

Neil Coward, my dad, Laurie, and I were joined by John Wagner, Chase, Laura, and Juliette Dorsey for the [North American Network](#) (NAN) conference in February 2021 in Augusta GA. The talks are available online on the NAN webpage [here](#) and I encourage you to listen to them.

John Wagner, with his strong technical skills and servant's heart, quickly jumped in to serving on the Sound Team. It was a joy to see him quickly learn new technology and then become an integral part of sound and broadcast team.

Chase and Laura were asked to give a testimony about Covenant Community. They wisely chose the topic of engaging youth and young adults since this is one of the most significant challenges facing all the communities that make up NAN.

Laura opens the sharing by asking the question of what drew you to the Renewal, to Community? Answers range from visible joy to the accountability of sisters and brothers in the Lord, to a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Regardless of our own personal response, the answer becomes the foundation of our Yes to the Lord. Jesus asks us to 'make disciples of all nations' and this is a lifelong calling for every one of us. Our witness, our example, must start with our own personal story, our testimony.

Chase and Laura's witness then asks many introspective questions regarding the state of our living our witness. Do our lives today reflect the joy, the fruit of mutual accountability, the personal encounter with the Holy Spirit? Are our lives a light and witness to others, to youth and young adults? Am I filled with a contagious joy of the Holy Spirit and living a radical way of life? These are particularly important questions for each of us to meditate on and then make adjustments. We all want another generation of youth and young adults to answer the call to covenant community but are we doing what is needed to show unconditional love and create an environment of belonging for them?

Chase and Laura next highlight that the time is now. That, regardless of their age, we do the practical things to get to know our youth and young adults, that we

enable them to experience Community as their Community so that they are empowered to shape its direction, serve, and be valued for their contributions. Chase and Laura stress the point that it is our responsibility to help them discover their place in the Body of Christ and empower them with a chance to live it out.

After providing some very practical suggestions they end asking several important questions: Are we ready to welcome and engage them? Are we willing to make changes? Are you ready?

I passionately believe that the Dallas Fort Worth metroplex will be better off the next twenty years if another generation of dedicated youth come together with like-minded peers to continue building charismatic covenant community here. This is not a challenge only for the leaders of our Community...it is a challenge issued to every one of us. Chase and Laura asked many probing questions in their testimony and I request that you listen and take it to heart. What can I do different today to help pass on the charism of charismatic covenant community to another generation?

Day One - Dr. Dan Keating, professor of Theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary

In Dan's first talk "Alert, Awake, but not Alarmed", he challenges us to not cower from hard times but rather that we were made for such times...even to thrive in such times! He uses the passage in Mark 13 that could be described as Jesus' message for hard times to make three points:

- v5-8: Be aware, let no one mislead us, do not be alarmed...this is not the end;
- v9-13: Be on your guard as the Gospel must be proclaimed to all the nations and the Holy Spirit will provide us the words;
- v33-37: Stay awake and be on our guard.

These are important words for anytime but especially in tough times as we are experiencing these days. We never know God's ultimate purpose for trials and suffering (i.e. Job and Jesus in today's Gospel). God might be using challenges and

disruptions to help us honestly see ourselves and get ready for what He is calling us to in order to fulfill His divine plan. The point is to follow Jesus' example and stay awake in prayer rather than sleeping as His disciples did in the readings today.

Dan teaches us how to respond by examining Mathew 7:24-27 encouraging us to be DOers of the Word as it is not a question of, if there will be a storm in our lives, but when it will come. Each of us must prepare and be constantly preparing. The obvious key to weathering any storm is to not look within ourselves but to Jesus, who is our Rock, and see that we have been grafted into Him as our strength. Dan reminds us that our strength flows not just from Jesus but also from the spiritual connection that we have in one another in Community as the Body of Christ. He ends his first talk warning us that it is too late to prepare once the storm starts.

There is a tie into the scripture Isaiah 50:4 as "for such a time as this" are we called: *"The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them"*. This is encouragement for us to be DOers of the Word and have the courage to seize this time of storms to be courageous proclaimers of His Word.

I particularly enjoyed his closing where he quotes Rod Dreher's book "Live Not By Lies" listing three actions to prepare that tie very well into our CCGD Covenant:

- 1) Deepen our roots through personal prayer
- 2) Cultivate essential core practices that bind us together in Community, and
- 3) Draw strength from leaders, family, and small groups.

In his second talk entitled "From Christendom to Apostolic Mission" Dan notes that many people are waking up today regarding the need for Community. Our 48 year history (Yes, we celebrate this week our 48th year as a Community 😊) attests to the strong power and resource that Community is for us. Those who have persevered will witness the strong connections that are often tighter than even familial bonds. But we know building Community is not easy and it is being attacked from all sides. Therefore, we each need to commit (re-commit) to active Community building (recall Bobbie's teachings on Nehemiah rebuilding the

wall). Dan speculates that the future might be larger number of smaller Communities which ties into our experience of bringing our Pastoral Areas together and to the importance of us all being in small groups. He concludes with the assurances of Psalm 27:1 "Whom should I fear?" and Paul in 2 Cor 4:7 regarding the "surpassing power from God".

Day Two - Talks given by Patrick Reis who is a co-founder and executive director of Encounter Ministries

After his personal testimony Patrick explains the mission of Encounter Ministries and the subject of his talks which is to equip Christians to demonstrate the power and love of God through the Spiritual Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus proclaimed the Good News in word and deed, so too are we to burn with zeal to receive Spiritual Gifts and use them to demonstrate God's love and cooperate with the triune God's desire to bring heaven to earth.

Patrick's message was particular to those of us in the Charismatic Renewal in that he focused on the concept of *Impartation* whereby we are called to be open to God choosing to bestow a Spiritual Gift from us to another person. He cited many examples throughout scripture whereby God worked through someone to *impart* a gift upon another. He was careful to point out that we must not confuse the one *who delivers the mail* with the *person who sent it*. We are to keep our eyes on the giver of the Gift and not the person who imparted or delivered it.

After explaining that there are multiple ways to impart or receive a Spiritual Gift he emphasized the most important *next step* is to put it into practice. We have heard people say that to retain a foreign language one should continue speaking it...similarly Patrick stressed the importance of putting Spiritual Gifts into regular practice.

Unfortunately, it is easy for us to see the Gifts at work through others and simply conclude that the Gift is for them and not us. Maybe we either believe that we do not have the Gift or simply do not exercise the Gift out of fear that God will not answer our prayer. Patrick quotes many scriptures in building our confidence that

God does want to act through us! God desires all His children to come together as His bride and be united with Him. He needs our Yes and the courage of being His *mail persons* to deliver His message of love, healing, peace, and joy to a world lost without Him.

There was a lot more 'education' that took place during the two talks and question and answer time. Patrick explained that this was a very compressed version of the 'school' that they teach on activating, imparting, and practicing the Spiritual Gifts. What was really helpful was the last sessions where the attendees were encouraged to put the lessons into practice. We were challenged to exercise the gifts that the Holy Spirit had already given us. Of course, this was all meant to build our confidence. We need the conviction that God really does need us and through His Holy Spirit has already given us His Gifts. It is up to us to aggressively look for opportunities to pray for one another, to prophesy to one another, and to share words of wisdom for one another. This is the only way that God is going to be able to accomplish His plan in and through us.

There is more material available on the conference including more testimonies. Please considering listening to all of the talks available online on the NAN webpage [here](#).

God Bless,
David