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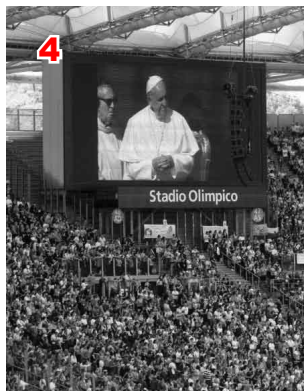
# GOOD NEWS

*Catholic Charismatic Renewal Serving The Church*



**“I Expect From You That You Share With All In The Church The Grace Of Baptism In The Spirit...”**

**Pope Francis, Rome June 2014**



**Front cover: CCR Meeting Rome June 2014**

© Peter Moran

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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

The “Fab Francis” factor goes on, as Pope Francis continues to charm and challenge not only the Church but the world. For the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, it is particularly significant, as for the first time we have on the throne of Peter one who is so supportive, that he has even gone to be a speaker at the big International Catholic Charismatic gathering at the Olympic stadium on 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014 in Rome. We reproduce his encouraging and challenging words, calling for unity and asking if we still carry our bibles the way we did in the early days of the CCR! Michelle Moran, the ICCRS president reports on the occasion, and we have some vox pops from others who were also there. Meanwhile Pat Kennedy continues her series picking out some of the most significant nuggets of wisdom that Pope Francis has uttered over the past year, and asking us to reflect on them for our own lives.

At the recent Diocesan Service Teams meeting and English National Service Committee meeting there was a strong sense that there was a new move of the Spirit in the air. In Northampton they feel this so strongly that their DST has committed to pray in tongues for 15 minutes a day, just so they will be more attuned to the Holy Spirit and will be able to recognise when He acts. One of the places where the Holy Spirit has certainly been doing extraordinary things over the past decade or so is at Ffald-y-Brenin, a remote retreat centre in the Welsh hills of Pembrokeshire. I visited Ffald-y-Brenin myself in April and interviewed the current director Roy Godwin. While I was there I also met an Irish Catholic woman, called Brigid Haran from Galway, who had experienced the most amazing healing from horrendous ME. Both stories are in this issue. John Ryeland, the director of the Christian Healing Mission in London, shares some of the insights he and his team use when praying for the sick and Pam Nelson tells us about the work of Rachel's Vineyard, a wonderful ministry that helps those who have had abortions come to healing and reconciliation.

One of the difficulties that many people in Western society face is low self esteem which can affect their faith too as they can't believe that God could really love them. Fr Chris Thomas encourages us to see ourselves as God sees us and not through the prism of our weaknesses and sins. Often inner healing and deliverance are bound up. Neal Lozano, the founder of the “Unbound” ministries from the US is a recognised expert in this area, and was a contributor at the recent ICCRS theological colloquium on the deliverance ministry. A team from Unbound ministries, sponsored by the Irish School of Evangelisation, will be coming to Ireland in the autumn to teach about his insights (see back page for details). Do

take advantage of this to learn more about this essential ministry. I have been sensing something new in the air. In February this year, when I was attending the Relay conference in Malta, I ran into some ladies from the “Praise the Name of Jesus” prayer group. They were high as kites as they had just been running the first ever Life in the Spirit seminars for priests and during the praying over there had been all kinds of spiritual manifestations from tongues to resting in the Spirit. In this issue we have the report of how the seminars came about and a testimony from Fr Paul Sciberras, one of the priests who took part. There have also been Life in the Spirit seminars taking place at Oscott seminary, near Birmingham, which we will report on in the next issue of Goodnews. We have some wonderful priests in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and many of us were looking forward to attending the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary to the priesthood celebrations of Fr Tom Kenny, the great northern evangeliser, in Wakefield. We were so disappointed when he died in May before this could happen. Dannie Firth, founder of the Wednesday Word, and a parishioner at English Martyrs parish pays tribute to his great friend and mentor.

The Sion Community hope to be running their very popular Catholic Charismatic Leadership Formation Course this autumn, open to all potential leaders in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, young and old. This is based on the international ICCRS course initiated by Oreste Pesare in Rome some years ago. See feedback from this year's participants and consider applying for this autumn.

We continue our series on the Scriptures and this month Duncan Mitchell, a member of the Cor et Lumen Christi community and one of the latest members of the English NSC reflects on Scripture and Prayer. Mary Meigh, who is a member of the Lay Community of St Benedict shares her experiences of how she uses Scripture in her daily prayer.

Conference season will be upon us soon, a time for spiritual refreshment. Andy Drozdziak reports on the latest Celebrate weekend in Macclesfield and what a great experience it was for him and his young family. So do think about going to one of the upcoming Celebrate weekends taking place all round the country or some of the other residential conferences like New Dawn in Walsingham and New Dawn Scotland (at St Andrews), the Birmingham Conference and many others. (See Coming Events for full details). We also have all our usual news pages and regular features such as the Other Half. Happy summer!

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# A Miracle Of Grace



Michelle Moran reports on the huge gathering of Catholic Charismatic Renewal with Pope Francis at the Olympic stadium in Rome (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014)

Last September when Salvatore Martinez, the president of Renewal in the Spirit (RnS) in Italy, met with Pope Francis, he took the opportunity to invite him to their annual conference which they were holding in Rome for the first time. The Pope agreed to come. His acceptance, which was the first time a pope has come to a charismatic event outside the Vatican, transformed what had been planned as a national conference into an international event. Thus RnS invited ICCRS and the Catholic Fraternity, who are the two principle international bodies recognised by the Vatican to serve the worldwide CCR, to work with them on the event.

The venue for the gathering was to be the Olympic Stadium in Rome and with only 6 months or so to prepare we were faced with a big challenge. We all worked together on the programme and while ICCRS looked after the registrations for international participants, RnS took care of all the practicalities, as they have a lot of experience in running big events in Italy. Unfortunately due to the short timescale not as many participants as would have liked to have come, from the worldwide renewal were able to make it as it was a long way to come for just a couple of days. Even so about 1500 people from 61 countries round the world joined 50,000+ Italians on the day.

The evening before the gathering some of the leadership team, speakers and guests celebrated Mass together. There was a prophetic word which said 'none of you have the complete picture but all have pieces of the jigsaw. When you each join your pieces together the full picture will emerge'. This proved to be something that we lived beyond our imaginings on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

## Repent, believe, receive and move out in mission.

The programme was built around the themes of "Repent, believe, receive and move out in mission." On the first day there were contributions from Cardinal Comastri who, referring to the Prodigal Son, spoke powerfully about the need for deeper conversion. Fr.

Raniero Cantalamessa OFM Cap, the papal preacher, encouraged us that if "you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your hearts that God raised him from the dead you will be saved." (Romans 10.9)

Patti Mansfield led a powerful time of intercession where she prayed specifically for priests, young people and families. Obviously the highlight of the day was the arrival of Pope Francis. You cannot imagine how I felt as I walked across the field of the Olympic Stadium to welcome and escort the Holy Father into the arena where 45,000 charismatics were waiting to welcome him with the most exuberant joy imaginable!



*"It was an amazing historic occasion and a miracle of grace which I feel will be a turning point for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal"*

*(Peter Moran)*

## Papal Invitation to all CCR World wide to come to Rome to celebrate Golden Jubilee of CCR in St Peter's Square 2017

The Holy Father stayed with us for an hour and a half. At his request we sang at full volume his favourite charismatic song 'Vive Jesus el Senor'. There were short testimonies from a priest, a young

person, a family, and a blind lady and each of these was followed by a moment of prayer. Then the Holy Father delivered his address, which reflected his experience of CCR in Buenos Aires (see pages 6-7). His final words were an invitation to all of us to come to St Peter's Square at Pentecost 2017 to celebrate our Golden Jubilee with him. So you are all invited! Finally there was a moment when the Holy Father knelt and we all prayed for him in tongues!

After the exuberance of June 1<sup>st</sup> our second day could have been an anti climax but this certainly wasn't the case. The crowds poured into the stadium and we had a full house, full of the Spirit! Ralph Martin spoke about the need we all have for 'power from on high'. He senses that these extraordinary days of the Spirit that we are experiencing are to prepare us for all the challenges and the struggles that lie ahead as we move out in mission. His talk was followed by an act of entrustment to Mary. This was followed by a prayer led by many historic leaders of CCR (including Charles Whitehead who was ICCRS president for many years) for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit.



**“What are you prepared to give up  
and to suffer for me?”**

Spontaneously and symbolically we were led to join together and gather at the foot of the huge crucifix that was on the stage. For me personally this felt like we were joining Mary at the foot of the cross, with the Lord saying to us “what are you prepared to give up and to suffer for me?” As Jesus from the cross gave Mary as our mother to the Church, I sensed the Lord was giving us, as leaders, the responsibility to shepherd the Renewal in the shadow of the Cross. The new President of the Catholic Fraternity, Gilberto Gomes Barbosa spoke very prophetically and in a moving way about the need for deeper unity and communion in CCR. He ended his talk by inviting myself and Salvatore Martinez to stand with him. Then we symbolically washed each others hands as a sign of our repentance for past hurts and divisions and a commitment to move forward together in a new harmony as Pope Francis had urged us during the previous evening. My exhortation focused on the three ICCRS themes for the journey to the Jubilee; fire starters, fanning the flame and spreading the fire.

The event drew to a close with Salvatore addressing the CCR in all its various expressions. He described our unity in diversity as being like a fruit salad not a fruit smoothie. Then he encouraged us all to move out in mission with Pope Francis. There was a final moment of prayer led by Sr Briege McKenna and a closing ceremony of choreography and songs led by the young people. As the crowds began to disperse there was a tangible sense of the joy of the Gospel in our midst and, for some of us, a profound sense that God is on the move in the power of the Spirit in ways beyond our wildest imaginings.



Everyone was so joyful all the time, even in the queue for the toilets, which took an hour, and everyone prayed instead of grumbling.

**Monica de Jesus,  
Muswell Hill prayer  
group, London**

I felt privileged to be part of such a memorable and joyous event and came back with renewed enthusiasm and the words of Pope Francis ringing in my ears ‘I expect that you share with all, the grace of Baptism in the Holy Spirit as we read in the Acts of the Apostles’. What a mission statement!

**Jenny Baker (English NSC)**



“It was an event full of excitement and joy but for me the most profound moment was the time of deep silence when the everyone in the stadium held hands and prayed in their hearts for the grace of unity in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

**Vicky Bunting, Sion Community**



**Washing each other hands**



**Salvatore Martinez, Gilberto Gomes Barbosa and  
Michelle Moran**



**Charles and Sue Whitehead**





Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo



ICCRS

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL SERVICES



Catholic Fraternity

of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships

# 37 Convocazione Rinnovamento con PAPA FRANCESCO

ROMA - Stadio Olimpico  
1-2 giugno 2014

## THE HOLY FATHER'S ADDRESS

Dear brothers and sisters!

I thank you so much for your welcome. No doubt someone told the organizers that I very much like this song, "The Lord Jesus Lives" ... When I celebrated holy Mass in Buenos Aires with the Charismatic Renewal, after the consecration and after a few seconds of adoration in tongues, we sang this song with so much joy and force, as you did today. Thank you! I felt at home!

I thank Renewal in the Spirit, the ICCRS and the Catholic Fraternity for this meeting with you, which gives me so much joy. I am grateful also for the presence of the first person who had an intense experience of the power of the Holy Spirit; I believe that it was Patty, here ... You, Charismatic Renewal, have received a great gift from the Lord. You were born of the will of the Spirit as "a current of grace in the Church and for the Church." This is your definition: a current of grace.

What is the first gift of the Holy Spirit? The gift of Himself, who is love and makes you enamored of Jesus. And this love changes life. Because of this it is said: "to be born again to life in the Spirit." Jesus said it to Nicodemus. You have received the great gift of the diversity of charisms, diversity that leads to the harmony of the Holy Spirit, in the service of the Church.

When I think of you Charismatics, the image of the Church herself comes to me, but in a particular way: I think of a great orchestra, where every instrument is different from another and the voices are also different, but all are necessary for the harmony of the music. Saint Paul says it in chapter 12 of the First Letter to the Corinthians. Therefore, as in an orchestra, no one in the Renewal can think of being more important or greater than another, please! No one can say: "I'm the head." You, as the whole Church, have only one head, only one Lord: the Lord Jesus. Repeat with me: who is the head of the Renewal? The Lord Jesus! Who is the head of the Renewal? **[those present: "the Lord Jesus!"]** And we can say this with the strength that the Holy Spirit has given us, because no one can say "Jesus is the Lord" without the Holy Spirit.



As you perhaps know – because news spreads – in the first years of the Charismatic Renewal I did not like Charismatics much. And I said of them: "They seem like a school of samba!" I did not share their way of praying and the many new things that were happening in the Church. Afterwards, I began to know them and in the end I understood the good that Charismatic Renewal does to

the Church. And this story, which goes from the “school of samba” forward, ends in a particular way: a few months before taking part in the Conclave, I was appointed by the Episcopal Conference to be the spiritual advisor of the Charismatic Renewal in Argentina!

**C**harismatic Renewal is a great force at the service of the proclamation of the Gospel, in the joy of the Holy Spirit. You received the Holy Spirit that made you discover the love of God for all his children and love of the Word. In the early times it was said that you Charismatics always carried the Bible with you, or the New Testament ... Do you still do it today? **[the crowd: “Yes!”]** I’m not so sure. If not, return to this first love; always carry in your pocket, in your bag the Word of God! And read a little piece - always be with the Word of God. You, people of God, people of the Charismatic Renewal, be careful not to lose the freedom that the Holy Spirit has given you. The danger for the Renewal, as our dear Father Raniero Cantalamessa often says, is that of excessive organisation: the danger of excessive organisation.

**Y**es, you need organisation, but do not lose the grace of letting God be God! **“However, there is no greater freedom than that of letting oneself be carried by the Spirit, refusing to calculate and to control everything, and allow Him to illuminate you, lead you, guide you, and push you where He wishes. He knows well what the need is in every age and moment. This calls to be mysteriously fruitful!”** (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 280). Another danger is that of becoming “controllers” of God’s grace. So often the leaders (I prefer the name “servants”) of some group or some community become, perhaps without wanting it, “administrators” of grace, deciding who can receive the prayer of the effusion or Baptism in the Spirit and who cannot. If some do so, I beg you not to do so anymore. Don’t do it anymore.” You are dispensers of the grace of God, not controllers! Don’t be a customs office to the Holy Spirit!

**Y**ou have a guide in the Documents of Malines, a sure course not to mistake the way. The first document is: Theological and Pastoral Guideline. The second is: Charismatic Renewal and Ecumenism, written by Cardinal Suenens himself, a great protagonist of Vatican Council II. The third is: Charismatic Renewal and Service to Man, written by Cardinal Suenens and Bishop Helder Camara. This is your task: evangelization, spiritual ecumenism, care of the poor and needy and hospitality for the marginalized. And all this on the basis of adoration! The foundation of the renewal is to adore God!

**I** have been asked to tell the Renewal what the Pope expects from you. The first thing is conversion to the love of Jesus, which changes life and makes of the Christian a witness of the love of

God. The Church expects this witness of Christian life and the Holy Spirit helps us to live the coherence of the Gospel for our holiness.

**I** expect from you that you share with all, in the Church, the grace of Baptism in the Holy Spirit (the expression that is read in the Acts of the Apostles). I expect from you an evangelisation with the Word of God which proclaims that Jesus is alive and loves all men. I expect that you give witness of spiritual ecumenism with all those brothers and sisters of other Churches and Christian communities who believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour; that you remain united in the love that the Lord Jesus asks of us for all men, and in the prayer to the Holy Spirit to come to this unity, necessary for evangelization in the name of Jesus. Remember that “the Charismatic Renewal is by its very nature ecumenical ... Catholic Renewal rejoices over what the Holy Spirit carries out in the other Churches” (1 Malines 5, 3).

**B**e close to the poor, the needy, to touch in their flesh the flesh of Jesus. Be close, please! Seek unity in the Renewal, because unity comes from the Holy Spirit and is born of the unity of the Trinity. From whom does division come? From the devil! Division comes from the devil. Flee from internal fights, please! They must not exist among us!

**I** want to thank the ICCRS and the Catholic Fraternity, the two organizations of Pontifical Right of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, at the service of global Renewal. Be committed to preparing the world meeting for priests and Bishops, which will be held in June of next year.

I know that you have also decided to share the office and to work together as a sign of unity and to manage the resources better. I rejoice greatly. I also want to thank you because you are already organizing the Great Jubilee of 2017.

**B**rothers and sisters, remember: adore the Lord God: this is the foundation! To adore God. Seek sanctity in the new life of the Holy Spirit. Be dispensers of the grace of God. Avoid the danger of excessive organization.

**G**o out into the streets to evangelize, proclaiming the Gospel. Remember that the Church was born “in going forth” that Pentecost morning. Be close to the poor and touch in their flesh the wounded flesh of Jesus. Let yourselves be led by the Holy Spirit, with that freedom and, please, do not cage the Holy Spirit! With liberty! Seek the unity of the Renewal, unity that comes from the Trinity! And I await you all, Charismatics of the world, to celebrate, together with the Pope, your Great Jubilee in Pentecost of 2017, in Saint Peter’s Square! Thank you!

[Original text: Italian, Translation by ZENIT]



“The two days were blessed from start to finish and filled with the Spirit. I feel privileged to have been able to share in such a joyful and unique experience. What a gift Pope Francis has given to the Renewal! I think we will only appreciate it fully much

later on, but there will be fruits and a new season for the Charismatic Renewal. I thank God for the Pope’s humility in kneeling down in front of the whole world to let people, both priests and laity, pray over him. He has given us an example of how to be open to the Spirit that works through everyone.

*Anna Querci, former Goodnews volunteer*

# Ffald-Y-Brenin

## *The sheepfold of the King*

Kristina Cooper reports on the Welsh Retreat Centre where the Holy Spirit is moving in an amazing way.



I first heard about Ffald-y-Brenin a couple of years ago at the annual ecumenical Charismatic Leaders' conference at High Leigh. Roy Godwin, the director, a small smiling man, with a cheerful countenance, whose face shone like a light bulb, told us all about the remarkable things happening at this beautiful Christian retreat centre in Pembrokeshire, South Wales. He told stories of finding walkers lying in the bracken giggling who had walked onto the land, of random strangers feeling drawn to come up the drive, and on being taken to the chapel, collapsing into tears, and of visitors having visions of Jesus, and all this in the middle of the silence and beauty of the Welsh hills. This spring I visited myself.

The first thing that struck me about Ffald-y-Brenin was how beautiful the location and the buildings were. High on the hill, the view is magnificent. The Holy Spirit it seems has always been at work here. Brynach, an early Celtic monk from Ireland who evangelised the area, used to climb this very hill, which is known locally as Carn Ingli - the Hill of Angels, and commune with God. Later on in 18<sup>th</sup> century the original farmhouse was registered as a place of worship and it was from here that local chapels were planted.

The retreat centre was the original vision of Phyllida Mould, who was inspired by the title of the book "How shall we live?" by Francis Schaeffer. She prayed and felt the Lord gave her the vision of a beautiful place of refuge, a mountain top idyll where Christians could come and be refreshed and meet God in creation and in simplicity of life. She waited years for this to be fulfilled and had almost given up hope of it happening when one day she and her husband, who were visiting in the area, came across the Ffald y Brenin site, and realised it had all the elements she was looking for. How the original building and outhouses were then transformed with God's providence, Phyllida recounts in her little book "From

Vision to Reality". It was some years later that Roy and Daphne Godwin became part of the Ffald-y-Brenin story. Neither he nor his wife wanted to come. Roy is an evangelist and had had a fruitful ministry as a leader in the New Churches network. Through force of circumstance he had recently left the ministry and got a well paid secular job. He comments, "I wasn't even through the first morning at the job when I thought, 'what are you doing here?' I experienced this terrible sense of blackness and despair and the absence of God, which I had never felt before. I rang Daphne and said, "I am in the wrong place."

Casting themselves on God's providence, Roy gave up the job. At this moment the couple got a call, reminding them of an offer that had been made to them earlier, but which the couple had turned down, to come and run the Ffald-y-Brenin retreat centre. Part of Roy's concern about taking up the appointment was that he had no background in retreat work. He comments, "I had never even been on a retreat myself and knew nothing about them at all, so how was I expected to come up with a vision for the centre." As he meditated and shared his frustrations with God, he sensed the Lord saying to him, "It is because you know that you have nothing that I have brought you here - all you can do is look to me."

Roy sought to listen to what God wanted. The Lord revealed that before Ffald-y-Brenin could become a house of prayer Roy himself had to become "a house of prayer." Roy remembered how in his early years of ministry he had spent long hours with God, but he had become so busy working for the Lord that he had little time for this. He wondered if he even knew how to pray any more and turned to the Lord in his brokenness. As he drew closer to God and renewed his intimacy, the Holy Spirit taught him a new way of praying. This involved prayer walking round the 30 acre property and consecrating it to the Lord and his purposes.



He and his wife were led to go round the buildings praying the Name and Blood of Jesus into the fabric and atmosphere of every room. Roy's passion, however, was to reach unbelievers with the gospel message, not just Christians coming on retreat. One day, frustrated, he challenged the Lord, "I cannot stay unless you do something!" The Lord heard his prayer and responded in the most unexpected way, kick-starting what has become Ffald-y-Brenin's unique ministry, of attracting people from all kinds of backgrounds many of whom were searching for God, without even being aware of it. The first couple who arrived, shortly after his prayer, stumbled upon the place by chance. Roy showed them around, offered them a cup of tea, and took them to the chapel. Here he asked if he could pray for them and prayed a simple prayer of blessing. The man began to weep. Roy discreetly left the man with the Lord to finish the work. The following day something similar happened and Roy began to realise that it wasn't necessary to have stirring worship and heartfelt preaching for people to get close to God. Instead simple hospitality, a cup of tea, and God's presence in the silence and natural beauty was touching people in a special way.

### **The only way we become the Church of God is to share our spiritual riches**

Gradually the Lord showed Roy how he wanted the ministry at Ffald-y-Brenin to develop. With his evangelical background, Roy did not have a tradition of liturgical prayer, but he had always been interested in Celtic spirituality, with its missionary communities of married, single and consecrated people living together. This seemed to offer a useful model bringing together the stability of the monastery with the freedom of the Spirit. Thus at the heart of Ffald-y-Brenin there developed a daily rhythm of communal prayer. This has as its core the psalms, but prayed in a more informal and spontaneous style than that of a traditional Benedictine monastery. Although Roy says that he was brought up in a protestant context with a mistrust of Catholics, through his own personal journey, he has come to appreciate the riches of Catholic spirituality. Henri Nouwen whose books are in the Ffald-y-Brenin bookshop, in particular is a great favourite. He comments, "He could be writing just for me." He adds, "This is why we need each other. None of us are it. We bring different gifts and the only way we become the Church of God is to share our spiritual riches."

Key to Roy's spirituality and strategy of evangelisation is the idea of blessing - not just people but the land too. On Fridays blessings are prayed over the neighbourhood, the flocks and herds, the teachers and pupils and marriages. The fruits of this prayer have been seen gradually. The local church which had had no baptisms for years suddenly had seven. Some of the farmers noticed that they were getting triplets and quads born to their ewes. For Roy this was a revelation and a totally new understanding of the calling of the Christian and this idea of the priesthood of believers, ministering to God first and then releasing God's blessing on others.

### **He has learned to accept the ebbs and flows of the Spirit**

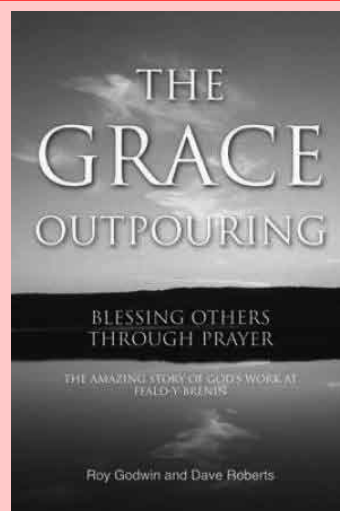
At times Roy says, the manifestations of the Holy Spirit at Ffald-y-Brenin have been spectacular, at others everything seems very quiet and ordinary. Over the years he has learnt to accept these

ebbs and flows of the Spirit, realising that when things seem fallow, it is often because the Lord is preparing for the next move of the Spirit. In the beginning Roy was central to many of the healings that the Lord did at Ffald-y-Brenin but as he and his wife travel a lot now, many of the blessings, like Brigid's story (see page 10), happen when he is not there, showing that it is the power of the Holy Spirit rather than just a personal anointing on a particular individual that is behind the extraordinary ministry there.

Many prayer initiatives have been birthed at Ffald-y-Brenin, including the Caleb prayer, which Roy was led to write, praying for the revival of the nation. This has spread not only all over Wales, but to other foreign nations too. Without intending it Ffald-y-Brenin has become the hub of a whole network of little praying groups which have spread round the Mediterranean, and who see the place as their spiritual centre. The prophetic words about Ffald-y-Brenin becoming a house of prayer for the nations have thus been fulfilled in an unexpected way.

Roy believes that the miracles and healings and visions that have been happening over this past decade at Ffald-y-Brenin are the first murmurings of a greater outpouring that will be coming to Wales in the future. Once a month on the first Tuesday of the month Ffald-y-Brenin hosts a special day of prayer for the nation in a church hall in the valley. The meetings are both homely and Spirit filled and one can imagine what it must have been like all those years ago when revival first came to the Welsh valleys at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the day I attended in April, Roy not only prayed for the Welsh nation, but for other nations too and for the Catholic Church and for Pope Francis, which touched me a lot. When that first revival swept Wales, the body of Christ was very divided, but I became very aware during my visit to Ffald-y-Brenin, how much things have changed for the better. We are blessed that in our time there is a new freedom and unity among Christians, whereby we can recognise and appreciate the different gifts we all have and learn from each other. Although I didn't personally see anything extraordinary, I was touched by the sense of peace and joy at Ffald-y-Brenin and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the beauty of the place.

**For info about prayer days and retreats at Ffald-y-Brenin contact: Ffald-y-Brenin, Pontfaen, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire SA65 9UA tel 01348 881 419 [admin@ffald-y-brenin.org](mailto:admin@ffald-y-brenin.org)**



### **THE GRACE OUTPOURING**

*\*The Grace Outpouring: Becoming a People of Blessing\* by Roy Godwin and Dave Roberts, is available from*

**GOODNEWS BOOKS  
T: 01582 571011.**



# The healing power of God

**Brigid Haran witnesses to the healing power of God, she experienced at Ffald-y-Brenin, where she was healed of crippling ME**

I live in Galway in the west of Ireland with my husband Jimmy. I have 3 adult children, 2 adult stepsons and 5 adorable grandchildren. I am a psychotherapist and pre- my illness I had my own successful private practice. I was always a very active person and in 2008-2009 Jimmy and I took a 12 month sabbatical and travelled around the world together. Some months after our return, however, I went to have a minor medical procedure in hospital. Unfortunately while being treated I contracted MRSA and ended up in intensive care. I was so sick that I thought that I was dying. I was very ill for the next 5 months. During this time I also developed acute pain in my right arm due to two protruding discs in my neck. In May 2010 I had spinal surgery to have these removed and replaced with titanium discs. This operation set me back again. I found I wasn't recovering and my energy continued to be very low. My energy and symptoms got worse until one day in February 2011 I collapsed and ended up in a wheelchair. Even worse than the tiredness was the severe brain sensitivity which meant that I couldn't tolerate noise, movement or light of any kind. I couldn't watch TV. I couldn't listen to or play music. I couldn't talk to anyone for more than a few minutes at a time. I couldn't cope with movement e.g. Jimmy moving his hands when talking or trees in the garden blowing in the wind. I couldn't cope with sunlight, flickering candles or the open fire flickering. I couldn't walk for more than 2-3 minutes. I was so tired that when I had a shower, I had to lie down and rest before I could get dressed. Once I got down stairs in the morning, I wasn't able to go back up again until night time as my legs were too weak.

I had a bed downstairs where I spent hours every day. My day consisted of resting in bed or resting in an armchair or lying on the sofa. As well as the chronic tiredness I had desperate headaches. My speech often felt slurred and words disappeared mid-sentence and I couldn't concentrate on anything for more

than a few minutes. Some days I wouldn't feel as bad and I would try to cook dinner or take a 2 minute walk in the garden, or talk to someone on the phone for a few minutes. On rare occasions Jimmy or one of my children took me out for an hour in my wheelchair to sit by the sea or be wheeled along the promenade in Salthill. Eventually in May 2011 after extensive tests I was diagnosed with ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

## The isolation of the illness

Because of how sick I was and not being able to spend any quality time with people, friends gradually disappeared from my life. The isolation which the illness caused was nearly as bad as the sickness itself. I tried telling people how I felt but they just didn't know how to deal with me or the illness. Where was God in all this? Well when I first got sick I pleaded begged and screamed at God. Then I thought ok enough of that because it wasn't helping. My GP had told me initially that I could have ME for anything up to 10 years. Some people I connected with in ME/CFS support groups on line told me that no one recovers from ME. But I had to believe that I would get well otherwise I was afraid that I would just give up and die. And at times death looked like a blessed relief.

I tried to pray every day but I couldn't read the bible or say long prayers. When I wasn't pleading with God, my prayers usually consisted of simply sitting inside looking out at our garden when I was able, and thanking God for the birds, flowers, shrubs, for blue sky, rain or whatever I could see. I learned to be thankful for all seasons and all weather. On days when I couldn't tolerate movement, light etc, I imagined I was resting in God's nurturing presence and thanked Him that I had a comfortable bed downstairs to lie in, or for Jimmy and the people who did support me through my illness. Sometimes I read short excerpts from books like "From the Father's Heart" by Charles Slagle. Jimmy brought me Holy Communion from mass most Sundays. In August 2012 a cousin

gave me a little booklet. In it the reader is encouraged to say the prayer "Thank you Father that through Jesus wounds I am healed." I decided that I was going to say it several times every day no matter how I felt.

In December 2012 two friends, Rosie and Anj, from the UK sent me a book called "The Grace Outpouring" by Roy Godwin and Dave Roberts about a Christian House of Prayer and Retreat Centre in Pembrokeshire, South Wales. I could only read 1 or 2 pages at a time so it took me a while to get through it. But all the time I was reading it all I could think of was that I had to go there. In January 2013 I called the prayer centre to enquire about going there the following weekend. They informed me that they were fully booked for ten months. I was taken aback as I had a strong feeling that God wanted me to go there very soon. Then the lady realised that they'd had a cancellation for the weekend I was enquiring about. There were 3 single rooms available beside the old stone chapel and the dining room! I called my 2 friends and they said that they would come and look after me! On the Thursday my husband drove me to Rosslare. I had to lie down in the back of the car for the entire journey and we had to stay in Rosslare overnight as I wasn't able to do the car and boat trips in one day. On Friday morning Jimmy wheeled me on to the boat in my wheelchair and Rosie and Anj met me on the other side and drove me to Ffald-y-Brenin.

### **What could possibly happen here as there was no Blessed Sacrament?**

When we got to Ffald-y-Brenin and I had rested I went to see the little stone chapel which was very close to my bedroom. It is simple but spectacular. It's a small round stone chapel with a rock protruding from the ground which is the altar and had 2 night lights burning on it and a plain crucifix, and a large wooden cross hanging on the wall. The seating is a stone bench which runs around the walls with cushions on it. My first impression was that it was cold and uncomfortable and what could possibly happen here as there was no Blessed Sacrament and Roy, who I was hoping would pray with me, was away that weekend! Then I remembered the strong sense I had that I needed to come here. I decided God is bigger than the Blessed Sacrament and Roy, and I decided to trust that God would do whatever He brought me here for. The people who work in the centre meet for a short prayer service every morning and evening, Monday to Friday. Visitors are free to attend too. I went to the Friday evening service which lasted 20 mins. It was a lovely prayer time but I could barely tolerate the two verses of a song they sang. I felt that my head would explode.

### **I felt I should go to the chapel**

The following morning I awoke at 6.30 am and felt I should go to the chapel. I said to God "you must be joking. I'm so tired and sick and it's dark and it might not be safe to be out there on my own. I'll freeze to death if I go out there in this cold"!! So I ignored the prompting and tried to go back to sleep. An hour later I was still awake, still convincing myself that I was safer in bed. But then I started coughing! I couldn't stop and worrying that I might awaken Rosie and Anj, I got up and put on a tracksuit and coat, over my

pyjamas and a woolly hat and scarf, and went into the chapel. It was freezing, but I noticed that I stopped coughing as soon as I went in. I couldn't sit but I noticed some cushions on the floor underneath the large crucifix hanging on the wall. I got some more and made a bed of these under the cross and just lay there and said to God, "ok have Your way and do with me whatever you want." And that's where I spent most of the day. I just came out to eat and when I needed to rest in bed. On Saturday evening Rosie, Anj and I had our own prayer service. I was amazed that when a song was sung I asked if we could sing another one. I knew my brain sensitivities must be improving!! My two friends looked at me in wonder!

### **By Sunday evening my brain sensitivities had improved**

On Sunday morning I was wakened again at 6.30 am. This time I put up no resistance and went to my space underneath the cross where again I lay for most of the day. By Sunday evening my brain sensitivities had improved even more and my walking too. My friends and I went into the chapel after our evening meal. We made a few shy attempts at praying. I felt God wanted us to do something. The answer came so clearly "Praise God". So we started praising, praying and singing in tongues. The power of God manifested itself powerfully and I went from being freezing to stripping layers off me. We laughed and cried as the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit ministered to the three of us. We were there for about two hours that night. I awoke early again next morning and the two ladies were also awake so we got together in one of their bedrooms and worshipped God again. And the Lord was there in power as in the chapel the night before. Even more healing took place. It was WoW!

### **Jimmy couldn't get over the change in me**

After the community prayer time later that morning the man who was leading prayed a blessing on all who were leaving that day. Again I felt I was being powerfully blessed. Before we left I walked down to reception, for the first time. I was asked if I would like a blessing. Of course I said yes. We walked back up to the chapel and two of the team prayed over me that my ME would be completely gone! When Jimmy picked me up from Rosslare later that afternoon he couldn't get over the change in me. I sat up in the car and chatted for most of the 4 hour journey home (and that was after the boat journey!). Two days later I was walking for 12 minutes and my brain sensitivities were completely healed.

It's 16 months now since that amazing healing weekend. God has continued to heal me physically and emotionally from all I have suffered during my illness. I have my life back again. I'm doing all the things I couldn't do when I was sick. I know that during my illness and healing God has drawn me into a closer, deeper, more intimate relationship with Him than I had ever known before. I have been back to Ffald-y-Brenin 3 times since then and I continue to be greatly blessed each time I return. I feel like I'm going home each time I go there. I continue to be in awe of what God has done and continues to do for me!! I give thanks that He has healed me! PRAISE GOD!



# Praying for the sick



**John Ryeland, the Director of the Christian Healing Mission, shares some of the insights he and his team use when praying for the sick.**

Instead we focus on three elements in turn:

- Father
- Son
- Holy Spirit

Let's look at each of these.

## *I wonder if this sounds familiar?*

Matthew plucks up courage and comes up to receive prayer for his bad back. He tells the prayer team his problem, and after several minutes of discussion about how it happened, what it feels like and that it's getting worse. The prayer begins. "Dear Lord, you know all about Matthew's bad back and how it's causing him pain and stopping him from doing the things he longs to do, so stretch out Your hand and bring your healing. Please cause the pain to lessen so that he can go out with his family this afternoon. In your name - Amen".

Surely there must be more to prayer than this! Prayer ministry must involve more than simply taking someone's request, rephrasing it, and saying 'Dear Lord' at the beginning and 'Amen' at the end! Matthew could have prayed that on his own!

Here's another scenario:

Mary picks up her sticks with difficulty and hobbles slowly towards the prayer team. Their hearts sink as they watch her approaching. What can they possibly say that hasn't already been prayed many times over the past few months? However, they do their best: "Dear Lord, we thank you that despite her many difficulties, Mary is here. We ask you to bring healing to her knees. We don't understand why the arthritis seems to be getting worse and her mobility is deteriorating. We understand that the pain is getting her down, but we place her in your hands and ask for your healing touch. Amen."

Having mentioned the ill-health, noting that it is getting worse and acknowledging the adverse effect of it upon Mary, the focus of the prayer is now very firmly placed on the gravity of the problem. Mustering up faith for healing is getting harder all the time. At the Christian Healing Mission, we are learning to take an approach that lifts the attention off the enormity of the need and off our own uncertainty in what to pray.

**The Father's Love** - Whenever I am praying for someone, I take time to encourage them to relax, take their mind off their problems, and recognise that they are deeply loved by their heavenly Father. After all, this is one of the central themes of the New Testament.

One of the greatest things the Spirit does is to bring us an awareness of the Father's love for us. Paul writes about this in Galatians 4.6 '...God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father"'. I think that unless we know and truly grasp the love of God for us, we are always going to find it hard to approach him for healing, or with any other requests. It is so easy to question how God really feels about us and suspect that although he might possibly heal others, he's unlikely to do the same for us. However, if we can grasp this sense of Father God's deep love for us, a door is opened and everything becomes possible.

So when I start to pray for someone, rather than focusing on their prayer request, I begin to gently worship Father God for his love for them - consciously thanking him for choosing them, adopting them as his very own child, and for loving them so much that he gave Jesus for them. This has the effect of lifting their attention off their problem and placing it on the fact that they are a much loved child of God - but it is far more than this. These words of worship to the Father are also a spiritual activity. Whenever we focus on the Fatherhood of God, the Holy Spirit is also at work bringing a new awareness of the depth of the Father's love for each person.

**The presence of Jesus** - Jesus told us quite clearly that he would be with us (Matthew 18.20 and Matthew 28.20). However, although we are told he is with us, this does not mean that we have any real awareness of him. Interestingly, in Luke 24.13ff, we are told the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. As they walk along with downcast faces they are joined by the risen Lord in physical form, walking only a few feet away from them

- but they miss him completely! If those disciples missed Jesus, so can we!

Once I sense that the person I am praying for is engaging with the love of God, and beginning to take their eyes off their own issues, I will ask them a simple question: "Where is Jesus for you, right now?" This does not require a deep theological response, but is about how they are experiencing the presence of Jesus at that very moment. This can be very personal. For some it can be a very physical experience; I have watched people take Jesus' hand and seen others embrace him. One lady gently tilted her head to the side, because she sensed Jesus standing next to her and wanted to rest her head on his shoulder.

Sometimes the experience is not physical, but might be in the form of a picture or general awareness of where Jesus is. Other people have a deep sense of peace, and I like to think this is them catching what flows naturally from the 'Prince of Peace', spoken of in Isaiah 9.6.

However, the presence of Jesus is not meant to be simply a nice feeling but rather a transforming presence; and this transformation often begins when specific needs are brought to him. Rather than me asking God to meet the person's need, I have found it more effective for the person to speak directly to Jesus. It is interesting that when people tell me about their issues it can take a long time, as they feel they have to explain the whole story. Yet when they talk directly to Jesus, it is amazing how quickly they can share very deep issues, because they know that he knows all the details and understands.

As with any conversation, both parties should have a chance to speak. However, when it comes to listening to the voice of Jesus there is sometimes an element of panic, as many of us feel that we don't hear God's voice as clearly as we might like. The truth is that we often do hear God speaking to us, but we simply don't recognise it as him. We expect his voice to be clear and distinctive, when it may be simply a spontaneous thought or picture that comes to mind, or a Bible verse that suddenly occurs to us.

I like to think that when we make time for Jesus to speak, it is him setting the agenda for what he wants to do. I believe that he has a vision for my total transformation, and may well have an agenda for how this comes about. We may want things to happen in a certain order but Jesus may have other ideas!

I remember praying for a man suffering with a bad back. He had a sense of the presence of Jesus with him, so I asked him to tell Jesus what he would like him to do for him, and he requested healing for his back. I went on to ask what he felt Jesus might be saying to him. He replied that a picture had come to mind of someone he knew, but their friendship had recently become very strained. When I enquired what he felt Jesus was saying through this, he replied that before asking for more healing for his back, he felt he ought to go and make peace and restore the friendship. He left in as much pain as he had arrived, but with a sense of God's agenda for him. Often God's agenda can coincide with ours, but on occasions He might have other plans.

**The presence of the Holy Spirit** - Finally there is an opportunity to invite the presence of the Holy Spirit to come. It's tempting to think that in order for healing power to be released when we pray, we need to feel the power of the Holy Spirit within us and if we don't, we assume he is not there. Paul makes a challenging comment about this in Ephesians 1.18-21:

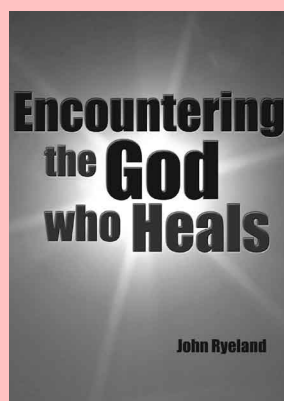
*'I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know...his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.'*

Paul was not praying that we will receive more power, but rather that we might have an awareness of the power that is already available to us. He goes on to say something even more amazing; that the nature of this power is like resurrection power. This is the power available for us, whether or not we feel it - resurrection power!

Just the other day I was leading a group through an exercise like this, and afterwards a lady testified that the pain in her wrist had gone without anyone touching her or even praying for her. Similarly another lady testified that the pain in her feet caused by fallen arches had been healed, again with no-one touching her or praying for her. Subsequently she wrote to tell us that her podiatrist had prescribed different shaped insoles due to the change in the shape of her feet.

Praying for other people is a huge privilege; it is about us being door-openers for others to revel in the Father's love for them, to enjoy and experience the presence of Jesus, and to receive something of the healing touch of the Holy Spirit upon them. The joy of this approach is that it is not just applicable to the healing ministry or for use when praying for others.

Whatever your own situation, try it out for yourself and enjoy discovering anew the wonders of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



**"Encountering the God who Heals" by John Ryeland**  
 £7.99 + £1.00 p&p  
 available from  
**Christian Healing Mission,**  
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[www.healingmission.wordpress.com/](http://www.healingmission.wordpress.com/)

# Scripture and Prayer



**Duncan Mitchell, a member of the Cor et Lumen Christi community, and the latest member of the English NSC, reflects on the importance of Scripture in our life of prayer**

Human life, your life and mine, ultimately consists in coming to know and love God, who desires us and calls us to share His life (Catechism of the Catholic Church:1). This call finds a most beautiful expression in the Holy Scriptures and draws us into a life of prayer. When prayer accompanies our reading of the Sacred Scriptures then we can truly enter into a dialogue with God (Dei Verbum:25)<sup>1</sup>. In this article I want to share with you something of the nature of this link between the Scriptures and prayer so that our reading of the Bible might become Spirit-filled and our prayer be fed by the words and revelation of God. First I want to establish that we are, as it were, made for the Word: the Scriptures provide vital assistance to our prayer so that we can develop greater intimacy with God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Finally, we shall briefly explore how the Bible can provide practical help in our prayer lives and build up our hope and confidence in God.

When God sets before his people his Law and the path of life, he reminds them that his word is very near to them, indeed it is already in their hearts and in their mouths (Deuteronomy 30:14). The great Swiss theologian, Hans Urs Von Balthasar has a wonderful reflection on this relationship. He writes,

“Man was created to be a hearer of the word, and it is in responding to the word that he attains his true dignity. His innermost constitution has been designed for dialogue...Man is a creature with a mystery in his heart that is bigger than himself. He is built like a tabernacle around a most sacred mystery. When God’s word desires to live in him, man does not need first of all to take deliberate action to open his innermost self. It is already there...” Prayer: 23.

## **Our hearts are made to be tabernacles of the Word of God**

Our hearts are made to be tabernacles of the Word of God and, since God has placed this word in our mouths, we can be assured that we are made for dialogue with God. When we are attentive to the Word, either through reading or listening, then we are truly being ourselves. When we reach out to God in prayer this ‘mystery within our heart’ is able to expand as we open up more of our lives to the action of the Holy Spirit. The whole of the Bible witnesses to Jesus Christ (Dei Verbum 15, 17), through whom all things were made, and so it is scarcely surprising that we find ourselves and our true dignity within the words of the Scriptures. Coming to know and imitate Jesus are essential to our vocation as Christians and

in our prayer we must meditate upon the life of Jesus and seek to be more like Him. St Jerome reminds us that if we don’t know Christ then we will not be in a position to inherit his promises:

“I interpret as I should, following the command of Christ: search the Scriptures, and seek and you shall find...for if, as Paul says, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the man who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” Commentary on Isaiah

## **When you are reading or listening to the Scriptures, God is breathing his words of life into your minds, hearts and souls**

Perhaps much of our experience of powerlessness or failure comes from an absence of knowing Christ. This statement is not meant to be dispiriting or deflating but quite the opposite. Through reading the Scriptures we come to know Jesus and our prayer can draw on this knowledge to develop greater intimacy with the Lord and help us realise our vocations in a more dynamic way. This is the work of the Spirit who inspires the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16; Dei Verbum:9) and is the one praying within us (Ephesians 6:18).

The very word for ‘inspired’ (theopneustos) means literally ‘God-breathed’. When you are reading or listening to the Scriptures God





is breathing His words of life into your minds, hearts and souls – what an amazing truth and what a power this has to deepen our lives of prayer and bring us more fully into God's presence. Indeed, as Jesus tells us, His words are *'spirit and life'* (John 6:63). God's word is *'swift'* says the psalm (ps 147:15) – it is sent to accomplish God's purpose and do it in God's time. The Greek translation of this verse is even more emphatic. The word used is, *'drameitai'* and describes the runners in a race and the response of the Father who *'rushes out'* to meet his prodigal son (Lk 15:20). In Sacred Scripture God is rushing out to meet you and lead you into your inheritance and the forgiveness of your sins. The Holy Spirit leads us into a profound intimacy with the Father which is able to find expression in Christian prayer. St Paul teaches that when we cry out to the Father our spirit and God's Spirit are in unity and we proclaim ourselves as sons and daughters of the

living God and heirs alongside Christ (Romans 8:15-17). The Spirit, who inspired the Scriptures, dwells within us uniting us to Christ, calling out to the Father and speaking to us in His own words. Surely, this is why St Ephraim the Syrian said, "Scripture brought me to the gates of paradise and the mind stood in wonder as it entered".

### Mary is completely imbued with the Word of God

Mary is a great example of one who is open to the word. She demonstrates the fruitful relationship between the word of God and prayer most beautifully in the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).

*Continued on page 16*

## Praying with Scripture



**Maryrose Meigh shares how she uses scripture in her daily prayer**

When asked to say how I use scripture in prayer, I felt I probably didn't do this as often as I should. However, when I came to think about how I start each day, I was greatly encouraged, because I do use scripture in prayer, all the time. My day begins with Morning Prayer of the Church, which is all scripture, mostly psalms. I love to use this prayer as a springboard for reflection and being with the Lord. On dressing, I place my cross and chain around my neck, praying that I may put on and live the whole armour of God. I name each part of the armour according to Ephesians 6, praying that God helps me to learn ever more deeply the meaning of this armour in my Christian life.

As my husband's car disappears down the road, I am praying the special scripture the Lord gave me for him: *'May your hand be on the man you have chosen, the man you have given your strength'*. I also pray that God gives His angels charge over him, and *'in their arms they will bear him up, lest he dash his foot against a stone'*. Ps 90:11-12

Over the years, the Lord has given me a particular scripture with which to pray for each of my three children, and one is particularly powerful for me - *'With joy she shall draw water from the wells of salvation'*, Is 12:3. Sometimes it can seem as if this is not happening, but this prayer rises up continually in my prayer for my beloved daughter. I also use this prayer for all my grandchildren, and I find it a powerful prayer, and a comforting one.

I love to go to daily Mass when I can, and I have a walk that can last exactly a Rosary! Of course, the Rosary is all scripture, and it is a great way to walk through town to church, gathering passers-by and the homeless that I see begging on the street corners, to be offered up in the Mass. There is a favourite prayer from Psalm 83v4 that I use as the offertory procession is taken up, *'I lay my young on your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God'*, and of course, I am thinking of my family.

Like most of us in the Renewal, song has become part of my very being! This is certainly the case for me, and at times I wake up and my spirit is singing. The most powerful songs are those taken straight from scripture. There are many of these, but for me the ones I love singing over and over are those learnt years ago - what we might describe as old fashioned choruses. They become a bit like a mantra, building up my faith - such as *'He is able to do exceedingly abundantly, more than we ask or think'*. As I walk into town to do shopping, with gospel songs in my head, I stride out with a jauntier step, and smiles come more easily to those I pass by. What about those challenging times when dreams are collapsing around our ears? That is when we have to put into practice what we have so easily and sublimely sung in our prayer groups and evenings of renewal: *'Blessed be your Name ... when we're in the desert place'*. Yes, that is when I need to repeat *'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that He is able, to keep that which I've committed, Unto Him against that day!'* 2 Tim 1:12

I love the psalms. Whatever the situation, there is a psalm or a couple of lines from psalms that are just right. Often I use Ps 36:5, *'Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him and He will act,'* or when low in spirit, *'Why are you cast down O my soul, why groan within me? Hope in God; I will praise him still!'* Ps 42:5. On the frequent occasions when I am rushing against time, I desperately pray: *'My times are in your hands Lord!'* Ps 31:15.

I am surprised by joy since I have begun these reflections. It is a beautiful gift that the Lord has brought about. It hasn't happened overnight, but grown over many years. I am so thankful, and I hadn't even realised He had done it! *'I will pour out my gifts on my beloved even while they slumber!'* Ps 126:2.



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Writing about how Mary uses words drawn from the Scriptures to praise God, Pope Benedict XVI stated,

“Here we see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God, how her will is one with the will of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate” Verbum Domini:28<sup>2</sup>.

Like Mary, through our prayerful way of relating to Scripture, we can treasure the word of God so that it becomes a part of us and brings us into unity with the will of God.

Finally, many of you will be aware that various traditions within the Church have developed methods to assist the faithful in using the Scriptures prayerfully; Lectio Divina and Ignatian prayer are particularly well known. These methods remind us that our prayer is not a Bible Study. We are not so much seeking after facts about the Scriptures as opening ourselves up to God in prayer. First we read a passage from the Bible so that the word becomes implanted in our minds and hearts. Next we must meditate upon the Scripture by engaging our thoughts, emotions, imagination and desires (Catechism: 2708). The purpose of this is for us to “understand the why and how of Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking” (Catechism:2705)

### **The bible contains the Words of Life**

Such prayerful engagement may be painful or joyous but we should remain with it for as long as it provides nourishment.

This meditation should prompt us to respond in some way: various actions or resolutions may come to mind or provoke the conscience. We should act upon these – the Bible is not a dead letter but contains words of life which means that our lives come to look more like that of Jesus. Having responded a period of thanksgiving and then more silent contemplation is helpful. Remember how Mary, the sister of Martha, sat at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10). Jesus commended her for it. Silence ensures that there is some space in us to for God to speak. Whether our prayer life is very active or more still, the words of Scripture, whether in the liturgy or through private reading, always contain the potential to speak directly into our hearts. At the mountain of the Transfiguration the Father says, ‘*This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to him!*’



Jesus makes a commitment to us: if we listen to Him and follow his words then we will be secure having built our relationship on solid foundations (Matthew: 7:24-27). The Scriptures provide food for our lives and prayer a place where we can feed. Let us

together ‘*taste and see that the Lord is good*’.

### **(Footnotes)**

1 Dei Verbum, The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. Produced in 1965 this was a document of the Second Vatican Council on the word of God.

2 Verbum Domini. Post Synodal Exhortation on the word of God 2008. This document sought to share with the wider Church the fruits of a special synod called by Pope Benedict XVI to study the place of the word of God in the life of the Church.