

# NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

LENT 2011



## Lent as a Time of Renewal in the Spirit

Lent often brings to mind penitential things, solemn music, and denying ourselves. Certainly this is part of Lent but it can also become the dominant theme, leading us miss much of what is also part of Lent. The focus of Lent is baptism, which is our new life in Christ. And with baptism comes the Holy Spirit. Immediately after Jesus is baptized the Holy Spirit comes upon him and he then prepares himself, in the wilderness, for his public ministry.

The three traditional Lenten practices have been prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Fasting is often the more dominant aspect of our understanding of Lent. Fasting is not just from food, but represents all practices of self discipline. We know this from our notion of giving something up for Lent, of making a sacrifice. This is essentially a religious version of our earthly practice of cleaning up our homes so as to make them more livable and welcoming to guests. We are

encouraged to examine our lives and to deal with the things that lead to the spiritual versions of clutter, dirt, things needing repair and cleaning, and even some renovation or removal. These all help us to refocus on what is spiritually important and essential for our lives. From a charismatic perspective, we want our hearts and lives to be more open to and welcoming of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps there are some things the Lord has put on our heart that need to be dealt with. And perhaps that will involve some commitment from us, and inviting the Holy Spirit more deeply into those aspects of our lives. The Hispanics have a saying, "*mi casa es su casa*" which literally means "my house is your house." That's how we want to approach the Lord and be welcoming of the Spirit in our lives.

Prayer is often seen in additional devotional practices such as Stations of the Cross, special Reconciliation services, and daily prayer and study helps. However, prayer is at its essence our relationship with God, our friendship with God. In any friendship, that relationship develops through time spent with another, getting to know them better, and loving what they love. The same is true of our relationship with God. It grows and deepens in these ways, and is damaged in a similar fashion to our earthly relationships. That damage is usually sin. When we damage our earthly relationships we usually apologize, make good what we did or said, and move on together. This is also what we should do with God, using the Sacrament of Reconciliation where necessary. We have this sacrament, not because we are so bad, but because God loves us so much. We can improve our prayer life this Lent, perhaps by praying regularly every day, perhaps by praying a little longer and more deeply, and by greater use the spiritual gifts during our prayer. When we get a word from the Lord, write it down, reflect on it, pray about it, and let the Lord move your heart and spirit. We can use scripture to focus our prayer, perhaps taking a Gospel and reading it from the perspective of growing in understanding of Jesus as a friend.

Finally, there is almsgiving, which is usually seen as giving money to the poor in some form. The heart of this Lenten practice is much more than giving money. It is really about growing in generosity of heart and of service in every way. We are challenged to look beyond ourselves, our own desires and wants, and to see those of others and to respond to them in some way. The purpose is to help us become less selfish and more selfless, in other words to love as Jesus loved and serve as he served. We can volunteer to help at our local prayer meeting in new ways. We can support our days of renewal, retreats, and other evangelistic events in ways we haven't done before. We can give extra time and energy in prayer, praying for the needs of others and for the spread of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. God has blessed us in many ways, we need to bless others.

May this Lent become a season of transformation for us, of growing in our relationship with the Lord, of serving as he did, and in seeking to grow in holiness as he calls us to.

## Patti Mansfield speaking on "More Than Conquerors"

At the 2010 SCRC conference in California Patti, who was at the Dusquesne Weekend, gave a talk on being "More Than Conquerors". The Youtube version is up on the SCRC site. You can view it at the link below.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBHOTUwJ1I0&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBHOTUwJ1I0&feature=related)

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## What is Catholic Charismatic Renewal?

*This is an excerpt from the **Catholic Charismatic Renewal Center for Chicago** website. It is a good description of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and what is essential to it.*

**Catholic Charismatic Renewal, A Movement of the Holy Spirit.** Renewal is a sovereign act of God, who touches our lives by the power of his Holy Spirit and changes us. Renewal is both a state-of-being and a process.

Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a movement of the Spirit, offered to the entire Church and destined to rejuvenate every part of the Church. When we say that the Charismatic Renewal is for the whole Church, we mean that it, indeed, is for all: the clergy, religious, and laity.

This Renewal is a personal experience of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who brings alive, in new ways, the graces of our baptism. The Holy Spirit not only renews, or sets on fire, all the graces we have already received, he comes in power to equip us with his gifts for service and ministry. We are renewed only when we open ourselves to God and accept what he is offering us—the fullness of his Holy Spirit. There is no other way!

While the Charismatic Renewal places a special emphasis on the role of the Spirit, it is also centered on God our Father, and on Jesus his Son, our Lord and Savior. It is a Trinitarian Renewal, and its goals are the same as the goals of the Roman Catholic Church, which are essential to living a Christian life:

- The need to know God as a loving and forgiving Father (Romans 8:14-16)
- The need for a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior (1 Cor. 12:3)
- The need for the empowering and indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5)
- The importance of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16) and Sacraments (Catechism section, 1131-1134).
- The call to prayer and the praise and worship of God (Acts 2:42-47)
- The importance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to serve the Church (1 Cor. 12:4-11)
- The need to build Community (Acts 2:42-47)

- The commission to evangelize and to witness (Acts 1:8)

### **What Are Our Gifts to the Church?**

- Prayer, praise, and worship
- The supernatural gifts of the Spirit such as tongues, prophecy, word of knowledge, etc.
- Expectant Faith— we are confident that God is going to act.
- The conviction that the Lord heals through ordinary people
- Other gifts we bring are a spirit of joy and celebration
- A desire to be witnesses empowered to proclaim Christ
- To bring alive the theological virtue of Hope
- We bring our prophetic voice in the Church and the world
- The need for and practice of intercession and spiritual warfare
- And no less important, a concern for justice, peace, and social issues

You can find the **Catholic Charismatic Renewal Center for Chicago** website at <http://chicagorenewal.org>. Take a visit and check out some of the other great features and links that they have. And if you are moved to do so, feel free to offer a prayer or two for their work and outreach in Chicago or even donate something to their efforts. Tell your friends about them too.

**Prayer Group Focus:** Take the points outlined above and reflect on them during your prayer meetings. The first set of points with the scripture citations are good discussion and reflection starters. The second group of points are good for self reflection as to how our prayer groups are doing.

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### **Deacon Alex Jones on “Finding God in the Wilderness”**

Here is a videoclip of Deacon Alex Jones at the 2010 SCRC Convention. His topic was "Finding God in the Wilderness: Making Sense of Our Sufferings"

[www.youtube.com/user/SCRConline#p/c/8C8626D1B9B8EEEC/2/c3QuwVoiTPc](http://www.youtube.com/user/SCRConline#p/c/8C8626D1B9B8EEEC/2/c3QuwVoiTPc)

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## And the Angels Danced: The Habit of Witness

By Sr. Timothy Marie O.C.D.

It was a magnificent winter evening, the air crisp and cold as the distant sun began to descend behind the oil derricks in Carson, California. Our convent car gave a shudder as I turned the key in the ignition and carefully backed out of the driveway. *Yes*, I would be there on time! Prayers at our nearby convent began promptly at 5:00 p.m. and I was looking forward to joining my other Carmelite Sisters in singing God's praises. Little did I know, as I made my left turn onto Sepulveda Boulevard, that this would be no ordinary journey.

Just past Wilmington Avenue, the car wheezed and coughed, as if catching an enormous cold from the onslaught of icy wind slapping its windshield. It sputtered to a graceful stop as I eased it nearer the curb. It took me a full minute to assess the situation --- do I stand on the side of the road as a hitchhiker would, or do I start walking back home? I closed my eyes and said a quick prayer, asking my guardian angel to help me decide what to do.

Cars were whizzing by, eager to get home for the supper hour. Finishing my prayer, I thought, "Well, at least, they will see me; in my long Carmelite habit and veil, I will stand out."

Exiting the car, I dashed to the street meridian, where I joined a beautiful young Hispanic girl who was selling bouquets of flowers. I introduced myself and explained my situation in broken Spanish and she replied, "Dios se le bendiga," which means "God bless you."

Sunset came. My new friend began to pack up her unsold flowers, and I suddenly spied the Spires Restaurant. A lot of big trucks were parked nearby. Truckers! My answer had come! Saying good-bye to my newfound friend, I went to the crosswalk and, feeling like Julie Andrews in the *Sound of Music* scene where she is toting that suitcase down the street singing, "I have confidence," I lifted my head and walked steadfastly and confidently into Spires Restaurant.

Warmth enveloped me as I stood in the entrance. "Excuse me, can anyone help me, please? My car just died outside."

About twenty sets of eyes turned toward this shuddering Carmelite, who remained hopeful that chivalry was not yet dead, and that charity still resided in the human heart.

A man seated at the counter purposefully got up and walked over to me. "Roosevelt's my name," he offered. Roosevelt appeared to me to be in his 60s. "Take me to that car and we'll see what we can do."

I led him out onto the nearby street and he said, "Can't fix it here. Have to bring it in. I'll get my truck and push you into the parking lot. You just steer." By the time we made it back to the lot, prayers at our convent had already started. I was going to be late . . . again!

Roosevelt tinkered with the car's innards. "Yup, that's it. Battery's dead." He proceeded to take jumper cables out of his truck and attached them to our convent car. "This will take about fifteen minutes," he said. "May I buy you a cup of coffee?"

Now that the sun had totally set, it was getting colder. I accepted his offer, gratefully.

We talked as we warmed our hands on hot mugs of coffee. A quarter-hour later the car was fixed; its battery had been recharged. I turned to thank Roosevelt. It was only then that I saw the tears in his eyes. "What's the matter, Roosevelt," I asked. "Why are you crying?"

"May I tell you why I fixed your car?"

"Yes, of course," I answered, not knowing quite what to expect.

"I was born a long time ago in Mississippi. We were very poor. Every winter I contracted pneumonia as a child -- our house was so poor. One year, I must have been about 10 or so, I was rushed to the hospital. With no antibiotics (recall this is in the 1930s, so antibiotics had not yet been discovered,) pneumonia caused the death of many children. The doctors had just told my mother that I would not last the night.

"That evening two Catholic Sisters, dressed just like you, entered my hospital room. I had a high, high fever and I remember one of the sisters came by my bed, put her cool hand on my forehead, and prayed for me. I didn't know what to do, or how to respond. I had been taught that no black could dare get near a white woman. And now here was this white Catholic nun, not only placing her hand on my head, but praying to God with all her heart for me. I had never heard nor seen anything like it. That's just how it was in those days. That's just how it was.

"Well, the next day my fever was gone. The doctor said I had passed the crisis; he didn't know why or how. But I knew. I never saw the Catholic sisters again. Throughout all these following years, I have wished I could find them and thank them. Today, just now, when you came into the restaurant and asked for help, I said to myself, 'Roosevelt, your time has come to thank the sisters.' That's why I got up and offered my help. It was finally my time to return the favor."

By now tears were glistening down both our faces. It was a sacred moment. The windy parking lot of Spires Restaurant became a sacred place. We were standing on holy ground. Yes, times have changed. Thank God!

I looked up at Roosevelt; he stood at least a foot taller than I, and I asked with immeasurable respect and reflection, "Roosevelt, may I hug you?"

A big smile spread across his face as he turned to me and answered, "Yes, ma'am." At that moment in time, right there, a cold and frigid night, just off Sepulveda Boulevard, two of God's children embraced, shattering centuries of ignorance and prejudice.

More than a battery was made right that evening . . . and the angels danced!

You can access this and other stories from the Patheos website at the following web address  
[www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/And-the-Angels-Danced-The-Habit-of-Witness.html](http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/And-the-Angels-Danced-The-Habit-of-Witness.html)

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