

Catholic Charismatic Renewal in WALES

Wales, which is part of the United Kingdom is a small country covering an area of 20,760 km with a population of 2,798,200.

Prior to the Reformation, Wales was a Roman Catholic country although the ancient Celtic religion had a strong influence on forms of worship and theology. St Patrick who is the patron saint of Ireland was actually a Welshman who sailed across the Irish sea to convert the pagan Irish to Christianity.

Wales experienced a great revival in 1859 which emanated from the evangelical churches and resulted in thousands being converted to Christ. It was accompanied by a fall in crime rates and prostitution and a equally dramatic drop in problems associated with drunkenness. Hundreds of chapels were built all over Wales. However one very unfortunate feature of this revival was that it was virulently anti-Catholic. "Papists" were branded heretics. There are still lingering signs of such prejudice.

The estimated Catholic population in 1998 was 147,000 with approximately 42,000 people attending Mass.

Charismatic Prayer groups registered in the year book for 2000 amount to 44. Given an average attendance of 10 at a prayer group this would give the number being actively involved in renewal at about 440. This is more than likely an overestimate.

The Catholic church is divided into three diocese in Wales each having their own service teams who organise days of renewal and retreat. Some training for leaders has also been organised at this level.

The National Service Committee seeks to serve all three diocese with members being drawn from the three Diocesan service teams. It officially came in to existence in 1984 under the leadership of Bishop Langton Fox. The NSC has organised an annual National Conference since 1981 which now has an average attendance of 180 delegates drawn from all over the UK. This is a reflection of the small Catholic population of Wales. We have had some excellent speakers - Fr Bob Faricy, Fr Fio Mascharenas, Fr Pat Collins, Sr. Nancy Kellar are just a few examples.

The NSCs also organises retreats and leadership training weekends which are enthusiastically supported.

Updated by NSC-chairperson: Elisabeth Relf, 2000.

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