

A history of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

The 50th anniversary of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) was celebrated on Saturday 18 February 2017, and all of 2017 is considered to be a year of jubilee. #ccrgoldrenjubilee2017 should help you find some of those celebrations. As with any special anniversary, it is a time to look back, a time to give thanks, and a time to look forward.

I was able to attend celebrations over the weekend of 17-19 February 2017 in Parramatta Diocese and to watch and listen to all the sessions video recorded at the con-current celebrations at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, where the Renewal started. Those video sessions are no longer free, but are available at www.somethinglikereal.com/ordermedia . From both I will stitch together a history from all the memories that were shared.

To find the real start, we need to go back to the late 1890s and [Pope Leo XIII](#) and [Blessed Elena Guerra](#). Blessed Elena wrote several letters to Pope Leo XIII asking him to promote devotion to the Holy Spirit. Accordingly in 1895 he wrote *Provida Matris*, in which he recommended to Catholics special prayers at the Feast of Pentecost, for the Reunion of Christendom. In 1897 he wrote [Divinum Illud Munus](#) (On the Holy Spirit) talking about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Divine Economy and calling for a novena of prayer preceding Pentecost and attaching indulgences to that novena. (Ed. It is well worth a read.) Sadly these two requests didn't get a lot of response world-wide. Next he was asked to have the [Veni Sancte Spiritus](#) (the sequence for Pentecost) sung as he processed in for the first Mass of the 20th century. This he did. Soon after the [Pentecostal revival](#) began in 1906. As a Church if we had responded in 1897 we would perhaps be celebrating the 120th anniversary of the Renewal.

The world goes through the First World War, then the events at [Fatima](#) in 1917, the Great Depression and the Second World War. Along comes [Pope St John XXIII](#) and the [Second Vatican Council](#) from 1962 to 1965. Here is the prayer prayed before each of its sessions:

*We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in Your name.
Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.
Give us light and strength
to know Your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.
Guide us by Your wisdom,
support us by Your power,
for You are God, sharing the glory of Father and Son.
You desire justice for all;
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
or corrupted by fear or favour.*

*Unite us to Yourself in the bond of love
and keep us faithful to all that is true.
As we gather in Your name, may we temper justice with love,
so that all our discussions and reflections
may be pleasing to You, and earn the reward
promised to good and faithful servants.
We ask this of You who live and reign with the
Father and the Son, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

The work of the 2nd Vatican Council was a major movement of grace and stirred up a lot of things and gave the Holy Spirit room to move.

In 1966 two professors at the small Catholic university in Pittsburgh got serious about praying daily for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They, too, used that anciently beautiful Pentecost sequence for the purpose. During this time they were given by friends two books to read; [The Cross and the Switchblade](#) and [They Speak With Other Tongues](#). Reading them made it easier for them to attend a local Pentecostal prayer meeting in January 1967. Impressed, they returned, sought and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

These professors were leading students in a scripture study group. A February retreat had been planned, and a theme chosen, but they decided to change the theme to 'the Holy Spirit'. Participants were encouraged to prepare for this retreat weekend by praying expectantly, reading 'The Cross and the Switchblade' and the first 4 chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The place they went to was called [The Ark and The Dove](#).

During the retreat, at the beginning of each session they sang an ancient hymn to the Holy Spirit, the [Veni Creator Spiritus](#). Early sessions were on Mary, on returning to God in the sacrament of Penance, and on surrendering to God as Lord and Master. Following this two students, [David](#) and [Patti](#), proposed that they conclude the weekend with a renewal of baptismal promises. They committed to doing this even if no one else decided to. On the Saturday night of that retreat, there were some birthday celebrations downstairs. But David felt a prompting to go upstairs to the wooden paneled chapel with the box-like tabernacle. There he had a profound experience of God. Patti came into the chapel looking for students to send down to the party, and began to pray. She then had a profound experience of the presence of God that prompted her to surrender herself unconditionally to God with this prayer. "Father, I give my life to you. Whatever You ask of me, I accept. And if it means suffering, I accept that too. Just teach me to follow Jesus and to love as He loves." And she was flooded with an experience of the merciful love of God. Leaving the chapel to find the chaplain to talk about this, she came across two other girls. Patti led these two students into the chapel and began to pray, "Lord, whatever You just did for me, do it for them!" And He did.

Many, but not all of the retreatants made their way to the chapel that night and experienced God too. Of those that didn't, fear held them back, either fear of making such a surrender to God or fear of the strange things the others were experiencing. One had felt an inexplicable hatred for Patti the whole weekend, and was only set free to experience God when Patti and the professors prayed for her to be delivered from evil.

For more detail about this retreat, read <http://www.arlingtonrenewal.org/duquesne-weekend.html>

These experiences of God, and the charisms that came with it, changed their lives so noticeably that others asked to be prayed for and this work of the Holy Spirit spread rapidly throughout the United States and then to the rest of the world.

The students wondered if what they had experienced was Catholic or not, and they found an affirmative answer in the documents of Vatican II, especially [Lumen Gentium](#) 12b:

'It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills, He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit". These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labor to be presumptuously expected from their use; but judgment as to their genuinity and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good.'

[Bruce Yocum](#) was a university student who heard about the Duquesne experience in March 1967. A friend of his knew Steve Clarke and Ralph Martin. A few months later he met them through the Catholic chaplaincy, and when an opportunity came in February 1968 he was baptized in the Holy Spirit immediately. Based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the prayer group that started as 8 people in February was 90 people three weeks later and 300 people by May. This formed the nucleus of the [covenant community](#) movement.

Because these young people knew each other well, they were able to organize quickly on a national and international basis. [Bishop Joe McKenney](#) got involved early. Endorsement from the bishops of the United States was obtained in 1969. [Cardinal Suenens](#) visited a few years later bringing with him Fr Wilfrid who was slightly depressive. The dramatic change in this priest after he was prayed with, and became joyful, laughing and energetic was proof for the Cardinal that this was the authentic work of the Holy Spirit, 'because only God could make this change'.

[Alex Reichel](#), a professor of applied Mathematics at the University of Sydney was in Colorado for a year's sabbatical in the late 1960s when he came across the charismatic renewal and his faith became alive in a new way. Upon his return to Sydney, Alex went to the Archbishop, Cardinal Gilroy, and asked for permission to start up a prayer group on the university campus. The response was, 'Good Luck'. That prayer group started at St Michael's College in City Road.

At the time there was a dual science/theology student at the college by the name of [Ken Barker](#). From his rooms he could hear the prayer group noise as he tried to study. He decided that 'if I can't beat them, I'll join them'. Good coffee and lots of hugs won him over. But he never went into the little room where people went in normal, got prayed over, and came out quite different. Yet he kept on going to that prayer meeting. He finished his science degree, and his seminary studies, was ordained and got sent to the United States for another 4 years of study. At this point he thought he

was equipped for ministry, but he wasn't. Young people convinced him to attend a charismatic priest's retreat at Hunters Hill. It was there that he learned that he needed to give up self-sufficiency and say to the Lord, 'I can't do it, but yes Lord, You can do it' and to join his Yes to that of Mary's. In this he found the surrender prayer of [Blessed Charles de Foucauld](#) very helpful:

*Father,
I abandon myself into Your hands;
do with me what You will.
Whatever You may do, I thank You:
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only Your will be done in me,
and in all Your creatures –
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into Your hands I commend my soul:
I offer it to You with all the love of my heart,
for I love You, Lord, and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into Your hands without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for You are my Father. Amen.*

After that retreat, everything changed. A prayer group next to the Cathedral in Canberra began. One day a prophetic word came 'to take the renewal to the heart of the Church'. Not sure how to respond to this, they reasoned that the cathedral was the heart of the local church. So Fr Ken asked if he and the young people could be responsible for one of the weekend Masses at the cathedral. No one wanted to serve the 7pm Sunday night Mass, so they gave him that, and the prayer group happened after that Mass. At one of those 7pm Masses a persistent thought kept coming to him, 'you can call the people forward if you want to'. So at the end of the Mass he decided to ask if anyone wanted to come forward to be prayed over, and 2/3rds of the congregation came forward. Many of them 'went down like ninepins'. When we surrender, the Holy Spirit moves.

Four months after Alex Reichel began that initial prayer group, [Costandi Bastoli](#) joined. At first there was some reluctance about the need for this experience. 'No, I am a Catholic, I know my theology, I have already received the Holy Spirit through the sacraments'. To which they replied, 'It is not whether you possess the Holy Spirit that matters, but whether the Holy Spirit possesses you. Surrender to Him.' Costandi said Ok, and was then asked to renew his baptismal promises, which he did, and then asked if he wanted to receive a gift from God. 'If He wants to do so, I'll take it'. 'Relax, and the Holy Spirit will do it'. As he started to praise God he was immersed in God's love and started praying and laughing at the same time. That prayer group outgrew its premises quickly, and moved to a meeting place at Lewisham.

In 1973 the first international leaders' conference was held in Rome. Around this time the second in charge at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith met with Steve Clark and Ralph Martin, and on his desk was an issue of the New Covenant magazine. They spoke for an hour.

In 1975 another international leaders' conference was held in Rome, which around 10,000 people attended. On the Sunday of the conference, everyone went to the papal Mass with great expectation that Pope Paul VI might say something to the renewal. At the end of Mass he did, 'This renewal is an

important chance for the Church.' At the closing Mass of that conference they were permitted to use the papal altar in St Peter's basilica. It was a very powerful time of prayer, praise and worship. However all of the microphones stopped working when it was time to share some prophetic word, and only the microphone at the main altar was working. A message was given about days of darkness and serious trouble coming, but followed by a great age of evangelization and days of glory when we would see people tumbling into the Church.

Here <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/ojs/index.php/VMAG/article/view/261/258> are a series of reflections on the first 7 years of the charismatic renewal, written by Keith Ranaghan. It was under his leadership that a very broad-based ecumenical committee prepared and led an ecumenical conference of over 60,000 in Kansas City in 1977. It was there that a message that continues to echo was given, 'Weep and mourn, for the body of My Son is broken'. Many ecumenical initiatives began as a result of that conference.

When a mountain river gets a good ways down the mountain it becomes deeper, broader, even more powerful but less violent- which is a good analogy for what happened in the renewal during the 1980s and 1990s. According to [Lalith Perera](#) in these years the renewal got organized and became more respectable, but perhaps started seeking official acceptance more than seeking the Holy Spirit. Both manifestations of the Holy Spirit and numbers lessened. Following years of personal crisis from 1996 to 2000, he was invited to a retreat with the [Divine Retreat Centre](#) at Potta in India. It was a time of grace for him, because God invited him to surrender to Him more than he had ever before and to relinquish his fears and let God be his security and the director of his life. He was overcome by an urge to cry and heard this, 'Cry, cry for the wasted years you lived and served without really submitting to My plan'. As he cried a new anointing of the power of the Holy Spirit came upon him. From that time everything began to flourish and large numbers started being touched by the Lord. Last year the Lord challenged him to see Him in the obstacles and problems around him. 'If I call you, I will do it for you. Do things My way'. God kept that promise. By sitting at the feet of the Lord and asking Him for the breakthroughs, all obstacles were broken by supernatural means.

In 2014 leaders of the renewal gathered in Bethlehem from 46 nations to seek the Lord and ask Him how He wanted the 50th anniversary in 2017 to be celebrated. One afternoon of that time was set aside specifically for listening to the Lord. It was a downstairs room with no windows. As they began, the electricity stopped. No lights, no air-conditioning. Confusion reigned. They considered abandoning the time of prayer, but those from the Duquesne weekend said no, this reminds us of the water and plumbing problems that weekend at The Ark and The Dove. As soon as the Holy Spirit came, the water came back on again. So they prayed and called out to the Lord. 'We don't have any power, we are helpless'. Someone grabbed a life-sized crucifix off the wall and brought it to the centre of the room, and said 'Look to Jesus', and the lights came back on. God wanted us to acknowledge our weakness and nothingness and to see that He is the power that we are looking for. God is drawn to our brokenness. The Holy Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. Open up to Him and let His Spirit come. To the most needy, He wants to come most. The next day 200 of us went from Bethlehem to the Upper Room in Jerusalem, and had the extraordinary gift of being able to pray there for an hour. Normally groups are only permitted in for a few minutes at a time. At that time these messages came: 'I have given you My Holy Spirit, and I will continue to give you My Holy Spirit again and again. You will receive more if you join your Yes to the Yes of the Blessed

Virgin Mary.' The Lord is about order, but not routine. He brings freshness and newness. We need new weapons for new battles, not yesterday's weapons.

To mark the 50th anniversary a big [Crucifix of the Renewal](#) was commissioned, and unveiled and blessed on 18 February 2017 at The Ark and The Dove. The international director wanted this to happen, but didn't know how to find a sculptor. Soon after placing the project in God's hands, an email arrived from someone in the renewal who was a sculptor...and it went from there.

At the anniversary weekend 17-19 February 2017 the international director [Michelle Moran](#) spoke about this Cross and also about how Pope Francis has invited members of the renewal to celebrate Pentecost 2017 with him. The [ICCRS](#) team have experience with events in St Peter's Square, but Pope Francis wants this gathering at the Circus Maximus in Rome, open to the view of the city, a place from which it would be easy to send forth people to all directions of the compass.

The major prophetic word that weekend, given initially on Friday 17 February and repeated on the evening of 18 February was:

Psalm 42: Deep calls unto deep. Go deeper. Call to Him from a place of great depth.

Genesis 7: In the second month, and on the 17th day of that month, that very day all the springs of the great deep broke through and the sluices of heaven opened. It rained on the earth for 40 days and 40 nights. This is for good, not for destruction, so that the world may be filled with the presence of God as the waters cover the sea.

Visit <http://www.societyofsaints.net/blog/category/prophecy> to read an interpretation of this.

At the vigil Mass of that weekend Bishop Zubik impressed upon us that we must be listeners of the Word and not just hearers of it.

Other messages and insights from this anniversary weekend were a profound call to unity, and to reconciliation between leaders and prayer groups and communities and other Christians. That we were to link arms in solidarity just like Patti and David did 50 years ago, and that when the curtain goes up we will be surprised who we have linked arms with. When movements of the Holy Spirit have happened before throughout history, eg the Desert Fathers, St Benedict, St Francis of Assisi that grace took form in religious life. The charismatic renewal has been marked by lay leadership and lay participation, and the prayer groups and communities were how this grace has taken form in our time. But in the outpouring God has promised it will take a new form that we have never seen before. For Him to do this we have to be prepared to go where He says, to stop when He says stop, and be utterly responsive to His promptings.

Pentecost 2017, if we call out to the Lord persistently from our hearts for the gift of the Holy Spirit as He has asked us to do, will be momentous indeed.

Come Holy Spirit!!!

Holy Mother Mary of each New Pentecost, Help of Christians, pray for us

(For another history, which fills in other details of these 50 years of grace, read:

<http://www.jeevanjal.org/jeevanjal/origin-ccr.html>)