



International Catholic
Charismatic Renewal

Services

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the Charismatic Renewal
in the Catholic Church

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THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL :

A prophecy for the Church of the third millennium

by Michelle Moran

I always find the story of Paul visiting the Christians in Ephesus very enlightening and somewhat amusing. He asks them a simple question, 'did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' they answered, 'no we were never even told that there was such a thing as the Holy Spirit' (Ac 19: 2-3). When I look at some Parish congregations and some of the things that happen in the Church I too am left wondering whether some of the faithful have heard of the Holy Spirit! However as we have moved into this new millennium I think that we have begun to see some changes. The build up to the Jubilee was a time of great grace. We were encouraged to contemplate the Trinitarian nature of our faith with a year being dedicated to each person of the Blessed Trinity. I think that one of the fruits of this process was that many people encountered or rediscovered the person and the charisms of the Holy Spirit. Just like the Christians in Ephesus many people began to see that the Holy Spirit is central to our faith and not just an added extra for those, such as the Charismatics, who like that sort of thing.

The call to Hope

At the start of this new millennium the Holy Father called us 'to a renewed appreciation of the theological virtue of hope' (T.M.A. 46). Sometimes when we look at the Church and see some of the enormous challenges posed by an increasingly secular age and we see human mistakes and scandals, it is easy to become despondent. However, the exposure of some of the human frailty in the Church can also remind us that the Church isn't of human origin. The future of the Church is rather dependent upon our willingness to be more and more open to the power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed one of the main thrusts in Charismatic Renewal has been this recognition that we need to continually surrender to the one who

can do more than we can ask or imagine (Eph 3:20). In CCR we should not therefore lose hope but be confident that we have much to offer and share with the whole Church. Today I think there seems to be a greater openness to the things of the Holy Spirit. It is vital that we in the renewal stay faithful to our basic call to promote and live the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We must model the Charisms as gifts of service for the whole Church and be careful not to become exclusive or elitist.

The call to Service

Here in England at the end of the 1990's our NSC made a deliberate decision not just to serve Charismatic Renewal but to serve the whole Church. A new organisation was launched called Catholic Evangelisation Services (CES). This was under the umbrella of Charismatic Renewal but we specifically avoided any reference to CCR so that people would not be prejudiced. Today CES provides many resources for evangelisation and has been endorsed by the majority of Bishops in England and Wales. We have had the great privilege of introducing to the whole Church some of the great renewal speakers and themes. All this has helped to create a more open climate for renewal. Our Cardinal, Cormac Murphy-O'Connor often speaks about the new movements with great warmth and enthusiasm. In fact this year he accepted an invitation to speak at the Celebrate Conference, which is one of our largest renewal gatherings. Kristina Cooper the editor of Goodnews renewal magazine is now frequently writing in Catholic journals that in the past would have spurned anything Charismatic. In our context, we have had to respond to the Lord's call to think wider than the Renewal. This has involved taking risks and at times



being misunderstood. The resulting fruits are that CCR is now being more widely accepted by the Church in general.

The call to be Prophetic

In Renewal we must truly exercise our prophetic gifting and read carefully the signs of the times. We need to be obedient to what the Spirit is saying at our local level but also as nations and at the international, global level. One way in which we have been sensing this in Europe is to respond to the call to repentance. At the European conference in Poland last year we reflected on Pope John Paul's gospel exhortation to 'put out into the deep' (Lk 5:4). During our days together we went on a pilgrimage of reparation and repentance to Auschwitz one of the most notorious concentration camps and also to the shrine of Divine Mercy recently opened by the Pope in Krakow. The day was profoundly moving as individuals were healed and reconciled. We as nations were then more closely united as we recognized our collective sinfulness and the need for repentance and reconciliation.

The call to Mission

As we move into this third millennium I think the challenge is for Renewal to impact the heart of the Church and not just to occur on the fringes or the sidelines. For this to happen we need to be a sacramental people because this is where we gain our unity and strength. We also need to be a people rooted deeply in God's word. From this flows the grace for mission and service to the Church and indeed to the whole of humanity.

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Suenens

Advent



Time of preparation
and hope

COME,
LORD JESUS
AND DO NOT
DELAY!

CF. RV. 22,20

Report on the Event 2003 "12 days of blessings!"

by Peter Thompson

*Consultation:
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The warm sun of Italy welcomed the one thousand delegates as they arrived from seventy three countries, to attend the "12 days of Blessings" sponsored by ICCRS. The 12 days were split into three parts. A two day consultation for leaders in CCR, a five day Retreat with Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, followed by a five day pilgrimage to holy sites in Italy.

Earlier this year the whole gathering was held in the balance as to whether it would take place or not. The registrations were only a tiny trickle with travel world wide affected by war, SARS, and a general travel malaise. With great courage and trust in the powerful intercession of Mary, Allan Panozza the President of ICCRS said "yes we will go ahead", trusting that the Lord Jesus would gather his people. Jesus did just that, calling delegates in their hundreds who were registering right up to the last minute and causing tremendous pressure on the staff in Rome, as they sought to arrange accommodation, transport, and assist with the many visa difficulties. Sadly a large number were unable to come as they missed the extended deadline or could not get visas to travel.

The first two parts were held at the beautiful Mariapolis Centre at Castelgandolfo, right behind the Pope's summer residence. We were only metres away from his Holiness Pope John Paul II, and that closeness physically prompted a deep awareness of our call to intercede for him, especially during his current trials of sickness.

Two hundred delegates were

expected for this consultation and approximately 700 came, prompting a change of plan in the logistics, as it was now impossible to break into small sharing groups. However there were a number of opportunities for individual delegates to address the whole gathering, reporting on the action of The Holy Spirit in their particular regions, and to ask questions of the ICCRS Council and Charles Whitehead (former president of ICCRS and current Advisor), who gave an inspired talk on the nature of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. He reminded us again that the CCR is a sovereign work of God, a move of The Holy Spirit. Not man made, with no founder as with other Lay Movements of the Church. Calling to mind the centrality of the Baptism in The Holy Spirit and the call to holiness and ecclesial maturity. Charles reminded us that we are Catholic first, charismatic second. "We stand in humility in the beating heart of the Church". The CCR is God's work not ours. He is in control and working at His pace and plan, not ours. We must go forth as He commanded and never compromise the grace of the Renewal.

Allan Panozza in his address to the consultation reminded us that the mandate of ICCRS is to serve the worldwide CCR. He reminded us of the ongoing need for conversion to sanctification and to holiness, and to build up the body through the use of the charismata, the Gifts of The Holy Spirit. There can be no slackening in our zeal for evangelisation. This is the call for all of us without exception. That we in the CCR are



to be part of the pastoral life of the Church. "Look to Mary the first Charismatic, she is the Ark of the New Covenant". In a beautiful analogy he reminded us that we are all "cracked pots" but God uses us even in our brokenness and frailty.

We were then joined by 500 more delegates for the rest of our gathering at the Mariapolis Centre, a spiritual retreat. The call to holiness directed by Father Raniero Cantalamessa, a Franciscan priest and preacher to the Papal household. What a joy to sit at his feet and listen attentively to the wisdom and depth of teaching expressed in words that we could all understand.

One of the great unifying gifts was instantaneous translation through technology and the dedicated translators who immediately translated the talks into English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and other languages. This enabled us all to receive God given wisdom through the instrument of Fr. Cantalamessa.

The clarion call of the first day of the retreat was, "Christ is Risen". It is He Jesus who calls us to holiness to perfect charity. Father compared holiness to a sculptor. The artist chisels away at the stone removing all that is superfluous until the figure is revealed. God is the divine sculptor stripping away all that is unholy to reveal the person, truly human, created by God.

He reminded us that the Gospel is a self portrait of Jesus. Christianity is not a doctrine it is a person, Jesus Christ the second person of The Holy Trinity. Gandhi

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was mistaken in that he thought the beatitudes were all that were necessary, without the person of Jesus. Christianity is a religion of grace - what God has done for me, not what I can do for myself.

All is Christ, his grace, his gift of himself totally for each one of us. Yes we can strive for virtue for purification, but works are not the cause of our holiness. Good works are the effect of holiness. Grace precedes holiness, and it is grace that enables us to become holy. Holiness is a privilege, so don't be afraid to aspire to holiness. All are called to be saints, indeed unless we become saints then we have failed. A drop of holiness is worth more than an ocean of genius.

These are some of the gleanings as I listened to this man of God teaching and exhorting us to grow in holiness. The Retreat continued calling us to be reconciled, to acknowledge our sins, our need for forgiveness. How we are assaulted on all sides especially through advertising that contains all the elements of the seven deadly sins. The world speaks to us of sin in an appealing and caressing manner especially through the media.

To spot the sin in my life use the Gospels as a mirror especially the Beatitudes. One little gem of wisdom was in the use of the eye. The question was once posed to Father. "Why not see the beauty in women and look upon God's creation with the eyes." Fr. Cantalamessa's response was that God also gave us eyelids to cover the eye!

Over seventy priests were available to minister the sacrament of Reconciliation, and many chose to avail themselves of the grace that comes to us through this healing sacrament. Another image Father shared with us was of a stalagmite. My sin is like limestone drops dissolved in water. They fall steadily and as I repent some are evaporated away, but my repentance is not perfect and there is a hardness of heart that builds up becoming like the limestone stalagmite. I cannot obliterate it; only Christ and the solvent which is the Sacred Blood of Christ shed for me on the cross at Calvary. These two sacraments, Eucharist and Confession dissolve away all the hardness of sin in my life. Let us use them wisely and often, asking God to help us approach them with a holy and right disposition.

The call is to prayer and the need to ponder the hidden life of Jesus, as in His life of prayer when he hides himself away to commune with the Father. We need to be like Jesus to seek the Father our Abba. We have a living vein of prayer in our hearts and we need to remove the fleshly obstructions to prayer. Allow those moments of prayer to constantly come to the surface in our lives and offer up ejaculations of praise to our God. Our minds wander but we can say to our body, "obey! This body is here Lord in prayer even though my mind is difficult to control"

Finally Father led us to the source and summit of our faith the Eucharist, Christ Jesus himself. The Eucharist is the door to the Trinity so let us become spiritually inebriated, a sober intoxication of the Spirit.

We do violence to Christ with our lack of love and reverence for his Sacred Body. He cannot defend himself, but gives himself to us totally, into our very hands. The celebration of the Eucharist each day of the "12 days of Blessings" was a constant source of blessings beyond measure, with powerful homilies by Cardinal Stafford, Bishop Stanislaw Rylko, Bishop Joe Grech, Fr. Michael Slavik and Fr. Rufus Pereira. We were nourished by the Bread of Life and the Word of Life.

The final blessings came in the form of a pilgrimage. Six hundred pilgrims set off in a fleet of buses, not without some difficulties in gathering the sheep together, but finally heading south to the shrine of San Giovanni Rotondo. Our first shrine was the Incononata shrine at Foggia, where Our Lady made her first apparition in Europe at the beginning of the second millennium. We then returned to San Giovanni to pray at the tomb of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, and to celebrate the Eucharist at the beautiful Church where Padre Pio served. This humble Franciscan saint manifested many Charisms of The Holy Spirit, reminding us that the Charismatic Renewal is not new in the Church. The Charisms have never left the Catholic Church, but have always been present.

Another early start took us

to the Cave of St. Michael the Archangel at Monte Sant'Angelo. It was here that St. Michael appeared in the first millennium when the Church was under grave threat from many heresies. We as pilgrims felt once again that we are to invoke his protection for Holy Mother the Church as she is attacked from within and without in our time. The prayer to St. Michael is very appropriate for our time as was seen by Pope Leo XIII, when he gave us this prayer at the turn of the 19th. century.

The pilgrims continued north to Lanciano, the shrine of the miracle of the Eucharist. We look beyond the outward sign of bread and wine and in faith say "Amen I believe that this is your Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, Lord". Hundreds of years ago when a priest doubted the true presence, Jesus chose to manifest His Real Presence in that the bread became visible flesh and the wine visible blood. To this day the flesh and blood remain, and we were able to kneel in silent adoration. The celebration of the Eucharist here drew us into heights of praise as we entered into the mystery of His love for us.

To Rome and an enforced much needed rest due to a total blackout with a power failure throughout the whole of Italy. We were however able to pack into the local Franciscan parish Church in Fuggi and celebrate the Eucharist, the same miracle of Christ's love regardless of its location. Our final day was spent in Rome with Mass at St. Peter's Basilica, a tour of The Vatican museum and The Sistine chapel with Michaelangelo's frescoes of The Creation and the Final Judgment, beautifully restored. The guides took us back to the Basilica for a closer look at St Peter's and a special blessing to some was being able to kneel and venerate the incorrupt body of Blessed Pope John XXIII.

Truly the "12 days of Blessings" for all who participated in full or only in part was a profound gift of God to us. Some delegates came under great difficulties and were not able to attend all that they had hoped for. But the Lord is faithful to his people, and as we left to return to our homes in many nations the blessings will spread far and wide and bear much fruit. 🍌

Retreat:

"...Grace precedes holiness, and it is grace that enables us to become holy. Holiness is a privilege, so don't be afraid to aspire to holiness.

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