
In this issue: *This very inspiring testimony we have heard in the European Catholic charismatic conference in Warsaw, last October. Women, who were praying for priests for many years, took the step to organise a Life in the Spirit seminar for priest. With very encouraging result. A report from Margaret Bianchi and Ingrid Parlato Trigona.*

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT SEMINAR FOR PRIEST
MOVEMENT OF SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD FOR PRIESTS
 CCR CONFERENCE 2015, POLAND

John 19: 26 - *“Woman, behold your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!”*

INTRODUCTION

Oreste has asked us to share with you a move of the Holy Spirit that we are experiencing in our country, the Island of Malta. Ingrid and I are members of a Charismatic group called *Praise the Name of Jesus*.

In February 2014 our group organised a *Life in the Spirit seminar* for 33 priests at the Seminary. Three months later at the request of the priests, a prayer group for priests was started. The meetings take place every last Tuesday of the month at the seminary.

In February 2015 another *Life in the Spirit seminar* for 30 priests was held and only last month some priests attended a Healing Seminar.

This seminar was specially planned for their benefit but also for them to understand better the gift of Healing; how it can become part of the normal life of every parish; how a priest can express and use this gift while saying his daily Mass; how to pray over (NOT ONLY pray for) their parishioners when they are asked to pray for them. They do it there and then.

Priests who have received The Baptism in The Holy Spirit are taking bold steps to introduce this ministry of healing in their parishes so that it will become normal and not only limited to the circles where Charismatics meet.

They are also organising a *Life in the Spirit seminar* for those who attend their churches as part of the life of the parish so that the experience we have all had in our prayer groups will be given to those who may not necessarily wish to join a prayer group. May this new movement of The Holy Spirit continue to set all our churches on fire.

HISTORY

I would like to give you a brief history of how all this came about.

Our prayer group started 28 years ago. There are many ministries in the group: one being, ‘Vision and Prophecy’. Right from the start this ministry used to meet to pray once a month; we would collect the words and prophecies that were given during our prayer meetings and discern what The Holy Spirit was telling our group.

We noticed that repeatedly we would feel the need to pray for priests and we committed ourselves to pray for their protection and support them in the difficulties of their priesthood. The more we prayed, the more we grew to love them and the more we appreciated how blessed we were that they were prepared to give up their lives and all that the world was offering to embrace instead, a life of self-giving and sacrifice that was very often unappreciated.

As time passed we started praying for them to receive their own Baptism in The Holy Spirit so that they would be strengthened in their ministries. We knew that there was a strong resistance but we still made several requests to high officials in the Church, but it was not yet the right time and the answers were always a ‘loud and clear’ –NO!

Many of us remember Bishop Joe Grech, born in Malta, bishop in Australia. He was the instrument that God used to help us. At the same time the then Auxiliary Bishop, Mons. Depasquale, who used to attend our Pentecost meetings, was starting to warm up to the idea of a *Life in the Spirit seminar* for priests. Together, they agreed that Bishop Joe would

organise them for the priests. Within six months both Bishop Joe and Bishop Depasquale passed away unexpectedly and this left us feeling very disheartened.

But nothing, absolutely nothing can get in the way of God's plans. Suddenly, the doors of the Curia opened wide to the idea and our group was asked to organise the *Life in the Spirit seminar*.

WOMAN

What I didn't mention is that we are a group of woman. We were surprised that during a consultation it became clear that they wanted us 'Women' to be their cell group leaders and to pray over them!!! We were asked to make no changes in the format.

Probably, Pope Francis standing on the balcony and asking for prayers had something to do with this change.

Invitations went out from the Curia to all the priests in Malta to attend the *Life in the Spirit seminar* and when we read the names of the priests who had applied we were quite intimidated: The Apostolic Nuncio; The Vicar General; The Delegate for the Clergy; The head of Dept of Scripture Studies at the Faculty of Theology of our University; Monsignors; Curia Officials; Parish Priests and others. But from the first meeting we could see that God was with us and by the time of the Baptism in The Holy Spirit, God had taken over their hearts; warmed them with his love and filled them with his Holy Spirit. It was another Pentecost: Yes, for many, drooping spirits became full of passion, as if a special love and intimacy with Jesus had filled them up once again.

VISION

God is doing something new in our Church: He is renewing; changing mindsets; empowering; healing; restoring and rebuilding his temple. "The new Temple will be more splendid than the old one..." Haggai 2v9.

We have had repeated prophecies about this. Because God is pouring His Holy Spirit on them again and giving them a deep personal encounter with Jesus, their lives and ministry have come alive. He is uniting priests so that they can support each other; pray together; drop their guard and surrender all so that God will take control and lead them; He is healing fears and anxieties and enabling them to trust Him and accept His will; He is restoring their

dignity; He is filling them with unspeakable joy and they are seeing His signs and wonders as they step out in faith and pray with others.

We have heard testimonies from the priests who have attended the seminars with remarks, like: "I would have never dreamt that something like this was possible!" or "You have taken us up to Tabor, now you need to show us how to live this life in the Spirit." Or, "I feel I have been born again as a priest because of the *Life in the Spirit seminar*"; "I just couldn't sleep all night"; "How can I take all this love in." "This is a time for me to receive...our lives are always giving and giving."

One particular priest has been asked to organise *Life in the Spirit seminars* for nuns; to be the main speaker at last year's National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference (after only five months); the main speaker for ICPE* Leaders; and has become the Spiritual Advisor to the National Service Committee. In his own words: "I really believe that all this was fruit of the *Life in the Spirit seminar* and Baptism in The Holy Spirit: maybe only I can fathom the strides forward that the Lord has helped me make since Baptism in The Holy Spirit."

Future Plans: *Life in the Spirit seminars* for nuns of The Poor Clares (taking place now), a *Life in the Spirit seminar* for priests from our sister island, Gozo, in Feb; a *Life in the Spirit seminar* for priests of a religious order in September; a *Life in the Spirit seminar* for priests in Malta in October 2016.

CONCLUSION

We believe that God wants to raise many more spiritual mothers all over our Continent and the whole World. God is preparing the very core of His church, His beloved priests to be frontline warriors with the laity standing behind them in this crucial time.

God is anointing women to be spiritual mothers to priests. Like Our Mother Mary, so that His beloved sons will be well looked after; supported in every way with much prayer; with care and attention that uplifts them; showing them our gratitude and appreciation; giving them feedback and encouraging them to be bold and use the gifts that they have but may

not be aware of. As mothers let us encourage them to step out and take risks. Our priests need to know that they are not alone. Just as Jesus gave Mary to the Church as mother, he is giving us, women, to his beloved priests so that through Mary we can take care of them.

As a group of women, we have observed that this work of the Holy Spirit would be impossible if it were not backed with much prayer, fasting and time spent in adoration. It has been an experience of growth and it is a great privilege to serve our priests.

*ICPE= Institute for World evangelisation

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