

# HISTORY OF CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN NORWAY

1984 - 2008

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## **THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NORWAY**

Over 1000 years ago, Christianity arrived in Norway in its Roman Catholic form. King Olav Haraldsson, who shortly after his death in the battle of Stiklestad in 1030 was declared a saint, is recognized as the one who completed the Christianization of Norway. Today he is known as Saint Olav.

After Saint Olav's death, the Church in Norway expanded and gradually turned into the unifying institution for the entire Norwegian population.

At the Lutheran Reformation, Roman Catholic religious practice was banned, and from 1624 onwards, Catholic priests were prohibited from staying in the kingdom of Denmark-Norway under the threat of capital punishment.

In 1843, a Catholic priest was permitted to celebrate Mass publicly in Oslo for the first time since the Reformation. From 1845, congregations were allowed to organize. When the Catholic Church was readmitted in Norway, there were only few traces left of its faith and culture which had characterized the country in the Middle Ages. Anti-Catholic sentiment was strong in Norway, and many Norwegians hardly considered Catholics to be Christians, something which still applies today.

The Catholic Church in Norway has been a church characterized by immigrants ever since its establishment in 1843. The number of Catholics increases slowly year by year, constituting about 50,000 registered Catholics and 200,000 unregistered in 2008.

## **REPORT FROM THE CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP LUMEN IN OSLO, NORWAY**

Lumen was founded in 1984 by sister of St. Joseph Ingrid Marie Nilsson. During a vacation in Connecticut, USA in 1974, she was introduced to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which she had previously only read about. She got in touch with a sister who was already involved in an ecumenical, charismatic group in New Britain, led by Catholic priests and lay people. Here, up to a hundred people met every week to pray and praise the Lord. Both through this group and through Renewal literature, sr. Ingrid Marie got a good understanding of what the Renewal stood for. In the last meeting before returning to Norway, about sixty people prayed for her to receive the baptism in the Spirit, which was a gracious experience. Before she had dared to ask for the baptism in the Spirit by the laying on of hands, she had looked for advice in the Bible and received the words: Tim. 1,6: "For this reason I remind you to keep alive the gift that God gave to you when I laid my hands on you." This was precisely the way she had come to understand the impact of the baptism in the Spirit, namely to lighten new life in the grace received in baptism and confirmation. After this, she became a member of "God's Love Community" in New Britain, by which she was supported spiritually for many years.

Having returned to Norway, sr. Ingrid Marie got several opportunities to tell about the Renewal both in her own community and in "Søsterrådet", a group of representatives from various religious orders in Norway. The prayer by the laying on of hands had granted her the same experiences as that of so many others: Jesus Christ came closer, the Word of God became more alive and the longing for prayer and silence increased. She also longed to be with others who had such experiences, and for several years she participated in groups led by Lutherans.

Only in 1984, at the request of two ladies in the church, a small group was formed. For several years, this group consisted of three to five people who met every week to praise the Lord, listen to the teaching and pray together. However, many others also dropped by and participated for a certain period of time, often suffering from problems and difficulties that they were unable to handle alone. Our impression was that the group functioned as a form of first aid, and we saw this as a sign that the group had an important mission even if it did not grow in numbers. Thus we may say that, throughout the years many people received courage and new strength to meet the challenges of life.

The leaders of the group have participated in a couple of international conferences in Rome and in Paray le Monial, France. In the late 1980s, sr. Ingrid Marie organized a Life in the Spirit seminar in Oslo with participants from Catholic churches in six different towns. The meetings lasted from six to nine p.m. once a month. This was a gracious time for everyone; the participants continued to meet once or twice a year on Saturdays for some years.

The intention was that the Lumen participants, who came from various Catholic churches, should establish individual groups in their own church. Unfortunately, this

failed, partly due to their many other tasks, but also because everything “charismatic” evoked and still evokes scepticism in many. It is difficult to explain the inner strength and grace that follows the baptism in the Spirit to people who have not experienced it themselves.

In 1993, Maria Tereza Bjerke became the new leader of Lumen and Kristin Tónay Berg assistant leader. In this period, the group expanded, primarily due to Spanish speakers, and it was visited several times by two Jesuits, p. Luis Maria Tejerina and p. Amando Sanz Escorial, who brought great blessings to many.

In recent years, the leaders have not been able to assist regularly due to illness and family responsibilities. Because of this situation, sr. Ingrid Marie still acts as leader. The group has gradually become stable and very international. Norwegian is always the main language used though, even if there are eight members from six different countries!

At the request of several group members, sr. Ingrid Marie organized a new Life in the Spirit seminar in the spring of 2007, with the help of two Franciscan priests, p. Nikolas and p. Grzegorz from St. Halvard Church in Oslo. They met every Wednesday from 18.30-21 p.m. from 11 April to 30 May 2007. Saturday 12 May they prayed for the baptism in the Spirit. There were thirty participants, some from the Philippine charismatic group\*, too. Since then, Lumen has grown, so now there may be anything from twelve to eighteen in the Wednesday meetings.

In September 2007, the group sent two representatives to Warsaw to take part in the forty years celebration of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Europe. They returned with great enthusiasm. At present, the group has many plans, among other things providing information about Catholic Charismatic Renewal on the web and tracing unregistered Catholic Charismatic groups around the country. With the help of God, we hope that these goals may be achieved.

We send our love with the words of 1 Cor. 12, 20 and 27. ”As it is, there are many parts, and one body.” “All of you, then, are Christ’s body, and each one is a part of it.”

\* Like in most countries all over the world, there are also in Norway Catholics from abroad who like to pray together in there own language. The Philippine charismatic group in Norway has her own story. So, to make the picture of charismatic renewal among Catholics in Norway more complete we have asked Rose Mary Erta to write her story too. **This is her report:**

## **FILIPINO CATHOLIC CHARISMATICS IN OSLO, NORWAY**

### **VISION / MISSION**

We, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Charismatic Renewal Community envisioned ourselves to be a renewed community of believers, proclaiming our faith in the triune God.

Firmly rooted in Jesus Christ, under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to fill the church with renewed life and vigor in:

- . giving witness to the faith we professed.
- . sharing and living the Word of God.
- accepting the gifts of the Holy Spirit with gratefulness.
- receiving the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist with renewed enthusiasm.
- obeying the laws of the Catholic Church and giving full support of its principles.
- caring for the needy.

### **HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY**

In 1991, Fely Naceno went to North Folk, Virginia where she attended Life in the Spirit Seminar given by Rev. Fr. Leonardo Polinar, a Charismatic Evangelizer and healer from the Philippines. Upon her return to Oslo, she started the Filipino Charismatic Movement composed of only her family and two others. A year later they expanded the group. They approached Fr. Clæs Tande, Parish Priest of St Olav Parish to be their Spiritual Director.

#### **El Shaddai**

A member of the group, Lina Teh, who just came back from the Philippines suggested if they would affiliate to a religious group called El Shaddai in the Philippines. Fr. Tande inquired about this organization and he consented. The Filipino Charismatic Movement became known as El Shaddai, Oslo Chapter. Constitutions and by-laws was formed based on the by-laws, Manila

#### **Filipino Chaplaincy**

In 1995, Fr. Marianito Dondoyano a Filipino priest was sent to Oslo to form the Filipino Chaplaincy. As we have our own chaplain and the Sacred Heart Filipino Chaplaincy was formed, we informed the El Shaddai Manila to discontinue our affiliation. And since then our group is known as the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Charismatic Renewal Community (SHJCCRC) under the guidance of our Filipino chaplain. Fr. Dondoyano helped the group with its Vision and Mission.

### **ACTIVITIES / EVENTS FOR THE PAST 17 YEARS**

A. 1. Prayer Meeting every Saturday at 2 o'clock, Ungdomslokale, St. Olav Parish. Ever since the Charismatic Renewal was organized, the leaders, filled with the Holy Spirit, saw to it that Prayer Meeting every Saturday is being held. We could say that God has a purpose for us to be there. Filipinos knew, that if you are new in a certain place/country,

just look for a Catholic Church and you will feel at home and safe. We were there for those who are lonely, no family, no proper clothing especially those who arrived in the country autumn or winter time. Those with personal, emotional, spiritual problems, etc. We are there for them. Our former chaplains, Fr. Dondoyano and followed by Fr. Nick was always with us to give homilies and reflections. It helped a lot for our spiritual growth and as a community, we were able to reach our vision and mission. If there is a mass to be celebrated for a certain Religious feast, then Prayer meeting is canceled so we could join the celebration.

2. Prayer meeting is not enough, our chaplains used to give weekly catechisms every after Filipino masses for all Filipinos. Mostly we would attend for those who had time. Unfortunately for some circumstances catechism for those who were interested was discontinued.

Our community once in while give catechism.

Our community organized Retreats once or twice a year for our members only and we are grateful to our chaplains who responded to our requests.

3. Our community would do some home visitations and outreach. If we were requested to hold Prayer meetings in their house especially outside Oslo, we would comply. Many would call and ask for prayers.

4. Our choir used to sing during our Filipino masses but for the past three years we had to give way to the youth choir of the chaplaincy. But if we are invited to sing in some occasions we accept. Just this Sept. 4, 2008, we were invited to sing during the Ecumenical Worship in the Philippine-Norwegian Ecumenical Peace Platform, Church Leaders' Conference held at St. Edmund's Anglican Church.

Two bishops from the Philippines attended. Topic: Advocating for Peace in the Philippines.

Really our community has been very busy. We had our schedule to help on Sunday's Church cafeteria in which the proceeds goes to the parish. We attended seminars, catechisms, retreats, Bible study, conventions, religious feasts organized by the Filipino chaplaincy.

Our community is responsible for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus next year, 2009. Therefore, our group is responsible that the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is going around visiting families for the whole year until next year feast.

## **B. SEMINARS / WORKSHOPS ORGANIZED and ATTENDED**

1. JUNE 5-11, 1998 Invited Rev. Fr. Leonardo Polinar, Charismatic Evangelizer and Healer from the Philippines to give the "Life in the Spirit and Growth Seminar. He is the Servant Leader of the "Servant Communities International". He is full of charisma and we could say God is really using him. The seminar was not only for the Filipinos (not only for the charismatics) but many from the Lumen and the Spanish charismatic

community came. Many were touched and we could say the Holy Spirit worked in so many of us. Our relationship with God improved.

2. AUG.12-15,1999 Second Life in the Spirit and Growth Seminar. We invited Rev. Fr. Polinar for the second time and this time we invited one of his newly ordained PACEM priests Fr. Edgar Boglosa. Fr. Ed was a successful Civil Engineer that after practicing his profession for five years knew that he has another calling in life, and that is to serve God. He was a charismatic as a student.

Fr. Polinar couldn't stay long and it was only Fr. Ed who gave LSS and Growth seminars in Bergen, Stavanger and in Copenhagen, Denmark. We were thankful to Bishop Tumalak of Bohol for allowing Fr. Ed to come to Scandinavia for five weeks. This time the seminars they gave were in accordance to the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) of the Catholic Church. The purpose is to unite not only Filipinos but other races as well.

AUG.10-13,2000 Third Growth Series Seminar and Worksop. To celebrate The Jubilee year we invited Fr. Edmund Nantes, Sis. Agnes Simbillo and Sis. Pat Moreno to give us this seminar. Based from the theme of the Great Filipino Jubilee Pilgrimage in Rome which is "LEARN THE FAITH, LIVE THE FAITH AND SHARE THE FAITH" many of us who attended this seminar had gradually and surely grown spiritually, thereby sustaining our Christian life and helped make us a better Christian.

OCT.18-19,2003 Fourth arranged seminar. We invited Msgr. Fred B. Kriekenbeek, Fr. Sam Galias and Sis. Melba Serasiko from the Philippines to give the Basic Healing and Evangelization Seminar. It was from them that we learned that there's a Catholic charismatic in Iceland.

5. SEPT.,2005 Fifth arranged seminar. We invited Sis. Bliss, a Filipino nun assigned in Bødo to give the Leadership Seminar. It was a two day seminar for our community only.

6. JULY,2006 We requested Fr. Frans, a Polish priest, to arranged a six days pilgrimage for us to visit Krakow, Poland where the devotion to the Divine Mercy started. It was a very meaningful and fruitful experience for all of us.

Fr. Frans maximized our six days in Poland. We visited places where our beloved, the late Pope John Paul II visited and stayed. He took us to Czestochowa where the Polish go for their yearly pilgrimage just by walking coming from different parts of the country to pay homage to our Miraculous Virgin Mother. One of the priests there who is a charismatic and knowing that we are charismatic, gladly gave us teachings and healing. God gave us a very special privileged on our last day in Poland when we were in Czestochowa.

Because of these, we understood why the Polish are having this yearly pilgrimage to walk the more than 20kms from Askim Church to Mariaholm (outside Oslo).

Since then, our community join in their pilgrimage and this year is our 3rd year participation. Tired but full of fun and joy and most of all together with them in Christ.

7. 2007 After the Holy Week, the Lumen Community organized the Life in the Spirit Seminar and our community was invited. Due to the language, only those who could speak and understand Norwegian attended. In the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a couple I encouraged to attend, received a blessing from our dear Lord. They had been trying to have a baby and already tried not the normal one twice and planning to undergo again and they already save money for this. After the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit, after 2 or 3 weeks, the wife realized that she is pregnant. Praise the Lord!! We were invited to the baptism this year. Sorry to say they are not active in our community.

8. JULY 4-5,2007 Six from our community attended a 2 day Retreat at St. Michael's Church, Moss led by Sis. Briega Mckenna.

9. SEPT. 26-30,2007 One from our community attended the International Charismatic Conference in Warszawa, Poland. We could say that the LSS arranged by the Lumen community was a good start for all of us Charismatic in Scandinavia. The European Charismatic Renewal heard that charismatic renewal exists in Oslo, Norway

10. AUG.1-3,2008 Four from our community attended the seminar in Finland. Theme "Moving in the Power of the Holy Spirit," talks given by Michelle Moran, President of the European Charismatic Renewal Services. We give Thanks to Lina Joannou-Jyranki for holding this 1st seminar/conference for Charismatics here in Scandinavia. We're praying that we could do this again with God's help.

Serving God gives us joy. We have time for everything... a time to pray, a time to do the simple job we could offer Him in our own small and simple ways and a time to relax and enjoy. GOD BLESS US ALL!!!

Rose Mary Erta  
Oslo, Norway

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### **Update October 10th, 2011, by Rose Mary Erta**

It was God's providence that we were able to start a Catholic Charismatic in Stavanger. The Filipino priest assigned there...( this time) was opened and helps anyone if it is only for our Lord. He came to Oslo when a Bishop from the Philippines came to visit us and I had only spoken to him for ca. 3 minutes and when he learned that we have a charismatic group, he just took my number. He was able to contact me right after our Nordic Conference in Sweden last year. I learned from him that there is someone in Stavanger who wants to start a Charismatic group and he is willing to help. I praise and thank God for this. I went with two others from our community to give the Life in the Spirit Seminar

first week of December and to have a follow up of the teachings I encourage Francis to attend the Life in the Spirit to be given in Iceland by a priest there.

Francis, who is the leader in Stavanger, has his own testimony to tell why he wants to start a Charismatic Renewal Community. God has been so good to him by giving him a second chance to go back to Stavanger to work.

He is an engineer and is already in the Charismatic Renewal since his college days, together with his parents and sisters. When he went to work in the oil rygg, he promised to start a Charismatic community 6 years ago, but unfortunately the former filipino priest won't allow it. He goes to church, yes, and so he just got involve in his work and forgot what he promised even a new priest(the present priest) came.

He just wanted to earn and was able to buy a house. But with God's intervention, he lost everything. . . . , his job and his house. His job closed down.He went back to the Philippines and was out of work for almost a year.

He was offered a job by the same company, and this time he did what he had to do. My meeting with the filipino priest was God's providence, that he learned about us. Now, they have their Prayer meeting every Friday, ca. 10 of them, and every Saturday, Francis would go with the filipino priest outside the city, reaching out, and he is very happy as he started small Charismatic Prayer group. His focus now is God and not money. Praise the Lord!

With regards to our Filipino Charismatic Community in Oslo, we celebrated our 20th year last October 1. It was a success. More than a hundred came to celebrate it with us. Members of the Couples for Christ came to join us in our celebration. Sister Ingrid of the Lumen Charismatic Community (with International members) were happy for us and what she could only say is that, because of the language, we have to be in two groups.

As we are celebrating our 20 years in the Renewal this year, so we tried to do some reaching out, evangelizing, give the Life and the Spirit Seminar, etc. God is with us! We are growing in numbers too. More or less there are 30 members who would attend our Prayer meeting every Saturday. Praise God!!!