



International Catholic  
Charismatic Renewal

Services

Serving

the Charismatic Renewal  
in the Catholic Church

# LEADERSHIP FORMATION

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40 years on: CR take courage!

## Ephesus: Lost your first Love

by Reinaldo Beserra Dos Reis



### TEACHING OUTLINE

- I Charismatic Renewal: A Divine strategy!
- II On the outskirts of Grace
- III Renew yourself, Charismatic Renewal
- IV Purification
- V More of you, Lord!
- VI Concluding 40 Years

“remember the devotion of your youth, how you loved me as a bride, following me in the desert in a land unsown” (Jer 2: 2b)

In February 2007, the Charismatic Catholic Renewal will be celebrating its Emerald Jubilee all over the world. The Church is charismatic by nature and started its missionary activity in the world exactly in the same sequence as the powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the Feast of Pentecost, soon after Jesus’ ascension into heaven. There, God “fulfilled the promise” (as in Acts 1:4-8; 2:16) for the first time, to pour the Holy Spirit upon those who believe (as “there was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not been glorified”, according to John 7:37-39).

The event marked also the beginning of the new mission of the Holy Spirit “to complete the work of the Son. Thus it will be he who brings to fulfillment the new era of the history of salvation” (see John Paul II, in *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 22).

That is why, by “unceasingly entering into the history of the world through the heart of man.” (DeV), the Spirit comes into the ecclesial core, sometimes in a vigorous way, bringing up expressions that are aimed at renewing His action and mission to reveal Jesus and His work of Salvation, and making it stand out.

### I. Charismatic Renewal: A divine strategy!

The Charismatic Renewal is one of these moments, one of these signs revealing the mission of the Spirit, as stated by John Paul II (in Rome, on December 11, 1978): “I am convinced that this movement is a very important component in the total renewal of the Church, in this spiritual renewal of the Church.”

With no founder, no human planning, no strategies and even no goals and pretensions, this renewing grace of the Holy Spirit emerged in February 1967 in the life of the Church especially in the second Vatican Council. This grace has been significantly used by God as a strategy to “rediscover, in the Church and in the world, the presence and action of the Holy Spirit” (see TMA 45).

In his address to the Charismatic Renewal, John Paul II said: “...How can we fail to give thanks for the precious spiritual fruits that the Renewal has produced in the life of the Church and in the lives of so many

people? How many lay faithful -men and women, youth, adults, and older people- have been able to experience the amazing power of the Spirit and His gifts in their lives! How many people have rediscovered their faith, a desire for prayer, the power and beauty of the Word of God, which is expressed in generous service for the mission of the Church! How many lives were deeply changed! For all of this I wish to praise and thank the Holy Spirit with you today” (in Italy, April 4, 1998).

### II. On the outskirts of Grace

It is predictable that, as we move away from an experience -both in time and space- we run the risk of growing weaker in what we received through such an experience. If we do not diligently consider the essence of the grace we had at the start, it is natural -because of our own human nature- that routine will dampen our enthusiasm, and tiredness, wear in our relationships and the absence of the initial novelty, may give rise -when we are faced with any difficulties- to discouragement and inactivity.

We become contented to live “on the outskirts” of the grace we had at the start, excessively valuing accidental and secondary things, to the detriment of the essence of the original experience. In certain cases, many leaders do not pursue the real objectives of the Charismatic Renewal and seem to consider themselves the only “beneficiaries” of the grace and not responsible for its diffusion. And we perceive many so-called “charismatic” events that are totally deprived of the real identity of the Movement, often creating conflicts with the local

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*“...One of the characteristics of any revival is purification. Every spiritual awakening is always preceded by a painful “purgative path.” Hence the need for prophetic courage to let all that is “stinking”, “rotting” or “growing in a disordered way” be acknowledged, for these things certainly do not make us popular, accepted or meet with approval...”*

clergy and hierarchy, and depriving our people from authentically experiencing God in their lives, developing a new relationship with Him, receiving the charisms that the Holy spirit wishes to bestow upon us and being empowered to witness Jesus Christ.

### III. Renew yourself, Charismatic Renewal

Today, as yesterday, God continues to speak to our hearts in order to raise us from any spiritual prostration and to correct our vision and feelings, directing them to the essence of His grace. Today, like yesterday, the Lord mercifully speaks to those He favorably chooses to get Himself known and to “share in the divine nature” (see II Peter 1: 4).

And although He sees “good intentions” in our spiritual superficiality and in our religious activism, He tells us: “Yet I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. Realise how far you have fallen. Repent and do the works you did at first” (Rev. 2: 3-5). Maybe we are willing to ask: “What were, Lord, the works I first did and have forgotten about? And, how about the many activities I do on your behalf today. Are they not also a proof of my love for You?”

If we humbly listen to the Lord, we will hear Him reminding us, among other things:

1. His first call to our lives is to be with Him and not do things for Him.
2. That our personal prayer life is a matter of love and cannot be “traded” for any activity, even a “charismatic” one.
3. Praise, a distinctive sign of the Charismatic Renewal, is limited today to a few songs and to a “charismatic” collective noise in the Prayer Group;
4. “We are led too much by the “gift” (or error!) of “supposition”. We “suppose” everyone knows enough about the Holy Spirit, the Baptism in the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit’s gifts and fruits.
5. Our ego, which “supposedly” has been dethroned by the Lordship of Jesus Christ, wishes to reign again. “It’s what I want”, “I can have”, “I order you”, “I have discernment”, “I decide”.

6. Source of Sanctification? Lives radically transformed? Love of people? Zeal for the salvation of souls? Are these things noticeable in our midst?

7. Is your organisation effective, efficient, remarkable? Or is there superficial concern about the presence of the Charisms as the basis of every ministry?

### IV. Purification

God has spoken to us in many and different ways about an imminent revival in the Charismatic Renewal. He has given us signs that the “Charismatic Renewal is pregnant with renewal.” He has spoken -through the

Pope, the Church, the people- saying that we are involved in a privileged process -with open wounds, hurts, deceptions, deviations, barriers, crises...but also with maturity, with redirection, going back to the first love, to a new awakening of prophetic courage- a prophetic courage that allows us to touch our wounds and shake ourselves out of our spiritual lethargy, out of our dependency on a merely emotive “charismaticity” and away from trying to justify divisions within the CCR.

One of the characteristics of any revival is purification. Every spiritual awakening is always preceded by a painful “purgative path”. Hence the need for prophetic courage to let all that is “stinking”, “rotting” or “growing in a disordered way” be acknowledged, for these things certainly do not make us popular, accepted or meet with approval. It is necessary for each one of us to be brave enough to avoid errors -ours and other people’s- and to let the Lord take over the Lordship, in all our activities, that are really His.

### V. More of you, Lord!

This is the time. This is the vision: go back to the first love, return to the works we first did, let God be more and we less. Renounce our private plans, docilely opening ourselves to the changes the Spirit wants to make in our projects. Die in order to be resurrected.

Let us offer “green pastures and safe waters” for the sheep the Lord will put in our way, being faithful in preserving our identity, in seeking communion and in accomplishing our mission. Let us “long for the living waters of the Spirit... to preserve our identity and charisms and bravely embrace the Apostolate of Pentecost, causing “the Holy Spirit to be known and loved in our time which is so hungry with hope” (John Paul II). Hear John Paul’s appeal at the Pentecost Vespers of 2004: “I hope that the spirituality of Pentecost will spread in the Church as a renewed incentive to prayer, holiness, communion and proclamation... And proclaim with power the salvation that comes from Jesus Christ, the Lord.”

### VI. Concluding 40 years

The time is now. Let’s praise the Lord for the grace received, repent for the graces we refused to accept and go back -not in time or space, not even as if we were missing something; but go back to the Lord. Let’s seek Him and find Him with all our heart (see Jer 29:13). “When you seek the Lord, He will be present to you”.

Let’s go back to the first love and to the works we first did, before the Lord “comes to you and removes your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent” (see 2:5b)...

Be brave, Charismatic Renewal, the Lord comes before us with His Spirit.



## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 Has your group grown or diminished in numbers in recent years? Has it become too inward looking to attract new members?
- 2 Are there any divisions in your parish? What can you do to overcome them and restore unity?
- 3 Do you still pray in private as well as in groups? Do you give yourself personal time with the Lord? And do you listen or do you do all the talking?
- 4 When did you last go on retreat to seek renewal? Could you go more often?
- 5 Do you have true love in your heart when you do “good works”?

# What is the Spirit saying to the CCR today?

## Listening to the continents: NORTH AMERICA

by Peter Thompson

**S** It will be interesting to review the various articles on this subject from each of the continents as they are written. I would presume that if we are truly united in the One Spirit then what he is saying to us will also be one in Spirit! There maybe different nuances as the Holy Spirit speaks to his people throughout the world but the heart of the matter will no doubt be one, in that there is but one vocation, i.e. to be bearers and witnesses of the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ.

A few years ago, Ralph Martin shared with us that as he presented his book, "The Church at the end of an age", to Pope John Paul II, the Pope asked Ralph "What is the Spirit saying?" Ralph Martin, moved by the Holy Spirit, responded with one word: "Jesus". Yes this is the ongoing word to the Church, be it to any one of the continents, "Jesus". This must be the word to all of us in the CCR. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

Perhaps we can ask the Spirit to help us to understand in depth this one word. This name above all other names. Holy Spirit how are we to understand here in North America what you are asking of us and saying to us?

For a number of years here in the birthplace of the current renewal in the Spirit we have been bemoaning the reality of prayer groups withering and dying. The greying of the CCR, as many of us who were drawn by the graces poured out in the 70s and 80s are growing older and, yes, physically dying. Prayer groups of hundreds meeting weekly reduced to a handful gathered in church basements and smaller meeting rooms. Conferences that once filled football stadiums diminished to a few hundred.

Is this so? The evidence would seem to point in that direction but if that is so then Jesus Christ has let us down severely in that his promise that the Holy Spirit would be with us for all time is not being fulfilled.

The truth is that the Holy Spirit is very much alive and active and speaking a very challenging word to all of us in the CCR today. God raised up a great prophet in our time, John Paul II, and the Spirit has spoken a clear word to us here in North America. "Cast out into deep waters." (Novo millenio ineunte.) The Spirit is saying clearly that we in the CCR have been content to stay in shallow waters. Content to remain as it were locked in our little prayer groups. Using the charisms, those precious gifts given to us for the whole Church, for ourselves. No longer willing to venture out into deep waters lest we be rejected or misunderstood.

The Spirit is calling us to repentance and to once again go forth in boldness to the whole Church, to the thousands of Catholics who desperately need the grace of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit desires not only those who have never heard the Good news to hear it for the first time but also the re-evangelization of the baptized, and the renewal of the renewal.

In response to this clear word of the Spirit we are

seeing once again the move to offer the wisdom and maturity of the CCR to the broader Church with Life in the Spirit seminars growing once again in many regions and also being offered in the form of parish missions. which are now beginning to bear fruit.

There is also a growing response in our youth who are hungry for authentic Catholic teaching and a lived faith experience. Once again the Holy Spirit is active and God has the future in his hands.

The Spirit has been calling us to a maturity that is seen in the depth of teaching that is being offered through the CCR to the Church as a whole. These are positive responses to the voice of the Spirit coming to us not only through the voice of the Church, but also through the prophetic exhortations spoken throughout the Continent in the multitude of conferences and meetings where the prophetic gifts are encouraged.

Although conferences are smaller, over the years there has been a proliferation in the numbers of conferences held in many regions, which if we combine the attendees it would suggest that the annual participation is still quite high.


The Spirit is also reminding us of the consequences to our eternal destiny if we fail to respond to the immeasurable graces that have been poured out upon us. "To whom much has been given, much is required." Luke 12:48.

In upcoming issues of the ICCRS newsletter we will study the letters to the seven Churches of Asia Minor in the book of Revelation.

Just as Jesus spoke to these seven Church's in approximately the same time frame following the first Pentecost, that is probably between 40 to 50 years after the Outpouring of the Spirit, so in our 40th anniversary of this new Pentecost the Spirit is speaking a clear word to us.

Have we like Ephesus, lost our first love? Have we like Pergamum and Thyatira allowed religious compromise to creep into our lives and thinking? Have we like Laodicea become lukewarm in our zeal for the Gospel? Have we like Sardis the reputation for being alive but in fact are dead, simply going through the externals of faith?

Or are we like Smyrna and Philadelphia poor, yet rich in the spirit, willing to suffer persecution and rejection for the sake of the fullness of truth, Jesus Christ and his Church.

The Spirit is very much alive and speaking to us with great clarity here in North America, just as he has throughout every generation and every continent. The words of St. Peter ring true today as they did following Pentecost: "The promise is for you, your children and all those who are far off." Acts 2:39. 

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# Questions to ICCRS

Please send us your questions at [newsletter@iccrs.org](mailto:newsletter@iccrs.org) or by fax: (0039) 06-69887530.

**1 Our prayer group is planning to put on a Life in the Spirit Seminars programme. Some members of the prayer group want to do the traditional, seven week programme. Others prefer to have the seminar in a weekend format. A few people suggest we do the entire seminar in one day. Which method is best?**

There are a variety of formats and programs for a series of Life in the Spirit Seminars. There is a lot of discussion about which format is best. Let's examine the strengths and weaknesses of each so your group can discern which might be the best for you situation.

The benefit of the seven week program is that you have a longer period of time to interact with people. Multiple studies have shown that it takes at least a month of repeated activity to begin a habit. In the seven week seminars, people have daily "homework" of prayer, scripture reading, and reflection. After seven weeks of these activities, many people have become used to this discipline and are ready to make it part of their daily lives. Also, being involved with the candidates over a period of several weeks gives the team time to build solid relationships with these people and help them to surrender their lives to Christ in a long-term, ongoing way. In addition, the people will attend seven prayer meetings and become more and more comfortable with the charismatic experience. Remember..the seminars are called Life in the Spirit, not moment in the Spirit. We are trying to help people change their lives and live in a new way. The seven week seminars go a long way toward meeting that goal.

The drawback of the seven week seminars is the amount of time people need to commit to. Whether it is right or wrong, many people today seem reticent to commit themselves to anything that lasts too long. Will seven weeks "scare" people away from even showing up to give it a try? Also, the seven weeks can put additional time pressures on the team sponsoring the seminar.

The advantage of the weekend seminar is the power of impact. A weekend which is well done can deeply touch people at an emotional and spiritual level. By being in a retreat centre for a week-end, away from the distractions of home and work, the candidates can get into a much more focused frame of mind. Things happen on a retreat that seem not to happen in other settings.

The disadvantage of a week-end setting is that there is simply not enough time to process and integrate

the material into a person's daily, on-going life. Many people feel deeply touched during a week-end event but are simply unable to continue the experience past the week-end. It is simply too much, too quick.

Another challenge of a week-end is that while it is not as long as seven weeks, some people are unable...or unwilling..to commit to a solid 3 day block of time.

The idea of a one day seminar has the advantage that people are more likely to "take a chance" on a program that lasts hours rather than weeks. You may get more people who are only mildly interested to be willing to sit through a long afternoon but who would not even consider something overnight or for seven weeks!

The disadvantage of course is the inability to get very far or very deep in a few hours. You are simply ignoring the realities of human nature to think you can get that much material into people that they will be able to process and implement in a meaningful way.

In an ideal setting it would be great to combine all three concepts:

1. Have a one afternoon or one evening "introduction to living a life in The Spirit" This would be a basic evangelization moment with moving testimonies, very clear teaching, inspirational music, fellowship,...and really good snacks.
2. Offer the traditional seven week seminars, but instead of the 5th week being held on a weeknight, make the praying over the people a weekend (or at least an overnight) event. Continue the seminars in the last two weeks as usual.

In the above scenario, you have properly used all three elements, taking from each the best advantage they have to offer... The short, non-committal invitation of the one-day introduction program, the deeper, ongoing benefit of a multi week program, and the profound impact of an overnight experience.

If you happen not to live in a perfect world, then as a team carefully consider the pros and cons of each model and prayerfully try to discern God's will. **WARNING:** It is important that the entire team can reach a decision in unity. Otherwise you may have dissension in your leadership team at a very critical time during the seminars. Honestly seek the Lord, strive for unity among yourselves, dream big, and have fun!

**2 Is it the job of ICCRS to control the events of the CCR world wide?**

ICCRS does not see itself as the "boss" of the CCR, but rather its servant. By serving as a CCR advocate at official ecclesial levels, by sponsoring various events around the world, by providing communications, and an office, and by promoting dialogue and fraternal relationships among various entities within the Renewal, ICCRS seeks to support and strengthen this sovereign, grass-roots work of the Spirit.

## ICCRS International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services

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