

THE CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

ITS BASIC TEACHING

The goals of Catholic Charismatic Renewal are none other than the same goals and objectives of the Church itself. The Renewal seeks the conversion, salvation and sanctification of the people of God, and their unification into an effective assembly of God's people. Though the Renewal places special emphasis upon the role of the Holy Spirit in all these efforts, it nevertheless remains Christ-centred, proclaiming Jesus to be Saviour and Lord of all the world, and teaching that to know Him is man's only path to fulfilment and peace.

THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC

The distinguishing characteristic of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is its understanding that the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church has in no way changed since the first centuries, and that we can experience today His outpouring, His power, and His gifts in the very same way they were experienced by the early Christians. Some would say that the Holy Spirit was poured out in a unique way upon the first Christians, in order to equip them for the task of evangelising the pagan Roman world. The Spirit that Christ promised as power (*Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8*) came to them as a deep human experience, external in some of its manifestations, and wonderfully mystical and spiritual in its effects. It was a vivid experience that they could remember and talk about afterwards, leaving them with discernible gifts for the sharing of Christ's mission, and fruits of the Spirit that united them into communities and healed them in ways that made possible a life of service and love, St. Thomas said that it was normative for the first Christians to have such an experience. The unique tenet of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is that this same kind of outpouring and experience of the Holy Spirit, coming with power and with gifts, can be normative for the Church today.

DISCERNMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

The proof of authenticity of this experience does not depend primarily on an analysis of the experience itself, but rather upon a study of its effects in the lives of persons. The changes witnessed to include a new sense of the presence of God, a more personal relationship with Jesus Christ, a greater need of and success at prayer, including a new freedom for simply praising the goodness and wonder of God, a new hunger for and understanding of the Word of God, a more universal and ecumenical love, a more generous apostolic heart, together with special gifts that give new talent for evangelization and for the building of communities. These gifts include some that may seem strange to Catholics unacquainted with the Renewal: gifts such as tongues, prophecy and healing.

A CURRENT RATHER THAN ANOTHER ORGANIZATION

Because the task we have as Christians is to continue the mission given by the Father to Jesus (*John 17:18*), it is a task beyond our natural powers; it is supernatural. The only true builder of the Body of Christ, the only one capable of transforming divided men into the image of God, Many-Who-Are-One, is the Holy Spirit. But men, touched and gifted by that Spirit, can serve as His instruments, and that is what matures them in the fulfilment of their Christian responsibility. Charismatic Renewal is not some kind of new organization in the Church, but rather a current, a refocusing of the mind of the Church, emphasising that man himself is not the essential agent of the Church's task. He is rather the willing and totally dependent agent of the Holy Spirit. Instead of saying, "God, I will do this for you," he learns to say: "Spirit of God, use me as you will".

A TASK ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN ACCOMPLISH

The Charismatic Renewal, therefore, is a revitalization of the message of the prayer: "Come, Holy Spirit". The goal and direction of the Charismatic Renewal is:

- to see every effort in the Church based on a discernment of God's plan rather than a working out of man's plan;
- to see evangelical and apostolic talents, and every talent for service, as a gift of the Holy Spirit;
- to see the Holy Spirit as the one who can truly speak to human hearts and enable them to hear the Word;
- to know the Spirit as the power of God among us, a power that must be working through us today even with signs and wonders as we battle against the modern forces of evil;
- to surrender as instruments of that Spirit doing all only for the glory of God.

Its goal is not the releasing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for their own sake, or a seeking only of those gifts listed in *1 Corinthians: 12*, but rather a renewed understanding that the work of God can only be done by God himself, and that we serve in this work as instruments only through the gifts that His Spirit chooses to give us. **He** fills the hearts of the faithful. **He** enkindles in us the fire of divine love. **He** recreates and renews the face of the earth. And when we surrender, **He** uses us as tools in the hands of the Builder of the Father's Kingdom.

(All of the above from 1979 Document to Pope John Paul II from the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office)