerged at Notre Dame realized the Cursillo founders' ideal. The men who comprised it were busy, often troubled, young graduate students who worked on Cursillos and worried about Church renewal in their spare time. They would drive 400 miles to attend a Cursillo closing one night, worry about the job market for Ph.Ds in philosophy the next. Their personal relationships were often tense as personalities and egos clashed. Yet the Lord was unmistakably at work. Through the life of this little community, a group of highly educated Catholics experienced a life together for the first time, refined a new strategy for renewal of the Church, and heard a call for radical commitment to Christian leadership.

Their pastoral development was solid and impressive. Soon after they began to work together, some of them realized that the Cursillos could not reach most college students effectively. The founders intended Cursillos to open mature men who were already recognized Christian leaders in their communities to a grand strategy of general Church renewal. On the other hand, college students usually experienced a variety of problems with basic Christian commitment. In an environment like Notre Dame, where tradition-minded complacency coexisted with powerful secularizing forces, the content of the “average” student's faith could neither be guessed nor assumed.

A group of the early cursillistas decided to write an entirely new weekend for college students incorporating elements of the Cursillo and some materials George Martin had developed while on the national staff of the Young Christian Students. Martin and Clark wrote the first draft. Fr. Charles Harris, C.S.C., and Jim Cavnar were among those who did the revision. The weekend was originally called the Study Weekend, but was renamed the Antioch Weekend after some of the leaders, while praying for a new name, asked the Lord for direction from Scripture. One of them opened to Acts 11:26 which tells about the founding of the Church at Antioch. "It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians,'" the verse concludes.

The Antioch Weekend is notable for its insight into student psychology. Consider this characterization of the student intellectual's attitude: "(Students) will be developing a kind of skepticism about whatever is said to them, a pride in their own minds, and a self-sufficiency. They will each have the habit of taking everything that is said in a detached way as something 'out there,' something to be contemplated and understood, something to be discussed and argued about, but probably not something they have to appropriate." To students imbued with the intellectual ideal, the Antioch Weekend presented the Christian ideal, "a call to give up all previous ideals for the sole ideal of following Christ and of serving him." The Antioch Weekend was the cornerstone in a pastoral plan to restore Christianity to a healthy place in the university's life.

The plan was never implemented. Spiritual life at Notre Dame continued to decline. Peter Collins, who later conducted highly successful Antioch Weekends at the University of Colorado, thinks the official Catholicism of the university rendered most undergraduates impervious to the need for renewal. "Most of them were still in the womb," he said "They didn't experience tension between their faith and secular world, and they weren't particularly looking for answers in their lives. Things have changed since, but Notre Dame then wasn't a promising situation for evangelism."

Yet the small community's vigorous life attracted many, if only by contrast to the prevailing complacency. Frank Amalfitano, a graduate student in philosophy at the time, remembers that hundreds of students would drop by the weekly Cursillo Mass, curious to see a liturgy which communicated a sense of worship. After the Mass, cursillistas and hangers-on would eat together in tables commandeered in one corner of the university's public cafeteria. It was a casual community life, dominated by the prevailing student life style. People saw each other frequently, crossed paths in the library and cafeteria, or went out for a beer together. Yet commitments went deeper. Members of the group increasingly took serious responsibility for each other's spiritual welfare. They tackled some serious personal problems as well.

The cursillistas were creative and wide-ranging. To list their activities is to recall the heady optimism of the post-Vatican II, pre-Vietnam Church. Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan became involved in the group partly because one of its emphases was on liturgical renewal. Bert Ghezzi helped organize a graduate students' Sunday liturgy; Fr. Edward O'Connor of the theology faculty usually celebrated the Mass and delivered the homily. Ghezzi, Ranaghan, and others also organized experimental Eucharists, vespers, and other liturgically progressive events. Richard Giloth was the leader of the cursillistas' social action efforts. Several members of the group participated in Martin Luther King's march in Selma, Alabama, and many others were involved in local civil rights projects. A number were also active in efforts to loosen the restrictions on student life at Notre Dame and at the adjoining St. Mary's College, an all-girl school.

The most novel of these developments was a growing interest in spontaneous prayer meetings. A desire for shared, spontaneous prayer first emerged among several of the Cursillo leaders who felt that their common life should grow deeper than their regular business and fellowship meetings allowed. They began to meet in Phil O'Mara's small apartment over the university art gallery, much to the irritation of O'Mara's then-unconverted roommate, Ralph Martin. Soon the meetings attracted a heterogeneous crowd of nearly 50 persons, including priests and nuns, Protestants and Catholics, men and women, cursillistas and non-cursillistas. Their sharing and prayer was often quite formal; the spontaneous prayer was typically offered by one person at a time. Yet many felt the meetings were a breakthrough of some kind and, when circumstances permitted, the formality was overcome. One evening, in 1965, there was an instance of glossalalia. It was stopped by the leader of the meeting, who did not understand it.

Ultimately, God's work among these men involved a break with the academic environment which nurtured them. They were influenced by the Cursillo founders' conviction that a fundamental renewal of the Church would succeed only if a group of men dedicated themselves to it as their primary apostolate. One of the most influential books among them was *Dedication and Leadership* by Douglas Hyde, a British Communist who abandoned the Party for Christianity. Hyde found his model for the Christian leader in the Communist Party worker, a man so dedicated that he would eat and sleep so he could live to work for the Party, and whose first thought in the morning was joy at the prospect of doing something to build Communism that day.

Clark and Ralph Martin eventually took the boldest step. During the Christmas holidays in 1965, the two met at Martin's parents' home in Teaneck, New Jersey, and agreed to spend the summer together at Mount Savior Monastery in Elmira, New York. While there, they felt the Lord was leading them to leave graduate school and make themselves more available for direct Christian work. Clark had remained at Notre Dame while Martin had begun work on a philosophy doctorate at Princeton University. After they made their decision, they were invited to give the opening and closing talks at the National Cursillo Convention in Kansas City. Subsequently, they joined the staffs of both St. John's Student Parish at Michigan State University and the National Secretariat of the Cursillo, also located in East Lansing.

The other men at Notre Dame struggled with the questions of careers and commitments as they searched for ways to serve the Lord adequately. Some entered the seminary, others joined lay apostolic groups; many completed their degrees and became college teachers.

Many of them emerged from their experiences at Notre Dame with commitments to serve the Lord in a direct way. George Martin is now director of religious education for the Catholic diocese of Oklahoma City-Tulsa. One of his major projects is to oversee the integration of Catholic schools in both cities. Bert Ghezzi is a philosophy professor at Grand Valley College in Michigan and chairman of the Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Kevin Ranaghan is executive director of the Apostolic Institute in Mishawaka, Indiana, an organization which trains laymen for the diaconate. William Storey is professor of Church history at Notre Dame and a prominent liturgist. Kerry Koller teaches philosophy at the University of San Francisco and is one of the leaders of the charismatic renewal on the West Coast. Phil O'Mara teaches English at Tougaloo College in Mississippi, a predominately black school, and is a leader of the charismatic renewal in the South. Ralph Keifer is executive director of the English-speaking section of the International Liturgical Commission. He is charged with preparing definitive English texts of missals, Mass texts, and other liturgical materials.

While they were students at Notre Dame, no one knew exactly what their experiences and commitments amounted to. Today we can see God breaking through. Miraculous events healings, discernment of spirits, answered prayer – accompanied the Cursillos they ran. Most of them had personal encounters with Jesus during this time at least as intense as their later experiences with the baptism of the Spirit. By February, 1967, they realized, clearly or dimly, that God had knit them together for a purpose.

Perhaps George Martin sums up the meaning of these early days most accurately. He calls them simply “incredibly grace-filled times.”