

New Life in the Spirit: Easter 2009

Christ is Risen!

Christ is Risen! That emphatic statement signals a fundamental change in human history. We have been set free, set free by Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. The spiritual hold of sin and death over us has been broken. The chasm between God and humanity has been bridged. Jesus Christ has done it. We can now be reconciled with God. But there is more, so much more. God now fills us with new life in his Holy Spirit. Christ dwells in us. We are now sons and daughters of God our Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, and brothers and sisters of one another in faith. We have a new identity. And we are part of a new family, a new people, the family of faith, the Church.

All this is possible because of the saving action of Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus death and resurrection are central to Catholic life and worship. We celebrate this incredible act of God's great love for us. We give thanks and remember what he has done for us, freedom, new life, forgiveness, friendship with God, brothers and sisters in faith, the opportunity to serve, to give of ourselves, the call to evangelize, and the task of continuing Jesus mission in the world! This is the Christians' independence day, and it gets even better. Our new life and freedom are sealed by God empowering us with the Holy Spirit and giving us the gifts we need for our calling. In the parish where I serve, we conclude the Easter Vigil and the Easter Sunday Masses by singing that wonderful gospel hymn, "O Happy Day."

Visit to Prayer Group at St Mary's, Eugene

Recently I was able to visit the prayer group at St Mary's in Eugene. About 25 people were there. We had a time of praise and worship and being open to word gifts. Thereafter I shared some things with folks and after that we had a time for questions and answers. There were some very good questions and discussion about how things were going in the prayer groups in the area. We concluded the evening with a time of prayer with one another for or needs.

While we were praying what came to mind was the parable of the Master and servants in Luke 19. The master leaves and gives each servant a coin. One makes ten additional coins from it, and another five. However one servant does nothing with it and returns it. I think we may be like those servants. Its not how much we make of what is given us as much as it is that we take the "coin" God has given and do something with it. We can be tempted to give it back to the Lord because it can be hard and tiring work in the renewal and in prayer groups, but we need to be faithful. Let us take whatever gifts the Lord has given us and use them as co-workers of His in building the kingdom.

Gratitude for God's gift to us

"In the theology and spirituality of the Pentecostal movement...there is an understanding that "the Holy Spirit really transforms the person, giving him a new heart and dwelling in the person. It is not

enough to determine the meaning of faith contained in Easter, liberation from sin and the gift of the Spirit. It is also necessary to be concerned about the intensity with which one believes. What can we do to reinforce it, to make it grow, if it is essentially a gift of God, not the fruit of our will? We must be conscious of the enormous gift, of the incredible privilege of being able to believe. We must be amazed and not cease to thank God the Father for it. "

Fr Raniero Cantalamessa OFM, [Come Creator Spirit](#)

Desire for God.

Among the sayings of the desert fathers of the 3rd century, is one about the importance of the desire for God.

A young monk one day approached an older, wise monk and asked, "What do I have to do to be perfect?" The wise monk replied, "Come with me to the river nearby and I will show you." When they arrived at the river the older monk led the young one into the water up to their waists, placed in his hand on the head of the young monk and plunged him into the water. After 15 seconds, the older monk could feel a slight stirring under the water. After 30 seconds, he felt the young man struggling. Finally, after one minute with the struggle become violent, the older monk release his hand. The young mopnk shot up and gasped for air. The old monk pulled him close and said, "Until you desire God as much as you do the air you are breathing, you will never be perfect!"

We can end up desiring the Lord too feebly and following him to sluggishly. That may be why we experience so little of God's power. Our desire for God fades and often dies because we do not act on it practically and persistently. Our desire for God may decrease for two practical reasons.

First, because it is crowded out by other desires. In the Boston Marathon, over 10,000 runners compete. As the race starts, there is a huge rush from the starting line. Eventually, several runners get out front. If front runner out far enough by the 20th mile, the others cannot hope to catch up with him. Our life in the Lord is similar. We begin the Christian life with many desires. To become holy, our desire for God has to get so far out front that the other desires cannot overtake the desire for him. These other desires are not necessarily bad. They may be legitimate, good and godly. However, if they take first place, our love for God will not predominate. Our predominant desire and love must be the Lord. We should regularly ask ourselves, What are all my desires? Are they out front or is the Lord out front? Because we live busy and complex lives, we may notice from time to time that the desire for God is number two or three or even ten in our lives. If so, we need to make some adjustments.

Our desire for God also decreases for a second reason, trials and sufferings. When we do not get the job we so desperately want, or we have had an argument with our spouse, or the person driving our car hits a tree, or our child doing badly in school, or we cannot lose weight, our resolve is weakened and we lose heart. During every trial, we should resolve to live as we know we ought. We ought to pray always, reflect on God's word, forgive others, ask forgiveness, faithfully carry out our responsibilities, be generous and do good to one another. In other words, whatever the circumstances, say to the Lord, "Yes Lord, I believe in you, I will follow you no matter the cost. As you struggled with your cross and got up, so help me carry my cross patiently."

If the Lord does not remove our trials and suffering, it is because they help us spiritually. They bring us to a consciousness of Jesus. They wake us up to recognize how much we need Jesus. They prod us to pray harder. The psalms are especially helpful prayers for those in trial.

"Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God....Why are you cast down, my soul, why groan within me? Hope in God; I will praise him still, my savior and my God" (Ps. 42:2,6).

"Lord my God, I call for help by day; I cry at night before you. Let my prayer come into your presence. O turn your ear to my cry....I call to you, Lord, all the day long; to you I stretch out my hands" (Ps. 88:2-3,10).

Trials and grief are also a means for growth in holiness and godliness. To face them in Christ, we must stretch out in self-control, patience, kindness, faithfulness and courage. And the Lord never leaves us alone in trial. He comes to our assistance. When we turn to him, though, he doesn't so much give us virtue, as he gives us more of himself, more of his Spirit. When we are full of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we can be like him in all circumstances.

Finally, "Do not be unduly alarmed at the fiery ordeals which come to test your faith," writes Peter, "as though this were some abnormal experience. You should be glad, because it means that you are sharing in Christ's suffering. One day, when he shows himself in full splendor, you will be filled with the most tremendous joy" (1 Pt. 4:12-13).

Catholic Charismatic books and media.

Renewed Life

A number of folks have asked about the availability of charismatic books and other materials. In years gone by we had numerous options, most of which seem to have gone. However, there is some good news. The old CRS (Charismatic Renewal Services) catalog which was mailed to many of us, has now been taken over and is run by La Salle Company. The new online catalog is known as Renewed Life. The good news is that they still give the automatic discounts that were part of the old CRS catalog, which seem to be around the 10% to 20% range on most items. I purchase quite a lot of materials from here, as well do a fair bit of Christmas shopping. The web address is:

<http://www.renewed-life.com/shop/index.cfm>

Servant Books

Another catalog we may remember was that from Servant Books. They were purchased by St Anthony Messenger Press, and incorporated into their overall publishing arm. You can still get to the Servant Books section of their catalog where they do have many charismatic renewal books. However, they do not offer the discount that Renewed Life does, nor do they have the range of books and materials either. It is a good fall back option if Renewed Life doesn't have the text you want. Their web address is:

<http://catalog.americancatholic.org/category.aspx?pcat=309>

Being Baptized in the Holy Spirit

“Our faith has come alive; our believing has become a kind of knowing. Suddenly, the world of the supernatural has become more real than the natural. In brief, Jesus Christ is a real person to us, a real person who is our Lord and who is active in our lives. We read the New Testament as if it were literally true now, every word every line. Prayer and the sacraments have become truly our daily bread instead of practices which we recognize as "good for us". A love of Scripture, a love of the Church I never thought possible, a transformation of our relationships with others, a need and a power of witness beyond all expectation, have all become a part of our lives.”

Patti Gallagher Mansfield, [As by a New Pentecost](#)

Charismatic Renewal on Youtube

The internet can be a source of good material on the renewal. It can also be host to a lot of naysayers. Recently I came across this 10 minute video on the website Youtube. It is a compilation of various video clips giving a history of the Catholic charismatic renewal from its beginning through to recent times. For those of us who have been involved over the years there will be a number of familiar faces and events. It's always helpful to know our history as it gives us a sense of our roots, what God began in this renewal, its successes and highpoints, and also things that we can learn from and do better or differently in the future. It also makes clear the Papal support the renewal has received over the decades from Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, and now Pope Benedict XVI..

www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-QDOcDGDWA

Testimonies: Faith in God's Healing Power

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12)

Last May I was in a restaurant having lunch with a friend. Our waitress was a very pleasant young woman named Tonya. During our conversations with her I noticed she seemed troubled about something and had a strong sense I should ask her about it. She immediately responded that her niece, Isabella, who was only 21 months old, had been diagnosed with a very aggressive type of cancer, and it

was terminal. Her only hope was to find a bone marrow donor. They had searched everywhere for a match, but none was to be found.

I asked if she would open to my friend and I praying with her for niece. While we were praying with her I had a very strong sense I should invite her to the prayer meeting and healing service my friend and I would be going to that evening at our local parish. When we had finished praying with Tonya I asked her if she could bring Isabella to the healing service. She said she would tell Isabella's family to come. We were there that evening when Tonya, Isabella, and Isabella's mom, Jennifer, walked in. They stood in the back throughout the meeting, trying to make sense of what was going on.

Right after the meeting began, Jack, the man leading the prayer meeting, asked, "Is there someone here named Mya?" No response. An hour went by and he said it again. Again, there was no response. Finally he said, "Is there someone here with a terminal disease?" Jennifer raised her hand and shared that Isabella's disease was terminal. He said, "Is there a name for it?" "Yes, she said. It's called Myodysplastic." "That's what I've been hearing all day. I thought it was someone's name," he said. "I believe God wants to begin her healing tonight." We all gathered around Isabella and prayed over her. When we were finished, there wasn't a dry eye in the place.

Two days later, a donor was found and Isabella received her transplant. She is thriving. I knew God wanted us to pray with Tonya in her workplace, the restaurant, even though there were people watching us. What they didn't know was that this was a life or death situation, and one requiring faithfulness. That's exactly how God wants us to approach all opportunities, with faithfulness to Him and openness to whatever opportunities present themselves

From Christians in Commerce, Daily Meditations.
