

[return to Body Theology](#)

Origins of and Responses to "Instructions on Prayer for Healing"

The following article is representative of the view of the Charismatic movement in the Catholic Church regarding healing services. It was in response to this developing phenomenon that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued its instructions. The magazine in which the article appeared is produced by the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the USA (there are National Service Committees, NSC, in several countries).

Restoring the Gifts of Healing; Reflections on 35 years of healing ministry

*by Barbara Shlemon Ryan, RN
October/November/December 2003 issue of Pentecost Today*

Healing services have become commonplace in Roman Catholic Churches throughout the world. It is not unusual to learn of someone with a terminal illness being declared "healed" by the medical community after receiving the "laying on of hands." Recently a couple brought their 3-year-old son to a Eucharistic healing service where the pastor and several prayer ministers prayed for the child. He had been diagnosed with a malignant tumor of the bladder and surgery was scheduled for the following day. When the surgeon performed the procedure he was astonished to find the tumor had completely disappeared and there was no trace of cancer in the boy's body.

The opportunity to attend healing services in the Catholic Church was not always as readily available as it is today. The first seven years of the modern Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement were devoid of any form of healing services on a national level. Teachings on the reception of spiritual gifts placed strong emphasis on the charisms of speaking in tongues, interpretation and prophetic words, but gifts of healing were generally avoided in prayer meetings and national conferences.

The reason for this oversight by Renewal leaders was an expressed fear that people might focus on a "selfish need to get healed" instead of the "more important need for spiritual growth." Teachings on healing and healing services were not encouraged in the early years of the Renewal. When someone with the gift of healing was invited to speak to a charismatic gathering, the leaders would program much praise, worship, witnessing and teachings into the event and ask the healing minister to give a short and simple service in order to avoid focusing on this charism. Thus healing remained on the fringe of the Renewal and continued to be equated with sawdustfloor tent meetings.

Francis MacNutt is credited by many with breaking the taboo against this charism. As a Dominican priest his workshops and seminars on healing began to break down the barriers of

ignorance and misunderstanding among Catholics. His insistence on the centrality of healing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ eventually influenced the National Service Committee to permit the first national public healing service to be held at the 1974 National Conference at Notre Dame. The persons who participated in that historically memorable event were: Bobbie Cavnar, Fr. Tom Forrest, Fr. Francis MacNutt, Fr. Michael Scanlan, Sr. Breige McKenna and myself. At least 30,000 were present in the Notre Dame football stadium that weekend and many were healed (including one legally blind woman who had her sight restored). The charism of healing came out of the closet, never again to be "on the fringe" of the Renewal!

The Catholic Church has a long history of legitimizing the charism of healing. More than one hundred years of Lourdes pilgrimages plus the many miracle cures associated with the saints makes healing prayer less suspect and more acceptable than in some mainline Protestant churches. However it is important to note that Protestants anointed with gifts of healing (i.e., Kathryn Kuhlman, Agnes Sanford, and Tommy Tyson) were very influential in launching many Roman Catholics into healing ministries.

In recent years, a renewed appreciation of the healing power of the Eucharist has prompted the scheduling of regular healing Masses in nearly every diocese in the United States. Participants in these services are often reminded of the prayer recited prior to receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ: "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed."

Recently I received a letter from a woman who was given a diagnosis of an aggressive form of breast cancer necessitating chemo and radiation. The first chemo treatment knocked her out for two days with nausea and exhaustion. Before the second one, she went to the chapel and asked to receive Holy Communion. As she received the sacred host, she said, "Jesus, I'm sorry to be medicating your body in a couple of hours, but would you fight tooth and nail with your glorified body so the side effects are minimal? Thank you in advance."

She says, "It was so marvelous how I never again got sick even one more time, nor was I ever so weak that I had to miss Mass." She also says, "Every Catholic should think about receiving Communion before any medical procedure."

Catholic belief in the power of blessings brought the use of sacramentals (i.e., blessed salt, water and oil) back into common usage. The early church encouraged Christians to routinely bless their sick family members with oil and there is a current trend back to this tradition.

From the beginning of my personal spiritual journey in 1965, I was convinced that healing prayer was an integral component of the medical profession. As a registered nurse I often prayed with my patients and they frequently reported feelings of peace and serenity. Even if the medical diagnosis remained critical, their faith level seemed to increase. It is interesting to note that the medical community in the United States has begun considering the importance of spiritual care of the sick. Nearly all medical schools include a course on spiritual healing in which the students are encouraged to look beyond current medical treatment.

"We want to tell patients that they can have a medical approach, a spiritual one or a combination", says Dr. Dale Matthews, an internist at Georgetown University. "There is a

growing sense that traditional medicine is coming to its limits," he states. Several years ago Matthews started asking patients if they wanted to pray with him. "If there are no atheists in the foxholes, then it is unethical for doctors to ignore a person's religious beliefs," he reasons.

What about those who retain their infirmities despite repeated prayer efforts? Years of experience have taught me to stop expending energy asking, "Why aren't they all healed?" and to recognize the problem is too complex for my mind. I have learned to direct my efforts toward praying for the sick, leaving the results up to the Creator who is all-knowing and all-loving. I have absolutely no doubt that God wants wholeness for all of us and I await the day when "there will be no more death, no more mourning or sadness, the world of the past has gone" (Rev. 21:4).

Two issues about healing services are raised in such presentations: how do the activities fit in with formal church functions (i.e. Liturgy)? And what should be done about such claims? In article 5 of the Instructions on Prayers for Healing, the following points are raised:

1. Non-liturgical prayers for healing are distinct from liturgical celebrations, as gatherings for prayer or for reading of the word of God....
2. Confusion between such free non-liturgical prayer meetings and liturgical celebrations properly so-called is to be carefully avoided.
3. Anything resembling hysteria, artificiality, theatricality or sensationalism, above all on the part of those who are in charge of such gatherings, must not take place.

and article 9 states:

Those who direct healing services, whether liturgical or non-liturgical, are to strive to maintain a climate of peaceful devotion in the assembly and to exercise the necessary prudence if healings should take place among those present; when the celebration is over, any testimony can be collected with honesty and accuracy, and submitted to the proper ecclesiastical authority.

Perhaps of concern to those involved in healing services, the document points out in Article 7 that aside from the prayers usually incorporated in accordance with the liturgical books "prayers for healing-whether liturgical or non-liturgical-must not be introduced into the celebration of the Holy Mass, the sacraments, or the Liturgy of the Hours."

After the release of the document, some who read it without sufficient care became worried that the Church was acting to prevent the further development and spread of prayer for healing in the Charismatic movement, or even to call a halt to it. Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, who published Instruction on Prayers for Healing, was interviewed. Portions of the interview that took place about two months after the release of the document were relayed by the ICCRS Director (following is from the ICCRS Newsletter, January 2001) to reassure the members:

INSTRUCTION ON PRAYERS FOR HEALING IS DEFENDED

Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone Says: "Media Reporting Was Distorted"

The recent publication of the "Instruction on Prayers for Healing" by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has stirred up public opinion due to the arbitrary interpretation by some of the mass media. Since this matter is so significant for the whole of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, I think it is necessary to publish - without any further comments - an excerpt of Vatican Radio's interview on this subject with the Secretary of the Vatican Congregation, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone as it was published in a press release by the Catholic press agency "Zenit" (<http://www.zenit.org/>) on Monday, 27th November 2000.

Oreste Pesare, ICCRS Director

The Vatican is concerned about the way in which some media sources have reported the publication of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's "On Prayers to Obtain Healing from God." Therefore, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of the congregation, which published the instruction with John Paul II's approval, tried to clarify, over Vatican Radio, the misunderstandings caused by the media.

Question: In many cases the media has interpreted the instruction as a "stop" from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to the "charismatic" prayer group meetings to obtain healing. Is this the case?

Archbishop Bertone: This interpretation is not right. Generally speaking, the document has a very positive introduction on prayers for healing in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Church's tradition, and also at present.

Because of this, I would like to specify: In order to avoid automatism, we have not said "healing prayers" in the document but "prayers to obtain healing." This specification is important because a necessary and unavoidable healing is not automatically connected to prayer, with the risk of very great disappointment, or even desperation, if healing doesn't take place.

The groups of Renewal in the Spirit (Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which are very many and have been approved by the Church, naturally in keeping with statutes and rules of life that include a fully ecclesial identity card - the famous criteria of ecclesiality - have greatly helped the people of God, believers and baptized, in recent years to recover the taste for prayer, not to be defeated by the boredom of prayer, and not to neglect prayer.

Consequently, there is no desire to strike at the Renewal in the Spirit (Catholic Charismatic Renewal) groups: There is an intention to give rules of conduct that, as can be seen in the document, make clear distinctions between liturgical and non-liturgical celebrations, individual prayers and communal prayers.

Question: The document states that it "would be completely arbitrary to attribute "a charism of healing" to any category of participants, for example, to the directors of the group; the only thing to do is entrust oneself to the free decision of the Holy Spirit, who grants to some a special charism of healing in order to show the power of the grace of the Risen Christ." Could you clarify this concept, which seems crucial?

Archbishop Bertone: Another problem arises here, which is a real problem of our time. In every period of the Church, there have been miracle-working men and women of God, who have effected healings, including prodigious ones and real miracles. Let's think of Don Bosco, Blessed Padre Pio, and other saints who have adorned the path of the Church.

Certainly today also there are persons who are gifted with this healing charism, because the Spirit acts in his immense and total sovereign freedom. However, discernment is always the work of the Church's authority, as St. Paul said in the first Letter to the Thessalonians: the discernment of charisms.

Moreover, we cannot canonize people before their time, we cannot give a miracle-working investiture to certain people, for example, leaders of groups ... as if they were automatically invested with a healing charism, and not give the Spirit the freedom to act also through other people.

Question: So?

Archbishop Bertone: The problem consists in distinguishing between the real charism of healing, which must be examined by the authority of the Church, and mythologizing, virtually the idolizing of persons, as we have seen recently including on some television transmissions, the exaltation of certain persons who allegedly had carried out thousand of cures, of "miracles."

This is inconceivable in the Church, precisely because the Spirit must be allowed to blow where he wills. It is important not to mythologize, not to favor certain meetings exclusively and, instead, to promote prayers to obtain healing, which is what the document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith hopes to achieve. In this way, a void can also be filled, a lacuna that emerged especially after the council.

A colloquium with ICCRS and Vatican officials to further go over the meaning and practical implications of the document was then scheduled. Prior to the meeting the Vatican provided the following press release (November 7, 2001):

From November 10 to November 13, 2001 an international *colloquium* on "Healing Prayer and the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church" will be held at *Casa del Pellegrino* at *Divino Amore* Sanctuary (Rome). The *colloquium* has been organized and promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in collaboration with the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), the organization that promotes Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church and coordinates the activities of the charismatic communities at a worldwide level.

The initiative was inspired by the "Instruction on prayers to obtain healing from God" published on September 14th, 2000 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The main guidelines contained in the document will be presented in a lecture by His Excellency Bishop Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The same theme will be examined and developed from different points of view by various lectures.

Fr. Albert Vanoye, SJ, will present the biblical aspect of healing in the life of Jesus and in the early Church; Fr. Fidel Gonzales, MCCI, will give an historical analysis of healing in the Tradition of the Church. His Excellency Msgr. Jacques Perrier, Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, will speak on the relevance of this topic for Sanctuaries and places of pilgrimages. The link between healing and the Sacraments will be dealt by His Excellency Msgr. Pio Tamburrino, OSB, Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments; Mr. Charles Whitehead will develop the theme of the ecumenical aspect of healing, and this will be followed by an address by Fr. Libero Gerosa on the canonical aspects of the ministry of healing administered by lay people. Unfortunately, in the praxis of prayer to obtain healing from God there are risks, deviations, and abuses: Fr. Mihaly Szentmartoni, SSJ, will illustrate this part. His Excellency Msgr. Albert De Monléon, OP, will speak about the ministry of healing in Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

A series of testimonies will expand on the experience of Catholic Charismatic communities in the context of evangelization in diverse cultures and geographical areas. A Round Table will reflect on the practice of exorcism and on the spiritual, physical, psychological components linked to healing. During the program time will be dedicated to discussion, work groups and common prayer.

The opening and concluding ceremonies will be led by His Eminence James Francis Card. Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and by Mr. Allan Panozza, President of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services.

Various representatives of the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, Bishops, theologians, lay people priests, religious women, religious men, and leaders of Catholic Charismatic communities have been invited to take part in the colloquium. Several ecumenical observers will also be present.

After the meeting, overviews of what took place were published by some participants. The following description was published as a press release in the European Catholic Charismatic Renewal Info-Letter (issue 53; December 12, 2001):

**'INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON
PRAYER FOR HEALING AND THE CHARISMATIC
RENEWAL
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'**

How does the Catholic Church understand the healing ministry? In answer to this, the Pontifical Council for the Laity (PCL), with the collaboration of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), convened the International Colloquium on Prayer for Healing and the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church at Casa del Pellegrino (Pellegrino House, a hotel) of the Santuario Madonna del Divino Amore (Sanctuary of the Madonna of Divine Love) in Rome. The Pontifical Council for the Laity President, James Francis Cardinal Stafford, presided over the assembly of some 87 invited participants mostly from the worldwide Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) and 12 Vatican representatives. The Colloquium specifically focused on the Catholic Church's understanding of the healing ministry, taking the Instruction on Prayer for Healing by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith as the basis for the discussions and reflections.

Insightful and valuable reflections on the various aspects of the healing ministry in the Catholic Church were offered by distinguished theologians from the Vatican, and experienced practitioners in the healing ministry in the CCR: the scriptural and patristic, historical and liturgical, canonical and ecumenical points of view, as well as the experiential and practical testimonies of healing in the context of evangelization in diverse cultures and continents. The overriding concern of the Colloquium was to present in-depth the Church's teaching on the healing ministry as exercised by Christ and the apostles, and also as experienced by the Church through the centuries down to our present times, particularly in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

This was the first time the PCL officially collaborated with the ICCRS on an issue that is of common concern for both. Although not intended to be a formal dialogue, in effect, it was. For the PCL officials and the ICCRS Council as well as the participants were provided the opportunity to informally exchange views on the healing ministry. Will there be more of these informal and formal dialogues to come? It was a hope ardently expressed by all.

This Colloquium likewise was a momentous venue for the leaders of the CCR to exchange personal experiences in the healing ministry. The personal interaction not only deepened their relationships but also gave them an important boost in their particular ministries. It was noted that the pioneering work by most of them in combining healing and evangelization has already rapidly spread to all parts of the world.

Moreover, the Colloquium highlighted the fact that more still has to be done in order to better understand, to extensively promote, and to gradually integrate the healing ministry into the pastoral life of the Catholic Church. Too many among both the clergy and the laity, it was observed, are largely unaware and even ignorant of the immense graces that the healing ministry can provide for the wholeness of the Body of Christ. More studies and dialogues in the near future are therefore in order for this purpose.

Aside from the official Acts of the Colloquium that will be issued jointly by the PCL and ICCRS, ICCRS has decided to use the materials from this Colloquium to draw up some practical guidelines on the healing ministry for the use of CCR prayer groups, communities, and ministries. ICCRS fervently hopes that these guidelines will serve as another meaningful and significant contribution to an authentic pastoral action in the Catholic Church.

The next two reports were published in Goodnews Online (issue 157, January/February 2002), which is from the National Service Committee for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in England. The first article (Healing Colloquim) was not attributed to a particular author, but members from England attending the conference are listed in the fifth paragraph. The second article (A Time to Heal) is by Charles Whitehead, the chairman of the English NSC.

Healing Colloquium

One hundred charismatic leaders involved in the healing ministry world wide met with theologians and representatives from the Roman Curia for a 3 day colloquium on healing at the beginning of November 2001

The meeting had been called by the Pontifical Council for the Laity and organized in collaboration with ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services) to discuss the healing guidelines produced by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith last year.

These guidelines on healing were the first ever to be produced by the Vatican, and as such were an implicit acceptance of the ministry within the Church, although they contained within them certain pastoral suggestions and restrictions. These unfortunately were interpreted negatively by some people round the globe and used as a way of banning any form of healing service or prayer for healing.

Despite Vatican attempts to correct these misunderstandings problems still continued in the interpretation of the norms suggested and it was felt that a much clearer interpretation, was needed particularly in the area of liturgical celebrations, which include prayer for healing. Hence the decision to call the colloquium in November 2001 to dialogue with those in the healing ministry within the Charismatic Renewal to hear their experiences and for the curia to put forward their understanding of the healing ministry.

A small group involved in the healing ministry went from England. These included Myles Dempsey, Damian Stayne, Geoff and Gina Poulter. Dom Benedict Heron OSB was also invited but unable to attend due to ill health. Charles Whitehead, the NSC chairman gave one of the main papers on "Healing in other Christian Traditions". This received a huge ovation from the delegates. (For a full transcript of his talk please send a book of 4 1st class stamps to the Goodnews Office, Allen Hall, 28 Beaufort Street, London SW3 5AA).

The meeting began with a presentation of the main guidelines from the Vatican Document that had caused all the controversy "Instructions on Prayers to Obtain Healing by God". This was given by Bishop Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of the Congregation for Doctrine of Faith. This was then further explored and developed by various presentations throughout the three day gathering.

The mornings were devoted mainly to papers given by theologians and members of the curia. Among the speakers and topics covered were Fr Albert Vanoye SJ who spoke on the biblical aspect of healing in the life of Jesus and the early Church. Fr Fidel Gonzales MCCI gave an historical analysis of the healing ministry in the Church. Mgr Jacques Perrier, Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, spoke on the relationship between healing and the Sanctuaries and

pilgrimage sites. Also covered was the link between healing and sacraments by Mgr Pio Tamburrino OSB, Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Fr Libero Gerosa spoke on the canonical aspects of the ministry of healing by lay people and Fr Mihaly Szentmartoni SSJ spoke on the risks, deviations and abuses that can occur in the healing ministry. Bishop Albert De Monleon OP from France talked about the ministry of healing within the Charismatic Renewal.

If the mornings were more concerned with the theological and theoretical aspects of the healing ministry the afternoons concentrated on inspiring testimonies and reflections on the healing ministry world wide, and gave witness to the importance of the ministry in the Church. Charles Whitehead commented, "I was very encouraged by the presence throughout the colloquium of Cardinal Stafford, Bishop Rylko and Professor Carrigury from the Pontifical Council of the Laity and I hope that as a result of this high level involvement there will be more support for both liturgical and non-liturgical settings for the healing ministry and we will see encouragement for the training up of more teams to pray for healing in our parishes."

Time to Heal (by Charles Whitehead)

I recently went to Rome for the International Colloquium on Healing Prayer and the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church, organised and promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in collaboration with ICCRS, International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services. The initiative was inspired by the "Instruction on prayers to obtain healing from God" published in September 2000 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and was attended by invited representatives of the Roman Curia, and by theologians, priests, bishops, religious and laity from the Charismatic Renewal. There were also a small number of ecumenical guests.

As part of the Colloquium I was invited by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to present a paper on Healing in Other Christian Traditions, and in preparing for this I collected information from a variety of sources, including the Orthodox Churches, the Churches of the Reformation, and the Pentecostal and Neo-Charismatic Churches. In this and the next issues of Goodnews I hope to share with you some of the helpful insights I gained during my research [*note: the follow-up issues did not contain further reports*]. In this issue I'm taking a brief look at a publication entitled "A Time to Heal", a report on the Healing Ministry prepared for the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England, and published by Church House Publishing in 2000. The Review Group was chaired by the Bishop of Chelmsford, and consisted of a representative selection of men and women mostly involved in ministries of healing, deliverance, and caring. They in their turn consulted widely outside the Group's membership. So what sort of report is it?

To quote the last words from Bishop John Perry of Chelmsford's short preface:

A Time to Heal is offered as a contribution and resource to the Church's continuing ministry of healing in obedience to the commission of Jesus Christ to heal the sick. It is a gospel imperative.

For me these words set the tone for what is to follow. This is a report which understands that the hope of healing is an integral part of the gospel, and encourages all Christians to be

actively involved in this ministry. It is an affirmation of healing and its place in normal parish life. The first sentences of the Introduction tell the reader:

The healing ministry is one of the greatest opportunities the Church has today for sharing the gospel. Wholeness is the in-word: it is what everyone longs for. The purpose of this Report is to encourage clergy and congregations in a wise and appropriate exercise of this ministry.

This was not the first report of its kind. As early as 1953 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York set up a commission to consider the theological, medical, psychological and pastoral aspects of Divine Healing. They published a report in 1958 entitled *The Church's Ministry of Healing*. This was the first time the British Medical Association and the Church of England had worked together, and the subsequent report was very well received. To quote a few lines:

To the Church then, as the Body of Christ and as the community through which the Holy Spirit works, command is given to heal the sick. Works of healing in the context of the Church's ministry throughout the ages are signs of the Kingdom of God to those who have eyes to see. Each act of healing is a direct, personal and creative act of God in fulfillment of his eternal purpose.

"A Time to Heal" builds on the solid foundations laid by this earlier document. It begins by defining what we mean when we talk about "healing", and as I found this part particularly clear and helpful, I'll try to make a short summary. We can use the word healing to properly describe many things, from issues relating to national and international reconciliation and social justice, or healing of the environment, down to people's individual hopes and aspirations for wholeness in body, mind and spirit. Such views can all be traced to a Scriptural understanding of healing as wholeness, not only for the individual, but also for the whole of God's creation. But when we think of Christian healing, these words of Bishop Morris Maddocks are particularly helpful:

Christian healing is, first and foremost, about Christ. It follows the pattern he set in his own ministry, and the commission he gave to his disciples, and the fact that it happens at all is the fruit of his work, both in the creation and in the salvation of mankind. In both these mighty works, humankind has been created and re-created in the image of God - has been made whole. This is what distinguishes Christian healing from other types of healing. It is the whole work of Christ, in a person's body, mind and spirit, designed to bring that person to that wholeness which is God's will for us all.

This definition still opens up an enormously wide field, so the Report focuses on those who come to seek the Church's help when they are sick or distressed in body, mind or spirit. In doing so it covers Scripture and tradition, ecumenical expressions of the healing ministry, professional care provision in parishes, complementary medicine, deliverance from evil, healing for those who dying or bereaved, and much more.

As I read "A Time to Heal", I was left in no doubt that the Church of England believes that all the Church's healing ministry is done in and through the person of Jesus Christ, and is to be seen as a charismatic work of the Holy Spirit who operates as he wills, using both sacramental and non-sacramental channels. Whilst the sacraments are clearly channels for God's healing power, and the Eucharist is the most commonly used form of healing service, extraordinary signs

and wonders are also to be expected. God heals in many ways - through personal and corporate prayer, the laying on of hands, and anointing with oil. Healing services of a charismatic, non-liturgical style have their part to play, with an emphasis on praise and worship, preaching that builds up faith, and the use of the charisms - particularly the word of knowledge.

I enjoyed reading this Report, and I warmly commend it to you. The recommendations are extensive and very encouraging, with a section on how to promote the healing ministry in a parish. Why? Because -

The basis on which a prayer ministry team exercises this ministry is that it is a group of Christians who pray together with faith, hope and love, seeking God's will.

Issues of leadership, accountability, training, confidentiality, appraisal, team building, cautions, and guidelines for good practice are all addressed in a straightforward way. There are many good things to be learned from our Anglican brothers and sisters, not least the importance of promoting and developing the healing ministry throughout the Church. Every parish should have a healing team, and the challenge facing all of us is to bring wide awareness of the central place of this ministry within the life and mission of the Church and our society. In the Introduction, three words are highlighted - visionary prophetic and dynamic. For me, these three words could well be used to describe "A Time to Heal".

Finally, a good summary of the historical development of the Catholic Charismatic movement leading up to the meeting about Instructions on Prayers for Healing, is presented by Walter Matthews, Executive Director of the U.S. National Service Council, in Pentecost Today (October/November/December 2003 issue, the same issue as the report by Barbara Shlemon Ryan quoted above):

Healing and the NSC (by Walter Matthews)

I remember, as if it were yesterday, the 1974 National Conference at the University of Notre Dame that Barbara Shlemon Ryan writes about in this issue's lead article. I was there. The healing session was electrifying. News reports after the Conference were headlined "Catholic Charismatics Introduce Healing" and "Healing Service at Charismatic Conference." It was new, startling and controversial. I was not working for the Service Committee at the time, but I later learned that there had been many arguments pro and con about introducing healing into the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Healing had already "appeared" in several main-line denominations including Lutheran, Methodist and Episcopalian. Some Catholics-the then Fr. Francis MacNutt and Barbara Shlemon (now Ryan) among them-had been involved in praying for healing for several years. Still the Service Committee hesitated. Is it legitimate to pray for healing? Is it appropriate to pray in large assemblies, as opposed to privately or in sanctuaries (like Lourdes)? Are there authentic charisms of healing? Do people who claim healing really get healed? What about those who don't get healed?

Thirty years later, healing is an accepted charism within the Renewal at both local and national levels. Healing Masses, retreats and prayer for healing at conferences are fairly regular events in most dioceses. Since that groundbreaking 1974 National Conference, the National Service Committee has included prayer room ministry, the Sacrament of Penance and either a

healing service or prayer for healing at nearly every national conference. Over the years, the National Service Committee has sought to maintain relationships with the many itinerant healing ministries. Various ministers of healing have been included on the NSC Council (formerly Advisory Committee) from time to time. One of the tracks at the National Leaders' Conference in Nashville in November will be on "Healing and Prayer Room Ministry." Nevertheless, thirty years after healing first emerged in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, some of the questions mentioned above continue to be raised both inside the Renewal and within the church. That is why it was a very positive affirmation three years ago when the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith issued its "Instruction on Prayer for Healing"

The purpose of the Instruction was to offer guidelines (norms) for the relationship of public healing prayer to liturgical services. Before dealing with such norms the Instruction discussed some doctrinal aspects.....[some quotations from the document are listed as examples]...We in the Renewal should take heart in the affirmation contained in the Instruction. Encouraged by the document, the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services, with the Pontifical Council for the Laity, in 2001 sponsored a colloquium on "Prayer for Healing and the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church." The papers of the colloquium have been published as *Prayer for Healing*, available from ICCRS or your Catholic bookstore. Is the work of integrating prayer for healing into the life and mission of the church over? Hardly. While there are many healing Masses and services sponsored by the Renewal as well as by priests and lay people who feel called by the Lord to pray for healing, there is still much skepticism and, sadly, much rejection.

The Service Committee will continue to work for the maturing of the healing charisms in the Renewal and for their integration and acceptance in the life and mission of the church.