

SCRC convention: 'A Spirit-filled experience'

By Paula Doyle

More than 9,000 people, ranging from teenagers to retirees, attended workshops at the 37th annual SCRC Catholic Renewal Convention in Anaheim over the Labor Day weekend, where prayers were offered at several liturgies for Gulf Coast evacuees fleeing Hurricane Gustav.

Keynote speaker Charles Whitehead, chairman of the International Charismatic Consultation from Buckinghamshire, England, spoke on the convention theme topic, "Be Transformed," Aug. 30 in the arena at the Anaheim Convention Center. Whitehead also spoke later in the afternoon to fill in for Bishop Sam Jacobs, from the Louisiana Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, who canceled his trip due to the impending storm.

"Transformation," said Whitehead, "begins when we sit and love the Lord and allow him to love us. This is where it begins. But, sitting with the Lord has to be followed by walking it out.... It's the practical outworking of the heavenly position that we know we're in.

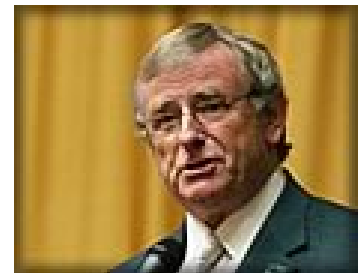
"Walking in the Spirit is all about our behavior. It's not just the creed we profess, it's the conduct of our lives in our public relationships and in our families.... Transformation is about being a disciple. It requires total commitment [as well as] obedience, trust, faith, courage, honesty [and] hard work as we study Scripture and the teaching of the church," said Whitehead.

In his young adult conference workshop, Whitehead emphasized that baptized and confirmed Catholics have the Holy Spirit within them. "Grace can be active or it can be restricted," said Whitehead, who urged the young adults to say yes to the Holy Spirit working in their lives. Following his talk, the young adults gathered in small groups to individually pray for one another.

Participants in the School of Healing Prayer tracks led by Francis and Judith MacNutt, internationally-renowned teachers of the charism of healing, packed workshops offering practical approaches on beginning a healing prayer ministry. Following the concelebrated Saturday night Mass in the arena, the MacNutt's assisted Sacred Hearts Father Patrick Crowley in the healing service, leading prayers asking God to stop the power of Hurricane Gustav.

"The convention brought hope to people that God is working in a mighty and powerful way, and He's not going to stop," said Barbara Lambert, SCRC event manager. She noted the three-day event drew better than expected crowds. "It was a great surprise finish in spite of the down economy," said Lambert.

Mary Pat George, youth minister at St. William Church in Atascadero, brought



a large group of teens and young adults to the convention, as she has every year for the past 12 years. "It's a great way to start the beginning of our year for our youth group," said George. "We love the music, the healing prayer, the Eucharist --- it's just an all-around, wonderful Spirit-filled experience."



Ellen Davis, 14, a first-time SCRC convention attendee from St. William, was very positive about the experience. "I love watching the Holy Spirit go through a couple of my friends and just being there for all the music and dancing. It's just so exciting. I'll remember this for a long time," said Davis.

Mallory Strawser, 22, a parishioner at Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Church in Valencia who has come annually to the convention since she was a baby carried by her mother, said she appreciates how the community "comes together and experiences God in unity. It uplifts you for the whole year."

Julie Ford, a parishioner from St. Bonaventure Church in Huntington Beach, said the workshops she attended impressed her with "how we need to deepen our connection and our conversion that we have, because we've all been given the gift of the Holy Spirit when we were baptized. But, like anything else in our life," she added, "we have to get these little 'tune-ups' where those connections are renewed and our awareness is recharged."