

In this issue: *This is the full text of a talk given by Michelle Moran, President of ICCRS to a European leaders gathering for the regions of North and West Europe, on 29th March 2014 in Brentwood, England. Including a historical overview of the development CCR and the nowadays challenges.*

PROPHETIC OVERVIEW OF THE NEW SEASON OF THE SPIRIT

Michelle Moran

I recently presented a paper at a theological symposium in England. After the talk a religious sister from my diocese approached me. She said that she was surprised to hear that I was in Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) as she felt this was not the usual place for people with a theological background to find a home! Then she asked me, *'what is the purpose of the Charismatic Renewal?'* Clearly she is not asking exactly the right question as CCR isn't of human origin. However, her naive question caused me to reflect on the contribution that CCR makes to the life of the Church. A more tangible question that I am frequently asked is; *'where in the world is CCR the strongest?'* The simplest answer is that CCR mirrors the Church. So where the Church is numerically strong there are a lot of people involved in CCR. However, it is important to note that strength can also be measured in other ways. *How deep is the CCR? Are we maturing and going deeper in the Spirit? How widespread is CCR? Are we still reaching out to new people or content with who we already have?*

A historical reminder - birthed in a current of grace

We usually trace our origins back to 1967 the time when the students from Duquesne university received the baptism in Holy Spirit during a retreat. Interestingly, things began with young people. The Lord entrusted the future of what became CCR into the hands of a few university students. Perhaps this challenges the presumption of some that CCR is for the non intellectuals. These were people of energy, enthusiasm and capacity.

Before the birth there was however a pregnancy, Bl Elena Guerra, an Italian Sister of the Oblates of the Holy Spirit, began a series of correspondence with Pope Leo XIII. This led to him, among other things, introducing the Novena of the Holy Spirit to be prayed from Ascension to Pentecost in perpetuity. He stated that the intention of the novena should be for the 'reunion of Christendom'. Then on Jan 1st 1901 Pope Leo XIII prayed the *Veni Sancti Spiritus* and consecrated the 20th century to the Holy Spirit. Around the same time in Topeka Kansas, a holiness teacher Charles Fox Parham laid hands on one of his students, Agnes Ozman, and prayed for her to receive baptism in the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this is the pregnancy of the Azusa Street revival in 1906 which is usually cited as being the birth of what we now know as the Pentecostal movement.

CCR was birthed in a current of ecumenical grace, what began as a small stream has gradually been gathering momentum. The years following Vatican II proved to be fertile ground for new moves of the Spirit to emerge.

The Early Years

Many of the pioneers in the Renewal testify to the refreshing breath of the Spirit in those early years bringing a new sense of freedom and liberation to all. Just as the Israelites were set free from captivity in Egypt, there was a new freedom in the Spirit permeating the Church. Those early years were characterised by high enthusiasm, sometimes lacking wisdom and occasionally making mistakes. I liken this to a young child who is very free but not very self aware or self conscious.

The Adolescence

As all parents know young children rapidly grow and enter into the troubled teenage years where they are self conscious and sometimes rebellious as they struggle to see where they fit in. I think we went through this phase in CCR. Some became elitist and arrogant, others wandered away from the Church or the Renewal. Many began to question where is our place as CCR in the Church? Sadly in our desire to fit in and become accepted by the Church, we became self conscious. Consequently, there was a tendency to play down our charismatic dimension. This led to a weakening in the growth of the charisms and in some places numerical decline. In order to gain respectability the Renewal sometimes became inward looking and self protective.

Charisms are our deepest identity

In 2008 Pope Benedict XVI said; *'One of the positive elements of CCR is the importance they give to the charisms and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The merit of CCR is in reminding the Church of the actuality of the gifts of the Spirit'*. Perhaps at this point we can examine our conscience and go back to the question, what is the purpose of the CCR? As leaders in the Renewal we have to partly take responsibility for the way things are today.

Apart from the general decline in the charisms which surely impacts the identity of CCR, I sense we have also seen a decline in the power that comes from communal praise and worship. Undoubtedly, in some parts of the world there are wonderful musicians and music groups but we have to remember that it is the anointing of God that in worship unlocks the gifts. Sometimes I see musicians who are just playing songs and good as this is, it is not worship. In some places participation of all the assembly in worship has ceased and what is supposed to be worship is more like a concert where the majority of people remain passive as they watch the worship band or occasionally join in the songs.

Grow in Ecclesial Maturity

At Pentecost 1998, in St Peter's Square, Pope John Paul II exhorted all the ecclesial movements to 'grow in ecclesial maturity'. In CCR this was a wake- up call and an invitation to leave behind our adolescent years. Then just in case we were unclear of our mandate, in his last official address to CCR in 2004 Pope John Paul II said *'I desire that the spirituality of Pentecost be spread in the Church as a renewed thrust of prayer, holiness, communion and*

proclamation'. As we cross the threshold of the beatification of Pope John Paul II, can we honestly say we have fulfilled the mandate he gave us? Clearly the Lord is sovereign and it isn't our job as leaders to control things or to forge ahead with our own man made projects. It is however our role to discern what the Spirit is doing. Clearly the Spirit speaks through the Church and we need to be attentively discerning the sometimes still small voice of the Spirit.

Life begins at 40

When I was elected as President of ICCRS in 2006, one of my first tasks was to go around the world speaking prophetically about our 40th anniversary. Many of you will recall I referred to the biblical template of the journey of the Israelites out of Egypt (CCR -1967). The formation and testing in the wilderness (CCR up to 2007) and my big exhortation was 'It is now time to Cross the Jordan and take the land'. I was certainly very excited. Some shared my enthusiasm. In Latin America, for example, this prophetic stance linked in very closely with the [exhortation from Celam*](#), the Latin American bishops conference which urged people to become disciples and missionaries. Interestingly, the main author of that very influential text for Latin America was Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio. Since 2007 many of the CCR conferences in Latin America have focussed on this missionary dimension and have had themes connected with promoting the 'Culture of Pentecost'. However, in other parts of the world, especially in N. America and Europe, after the initial enthusiasm they began to question; 'what does this actually mean?' How are we supposed to take the land? Certainly, there was a danger of activism. However, my exhortation was not so much a rallying call but more of an invitation to be strategic in the Lord and not just move according to our human ideas. In Hab 2:1-3 the Lord encourages us to seek for vision and to be alert and attentive to his voice. He also reminds us to 'wait' for the right time for the vision to be fulfilled. I am sensing that we are now entering into the Kairos time.

Approaching the Jubilee - a Kairos time

During his pontificate Pope John Paul II spoke many times about the 'new springtime in the Church' and although we began to see the first shoots of this spring many people sense that we have not yet seen the full blossoming of the springtime. I sense that we are now entering into a new phase of the prophetic unfolding of Pope John Paul's springtime. Many people have heard me speak about the spring and the autumn rain (Deut 11:14, Hosea 6:3, Joel 2:23). In the Middle East and Mediterranean regions the crops are planted in September time and the first rain comes in the autumn. This is the early rain that helps the plants to take root and to get established. Then in the spring there is the later rain and this is the rain that yields the harvest. Reviewing our history, I think we have had the early rain and we are now transitioning into the new season. At this time we need to be attentive, there are several themes which keep emerging. Time does not permit me to elaborate, so I leave these with you for your discernment. We need to be a people of humility, Prov 18:12 reminds us that 'humility goes before honour'. Unity is key both within CCR (unfortunately there are always so many challenges in this area). Also unity in the wider body of Christ. In some parts of the world CCR has lost its ecumenical dimension. Remember we were birthed in a current of ecumenical grace. Flowing from the graces of the 'Year of Faith' - our response in CCR needs

to be the transition from Acts 2, the initial outpouring, towards Acts 4:29-31. The new season of the Spirit calls us to go deeper in faith so that when there are trials, difficulties or even persecutions we can go deeper in the Lord and move in expectant faith believing that the Lord wants to work 'miracles and marvels' among us. Consequently, there will truly be power for the new evangelisation.

In Nov 2013, around 160 international leaders gathered together in the Holy Land for the ICCRS Prophetic Consultation. It wasn't a conference but a specific time to seek the Lord. In surprising ways the Lord visited us during those days (see ICCRS newsletter Jan/Feb2014**). There was a pivotal moment where the Lord showed us 'CCR you have no more power come to me'. As we acknowledged this, there was a great illumination (literally). I think this will prove to be a significant time in the history of CCR where leaders began to see things in a new way. A couple of days later we were gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. Unexpectedly we were able to have a prolonged period of prayer together. Many people testified to receiving a new personal anointing, I also think there was a new release of the power of the Holy Spirit given to the CCR. It is the power to move in the grace of the spring rain the rain that yields the harvest. The new season indicates that the time is now. Now it is time to take the land. However, this is no longer just a prophetic impulse it is something that the Lord is doing through us. We need to have the courage to surrender and boldness in faith to move in power. Only then can the Land be taken and the Lord work his miracles and marvels in our midst.

(c) Michelle Moran 29.3.2014

*Celam, the Latin American bishops conference, gathered in Aparecida 2007, urged people to become disciples and missionaries. The main author was Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio. A document with 165 pages. If you look for topics you can go to the index pages 131 - 143 or use ctrl-f. See the whole document in English: <http://www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf>

**For the ICCRS Prophetic Consultation in Bethlehem 2013, see ICCRS newsletter Jan/Feb2014 on http://www.iccrs.org/Dettaglio.php?id_liv3=1169&WEB=JanuaryFebruary and EUCCRIL 263 on www.iccrs.eu (> documents).

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Editor: Kees Slijkerman, e-mail: kees@stucom.nl

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