



No.226

GOOD NEWS

Catholic Charismatic Renewal Serving The Church

**Pentecost
With The Pope**

Michelle Moran

**Go Out To
The Margins**

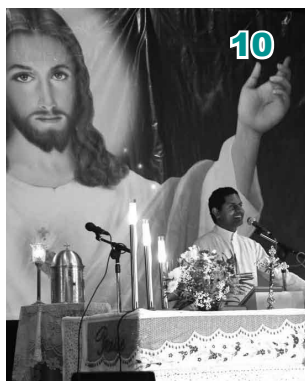
Kristina Cooper

**The New Evangelists
Sehion UK**



July/August 2013

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Front cover: Waterfall in Israel

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Regulars: News, The Other Half, Coming Events

GOODNEWS is a bimonthly Catholic magazine drawing from the insights of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, but seeking to serve the whole Church. Through its teaching articles and testimonies of what God is doing in our countries at this present time, Goodnews seeks to help the general reader experience and understand the importance of the charismatic dimension of the Christian life, which the Pope in 1998 underlined as co-essential to the Church's hierarchical dimension. Through its coming events section, it enables readers to find out about good retreats, conferences, events and seminars that will help them grow in their spiritual life.

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by Kristina Cooper

In this issue I have very much a sense of the passing away of the old, good as it has been and the sprouting of the new. This has been highlighted by the election of the new Pope, Francis, and his very different way of operating – his spontaneity and his challenge – which have created a real sense of optimism and hope. Michelle Moran was in Rome for the meeting of the Movements in St Peter's Square at Pentecost and she tells us what happened, what the Pope said and the reflections that she took away with her.

Even though I didn't go to Rome, I have been following Pope Francis's words on Zenit over the past few months and have been greatly challenged by his life as much as his words, and his call to go to the margins. This ties in very much with the reflection on *Gaudium et Spes*, by Fr Jack Finnegan from Dublin, and its call to the Church and to the CCR to break out of its narrow confines to serve the world. Fr Chris Thomas picks this up in his piece and wonders if, with the election of Francis, the fullness of Vatican II will be achieved.

As Christians we are called to serve society and in this issue we hear from Fiona Hendy, a former member of the English NSC, who now lives in Tanzania where she is in the process of building a home for children in need and forming a small Christian community to look after them. We also hear the testimony of Lillian Awere, a GP in South London, who tells us how Charismatic Renewal brought her faith alive and how her Christian faith has sustained her in her life and helps her as a doctor.

Many of the great pioneers of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the UK have been passing away in recent months. One larger than life character was Fr Peter Dolan, parish priest of Holy Family in Ingol, Preston, who headed perhaps the only Catholic Charismatic parish in the country. I remember him best of all for his spirit of prayer and the fact that every phone call to him, ended in a time of prayer and blessing. This passing of great men and women of God I realize is going to be happening more and more as those who were responsible for bringing the CCR to our northern Isles in

the 70s and 80s leave this life to go the Lord. It brings home to me too, the sense of my own mortality and the importance of making space for the next generation. Thus, in this issue and future ones, we will endeavour to include articles by some young writers from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and their perspectives. Sam Goldsmith, who is in her mid twenties, has written a fascinating and challenging piece about the future of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the need to surrender its future to the Holy Spirit. Caz Parra, is a young web journalist, and she explains how the web can be a great vehicle for building community and friendship. This is something I have always had a bit of problem with, but I was struck by a testimony we received from Greg Crowhurst, that confirmed what she has written. He explains how isolated he and his wife have become from normal Christian community, due to her terrible illness, and how the internet has provided friendship in unexpected quarters.

Another of the new sources of life in the CCR are the many foreign communities and groups that are enriching the Church at the moment and the events they are organising. One of the most amazing of these must be the Second Saturday Conventions led by Fr Soji Olikkal and his team from Sehion UK in Birmingham. Three thousand people come regularly to their gatherings and many children are being enthused in their Catholic faith and now want to become evangelists as a result.

Rosemary Swords from the Elijah Community in Dublin, meanwhile, continues her series on practical evangelisation and in this issue looks at how to deal with argument and confrontation when evangelising. Fr Frank Bird, a Marist missionary from Down Under, gives some very helpful advice to encourage us to become more aware of the spiritual warfare often going on in our heads, that can stop us being effective witnesses for Christ. Sue Whitehead gives us her usual amusing but perceptive take on life in the Other Half, and we have our news pages and information about good books and tapes.

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It was in the context of the Year of Faith that Pope Benedict announced there was going to be a gathering of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities in Rome for Pentecost. On this occasion, we were called to Rome by the Pontifical Council for New Evangelisation, so the emphasis was less on the 'Movements' and more on the 'mission'.

During these early weeks of Pope Francis' pontificate large crowds are regularly gathering in St Peter's Square. So for the vigil of Pentecost things were certainly lively as 250,000 tried to make their way to be as close to the Holy Father as possible. For me these large crowd moments have more of a pilgrimage dynamic than being opportunities for deep prayer and reflection. It is the being there together in solidarity that is so encouraging and obviously witnesses to the world. However, there was a sense of something very significant happening as we all joined together to pray the solemn invocation, 'veni creator Spiritus'.

Vatican Radio commented that Pope John Paul II drew the 'movements and new communities' into the heart of the Church. Then in 2006 Pope Benedict commissioned us to embrace our baptismal responsibilities but now Pope Francis was showing us how to do it. This time, there was no particular message for the movements. However, it was wonderful to look out at the totally packed square and surrounding areas and see all the colour, the banners, the balloons and the vibrancy of the Church alive and to know that our focus was evangelisation.

At the beginning of the vigil, the first symbolism was the procession of an icon of Our Lady by six young people who then greeted the Holy Father. It was touching to see the Holy Father spend some moments in quiet before the icon and then to simply bless himself before turning to the crowds and resuming his public office. After the liturgy of the Word, there were two testimonies. The first was from an Irish journalist, John Walters, who is a member of Communion and Liberation movement. He gave a personal testimony of how through the various circumstances of his life he had come to know the Lord. The second witness had more of a communal dimension. It was given by a Paul Bhatti a doctor originally from Pakistan, who had worked for many years in Rome. His brother was Shahbaz Bhatti the Pakistani politician, who at the age of 43 was murdered in 2011 for speaking out against the blasphemy law in Pakistan. We heard very movingly how Shahbaz spent time everyday in prayer and in reflection on the Word. How even though he knew his life was in danger he continued in his mission trusting that Jesus would protect him.

The main part of the Vigil was a question and answer session where the Pope received four questions of which he had had



previous notice, so he said "It is with some thought, prayer and reflection that I now make my response to the questions." However, his answers were completely unscripted as seems to be his way. Amusingly, the Vatican Radio presenter in English kept emphasising that they were really doing their best to give as accurate a translation as possible to the Holy Father's unscripted reflections. In summary the questions were:

- Holy Father how did you come to have a certainty of faith and how can we overcome the fragility of our own faith?
- How can we communicate our faith in a real way?
- How can we live as a poor Church for the poor?
- How can we help the persecuted and suffering if there is little we can do to change the socio-political climate they are living under?

In answer to the first question, the Pope gave a personal testimony to the importance of his family, in particular his grandmother, and said that for him the family was the first place of initial proclamation. Then he shared how, when he was 17 years old, even though he wasn't that devout in his faith, he went to confession and had a deep experience of the Lord who was, as it were, waiting for him. He said that something within him at that moment changed and he heard for the first time the call that was to eventually be his priestly vocation. In his simple kerygmatic style, he said that studying faith in books is important but the most important thing is that you need to encounter Jesus. As humans we are fragile but there is no

Pentecost with the Pope

by Michelle Moran



need to be afraid because He is stronger than us. We are like children walking with our Father and the walking strengthens us. He encouraged us to draw strength from prayer, the Eucharist, the Church and Mary and suggested praying the rosary every day so that we can grow stronger.

Practical evangelisation

In answer to how to communicate our faith, he said 'I will say just three words: Jesus, prayer and witness'. He said we must keep focused on Jesus and warned the movements not to get too distracted by structures and organisation. He appealed to the crowds not to chant Francesco but only to chant Jesus. Again he gave a witness to his own life, his life of prayer, encouraging us to look at the face of the Lord. He said that sometimes he feels sleepy in front of the Lord but the most important thing in prayer is not what we do but that we simply allow the Lord to look at us. From this place of silence and prayer we will be guided by the Lord and then live a life of credible witness.

A poor Church for the poor

Flowing from this focus on witness he spoke practically about being a Church for the poor. He emphasised that the Church isn't a political movement and that we are not an NGO. When we are reduced to this we lose our salt and become an empty organisation. He said that there is a sin of efficiency he said. We have to be salt and light and make the yeast of the Kingdom present through fraternal love. He commented that the present

crisis isn't only financial or economic but a crisis of humanity. We can't only be concerned about ourselves or close ourselves to others by becoming self referential as this leads us to become stale. When the Church becomes closed up in itself it gets sick. We have to go out with the gospel which always goes beyond itself. Reassuringly he said that people can be afraid of making mistakes but he commented "I prefer mistakes to staleness!" Referring to Rev. 3:20 he said that Jesus stands at the door and knocks so that when we welcome Him in, the door then leads us out. So we should not be slaves of fear but free children of God. We must go out and encounter others. We have to combat the culture of individualism and fragmentation and transform it into a culture of encounter. In his truly incarnational preaching style he said; we must not become inanimate Christians, people who are well read, well spoken, and well behaved. We must engage and look people in the eyes, touch the poor and be like Christ who was poor among the poor.

The wider mission

In conclusion and answering the final question he said that the call is to be missionary and we need courage and patience. Noting that there are more martyrs today than in the early centuries of the Church, he said; death isn't a defeat but martyrdom is the highest form of witness. So we must be humble and tender showing mercy and responding to evil with good although this is often difficult. We can help the persecuted by being profoundly united with them and by praying for them and doing all that we can to promote religious freedom for everyone.

GO OUT TO THE MARGINS



Kristina Cooper reflects on the message of Pope Francis to the Church to go out to the poor and evangelise.

I admired both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI and really felt them to be the right people chosen by the Holy Spirit to serve the needs of the Church at the time. Neither of them, however, have challenged me as much as Pope Francis has done in the short time he has been in office. I have been amazed at some of the stories that have emerged about his past life. One former seminarian told how, when Pope Francis was the rector at the seminary, on Sundays he would send the students out to visit the poor, while he fed the seminary pigs, scrubbed the seminarians soiled clothes and prepared a meal for them when they returned. What an example of service for future priests and surely more effective and powerful than a thousand teachings or scripture reflections about being a servant leader.

Didn't have anyone controlling his diary

Equally when he was elevated to be archbishop in Buenos Aires, apparently he made his own appointments and didn't have anyone controlling his diary. This meant he could choose whom he wanted to see or not, rather than have others make this decision for him. And some of his choices would not, I imagine, be the expected ones. One story I read told of how a young man who had been a drug addict and had become a postman, delivering the mail to the office, one day asked if he could have a chat with the cardinal. The secretary in most curial offices would have carefully screened out someone like this as not a priority for a busy archbishop, but Cardinal Bergoglio rang him up personally and agreed to see him. Another story that touched me was that when he became archbishop he installed a special telephone line for his priests to contact him on. They were given the number and told to ring whenever they needed him. Not surprisingly those who tended to ring were the old and sick priests who had time on their hands rather than the thrusting, busy, successful priests involved in important projects. And apparently the cardinal spent many nights ministering to them.

What did he not do that most bishops and cardinals did?

Then facts emerged that rather than having a chauffeur driven car when he was Cardinal Bergoglio, Pope Francis would travel on public transport on his visits to his priests. He also did his own cooking. I thought of the bishops I have known. If they have had drivers and cooks, it wasn't because they were lazy or self

important but because they were so busy and pressurised they didn't have the time to cook for themselves or wait for buses. I pondered if Cardinal Bergoglio spent his time on these time consuming ordinary tasks, what did he not do that most Bishops and Cardinals usually do?

It seems that he didn't spend that much time networking with the influential or being interviewed by the press or writing books. As a journalist I find this very challenging. It is normal if you have a message that you want to communicate that you look for opportunities that will facilitate this. This is why people employ press officers, PR consultants, speech writers and marketing experts to find the best way to communicate their message. Pope Francis, however, all his life, whatever position he has held, seems to have totally ignored this. Instead he has chosen a more revolutionary way to communicate what he wants to say. He has simply put the gospel into practice in his life. Like his namesake Francis of Assisi before him, he has put Christ in the poor in first place – be they postman or elderly priests or young seminarians. He has “wasted” his time with people the world would consider of no account or influence just like Jesus did. And what has happened? What he has done quietly for so many years has suddenly been brought into the light because of his elevation to the papacy. Instead of secret sins being revealed, hidden virtue has been revealed and the cynical world which has been criticising the Church for so long have noticed and have been amazed.

Thus when Pope Francis tells us that if we are to evangelise we must go out of our comfort zones to the margins, these are not just poetic words. They come from his own lived experience and precisely because of this, his words and his lifestyle have really challenged me. I am a very focussed person and I realise I often am too busy to notice the “poor” that God puts in my daily path because I have become too involved in what I consider “important” matters – my priorities. Pope Francis' way of living is causing me to think again. How should we be communicating the gospel in our society?

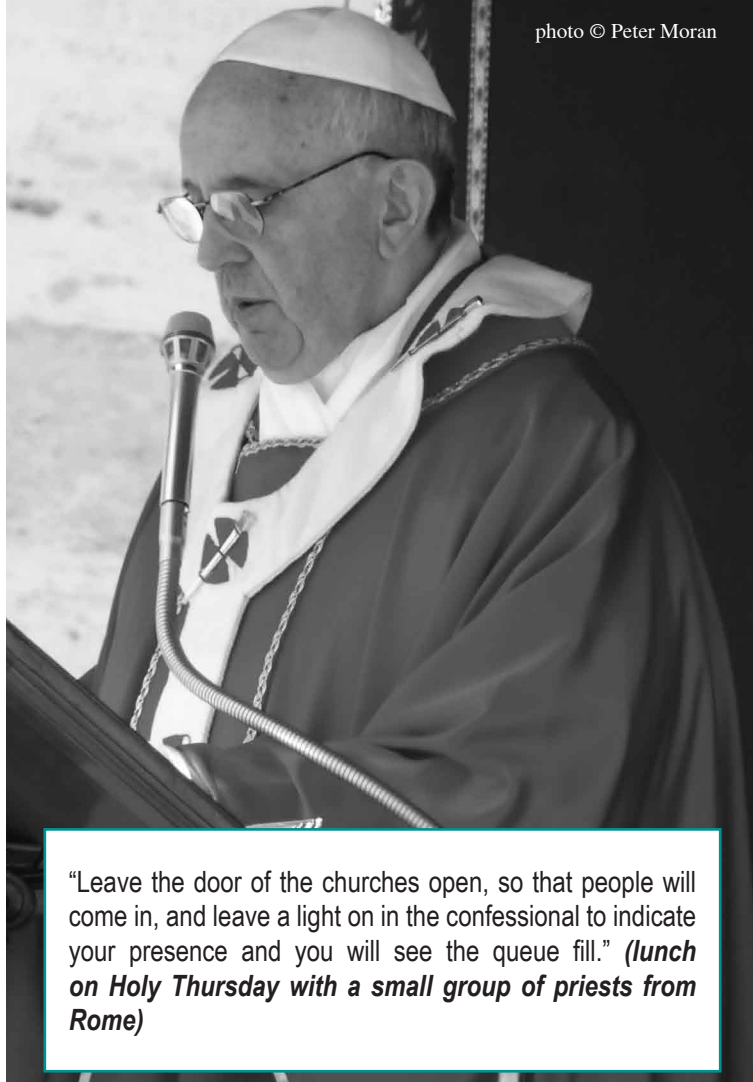
Live with the smell of the sheep

Pope Francis doesn't need to speak much, because his actions are so powerful they speak for him. Thus when he says that pastors must “live with the smell of the sheep” or that “we must go out to the margins and evangelise” his words have resonance. If he has been able to live this out in simple ways, and not caved in to social expectation or pressure, when he was a seminary rector or a cardinal and now pope, we have no excuse either. We too are being challenged to recognise and serve those who are on the margins in our own lives.

Are we capable of bringing the Word of God into the environment in which we live? Do we know how to speak of Christ, of what He represents for us, in our families, among the people who form part of our daily lives? Faith is born from listening, and is strengthened by proclamation..... We cannot feed God's flock unless we let ourselves be carried by God's will even where we would rather not go, unless we are prepared to bear witness to Christ with the gift of ourselves, unreservedly, not in a calculating way, sometimes even at the cost of our lives. But this also applies to everyone; we all have to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel. We should all ask ourselves: How do I bear witness to Christ through my faith?..... In God's great plan, every detail is important, even yours, even my humble little witness, even the hidden witness of those who live their faith with simplicity in everyday family relationships, work relationship, friendships. There are the saints of every day, the hidden saints, a sort of middle class of holiness to which we can all belong. we have to empty ourselves of the many small or great idols that we have and in which we take refuge, on which we often seek to base our security. They are idols that we sometimes keep well hidden; they can be ambition, a taste for success, placing ourselves at the centre, the tendency to dominate others, the claim to be sole masters of our lives, some sins to which we are bound and many others. Worshipping is stripping ourselves of our idols, even the most hidden ones, and choosing the Lord as the centre, as the highway of our lives." **(Homily at St Paul Outside the Walls 15th April 2013)**

"A priest who seldom goes out of himself, who anoints little (I won't say not at all because thank God, our people take our oil from us anyway) misses out on the best of our people, on what can stir the depths of his priestly heart. Those who do not go out of themselves, instead of being mediators, gradually become intermediaries, managers. We know the difference: the intermediary, the manager, has already received his reward, and since he doesn't put his own skin and his own heart on the line, he never hears a warm, heartfelt word of thanks. This is precisely the reason why some priests grow dissatisfied, become sad priests, lose heart and become in some sense collectors of antiques or novelties instead of being shepherds living with the smell of the sheep, shepherds in the midst of their flock, fishers of men." **(Chrism Mass to priests 2013)**

"First Eucharistic adoration, then go out to meet Christ who is in the poor who live on the streets, to give them something to eat, to engage in conversation with them, which enables us to take Christ to those persons.... Don't be hasty, this isn't fast food." **(Conversation with seminarian Luis Montesano when Pope Francis was Cardinal Borgoglio)**



"Leave the door of the churches open, so that people will come in, and leave a light on in the confessional to indicate your presence and you will see the queue fill." **(lunch on Holy Thursday with a small group of priests from Rome)**

"To put it plainly: the Holy Spirit is annoying because He compels us to move. He makes us walk on, He urges the Church to go forward. And we are like Peter at the Transfiguration: "It is wonderful for us to be here, all together!"... as long as He doesn't become too demanding. We want the Holy Spirit to doze off..... we want to tame the Holy Spirit. And this is unacceptable." **(Homily 16th April 2013)**

"A Church that does not go out, sooner or later gets sick in the vitiated atmosphere of her enclosure. It is also true that to a Church that goes out something can happen, as it can to any person who goes out to the street: to have an accident. Given this alternative, I wish to say to you frankly that I prefer a thousand times an injured Church than a sick Church. The typical illness of the shut-in Church is self reference; to look at herself, to be bent over herself like the woman in the Gospel. It is a kind of narcissism that leads us to spiritual worldliness and to sophisticated clericalism, and then it impedes our experiencing "the sweet and comforting joy of evangelising." (letter sent to Argentinian bishops 105th plenary assembly 25th March 2013)

Surrendering to God's plan for the Renewal



Sam Goldsmith reflects on the sovereignty of God and His plan for the Charismatic Renewal.

It was November 2011 and I was sitting in a packed room somewhere near Munich surrounded by many inspirational European CCR leaders at the European ICCRS meeting. However, by the end of the first night I was struck by the undeniable heaviness in the room. Almost to a man (or woman), each leader shared how their country's Renewal movement was dwindling. The weight of numbers and the spectre of the past sat heavily on their shoulders. This fear of stagnation and the temptation to look back to reminisce on the halcyon days of the past is not, in my experience, unique to that weekend. I've come across it in almost every aspect of the Renewal, from main conferences to lunchtime initiatives started by sixth formers. Closely linked is another common preoccupation - the eager awaiting of the next big revival. Having been in the Renewal since I was six and leadership since I was eighteen, I have lost count of the times I've heard this hope expressed. This has taken many forms - a prophecy, intercession or rally call, and through "pictures", words of knowledge and references to scripture. A 'new wave of the Spirit is just around the corner', "a new mass outpouring", "a fresh anointing poised to sweep us along" we are so often told. They have recurred so often that I had almost ceased to notice them.

Over focus on numbers is damaging

I believe an over-focus on either of these issues to do with numbers and size is damaging for leaders and anyone in the Renewal. I refuse to accept that God is doing nothing in the European CCR movements. We live in a world climate of targets and numerically measurable achievements. Now, while I recognise the value of a well-conducted statistical review, God is not, and never has been, limited by numbers. Gideon's drastically reduced army, a shepherd boy and a pebble, five loaves and two fishes, twelve disciples...God has repeatedly shown that when he desires to move in power, numbers (or the lack of) mean little to Him. Equally, Jesus hardly left His Church with an NHS-esque target plan prior to His Ascension; 'Right team, I want to see a 2-4% increase in church numbers at the close of each liturgical year.' I am as uneasy with the regular prophecies of renewal, revival, a new Pentecost. I am certainly not saying that I'm against the Renewal expanding or a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but my seemingly Scroogeian concern was recently verbalised for me at

York Community Church by preacher Brian Crosby, who reflected that the prophecies of revival spoken with monotonous regularity never seem to come to fruition. He felt instead we should be focussed on what God is doing NOW and on understanding the many different ways in which the Spirit moves.

Why are we always looking for the next big wave?

The Spirit is always moving. So perhaps we need to ask ourselves why we are looking for the next big wave? Why, exactly, do we fear decreasing numbers? Are these cries genuinely instigated by God or are they reflecting our own desires and patterns of expectation? My reflections have been greatly stirred by the ICCRS Doctrinal Commission's *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (2012). (see May/June 2013 Goodnews). It's stuffed full of allusions to the sovereign nature of God. The understanding of God as an all-powerful King, who has a sovereign authority over history and time. We often know this in a hazy 'God is omnipotent' sense, but not in the affecting-us-here-and-now sense. A lot has been said recently on the complementary but separate institutional and charismatic elements of Church, through which God loves and provides for us. Institutionally, he loves us through the scriptures, liturgy and sacraments - steadily, unchangingly, and sustaining, a continual, reliable presence throughout history. While giving life to the institutional, the charismatic dimension is in many ways the total opposite. The charismatic is unpredictably given, cannot be codified, predicted or controlled. Here we can understand a little more about God's sovereign nature. The charismatic dimension is the sovereign action of the sovereign Lord.

The charismatic is given by the Lord in an unpredictable way and cannot be codified

As John Paul II said, 'The Spirit is always awesome when He intervenes'. This intervention radically changes people and history - think of Jesus' conception, the Upper Room Pentecostal experience, Paul's conversion. Think of more recent shifts, the outpourings of the Spirit in the various denominations that eventually led to our own Renewal movement. Think of the actual experiences of the 1967 Duquesne Weekend, and our personal experiences of the grace of the Spirit. They are certainly not moments that anyone can claim to have created in any other way than having said 'yes' to what the Spirit desired to do. These are

moments of unexpected and direct intervention, moving history closer towards completion. As *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* puts it:

The charismatic dimension refers to the gifts poured out spontaneously at Pentecost and afterwards by the Holy Spirit, who freely distributes His graces when and where He wills. The institutional is passed down from generation to generation and belongs to the permanent visible structure of the Church. The charismatic is given by the Lord in an unpredictable way and cannot be codified. (p. 69 – my italicisation)

So if the existence and nature of Renewal is closely tied to God's charismatic and sovereign nature, this leads to some important questions. What does it mean to be part of, or to lead, a movement that is an outpouring through the sovereign action of God? One that might, just as easily, be ended by the sovereign action of God? And how does this relate to our preoccupation with numbers and eagerness for a fresh revival?

If the Renewal could by the grace and will of God end, what does that mean for us?

In 2012, Fr Peter Hocken spoke on this to a group of English CCR leaders. The conclusions it led us to were unsettling, particularly for the '3rd generation', the younger leaders like myself in our twenties. Many of us had grown up in the Renewal and I remember our concerned discussions afterwards. If the Renewal could by *the grace and will of God* end, what did that mean for us for whom the CCR has been such a central part of our lives? The renewal is my home, where my heart is, where I encounter God – what would I do if this ended? A frightening, disheartening, despairing prospect? Or one, which through prayer and reflection, leads us not only to a fuller understanding of God's nature and plan, but also a fuller trust and surrender to the Spirit? What could be better than the CCR? God's plan, surely? So my proposal is this: we need to contemplate this possibility actively, if only to bring us to a greater surrendering and trust in God.

There is nothing we can do to perpetuate the Renewal or any of God's widespread outpourings, as they are His alone to distribute as His wisdom wills. For me, this is a profound challenge to our expectation and desire to see God move. Yes, we should desire, pray and look for this, but our primary seeking should be for an openness to respond to what His sovereign heart desires, and how He intends to move – not how we think He should be moving. We have to yield to His living lordship. We need to have the courage to hand the Renewal back to Him – He instigated, He guides, He perpetuates and/or ends – not us. We must understand that it is not our remit to create, summon, perpetuate or end such incredible power. When we think about statistics and cry unthinkingly for a revival, we are in grave danger of falling into that trap. It is not our job to desire Him to continue the Renewal (or to end it), or to attempt to do this in our own strength and enthusiasm.

For me, this is an interesting reallocation of responsibility – it is not my personal duty to 'keep the Renewal alive' or bring the 'next Revival'. It is my duty to continue to seek the Lord and His love, to open my heart fully to receive whatever He pours out upon me

in His sovereign power. It is my duty to listen to and discern His Spirit, as much as I can. And then, it is my duty to bring that love and openness to others. Our remit is so much more simple than perpetuating the Renewal. We are called to receive God's love. We are called to receive His heart for others and to love others with and through that – to love the individuals, not the numbers or the experience. What is the point of expanding so rapidly we don't have time to love, to have a relationship with those who come flocking through the doors? What is the point of manifesting amazing signs or spouting incredible prophecies if we don't, before that, love the people next to us with God's heart?

"*Baptism in the Holy Spirit*" tosses out some fairly thumping challenges here:

- Wherever the Renewal is healthy and the exercise of the charisms is mature, the emphasis is not on the miraculous or extraordinary nature of these gifts but rather on their capacity to mediate God's love and build up the body of Christ. (p. 22)

- [1 Cor 13] is not a digression but rather provides the foundational principle that must order all the exercise of the charisms. Even the greatest charisms are nothing apart from love ...Paul is not setting up an opposition between charisms and love, but rather between charisms exercised with or without love. Indeed, his whole point is that exercising a charism must itself be an act of love. (p. 44)

Irrespective of how many people come or how many prophecies are made per session, we must keep this teaching at the very centre of all we do. We must fix our eyes on him, seeking him and his love first, becoming more open to his love for us, and desiring to love others from that place alone.

I don't know what the Spirit will do next.

I don't know what the Spirit will do next. Very few people had prior warning of the current Renewal movement, and I'm sure it will be similar for the future. He might lead us into a time of deep silence. There might be no more big gatherings. I don't know, but I do know that the tiny bit of God that we do know is already so vast, incomprehensible and at times downright weird. If God can desire people to manifest the Spirit by burying loin cloths like Jeremiah (13:1) or walking like chickens and roaring like lions (check out the Toronto Blessing). I feel it is safe to say we have no idea what might be in store. And the best thing of all is that God's total unpredictability is matched by His total constancy. He is utterly faithful in His promises to us, and that gives us the strength to surrender all to Him.

It would make my heart ache if the Renewal as we know it was, even by the grace of God, to end. If I'm honest, I can't even imagine it. Yet surely as an act of trust, it is worth surrendering all to the Lord – even the Renewal? At the end of C.S. Lewis' Narnia series, Jewel cries 'further up and further in' as the characters perceive their familiar world grow bigger, bolder and far far more beautiful than they could have possibly anticipated. ("The Last Battle") This is for us an apt image. I may not know what God has in store for us next, but I know for certain that it can only get better.

The New Evangelists: Sehion UK

Kristina Cooper reports on “Kids for the Kingdom”, a new generation of young evangelists of Indian origin who feel called to evangelise.

One of the big benefits for the Catholic Church from the recent immigration to our shores has been the number of very devout Catholics, particularly Catholic Charismatics from other countries who have brought new life and energy to the life of our parishes. Many of these newcomers feel a deep sense of calling to help restore the Christian faith in their new adopted land. Up until now their work has often remained beneath the radar as their activities have been within their own culture and language group, but these vibrant groups, often have a big vision. This is particularly the case with the many of those of Indian origin coming from Kerala, where the Catholic Church is flourishing and Charismatic Renewal is particularly strong, with many thriving retreat centres.

One of the most recent of these groups that has emerged into prominence is Sehion UK. A couple of months ago I met their chaplain and leader Fr Soji Olikkal to find out about their ministry. Fr Soji, who is in his mid 30s, first came to England in 2009 to assist Fr Sebastian Arikatt, the chaplain to the Syro Malabar Catholics in the UK, and then he took over from him when Fr Sebastian returned to India in 2010.

God powerfully using people unable to read or write

Fr Soji told me he came into contact with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal when he was in the seminary, where he was baptised in the Holy Spirit. In 2001 he was sent on his first placement to the Sehion Retreat Centre in Attappadi, in Kerala, which had recently been started by Fr Xavier Vattayil. Attappadi is a very remote and poor area, with no proper roads, telephone or electricity. The mere mention of the place he said would cause people to mock and say that nothing good could ever happen there. In the village, however, there was an old boarding school and Fr Xavier had decided that he would make it into a retreat centre. A few simple local people came to pray with him, and Fr Xavier was amazed to see how powerfully God was using these people, who often couldn't read or write, to do signs and wonders. This helped Fr Xavier's own faith in the power of God to grow. Thus he began every Friday to organise a day of prayer and teaching. This gradually built up to him putting on week long retreats based on the Life in the Spirit seminar programme, with the aim to bring participants to conversion.

In the beginning numbers were very small. At Fr Xavier's first retreat only 5-6 people attended and even by 2001 when Fr Soji arrived he remembers there were only 11 people at his retreat. Fr Soji comments, "In the beginning I was disappointed to be sent there as I wanted to preach and I didn't think there would be



Fr Soji celebrating Mass at Second Saturdays

much opportunity as the place was so remote." But then things began to change. Fr Soji remembers, "One night Fr Xavier and another priest and myself closed the doors of the retreat centre and we started to pray in faith that the Lord would do a lot of things through us; that He would bring people from all over; that He would send us to different places and even to different countries with His Word; that He would use us to do signs and wonders. And now all these things have happened." The roads were gradually improved and immediately numbers attending their sessions increased. They were soon getting capacity numbers of 500 each week for the residential retreat and up to 50,000 people would arrive in 300 coaches for their first Friday event. Key to this, he commented, was also the support of the local bishop Jacob Mananadath, who defended them against any criticism from those who didn't like what was happening.

Eventually Fr Soji was sent to England to work with the Syro Malabar families in the UK. His ties with Sehion have remained, however, and even today there is a special team of intercessors back at Attappadi who pray for his ministry from 8am to 5pm every day. Coming to England was a big culture shock for Fr Soji. He comments, "I found that the spirit of atheism is very strong in the schools in the UK and I was concerned about the effect this was having on our children, so I prayed to the Lord, 'What is your plan for these children?' I got a strong inspiration that I should give them the Word of God and this is how I began the 2nd Saturday ministry – for the children."

Second Saturdays regularly attracts 3000 people

Helped by a fellow priest from Kerala, Fr Jomon, who is based in Stoke on Trent, the pair launched the first Second Saturday in 2010. About 60 people including a few children gathered in Fr Soji's parish at Blessed Robert Grissold Church in Coventry. He comments, "We didn't just babysit the children but really preached the word of God to them, in ways that were appropriate to their age, with action songs, skits and memorisation of bible verses." The word got out and after only a couple of sessions a coach full of children came from Manchester. The church was so full, they soon had to change venue to St Catherine's, the biggest Catholic Church in Birmingham, which holds 1000 people. Even this became too small and they had to move to a Pentecostal Hall,



called the Bethel Convention Centre in West Bromwich, as they now regularly get 3000 people every month.

Key to this is the ministry to the children (aged 5-16). This is called "Kids for the Kingdom" and is organised by Ainish, a lively young woman. Forty adults are involved too, including some full timers, who have generously given their time and talents to the ministry and rely on Divine Providence for their income. Fr Soji believes that one of the factors of the huge growth of the ministry has been the signs and wonders and healing that have happened. He comments, "The Lord did some miracles among the children – healing them of things like eczema. That's why the children brought their friends." Jackson, Fr Soji's assistant, who is very involved in the children's ministry says the Lord has made him aware of the great responsibility adults have in the way they behave because children absorb everything they see. He comments, "I have realised they copy everything we do. If I wind my rosary around



Kids for Kingdom, led by Ainish (right)

my wrist, I realise they are all doing it. If I carry my bible under my left arm, they do, too. We teach as much by our example as by what we say." The team has now started 5 day residential schools of evangelisation for 10-16 year olds. Five of these have already taken place in Warrington, Southampton, Birmingham, Bristol and Northampton and more are planned. About 60 children have come to each session. Key to the phenomenal growth of the ministry says Fr Soji, is prayer and intercession, particularly adoration

of the Blessed Sacrament. In his own small parish he has been having adoration of the Blessed Sacrament 24/7 for some time, and has only reduced it recently (Monday to Friday 10am to 8pm) to encourage those coming to start it in their own parishes. Among his own personal intercessors are some of the children who are part of the "Kids for the Kingdom" ministry.

Many of the young people want to be evangelists.

When he goes preaching, he also takes some of the children with him to give testimony as to how the Holy Spirit has worked in their lives. Some of the children, he says, have started prayer groups in their schools. He comments, "It is not easy but the Lord is revealing to them new methods to evangelise and I am learning a lot from them myself, like street evangelisation." Although their ministry has mainly been confined to youth of Indian origin what they have been doing has attracted the attention of some English priests who are interested in starting such a ministry among their own youth and have attended their events.

When Fr Soji first came to the UK one of his main jobs was simply to visit and bless the homes of the people from Kerala. Through this he discovered many problems that they faced and was able to pray for them and several received deliverance from various addictions and have now joined him in the mission. When he visits a new area, a team will give up their weekend and will go ahead of him, often with their children, to visit the homes and prepare the way for his preaching and teaching mission. He reckons they have visited about 3000 homes in the last two to three years. He comments, "It really is the lay people doing this ministry. Most of them fast the whole day and pray." Although up until now a lot of the ministry has been conducted in Malayalam, the local language of Kerala, the intention is to spread their ministry to the local British community too and Fr Soji has started to preach in English at some events, and they have invited English speakers, like Damian Stayne, who not only came to speak at Second Saturday in March, but also ran his only Charism School in the UK in June for the community. Not content with a mission to England, they say that the Lord has now led them not just to pray for the conversion of England but for the whole of Europe too. "We see our role to work for Christ and the whole Church and nothing is impossible for Him."

The Art of Discernment

By Fr Frank Bird S.M.



Fr Frank Bird s.m. is currently working as a missionary on the Thai/Burmese border, where they are trying to build a centre to support the locals (www.maristthailand.org)

I remember once having a cup of tea with a mother as her young children returned from school. With a laugh, she told me the only time she could have time alone was going to the toilet. She pointed to a small icon above the oven and said that sometimes life was so busy all she could manage was a quick look at the icon. That was how she tried to remain close to God. Many people feel the same way. Life moves so quickly, our daily life is so busy, and our experience of life is more of being scattered than peaceful. A quick thought and a rushed prayer just doesn't seem enough. What we want is to know how to stay in tune and be with God. This is what discernment is: the art of listening to God. Practically, discernment means in all of my experiences I learn to notice my thoughts and feelings, I test them to see if they are from God, and then I make choices and decisions trying to follow what God wants of me. Discernment always follows this general pattern. It doesn't matter whether you are in the supermarket, washing dishes, or at the office faced with difficult decisions, the practice of discernment remains the same. There are two parts to listening to God: we have to learn to become aware and we have to learn the characteristic signs of God.

Cassian, a monk who lived in the desert, had some great advice for those trying to live out the basic Christian practice of listening to God. Cassian has been named the "desert psychologist" because he had a deep understanding of human nature and how God works in us. Many people would go out into the desert wanting to be closer to God and they would seek his advice. His advice was simple: "Be watchful!" But he would also teach them why they should become aware of their thoughts.

Cassian would tell newcomers to the desert how we all have something in common at the heart of our spiritual life. We all have an "invisible struggle" on the level of our thoughts. Cassian would emphasise how important our thoughts, desires and emotions are because God is at work in them. We must be watchful and listen to

them. Thoughts were the beginning of everything and could lead us towards God, and away from God. Cassian's advice to those just starting their life in the desert and wanting to learn how to listen to God was to watch for a pattern in their thoughts. Cassian would suggest that we take a specific experience or event in our day and see how a certain pattern unfolded. Cassian taught his disciples to watch for this pattern. Our own experiences will reveal the same pattern. Take the time to reflect on an incident today that caused you to be upset and you will find the pattern that Cassian suggests is true. A particular thought bounces its way around our mind, our imagination starts, feelings and emotions begin to stir, we start to act on the suggestions made to us. Sooner or later we are feeling sad and scattered (or happy and peaceful) and we wonder why. We even use the phrase "What got into me today?" Cassian realised our problem was that we are so often in a state of spiritual sleepwalking. We don't notice what is going on within and

around us. We become spiritually blind to God because we are inattentive to our inner life. Cassian gave monks further advice: Stand guard at the door of your heart and ask every suggestion that presents itself "Are you one of ours or from the opposing camp?"

"First a thought will enter, you will start a conversation with the thought, a suggestion will be made to you, a temptation will follow, a struggle will begin and then victory or consent"

If we put this advice into practice in our lives we will soon realise that there is a lot going on in the times when we thought nothing much was happening. In fact it is easy to become overwhelmed. One young man after thinking about this replied with a question: "Does this mean I have to examine every single thought I have?" Not quite. There is a difference between doing the dishes while looking out of the window, and having to make a decision knowing important consequences will result, choosing one or the other. Sometimes when we are lonely or sad, busy or angry, particular thoughts will begin to play on us. It is at these times that Cassian would urge us to be particularly watchful. Cassian encourages becoming watchful and self aware so as to develop an instinctual awareness of what is happening in our spiritual life, to be like a wine-taster, sniffing the bouquet or a wine, to "sniff" an experience or thought to test whether it is a good one and from God. Over time we become familiar with the noises and effects of the good spirit and evil spirit working within us. **Originally published in the Marist Messenger reprinted with permission of author. Fr Frank Bird's website is www.livingword.org.nz**

EVANGELISATION IV

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



Rosemary Swords, a full time evangelist and a member of the Elijah Community in Dublin, continues her series on Evangelisation and gives some practical advice on how to be effective.

That's not an attack - it's an opening!

St Peter tells us to be ready to explain the gospel whenever we are asked (1 Peter 3:15), and yet many of us dread the topic of religion coming up. Belief in God or particular aspects of our faith may be laughed at, belittled or misrepresented. There can be an unspoken undercurrent that suggests no one in their right mind would believe such things. We shy away from being open about our faith, knowing that we may become the on-going focus of unkind comments. What would happen if instead of focussing inwards on how those comments made us feel, we focussed instead on what they reveal about the other person? Instead of seeing this as an attack from which we need protection, what if we saw it as an opportunity to share our faith?

We can learn a lot from watching other evangelists at work. In Acts 17 we see St Paul talking to two different audiences, his fellow Jews in the synagogue, and also to pagan Athenians in the Areopagus. Speaking of this Pope Francis said recently that 'Paul is a builder of bridges. He doesn't want to become a builder of walls.' Walls around cities were built to defend them from attack, but the gospel does not need this sort of defence. The Pope went on to say that 'When the Church loses this apostolic courage, it becomes a stalled Church, a tidy Church, nice, very nice, but without fertility, because it has lost the courage to go to the peripheries, where there are so many victims of idolatry, of worldliness, of weak thinking.'

- **Abandon your own expectations and let the Holy Spirit lead.** You may be only one of a series of people the Holy Spirit has planned for this person to meet, so you don't necessarily have to get every minute detail of doctrine across in one conversation.
- **Be aware of your own defensiveness and ask God for His perspective.** This conversation is not about you. Focus on the joy, building bridges for the gospel with the other person.
- **Stay positive, and don't be thrown by arguments.** I was most argumentative just before I finally converted, because I was really wrestling with the issues. I argued least when I was furthest away from the Lord, because I didn't care enough to question or discuss.
- **Be curious.** Ask open ended questions to allow people to develop their ideas more. It gives you a chance to hear what the core issues really are for them, they are often not the first things mentioned.

- **Slow down the conversation, if it is ranging over too many topics.** Keep it simple and focussed on one thing at a time. Don't fall into the trap of trying to deal with a hundred issues all at once.
- **Show respect for the other person, even when they don't show it to you.** Don't interrupt, stay relaxed and keep your sense of humour. Don't talk on and on, conversation is two-way. Maintain eye contact. Smile!
- **It's okay to acknowledge what you hear, reflecting that you are listening with an understanding ear.** Acknowledgement does not necessarily mean agreement, but it shows you have been listening not just waiting for your turn to speak.
- **Be prepared.** Many topics come up again and again, so be ready to explain your position in simple ways that people of little or no faith can connect to. This will take some work, but it is worth it.
- **Don't be afraid to admit you are not sure.** 'I don't know, but I'll find out and get back to you' or 'I've never thought about it from that perspective, let me think about that and I'll get back to you'; these phrases give you an opportunity to keep the conversation going, while giving you time to withdraw and do some thinking, praying and research.
- **Get help.** The Church is full of great thinkers both ancient and modern who have pondered these things – you are not on your own in finding answers for puzzling questions.

Action plan

1. Take the time to listen and reflect on conversations around you. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you opportunities you might have been missing.
2. Are there topics you dread? Take the time to do some preparation so that you feel more equipped.
3. Take a deep breath and jump in! Keep in mind the joy of helping someone come to know Jesus. Aim to develop at least one conversation this month, from the everyday opportunities that come your way.

Scripture to ponder: Acts 17; 1 Peter 3:15

Further listening suggestions: free talks at www.biblechristiansociety.com – I recommend 'Introduction to apologetics' and 'Apologetics for the scripturally challenged'

Rosemary website www.rosemaryswords.com

Dream Dreams



Fiona Hendy originally from the House of the Open Door Community and a former member of the English National Service Committee for CCR brings us up to date with the calling she received to go to Africa and open a home for orphans.

I was recently at a prayer meeting when someone prayed that we would "Step out into the deep!" I am sure that the disciples felt completely useless and tired, having fished all night and caught nothing, so to hear the Lord's command to go out to the deep, yet again, was not easy. Easy or not they did it, and well, you know what happened; they were overwhelmed with the mighty power of a miracle working God. This is the third time I am returning to England from Welcome Home Ministries (Karibu Nyumbani) Tanzania, and I want to encourage all who are being called right now in some area of your life to "Step out into the deep" however it may be.

THE CALL - In Aug 2010, through a nudge of the Holy Spirit, I went to Tanzania, met Ester, a Tanzanian, shared dreams and in May 2011 we stepped out to start a vision that we knew was entirely dependent on God making the way for us. (Read more on line www.karibunymbani.org – or previous GoodNews articles).



FEARS CALMED - On my first visit back to England, I announced to all that we were going to build an orphanage. I had no idea at the time that I was suffering from an over active thyroid (which was diagnosed a month later). The symptoms of this sickness undermined my faith which was being sorely tested. So I explicitly told God that if this was His work, He needed to show me more clearly. Within a few days of this prayer, I received an anonymous donation of £20,000 – an unbelievable GIFT, and with it a deeper TRUST.

IN HIS WAY AND IN HIS TIME - I returned to Tanzania in October 2011 with funds to start but experienced nine months of waiting for the okay to use five acres of land belonging to the Church! In hindsight, it was a great time to learn the language, get to know the culture and the people. But the waiting was not easy! Around Easter 2012 I started to pray with a lady, and within 3 weeks we bought a 2 acre plot in her village.

It was already becoming clear to us that apart from building houses we would need a large septic system, a well for water and a wall around the land and more. So on my next visit to England, June 2012, I wrote my usual newsletter to friends. However there were many hindrances to it being sent out, and God worked the unimaginable again!! I had a

phone call from someone I did not know well, inviting me to meet a friend of hers in London. So on the day the Olympics started I went to London to meet these two dear ladies. At the end of a



very blessed day our little orphanage received a huge gift which along with other donations from friends gave us a total of £100,000 to build the home we have today.

A DREAM COME TRUE - In November of 2012 our foundations were being dug. In December, the roof was on the first house. We built our well, and the septic system, laundry and store as well as water towers, outside kitchen, chicken coop, wall, and, by March, we finished the second house and were ready to start having children. Our first three children; Bahati, Devota and Emmanuel arrived on March 7th 2013. For them it was a DREAM COME TRUE. Isaya arrived last week and we have two siblings on the way. God has truly heard the cry of our orphans. Our home is for children with no parents or relatives who can care for them. Both Devota and Emmanuel (now two and a half) have, before coming to us, lived in a hospital, with very little care.

FUTURE VISION - Our vision is to build two dorms so we can take up to 40 children, plus a kitchen dining room that can be used as a meeting place.

VOLUNTEERS - We have our first volunteer coming to us in July for 3 months and she is keeping notes of all her preparations to prepare the way for others who may like to do the same!

BUSINESS - In March we also bought a lorry, and started a delivery business- our lorry driver gets his wage, and his monthly earnings from deliveries pays for all our bills.

SPONSORS - We are now setting up "Sponsor a child" to help us with the needs of each child.

THANK YOU - On my return to England this time, it has been so encouraging to share with groups our beautiful story so far. I am encouraged over and over when I see others I know "step out into the deep" in whatever situation they are in to trust the Lord. We have a miracle working God and he so wants us to depend only on HIM, what a joy it is to share stories. God bless you all.



The Other Half



Sue Whitehead

I would like to share an ancient legend that I have just heard. It tells of the return of Jesus to glory after His time on earth. Even in heaven He bore the marks of His earthly pilgrimage with its cruel cross and shameful death. The angel Gabriel approached Him and said, "Master, you suffered terribly down there. Do they know and appreciate how much You loved them and what You did for them?"

Jesus replied, "Oh no! Not yet. Right now only a handful of people in Palestine know." But Gabriel was perplexed. He asked, "Then how will people learn of what You have done and Your love for them?"

Jesus said, "I have asked Peter, James, John and a few more friends to tell others about me. Those who are told will tell others in turn. And my story will be spread to the farthest reaches of the globe. Ultimately, all of mankind will have heard." Gabriel frowned and looked rather sceptical. He knew what poor stuff humans were made of. He said, "Yes, but what if Peter, James and John grow weary? What if the people who come after them forget? What if they just fail to tell? What is your alternate plan?"

Jesus answered, "There is no other plan." This was told at the Ascension Day service I attended this morning and I cannot improve on the comment then added. "How will others get to know of God's saving grace and the power and love of Christ available to them, if not through us?"

We need to remember that there are five gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and you. And you are the only one that many of the people you meet will read! A responsibility and a privilege.

As I write this we will be celebrating Pentecost in a few days and I pray that as we remember the awesome power which was poured out on Peter, James, John (and a few friends!), we will expect the same empowering ourselves. We are now the channels for The Word to be spread throughout the world. In His power it is desirable, possible, and exciting. May the very 'ends of the earth' soon be reached with knowledge of God's great love so that His will is done and His Kingdom comes.

It really is up to us!

© Sue Whitehead

The Social Media

facilitating relationship or source of isolation?



Caz Parra shares her experiences of friendship on line

One day a friend of mine decided that life was no longer worth living. When something that profound happens it's hard not to question how much you really know of the person and this was especially true in this case. This relationship was real but it was different. I first met Jack in the summer of 2010 when I replied to a message he put out on Twitter about work experience at the fashion magazine he worked for. Despite speaking to him every single day for nearly two years I only ever met him once, but our friendship was as real to me as any of my other relationships.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI brought this sharply back into focus for me when he wrote about social media ahead of the 47th World Communications day on 12th May. Far from dismissing the online world as a time-wasting environment, he challenged the Church to realise its potential and "engage in building relationships and making friends" online.

Jack and I discussed everything, from life in London to art, music, photography, video-games, fashion and the news. Even though we met in person once, discussions and shared interests are surely the cornerstones of strong, lasting friendships? I learnt this the hard way after spending most of my teenage years in relationships with people who, like me at the time, were not interested in sharing anything of themselves. Back then my relationships revolved around my hobbies with only the occasional deviation to debate the virtues of MacDonalds versus Burger King.

Friendship has been one of my core and constant values

Thankfully, God has a habit of turning our worlds upside-down every now and then. In my case that came in the form of freeing me from the fear of truly connecting with those around me. This change came about when I was 16 and ever since then friendship has been one of my core and constant values. As we grow up it gets harder and harder to stay in relationship with people. We become busy with school, university, work, other relationships, going to the gym... you name it and as our time gets monopolised it's people that we all too often let fall by the wayside. Life pulls us in different directions and we start seeing each other less, less, and less until we know very little about

each others' lives and we only catch up at special occasions like weddings or funerals or conferences.

Social media was created to disrupt this cycle. Networks like Twitter and Facebook help us share our day-to-day moments with those we value. That's the theory anyway. Judging by the flurry of inane mutterings that fill some people's online profiles I'm not surprised by the number of people who believe social media is just a waste of time. But as we all know, reality and potential can be two very different things. The important thing is to always push for better. I recently read an article by a sociologist whose research found that the internet is creating a more "isolated society". According to him, people are choosing to stay at home and 'heart-to-heart' through screens rather than in person. Without wanting to disagree with an expert, the problem this sociologist observed seems to me to have more to do with the choices people make rather than the opportunities technology enables.

Not different from having a pen friend

It is possible to have meaningful online relationships, as the Pope Emeritus suggests. If you think about it, it is really not that different from having a pen-pal, simply a lot more immediate. The great thing about networks like Twitter is that it's all about your thoughts. You don't have to start by saying 'hello' or warming up to a conversation by discussing the weather, you just write what you think. This direct openness means you get to know people through their opinions and learn about the way they view the world.

Sadly, I only became aware of how much my relationship with Jack meant to me when his family tweeted he had committed suicide. It turns out that Jack was very depressed, and, in spite of his apparent optimism and love for life, one day he just couldn't carry on. It was then that I realised I had lost a friend. I was shocked and deeply saddened. I couldn't believe I was never going to interact with this vibrant voice again. Meaningful exchanges are the heart of true friendship. It seems to me that friendship, thanks to the social media, is now no longer reserved only to those we get the chance to see face to face and that can only be a great and wonderful thing.