



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!

## Listen still to the Spirit

by Fr. Renato Tisot

### TEACHING OUTLINE

I Smyrna

II Philadelphia

**F**orty years have a great symbolic meaning in the bible as a time of gestation, above all in the story of the exodus when the chosen people were lead, in a dramatic unfolding of space and time, into the promised land. And this came about because of the pure and merciful faithfulness of God, accompanied by signs and wonders, and in spite of the enormous lack of human responsiveness.

We were at Fiuggi last year to reflect on our forty years, forty years of the CCR, joyfully valuing the divine wonders recorded throughout the world, but also beating our breasts in repentance for our many defects. And yet we said: courage! The Holy Spirit does not hold itself back and the promised land is still on the horizon full of His divine splendour.

And I Fr. Renato, called to render this little service to millions of brothers and sisters in the world must also recall my more than forty years as a priest and at the same time the thirty-seven years of whirlwind participation in the charismatic "earthquake" of our time. It was God's project. I was baptised on Pentecost Sunday and confirmed ten years later, again on Pentecost Sunday, in a well used phrase, Born Again.

And so, convinced that both in one's personal story as in that of the community, there is the mysterious and loving work of God, let us take a step backwards into that great story which is, at the root of all definitive historical upheavals, that of the early Church. In speaking of the price paid by the incarnate son of God, we say at once that the Church was only just born of the blood and water of His pierced heart and then, immediately confirmed and presented to a hostile world in the fire of Pentecost.

Let us, in imagination, take a brief journey between two of the churches of the Apocalypse which must have been about forty years old and which represent charismatic communities, evidently less constrained than the structures and superstructures of subsequent centuries. They were much loved by the Lord, who because He loved them, gave prominence to their virtues and defects, also giving severe warnings and imposing decisive ways of correction. Let us close in on the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia.



### I. Smyrna

*"Write this to the angel of the Church in Smyrna:*

*Thus speaks the First and the Last who died and came back to life: I know your hardships and your poverty - yet you are rich and I know the slander of those who falsley call themselves Jews but in reality belong to the synagogue of satan. Do not be afraid, you who are going to suffer. The devil is about to throw some of you in prison, to put you to the test and give you hardships for ten days. Even if you have to die, remain faithful and I will give you the crown of life. Anyone who has ears, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches: The victors will not be smitten with the second death" ( Rev 2, 8-11).*

I am at once brought to a halt by the mention of an angel but I don't want to get lost in the meandering theories about the presence of angels. I simply think about the beautiful and powerful reality of these celestial charismatics that the adult catechism of the Italian Church describes as: "Pure spirits who have remained faithful to God, who glorify Him without ceasing with praise and service; they protect the Church and accompany us on our journey to eternal life" (388). These "special guardians" understand, certainly better than we, the richness and the weaknesses of our existence. I would like to have had the experience of the shepherds of Fatima who met the one full of splendour, who said: "I am the

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“...There are still attachments between the spirit and the world, between leadership through service and through dominion, there is still the human protagonism of the type that made Paul at Corinth shout “but you are not all with Christ!” Alas! On the other hand there was the quite brilliant charismatic, Apollo...”

angel of Portugal”. Today, because we have extreme need of him, I would like to meet the one who declares to us all with an attentive open heart: “I am the angel of the Renewal”. Might it be he who leads us to read slowly the text from the book of Revelation 2, 8-11. Let us read it slowly and meditatively at least three times.

The present situation is very clear. Joys and sorrows as ever, divine grandeur and human poverty intermingle, but the great event to which the Spirit is pointing is the power of the Pascal Mystery, of God scandalously immersed in His passion, death and resurrection in order to overcome the problems at the heart of the human drama, to guarantee that His merciful love is no joke. And now let's return to the safe ground of our own experience of an “effusion” or “baptism in the Holy Spirit”, when this Jesus, the First and the Last, became the Lord of our lives. Why then have we fallen, against His will, into a state of poverty? Why don't we know how to face up to the hardships, to being put to the test in our interior and exterior lives, and become afraid of the power of the synagogue of the devil?

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The charismatic listener needs a special kind of ear. Let us borrow from the best of listeners who is, clearly, Mary.

*there forever; I will inscribe on it the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which is coming down from my God in heaven, and my own new name as well. Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev 3,7-13).*

Read it again and again.

Prayer is the best response: “O Holy Spirit, you allow me to speak with the Truth, with He who holds the key. It is the key of history which reaches into the gate of eternity. It is also the key of my much closed heart. Heal me of my interior barriers, break down all the bars of my distorted personality and thereby lovingly affect the whole community, break the chains which so often make the cenacle into a prison.” There are still attachments between the spirit and the world, between leadership through service and through dominion, there is still the human protagonism of the type that made Paul at Corinth shout “but you are not all with Christ!” Alas! On the other hand there was the quite brilliant charismatic, Apollo, chosen by Peter and Paul, who said “Lord, let me hear instead, together with all the community, these words: “I am coming soon” Maranatha!”

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 Are you mature or inexperienced (in the CCR)? What impressions do you have of the CCR which has become one of the most powerful and fastest spreading movements in the history of Christianity?
- 2 If you have passed beyond being put to the test personally and in the community, what do you think of being able to overcome such tests in the light of the above warnings of Sacred Scripture.
- 3 What might be the way forward for a renewal of the Renewal in the sense of bringing it to greater maturity?
- 4 Also, if you are in crisis or have given up, what advantages do you think you have obtained while you were in the CCR?

## II. Philadelphia

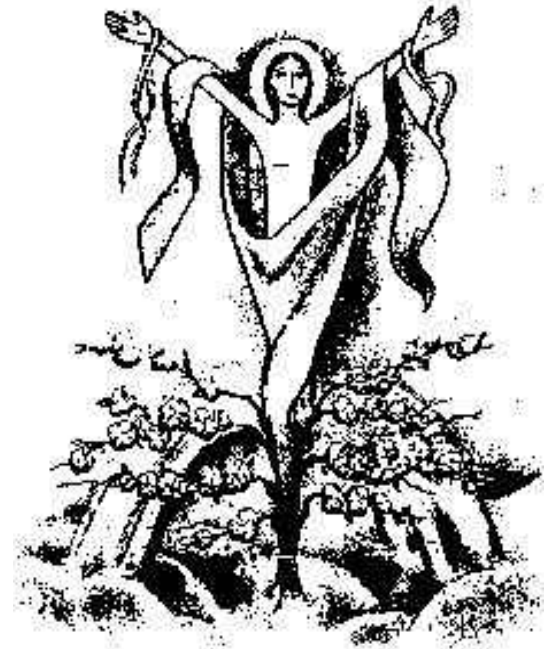
*“Write to the angel of the church in Philadelphia and say:*

*Here is the message of the Holy and True one who has the key of David*

*so that when He opens, no one will close,*

*and when He closes, no one will open:*

*I know about your activities. Look, I have opened in front of you a door that no one will be able to close and I know that though you are not very strong, you have kept my commandments and not disowned my name. Look, I am going to make the synagogue of satan. Those who falsely claim to be Jews, but are liars, because they are no such thing I will make them come and fall at your feet and recognise that I have loved you. Because you have kept my commandment to persevere, I will keep you safe in the time of trial which is coming for the whole world, to put the people of the word to the test. I am coming soon: hold firmly to what you already have, and let no one take your victor's crown away from you. Anyone who proves victorious, I will make into a pillar in the sanctuary of my God, and it will stay*



PS: How much is beautiful to remember about Philadelphia, but this time in the USA right at the start of the CCR, the good monsignor Vincent M Walsh, offered us a wonderful and widespread key: “a key for the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church”

# The ICCRS Doctrinal Commission: "Guidelines on Prayers for Healing"

by *Bp. Joseph Grech*

This year we are celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Catholic Charismatic Renewal. However, the powerful experience of the Holy Spirit that is so much part of our faith is not a recent phenomenon. It manifests what we find in Acts 1:8 "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses". In reality, Catholic Charismatic Renewal has brought to the fore what has always been an important element of our faith. The gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit were very much an integral part of the ministry of Jesus. Jesus healed many from physical, spiritual, psychological and spiritual sickness (Mt 4:23, Lk 9:11). He exuded joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). Moreover, the Book of Acts, written by St Luke describes the earthly ministry of Jesus in such a powerful manner. "and because God comes with Him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil." (Acts 10:38).

As a wise teacher, Jesus passed on to his disciples the necessary qualities and gifts so that they could continue His work. He com-manded them specifically to "Go, out to the whole world to proclaim the gospel to all creation and to make disciples. They will be helped by the gifts and the fruits of the Spirit to accomplish their mission (Mk 16:16-18). It is the Holy Spirit living in us which will enable all those who believe in Jesus to continue to proclaim that Jesus is Lord.


Over the centuries, the church endeavored to teach and promote in various ways and with varying degrees of success the reality that, in God, because of our baptism and confirmation, we are destined "to do the same things that Jesus did and to do even greater things." (Jn 14:12) The history of the church abounds with men and women who, because of their faith, have touched the lives of so many. They include not only the great saints that we are familiar with but also fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, religious, single people, young people and children who through living their daily lives animated by the Holy Spirit have given hope and practical sustenance in the mist of dire and adverse situations. All these experiences received an amazing burst of energy through the experience of Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Through a personal, intimate and life giving relationship with Jesus Christ, as a result of prayer, thousands have experienced a radical change in their lives and have become much more familiar with the reality and exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

While all of this is a cause of rejoicing and gratitude to God, there is also the necessity for those entrusted with the ministry of leadership in the church as well as in Charismatic Renewal to provide guidelines so that this amazing experience will continue to grow and deepen within the experience and the lived faith of

the universal church. This is the reason why ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services) was established. ICCRS is recognized by the Vatican authorities as the entity or organization that supports the different streams of Charismatic Renewal. These include all the communities and prayer groups that have had the experience of the Baptism in the Spirit and which are under the authority of the local bishop. For this purpose, ICCRS works in close collaboration and under the guidance of the Pontifical Council of the Laity. Working together is vital.

This has clearly happened in the case of praying for healing. In Sep-tember 2001, the Congregation for the Doctrine and Faith published "An Instruction of Prayers for Healing". This was to an answer to many questions and observations that the congregation received from many bishops all over the world. The following year, ICCRS and the Pontifical Council of the Laity organized an International Colloquium held in Rome to explore more deeply the whole question of prayers for healing. It was a great opportunity where ICCRS worked hand in hand with the teaching authority of the church. As a result of the International Colloquium it was felt that simple, direct and practical guidelines based on the Instruction of the Doctrine of the Faith needed to be written. Leaders of Charismatic Renewal from all over the world could therefore be helped in the proper exercise of the ministry and in the formation of those who are or will be involved in the exercise of ministry. A Doctrinal Commission of ICCRS was formed to facilitate this project and it is hoped that the practical guidelines will be published in the near future.

The Doctrinal Commission is also, at the present time, engaged in producing other similar practical guidelines and teachings on other aspects of Catholic Charismatic Renewal such as "Baptism in the Spirit" and the so termed "Resting in the Spirit". This work continues the tradition started by the well known Malines documents which were coordinated by Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenes of Malines, Belgium who was asked by Pope Paul VI to have pastoral oversight over the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In addition, as one may imagine, the ICCRS office in Rome receives many questions and requests for clarification about different issues that relate to the experience of Charismatic Renewal. Once again, the role of the doctrinal Commission is to provide adequate answers based on the constant teaching of the church and on the experience of living the grace of Charismatic Renewal.

In this manner, the full grace of Charismatic Renewal can be lived to the full and in an authentic manner making the whole church more conscious and open to receive an exercise the gifts and the experience of the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus (Jn 14:26). 

# Questions to ICCRS

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

## 1 In this very special year in which we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the birth of the CCR, what is the deeper meaning behind the theme for this year's Newsletter "CCR: Take Courage"? What message can we draw from this title?

The theme for this year's Newsletter is taken from the account of Jesus walking on water that we find in the Gospel of Matthew. Let us imagine the scene: It had been an amazing day for the disciples; they had spent the day with Jesus and had been present when he performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Then Jesus dismissed the crowd and told the disciples to sail back across the lake while he stayed behind to pray. The conversation between the disciples was surely dominated by the miracle that they had witnessed and the extraordinary power of Jesus. As night fell, the conversation would have shifted to the changing weather, until, late at night, the disciples found themselves rowing against stubborn winds and threatening waves. Even these seasoned sailors must have had some misgivings about their situation.

But even the raging storm paled to insignificance against what the disciples saw next: Jesus walking towards them across the water! Their rational minds failed them. They were terrified and cried out in fear, thinking that they were seeing a ghost. "At once Jesus spoke to them 'Take courage it is I; do not be afraid.'" (Mt 14:27) Then Jesus got into the boat with the disciples and the storm ceased. "Those who were with him in the boat did him homage, saying 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'" (Mt 14:33).

Like those first disciples, we in the Charismatic Renewal have also travelled with Jesus, and over the years we have seen the power of the Son of God; many of us have been present when people have been healed, when hearts have been changed, or when someone has been set free from the grip of evil. We have seen our few loaves and fishes being miraculously transformed into something that has fed so many people over the years.

But we have also known many storms, and fought through many dark nights when it seemed as if Jesus had sent us off to struggle alone. We have grown weary fighting against the waves that threaten our fragile boat. It is precisely at this moment that Jesus comes to us and says "Take courage it is I; do not be afraid."

What is this courage that Jesus speaks about? The word courage comes from the old French word corage which means "heart." Courage is defined as "the quality of mind or spirit which enables a person to face difficulty, danger, pain, etc, with firmness and without

fear." This courage will serve us well as we face the storms of life.

People who have served in the Charismatic Renewal for a long time will admit that they are sometimes discouraged by the struggles that they experience within the Renewal. To become discouraged means to loose heart. If the Renewal becomes discouraged, if it becomes a movement "without a heart," then it will no longer have anything to offer the Church or the world.

Jesus knows our struggles. He sees the wind and the waves that we struggle against, and so he comes to us and says "Have a heart! Don't yield to the storm! Look, I am here with you. Keep believing! Remember what I have done in the past. I am the God who can do what seems impossible to you. I am here with you right now!"

It is clear that the Renewal is sailing through some storms. However, these storms are not the first and they certainly will not be the last. So how do we take courage in the face of this reality as Jesus asks us to do?

\* Remember the deeds of the Lord. Let us recall the things that we have seen God do. When we are feeling weary, let us remind each other about the miracles that we have witnessed in the past. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, forever." (Heb 13:8).

\* Stop complaining and start praising! Nobody likes to go through a storm, but worrying and complaining does not help. Instead let us choose to worship and praise God, not only for what he does but mainly for who he is! When we start praising God the waves get smaller and the wind calms down.

\* Don't stop rowing! Sir Winston Churchill once wisely remarked "If you're going through hell... don't stop there! By all means, keep going!" When we try our hardest and seem to be making no progress against the waves, the temptation is to give up, to stop rowing, and to let the storm take us where it will. People can reach a point where they stop evangelising, stop organising prayer meetings, stop hosting Life in the Spirit Seminars. It is important to be patient in the storm: patient with you own limitations; patient with the little fruit that you see. Keep on rowing for just a little bit longer. Jesus will be at your side.

If we practice this courage that Jesus calls us to, if we keep our hope in the Lord, then we will be able to endure the storms and struggles that assail us, and we too will one day bow before Jesus, in awe of what he has done and, together with the early disciples, we will proclaim "Truly you are the Son of God."

## 2 If someone gives a prophetic word in tongues should they wait for another person to give the interpretation or can the same person give the interpretation?

There are differences of opinion on this issue but there appears no definite reason why the same person should not give the interpretation. The usual challenge to this is from 1Cor:14 .27 -28. which seems to imply that another should give the interpretation.

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