



# CHARIS

## MAGAZINE

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### **Pentecost Vigil 2020**

*Pope Francis*

### **Message in preparation for Pentecost 2020**

*Fr. Raniero  
Cantalamessa  
ofmcap*

### **Serve in the Peripheries**

*Ruggero Zanon*

### **COVID 19 : your testimonies**

**Veronica O'Brien**

*Roger Matthys*







For the first anniversary of CHARIS, we lived a historical, ecumenical Pentecostal Vigil, a true Pentecost of the nations. We were more than 200,000 gathered virtually to implore the Holy Spirit and pray for a new Pentecost for the Church and the world.

In Babel, people were separated into countless different languages. At Pentecost, as recorded in Acts, the Holy Spirit brings about the communion of nations: "Parthians, Medes and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and that part of Libya near Cyrene, Romans in residence, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs, we hear them proclaiming in our language the wonders of God!" (Acts 2:9-11). Pentecost is the anti-Babel! This is what we experienced during this Vigil. All united, we prayed in tongues - the language of the Spirit who prays in us with inexpressible groans (Rom 8:26) and who unites us beyond all our cultural or social differences. Many of you have told us how

moved you were to participate in this song in tongues.

This Pentecost 2020 has highlighted in a special way one of the reasons why the Vatican erected CHARIS: communion. The Vigil dramatically highlighted the communion service of CHARIS. Personally, I had never had such an experience of worldwide communion among all the expressions of the Renewal that came together to make this Vigil a success. In fact, one should not believe that the realization of this Vigil rested only on the small staff of the CHARIS offices in Rome, obliged to work at home for reasons of confinement. The success came from the communion that was built between people, young and old, groups, communities, TV channels from different continents, separated from each other by thousands of kilometers. It is the common work of American, Indian, French, Mexican, German, Brazilian, Polish, Argentinean, Hungarian, Togolese (and so many others) brothers and sisters that made it possible for this event to reach hundreds of thousands of people. This result is the fruit of communion where all put

themselves at the service in humility. The marvel is that the communion in service has given rise to a magnificent worldwide communion in prayer to the Holy Spirit which has also brought together Orthodox, Evangelical, Anglican Christians... May all those who participated in this communion be thanked here.

But it is not only the experience of communion that marked this Vigil, but also the message of Pope Francis (see p. 4). The Holy Father affirms that to live according to the invitation of Jesus in Matthew 25 is the duty of all, including those of CHARIS who are "all the charismatics united". He invites us to emerge better from this pandemic by placing ourselves at the service of Christ present in the poor. CHARIS takes this call of the Supreme Pontiff very seriously and has committed itself to work in this direction (see p. 6). In this issue, in particular, we propose a reflection on the evangelization of the peripheries, accompanied by testimonies of actions in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many, in fact, have been the members of the Charismatic Renewal who have committed themselves to the service of the sick of the pandemic or of people in precarious situations as a result of this terrible illness.

Finally, in the section on witnesses to the Renewal, you will find a presentation of the figure of Veronica O'Brien who, together with Cardinal Suenens, played an important role in the integration of the Renewal in the Church.

Jean-Luc Moens  
CHARIS Moderator

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Postal Address: Palazzo San Calisto, 00120 Vatican City  
Telephone: +39 06 698 87126/27  
Fax: +39 06 698 87224  
Website: [www.charis.international](http://www.charis.international)  
E-mail: [info@charis.international](mailto:info@charis.international)



# CHARIS PENTECOST VIGIL 2020

## Message of the Pope Francis



***“When Pentecost day came around, they had all met together in the same place.” Thus begins the second chapter of book of Acts that we have just heard. And thanks to technology advances, today too, all of us, believers from various parts of the world are gathered together on Pentecost eve.***

The account continues: *“Where suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind, which filled the entire house in which they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, they separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit...”* (Acts 2, 2-4)

The Spirit came to rest on each one of the disciples, on each one of us. The Spirit promised by Jesus comes to renew, to convert, to heal each one of us. He comes to heal our fears – oh, how many fears we have! – to heal our uncertainty, He comes to heal our wounds, also the wounds we cause one another and He comes to make us disciples, missionary disciples, witnesses full of courage, of apostolic parresia, which are necessary for the preaching of the Gospel that,

as mentioned in the following verses, happened to the disciples.

Today more than ever we need the Father to send us the Holy Spirit. In the first chapter of book of Acts, Jesus says to his disciples: *“... he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”* (v. 4). And, in verse 8, he says, *“When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

### Testimony of Jesus

The Holy Spirit leads us to this testimony: today the world suffers, is wounded; we live in a very wounded

world, which suffers, especially in the poorest, who are discarded. When all our human certainties have disappeared, the world needs us to give Jesus to it. It needs our witness to the Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus. And that witness we can only give it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need the Spirit to give us new eyes, open our minds and hearts to face this moment and the future with the lesson learned. We are only one humanity. We are not saved by ourselves. No one saves himself. No one. St. Paul says in the Letter to the Galatians: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ,”* (Gal. 3:28), cohesive by the power of the Holy Spirit, through this baptism in the Holy Spirit that Jesus announces. We know it, we knew it,

but this pandemic we are living through has made us experience it in a much more shocking way.

We have before us the duty to build a new reality. The Lord will do it; we can collaborate... *“Behold, I make all things new.”* he says (Rev 21:5).

When we come out of this pandemic, we will no longer be able to do what we have been doing, and in the way we have been doing it. No, everything will be different. All the suffering will have been useless if we do not build all together a more just, more equitable, more Christian society, not in name, but in reality, a reality that leads us to a Christian behavior. If we do not work to end the pandemic of poverty in the world, the pandemic of poverty in each of our countries, in each of the cities we live in, this time will have past in vain.

From the great trials of humanity, and among them, the pandemic, one comes

out either better or worse. One does not come out the same person.

I ask you: How do you want to come out? Better or worse? And that is why today we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit so that He can change our hearts and help us to come out better.

If we do not live to be judged according to what Jesus tells us: *“For I was hungry and you gave me food, in prison and you visited me, a stranger and you welcomed me.”* (Mt 25:35-36), we will not come out better

And this is everybody’s task, a task for all of us. And also for you of CHARIS, who are the communion of all the charismatics.

The third Malines document, written in the 70s by Cardinal Suenens and Bishop Helder Camara, called: *Charismatic Renewal and Social Action: A Dialogue*, shows the way to this current of grace. Be

faithful to this call of the Holy Spirit!

The prophetic words of John XXIII, when he announces the II Vatican Council and which the Charismatic Renewal especially treasures, now come to my mind: *“May the divine Spirit deign to answer in a most comforting manner the prayer that everyday rises to him from every corner of the world: Renew your wonders in our time, as though in a new Pentecost, and grant that the Holy Church, united in unanimous prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and guided by Peter, may spread the Kingdom of the divine Savior, a Kingdom of Truth, of Justice, of Love, and of Peace.”*

To all of you, on this vigil I wish you the consolation of the Holy Spirit. And the strength of the Holy Spirit to come out of this time of pain, sorrow and trial that is the pandemic, to come out improved.

May the Lord bless you and the Virgin Mother guard you.◊



# Letter of thanks to Pope Francis



Most Holy Father,

Your message of Pentecost and the appeal it contains have touched the whole Charismatic Renewal and has found a very broad and favourable response.

We do not know the exact number, but we know that your message was heard live by more than 200,000 people in 8 languages, including Russian, Tagalog, Swahili etc. In addition, our prayer was attended by Norberto Saracco, a Pentecostal; Kinga Lakatos of the Reformed Church of Hungary; Piotr Babarin, Orthodox of St. Petersburg and the Whitehead couple, he a Catholic and she an Anglican.

In response to your message, we assure you that we, members of the Renewal, desire to live according to Matthew 25, with all that this means. And we want to emerge better from this pandemic. Yes, we wish, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to contribute to the transformation of society into a more just, more Christian society for the poor, the excluded, the sick, the disadvantaged, the forgotten, the lonely, as Cardinal Suenens and Dom Helder Camara encouraged us in their time.

We thank you wholeheartedly for your encouragement and we assure you, Most Holy Father, of the prayers of the whole stream of grace for your Petrine ministry. Thank you for keeping us also in your prayers!

Jean-Luc Moens  
Moderator of CHARIS

## A request for your collaboration

# Charismatic Renewal and service of Man



Once again, Pope Francis invites the whole Renewal to make the message of the Mechelen document “Charismatic Renewal and Social Action: A Dialogue”, published in 1979 by Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens and Dom Helder Camara, a joint publication.

In order to deepen this appeal of the Pope, CHARIS Magazine No. 5 will be entirely devoted to reflection and testimonies on the Renewal in the Spirit and service of man in the light of Matthew 25: “What you did to the least of my brethren, you did to me. “We know that many prayer groups and communities have already been engaged for years in the service of man in all his dimensions. But this commitment is often little known. That is why we call here for your collaboration: send us your testimonies... **How has the Holy Spirit inspired your group, your association, your community to work for the service of mankind?** We will publish

the best testimonies with the photos you send us. The different examples you will send us will be an encouragement for all of us to move forward along the path that the Pope indicates to us in these times when Covid-19 is forcing us to face new challenges.

We recall that the service of man as presented by Cardinal Suenens and Dom Helder Camara touches all dimensions of humanity, both physical and spiritual. In particular, it never separates the exercise of absolutely necessary charity from the equally important proclamation of salvation. Pope Francis also reminded us of this: “The Spirit [...] comes to convert us into disciples, missionary disciples, courageous witnesses [...] for the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus”.

Please send your contributions to **magazine@charis.international** before August 31.

# REACTIONS TO THE PENTECOST VIGIL

We have received many reactions to the Pentecost Vigil. Here are a few of them. We are publishing them in their original language, in the spirit that we experienced at Pentecost.

## Lina González

Ha sido una bendición. Un momento de verdadera unidad; un sentimiento de que la unidad es posible y que unidos todo es posible. Pero más allá del sentimiento humano, la posibilidad del sentir sobrenatural de la presencia de Dios; de un Dios que nos muestra un nuevo mundo de posibilidades de lo que Él podrá hacer a través de nosotros, si estamos unidos.

## Nickodemus Richard Rinaldi

I am also touched as we pray in tongues together. I can feel the unity of our heart as we pray.

## Agatha Chen, Irene Wu and Ya-Wen Fan (Taiwan)

We all unify together, just like a big Family. Communion is the Power.

## Patti Gallagher Mansfield

Congratulations on the beautiful and anointed worldwide celebration of Pentecost 2020! How moving to hear 500 brothers and sisters praising God in tongues, that mysterious and powerful charism! You have used “digital platforms” to unite us in praise and to share the Baptism in the Spirit with the Church and the world!

## Michele (Mozambique)

Para mim foi uma experiência ímpar, de unidade, de oração, de estarmos unidos num só coração e numa só alma, como as primeiras comunidades cristãs. Foi muito emocionante ver pessoas de diferentes nacionalidade e portanto, idiomas diferentes, falando a mesma língua, a língua dos anjos.

## Denise Bergeron

Merci pour ce magnifique rassemblement Pentecôte que CHARIS nous a permis de vivre. J’ai reçu beaucoup de témoignages.

## Miledys Alt. Pérez

Una experiencia hermosa para nuestra vida de fe, un evento extraordinario que sin diferencia cultural, racial y económica involucró un mundo que no tiene frontera para Dios, en él se evidenció que todos somos iguales que pertenecemos a una sola raza humana adoradores de un Dios Trino.

## Ir. Sandra Mara

A sensação que tive foi de estar vivendo um momento de céu na terra, com línguas diferentes, mas ao mesmo tempo parece estar falando a mesma língua.

## Charles Whitehead

Many congratulations and thanks for all your hard work which made last night such a powerful and encouraging prayerful event for people all over the world.

## Maria Carmen Rubio

En la pandemia por COVID no podíamos tener encuentros físicos, pero un encuentro de este tipo como el que tuvimos hizo posible la participación. Creo que en adelante también por cómo están las economías mundiales, deberemos seguir pensando en tener más encuentros virtuales, para facilitar así que participemos los más posible.

## Monica

Vorrei lodare il Signore per la bellissima Vigilia di Pentecoste e il primo compleanno del CHARIS ma anche ringraziare a voi il vostro lavoro per quello. E’ stato davvero molto emozionante.

## Mildred Conise

The feeling was surreal and amazing. The whole of the event was really touching to me and most especially when Pope Francis shared his wisdom and the part of when everyone was praying “The Lord’s Prayer (Our Father)” in own language.

## Lordan Ljubenkovic (Croatia)

It was wonderful to witness how so many representatives of CCRs from all over the planet pray together.

## Aurora Barbero

Orar en lenguas, cantar y alabar al Señor con hermanos y hermanas de diferentes lugares, ha sido un verdadero y auténtico Pentecostés personal. Creo que también ha sido una bendición para la Renovación Carismática y para toda la Iglesia. (continue on page 10)

## Clément Tuho

Quelle grâce d’unité... quel chemin de gloire pour l’amour de Jésus. D’un mal, Dieu a suscité une merveille.

## Evilly (Brazil)

Uma experiência emocionante e enriquecedora. Poder viver Pentecostes unida a diversas culturas, países, mas um só espírito e mesmo clamor: Vem Espírito Santo.

## Italo Fasanella (Brazil)

Para mim foi um privilégio ter participado desta histórica Vigília de Pentecostes. Poder contribuir, ainda que minimamente, para compor o “mosaico” da unidade de Deus a mim e minha comunidade o sentido de que a tão sonhada comunhão e unidade nasce e se compõe de pequenos gestos.

## Jorge Luiz Vieira da Silva

Uma experiência de Pentecostes, o Espírito Santo nos fez sentir a comunhão da Igreja.

## Marie-Hélène Martin

Faire monter du monde entier simultanément une invocation de l’Esprit Saint, qu’on soit en été en hiver, en plein jour, au matin ou à la nuit, c’était vraiment une expérience de Pentecôte.

## Luzia Santiago

A Vigília de Pentecostes, foi maravilhosa. Uma experiência única na minha vida. Foi também uma bênção para a Comunidade Canção Nova poder transmitir a Vigília pela da TV Canção Nova.

## Nèbpawindé KABORE (Burkina Faso)

C’était vraiment une œuvre de communion.

## Ron and Leann Smith

We as most groups had to cancel our annual Charismatic Conference this year due to the pandemic. By participating in this Pentecost Vigil, we had a chance to be with so many countries that we never have been in contact with before.

## Nikolina (Croatia)

I had a sensation like I participated in first Pentecost when all languages were mixed up and I felt an anointment of Holy Spirit to whole world.

## Sunimalee (Australia)

It gave me a huge sense of belonging in the mighty current of Grace that’s flowing right across the Church.

## Kathrina (Philippines)

There was unity in diversity.

## Robert Tumuhimbise (Uganda)

It was such an awesome and powerful presence of the Spirit that was felt even we were so many miles apart.

## Michael Joseph L. Estrella

It’s so wonderful to be part of the bigger Body of Christ. I felt the awesome presence of Jesus and His prayer to the Father that we will be One in Him.





# CHRONICLE OF THE ECUMENICAL VIGIL

Immediately after having proposed a world-wide online prayer vigil for Pentecost, CHARIS received numerous proposals for collaboration that have made it possible to carry out this important event, the first of its kind.

Technicians from around the world helped us by generously making their professional skills available to CHARIS, giving us access to the best of today's technology. Their generosity allowed the realization of our Pentecost Vigil.

Here are the names of the technicians who have worked for CHARIS from different parts of the world. They are the first ones we want to thank. *Juan Pablo Chávez - USA, Everton Fernandes and Clyde Mendonca - India, Adaiton Batissta Da Silva and Saulo Macena from Canção Nova Community - Brazil, Jean-Baptiste Dumouchel - France, Roberto Merola - Italy, Andrzej Lewek - Poland, Vegh Zoltán - Hungary, Solomon Islands - Trinidad and Tobago.*

## PARTICIPANTS

Shayne Bennett, member of the : CICS (CHARIS International Communion Service) connected from Australia to guide our vigil, at 4 am! More than 60 young people and families from more than 50 countries invoked the Holy Spirit in more than 25 different languages, including Spanish, English, Portuguese, Indian, Malay, Hungarian, Croatian, Tamil, Swahili, French, German, Bahasa, Indonesian, Singalo, Italian, Finnish, different African languages, Samoan, etc.

A thousand brothers and sisters from 70 countries connected live for prayer, particularly in praise, song in tongues and thanksgiving. These are the names of the brothers and sisters who participated in the spontaneous prayer: *Denise Bergeron - Canada - French, H.E. Msgr. Francis Kalist - India - English, Danielle Younan - Lebanon - Arabic, Shenny de Gongora -*

*Guatemala - English, Fernando Venâncio Filho - Brazil - Portuguese, Ciro Fusto - Italy - Italian, Diana Margarita Ingle - New Zealand - English, Carmen Rosa Gito - Spain - English, Jur Jacobs - France, Fe.m. Barino - Philippines - Tagalog, Betty Namusoke - Uganda - Swahili, H.E. Msgr. Peter Smith - USA - English, Anthony Kraby - Guinea - Soussou.*

We highlight ecumenical participation that prayed with us; *Charles and Sue Whitehead - Catholic - Anglican marriage - English, Kinga Lakatos - Hungarian Reformed Church, Norberto Saracco - Buenas Nuevas Church - Argentina - English, Piotr Baburin Orthodox - Russia - Russian*

## MUSIC

The beauty of our Vigil was also the participation of the groups that accompanied us with the songs:

- From Argentina, the *Evangelizing Community Messengers of Peace.*

- From Germany, the group of *Fr. Markus Wittal, Community of Emmanuel, who sang the Sequence of the Holy Spirit in 5 languages.*
- From India, *Lenny Soares' By Grace group.*
- From Rome, the *Community Shalom.*

## TRANSMISSION CHANNELS

The event was broadcast through Zoom and the channels of YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TV Shalom of USA, TV 2000 (official television of the Italian Episcopal Conference).

These are the YouTube channels where you can watch the recording of the Vigil:

**English:** <https://youtu.be/Mb4KquWptTw>

**Italian:** [https://youtu.be/gS\\_3O3PGYzU](https://youtu.be/gS_3O3PGYzU)

**French:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TomrPqnthhg>

**Spanish:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn\\_4-NXVWZE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn_4-NXVWZE)

**Hungarian:** <https://youtu.be/iAd3kL1sPuY>

**Portuguese:** <https://youtu.be/MqPs2WhejzQ>

**German:** [https://youtu.be/IN\\_Jb\\_VDI8A](https://youtu.be/IN_Jb_VDI8A)

It is not a question of numbers, but of hearts gathered together in communion.

## GET READY!

The Holy Father's message has touched us. He wanted to send his message to all charismatics together. We were happy that more than 200,000

people participated in the event live from more than 100 countries. Looking at the time zones of certain countries, we can say that it was a great success. The Holy Spirit, the protagonist of the event, brought a great number of hearts into tune in this difficult period for humanity. The reactions we received made us understand that He wanted to comfort us. "The sleeping giant has woken up", as someone said when talking about the charismatic family.

All that remains is for us to continue on the path we have taken, putting the great potential that the Lord has given us at the service of all. CHARIS will continue to work and our next initiative will be directed to the young people of the whole world. They will soon receive the information.

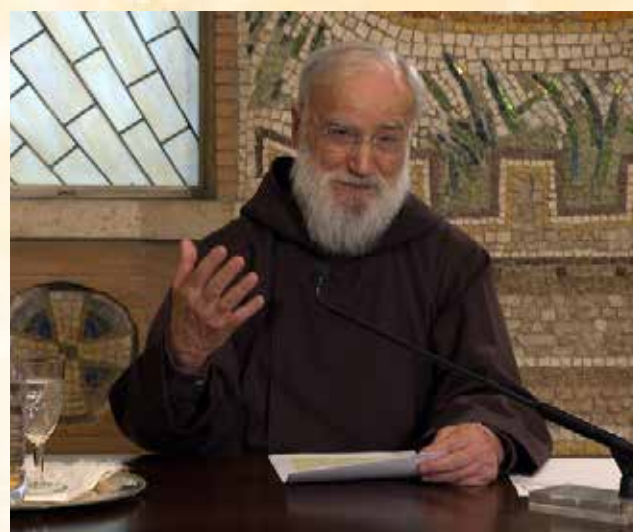
**Let's get ready!**





# CHARIS' MESSAGE IN PREPARATION for PENTECOST 2020

Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa ofmcap



The Acts of the Apostles recounts this episode in Paul's life:

"The crowd joined in the attack on them, and the magistrates had them stripped and ordered them to be beaten with rods. 23 After inflicting many blows on them, they threw them into prison and instructed the jailer to guard them securely. 24 When he received these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and secured their feet to a stake. Deliverance from Prison. 25 About midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the prisoners listened, 26 there was suddenly such a severe earthquake that the foundations of the jail shook; all the doors flew open, and the chains of all were pulled loose." (Act 16: 22-26).

With their clothes torn, covered in blows, and shackles on their feet, Paul and Silas did not pray to God to help them, but instead sang the praises of God. What a message for us members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal at this time! The example of Paul

and Silas invites us to leave aside, at least until Pentecost, all the discussion about coronavirus, or at least not to make it the center of everything. Let's not sadden the Holy Spirit by considering it as less important (or less powerful) than the virus.

Moreover, the example of Paul and Silas invites us to sing hymns to God. This may seem absurd and difficult to accept, especially for those who experience in their own flesh the devastating effects of this scourge, but in faith we can understand that it is possible. Saint Paul proclaims that "all things work for the good of him who loves God" (Rom 8:28). Everything without excluding anything; therefore also the present pandemic! St. Augustine explains the profound reason for this: "Being supremely good, God would never allow any evil to exist in His works unless He was powerful and good enough to bring good out of evil itself" (Enchir., 11:3).

We do not praise God for the evil that brings the whole of

humanity to its knees; we praise Him because we are sure that He will be able to draw good out of that very evil, for us and for the world. We praise Him precisely because we are convinced that everything works for the good of those who love God, and above all, of those whom God loves! I say this trembling because I don't know if I myself would be able to do it, but God's grace can do this and more. In the Good Friday preaching at St. Peter's Basilica, I tried to identify some of the "goods" that God is already drawing from this evil: the awakening of the illusion of being able to save ourselves, the sense of solidarity that this evil arouses and which has pushed some of our brothers and sisters to the point of heroism. I would add today: the awakening of religious feeling and the need for prayer. The extraordinary attention to the gestures and words of Pope Francis, even outside the Catholic world, is a sign of this.

The same Saint Paul recommended to the Thessalonians: "In all

things give thanks" (1 Thess 5:18). Praise and thanksgiving, doxology and the thanksgiving are man's first two duties towards God. The fundamental sin of humanity, which, according to the Apostle, is the source of every other sin, is the rejection of these two attitudes: "As a result, they (men) have no excuse; for although they knew God they did not accord him glory (doxazein) as God or give him thanks (eucharistein)." (Rom 1:20-21).

**"Being supremely good, God would never allow any evil to exist in His works unless He was powerful and good enough to bring good out of evil itself"**  
(Enchir., 11:3).

Consequently, the exact opposite of sin is not virtue, but praise! The praise of God, made in the present dramatic circumstances, is faith pushed to its highest degree. Jesus, after having calmed the storm, did not reproach His apostles for not having woken Him earlier; He reproached them for not having had enough faith.

This is an opportunity for us in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal to return to the purest origins of the stream of grace: from its birth, it appeared before the rest of Christendom as the people of praise, the people of hallelujah.

We were not alone. Our Pentecostal brothers had had the same experience. One of the most widely read books in the Renewal, after "The Cross

and the Switchblade" by David Wilkerson, was Merlin Carothers' book "Prison to Praise". The author not only recommended the importance of praise, but demonstrated - with Scripture and experience in hand - its miraculous power.

The greatest miracles of the Holy Spirit are not obtained in response to our supplications, but in response to our praise. In the same way, about the three young Hebrews thrown into the burning furnace, we read that with one voice they began to sing, glorifying and blessing God by singing a hymn with which the prayer of Lauds begins every Sunday and every feast day: "Blessed are you, Lord, God of our fathers..." (Dan 3:51 ff.). The greatest miracle of praise is the one that happens to the one who practices it, especially in trial, because it shows that grace has been stronger than nature.

The miracle of Paul and Silas in the prison - and of the three young men in the furnace - is repeated in multiple circumstances and in endless ways: release from disease, from drug addiction, from a wrongful conviction, from the burden of one's own past...



"Try to believe", was the advice Carothers gave to its readers.

So let us drown the virus in a sea of praise, or at least try to do so. . Let us unite ourselves to the whole Church which, in the Gloria of the Mass, proclaims: "We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your immense glory". There is no supplication in this prayer, only praise!

While waiting for Pentecost, let us begin again to sing with the same enthusiasm as at that time the songs that brought tears to so many of us at our first encounter with the current of grace of the Charismatic Renewal: "Alabaré, Alabaré", "Come and Worship, Royal Priesthood" and so many others.

There is one song that I would like to mention in particular because of its topicality. It was composed in 1992 by Don Moen. Its refrain, in the original English text, says this:

*Oh, God will make a way  
Where there seems to be no way  
He works in ways we cannot see  
He will make a way for me.*

Not just for me or for us, but for all mankind. ♦





## TO SERVE IN THE PERIPHERIES

Ruggero Zanon

To go to the outskirts, to choose the outskirts, is above all to discover that the outskirts are at the centre of God's heart, because our God "has chosen the weak in the world" (cf. 1 Cor 1:27), because "the Gospel is proclaimed to the poor" (Mt 11:5) and because "the kingdom of heaven belongs to them" (Mt 5:3).

If we want to remain with God, if we want to follow him, the periphery is our home, because it is there that "the Word became flesh" and "came to dwell among us" (Jn 1:14): he wanted to hide behind the tired eyes of that sick man, behind the dirty and weary hands of that poor man, behind the despair of that young man, behind the bars of that prison.

### Conversion to the poor

Poverty lays us bare, poverty makes the truth in our lives,

poverty keeps questioning us. Pay attention: if you decide to face it, it's over for you! You can decide to look away, to avert your eyes. But you know that if your gaze crosses that of the poor, the wall of indifference falls, you enter the spiral of compassion, and you don't know where it will lead you.

So, perhaps it is better not to let yourself get too involved, perhaps it is better to keep your distance from the poor, because if we allow ourselves to become passionate, we risk losing control of our lives. Because the poor person is not satisfied with money, time, energy; he is not asking us for something, he is asking us for everything: he is asking us to give him life, to give him the totality of ourselves. And you, who thought was patient, always available, all powerful, you experience all your limits, all your poverty.

But this is how the poor person succeeds in bringing out the best in you. These are not my gifts, my virtues, but the fact that I feel poor among the poor, that I am part of the same body, that I need everything and everyone.

The first time I went into a prison in Italy for a project for prisoners, I felt strong and courageous. But it was enough to hear the first stories of these people to experience my poverty: what richness in their words, what depth, what desire for infinity in their sharing, what freedom to be truly themselves, what truth! And the more abysmal the evil they had committed, the deeper was their level of awareness and thirst for true life.

I thought I had gone to prison to convert the poor. I understood that it was up



to me to convert the poor, overcoming my prejudices, my fear, my disbelief. I understood that this God that I thought I was bringing to the prisoners, was already present there and was waiting for me in that face, in that look, in that fraternal greeting. If we want to serve on the periphery, let us allow ourselves to be surprised by the other, let us allow ourselves to be led to discover the treasure that is hidden in every man, even in the worst of them, and going forward, let us abandon all our certainties (cf. Mt 13:44) and let ourselves be conquered by this wealth.

Betting on weakness, believing in man in spite of everything and in spite of everyone, trusting in him who does not deserve it: this is what the Gospel asks. It asks us to go beyond: beyond ourselves, beyond our categories, beyond our

fears, because - as Pope Francis says - "we succeed in being fully human when we are more than human, when we allow God to lead us beyond ourselves so that we can reach our truest being". (EG 8). We are fully ourselves when we allow ourselves to be led "beyond ourselves".

### Open Doors

Pope Francis continually speaks of a Church "on the way out": a Church that is not so much a Church occupied with moving, with doing - this comes later - but which is above all a Church with open doors (cf. EG 46).

This is an extraordinary prophetic vision. Going out to others is not primarily a movement. It is an attitude. If we open the doors, if we open them wide - as Saint John Paul II exhorted us to do - it will be the poor who

will come to us because they will find a place in our hearts. And to that Christ who knocks (cf. Rev 3:20), he will finally be opened!

Then comes the second step to serve on the periphery: not to put oneself in the centre, to change perspective. Jesus did not so much ask us to do good, to be protagonists ourselves.

Above all, he asked us to let him enter into our lives: "I stand at the door and knock" (Rev 3:20). Are we ready to open that door? Are we sure we want to? Are we sure we want to give up our comforts, our free time, our peace? Because, if we open the door, if we open it wide, it is the unwanted ones that will enter. Those who are unfriendly, the misfit, the alcoholic, the prostitute, the violent, the one nobody wants. (continue on pg. 16)



If I open the doors, it is no longer I who will decide when and how to go to the periphery, when and how to go to the poor. If I open the doors, I say to the world: "Here I am! And the world will come, with its worries, its problems, with its thirst for truth and justice.

It is there that we discover that the poor are our salvation, that the poor are those who save us from spiritualism, who root us in reality. By their insistence, by their hunger for attention, for peace, for relationships, they constantly remind us that we are called to give life, to lose it. They constantly remind us that, since Jesus came into the world, it is no longer possible to love God who does not see himself if we do not love the brother we see (cf. 1 Jn 2:20b).

Then comes the moment when we can no longer bear it, when we feel the fatigue and the weight of so much poverty, when we experience our helplessness. It is then that we realize how much



this poverty is our richness, how much the experience of our limitations brings us back to God, because "...it is when we are weak that we are strong" (2 Cor 12:10).

To go to the periphery, to reach the forgotten, the marginalized, those who have lost all hope, I have to pass through my periphery every day. I must discover and welcome my poverty, look into my abyss, face my weakness. Because it is in my poverty that I feel the need to turn to God. It is where I am most powerless to make room for the power of God. It is where I think I have reached the lowest point in my life that I come face to face with the infinite depth of God's love. For there is no poverty, no failure, no human baseness in which God is not. There is no sickness, no slavery, no loneliness in which God has not already established His dwelling place!

When I was 30 years old, I was a dead man. In the abyss of my loneliness and despair in which nothing made sense to me, God came close in the unconditional welcome of some people of the Via Pacis Community. God manifested Himself to me through their open houses, in their patient listening. This

God who seemed so far away, excluded from my life, was there in this brother who took care of me, he was there in this sister's gesture of affection. Without anyone having spoken to me about God, I had experienced him, I had touched him.

### The relationship at the centre

The last time one of my founders, Paolo Maino, came back from Colombia, he told how during a mission in a barrio in Armenia, he approached an old homeless man sitting on the street and asked him how he was and why he was living on the street. The man, after thanking him, said: "It had been weeks since anyone had spoken to me!" He was living on the street, always in the middle of people, but it had been weeks since anyone had spoken to him. He had nothing, he lacked everything; but the greatest poverty, insurmountable, was the lack of relationships.

The poor - the excluded, the marginalized, the forgotten, the desperate - asks us above all to enter into a relationship with him. He asks us to look him in the eye, to listen to him, to touch him in order to bring him out of the marginalization in which he has been locked. We need to establish contact. For when we enter into



relationship with the other, the other becomes a part of ourselves. To enter into relationship with the other means to give him back the place he deserves: that of a person, that of the brother for whom Christ died (1 Cor 8:11). It is giving him back that dignity which opens the door to hope and makes him discover that he too is rich, that he too has something to give.

The relationship places us in a dimension of reciprocity: yes, because everytime we believe we are going to meet the poor, every time we believe we are doing something for them, we discover that it is they who are doing something for us, it is they who are evangelizing us (cf. EG 198), it is they who reveal to us the face of Christ, the true face of God. Then we discover that we too are poor and we understand that poverty is a grace that opens us to an encounter

with God because it is to the poor that the Good News is proclaimed (Mt 11:5).

In welcoming the poor, we are not doing a good deed, a work of mercy: we are performing a liturgical act, because we discover that this Jesus that we want to carry and proclaim, is already present in this poor person who is before us, is really present in this face marked by suffering, loneliness, despair, old age. He was "without beauty or radiance to attract our eyes, and without an appearance that would have seduced us" (Is 53:2). It is like this, it is stronger than him: God has a weakness for the weak! That is his style. It pleased him to choose what is weak in the world in order to confuse the strong (cf. 1 Cor 1:27). He came to seek and save what was lost (cf. Lk 19:10). He came for the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame (cf.

Lk 14:21): he came for the forgotten of the world.

The other day, in Recife, at the exit of a church, a woman approached me to ask me for money. It was the poor "usual" person we meet every day, the one we are used to saying "no" to. And I said no to him too. But this woman insisted. So I said to myself: "With what courage will you be able to speak in a few days about 'Serving on the periphery' if you don't now seek a relationship with this woman?" I gave her what little change I had. Until that moment, it was always me who was in the center. But when this woman started to cry, to thank, to seek to embrace me, I suddenly found myself on the other side receiving love and not giving it, being evangelized and not evangelizing.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of poverty that helps us to remain humble, that enriches us with your goodness!✠

# COVID-19 : your testimonies

*All over the world, the Renewal is committed to serving those who have suffered directly or indirectly from Covid-19. Here are a few testimonies. As Pope Francis said: “Let us start afresh from the countless testimonies of generous and gratuitous love that have taught us how much we need closeness, care, sacrifice to nourish fraternity and civil coexistence. In this way we will emerge from this crisis stronger.”*

**“For I was hungry and you gave me food”**

**Matthew 25:35**



My name is Patrizia. I am the mother of two beautiful children and I work as a health operator in the RSA (Residenza Sanitaria Assistenziale) in Riva del Garda. I am a member of the Association Via Pacis.

Since the arrival of the Covid-19 health crisis, we, the health professionals (doctors, nurses) have been on the front line in dealing with the epidemic in the various branches of the health service; exposure to the risk of infection, to an emotional overload due to daunting work schedules, to the lack of individual protection

resources, often disinfected and reused, to physical fatigue, to the fear of contracting the infection, of transmitting it to our loved ones, to the reduction of human resources, to the lack of support from our loved ones because of the danger of infection, this last irreplaceable resource, which everyone has the right to have next to them, especially in the last moments of their lives.

After this brief introduction to an almost dramatic setting, which every health care worker in any facility experiences, I want to briefly describe my

experience in my workplace. I start my day by getting up at 4.40 in the morning, doing praise, because it is from prayer that I gain the strength to face my day, if I draw on the strength of the Lord, I am sure that my day has a different meaning.

For about two months now, the work seems to have been taking place on a battlefield where one leaves covered from head to toe, indistinguishable from each other like martians. A white, green and blue army; this is also a beautiful teaching; not only does the virus not look



anyone in the face, but perhaps we ourselves are no longer capable of it. We have lost the sense to stop and look at ourselves. Only when we were getting dressed, at the end of our turn, we discovered the face of the person we worked with, elbow to elbow, the face marked with protective devices and dripping with sweat.

I can testify that my view of my colleagues at this time has changed and has become more profound. The compassion I feel for all those faces marked by the masks and dripping with sweat is indescribable; I breathe their physical fatigue. The sadness and sense of loneliness that I feel when I walk into patients' rooms is impossible to fill. They who with a look full of hope extend their hand towards you to look for a caress, a hug, a little comfort, a smile, who ring the bell ten times with any excuse only to see a face, which, even if hidden behind a mask, is familiar to them.

There is also the sadness and the sense of loneliness of the patients, who stretch out their hand to look for a caress, a gesture of attention. Linger by the side of the dying, who are denied the presence of their loved ones, I felt it was my duty. One episode in particular left a mark on my heart.

Mr. A. was a man of faith; he would hold his rosary between his fingers without tiring. At Mass, in the little chapel of our residence, he was always

first. That evening, he was in a terminally ill state, and as I looked at him, in my heart, I lamented to the Lord: “It is not right that he should die like that, without the sacraments, that he should leave this world without first having received You. I heard a voice inside me saying, “I’m hungry, you give me food. “At that moment, a colleague approaches me and asks: “Aren’t you an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist? Give him communion yourself!”. After having obtained with





# COVID-19 : your testimonies

some difficulty the key to the tabernacle, I took the Blessed Sacrament and brought it to Mr. A.

In this little piece of bread was concentrated all his hope. His face relaxed and, with the trickle of voices that remained, he recited with me the Hail Mary. He did the same with his roommate, and I blessed them both with the sign of the Cross, entrusting them to the Lord.

This experience showed me a living God, always present and close. Together with my colleague Simona, also Minister of the Eucharist, the way has been opened to bring communion to all the guests who desire it, with the approval of the administration.

This is the extraordinary thing about my work: the possibility to “make myself the neighbour”, to wipe on so many faces the tears that have the taste of solitude, to lighten the weight that oppresses, to contemplate the presence of the Lord scattered throughout my daily life.✧

## Service for “A Time Such as This”

**Mary Ann West, New Creation Community, Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA**



How can we still serve in this time of lock up? We want to serve more. And yet everything says, “distance yourselves”.

A long-standing relationship in Portsmouth, Virginia, between New Creation Community and Church of God, Sanctuary of Hope, has made it possible for us to serve brothers and sisters during these uncertain times. Hope Charitable Services, Sanctuary of Hope’s outreach arm, has been New Creation’s outreach partner for many years. Our relationship has deepened over the years of service together.

**“Through this ministry, the Lord has provided some unexpected blessings”**



During this time of even greater need of those who live in the inner city, Bishop Frank Allen, pastor of Sanctuary of Hope, asked us if we could help provide meals for the increase in people they are serving. We decided that we could provide 90 dinners once every other week. We provide a one dish dinner the same evening that Hope is organizing a large food distribution.

**“In this time of “stay at home”, we can still serve together in the periphery, and deepen and forge new relationships”**

A large aluminum pan filled with the ingredients for a one pot meal for 15, is delivered on the front porches of the cooks. The next afternoon the covered, prepared meals are picked up, again from front porches, and delivered directly to Sanctuary of Hope. There they are repackaged into single containers and served as people pick up

fresh and packaged food.

Through this ministry, the Lord has provided some unexpected blessings. As our grocery stores have experienced shortages, we have not been certain that we will be able to buy all the ingredients for our recipes. Once the Lord provided two community sisters at the same store at the same time. There was a package limit in force. Yet between the two of them, they were able to purchase exactly the amount of ground beef needed. Another time, the meat was donated by a young family,



friends of ours, who had an excess in their freezer. And yet again, Hope Charitable called, informing us that they had received a donation for the type of meat in another of our recipes – just the number pounds we needed. It was suggested we reach out to young moms, some our own children and their friends, to join us in this endeavor. They have joyfully responded, cooking meals without having to leave their homes.

In this time of “stay at home”, we can still serve together in the periphery, and deepen and forge new relationships on two fronts, with Hope Charitable and with these young families.

Praise God whose plans are always deeper and wider than our own! What joy for all of us!✧





# COVID-19 : your testimonies



## A hand extended to the poorest

**Fr. Rodrigo Custódio**  
Moderator of Aliança de Misericórdia  
[www.misericordia.com.br](http://www.misericordia.com.br)

When I delivered breakfast to the brothers in the street, one of them looked at me and said, “Sister, do you have a Mass today?”. I replied, “Because of the pandemic, we won’t have it, because we can’t have crowds”. He said, “My God, I have come from far away, walking, only to hear the Word of God. I need to talk to God”. Then he went to have coffee [...] When I closed, I called him to speak and said, “You came to seek God today and I cannot let you leave here empty. I asked him, “May I pray for you?” He said, “Clear!” And he gave me a big smile. He said he was very scared of dying because of Covid-19 and

started crying. So I prayed for him and told him how much he was loved by God. At the end of the prayer, he looked at me and said, “Thank you! This is what I needed. I feel a great peace in my heart,” he smiled and left.

José (name changed) is one of the people living on the streets served daily by the Mercy Pact in Brazil. In addition to the city of São Paulo, the community is present in 40 cities and seven countries, working with the most

needy. The testimony of each of these homeless people has been a fulfilling reward for those who have been on the front lines helping the most vulnerable in this time of pandemic.



As the number of people infected with COVID-19 among the homeless has increased, the Aliança de Misericórdia has stepped up its humanitarian assistance services to the poorest. Community members take to the streets to bring food, in addition to the services provided by the various social projects, where 6,000 meals are served each week.

Many homeless people have come to us with despair and fear of being contaminated. Faced with this reality, a

partnership between the charismatic communities and Catholic institutions has been created to welcome these homeless people in shelters and recovery homes. More than a thousand men and women have already been taken off the streets in recent months by these different communities.

Other beautiful partnerships are taking shape with the dioceses: in Manaus, for example, Cáritas Arquidiocesana is financing 300 meals distributed daily

by members of the Alliance for the Homeless. Along with the food, they receive instructions on how to avoid the spread of the virus, with guidelines on hygiene and the distribution of masks and alcohol-based gel.

These are difficult times! But we must not forget those who have nowhere else to go and who count on our welcome. The preserved life and the gratitude of these brothers brings back all the discouraged spirit. With them, we are a family. ♦



# COVID-19 : your testimonies

## Catholic communities unite in sight of the poor

*Shalom Community*



Shalom Community promotes Halleluya Solidarity to raise funds for three other institutions that perform social work.

With the participation of institutions, artists, communication groups, brands and people of good will, the Halleluya Solidario was held online on June 7, 2020. In addition to bringing a lot of good music to the audience, the event offered participants the opportunity to contribute to four social institutions through donations.

Promoted by the Shalom Catholic Community, the event included more than six hours of programming with the participation of 15 Catholic artists who presented their music in order to raise R\$ 100,000 for the social work

of four Catholic institutions: Amigos dos Pobres (friends of the poor) of the Shalom Community, Obra Lumen, Fazenda da Esperança (Hope Farm) and Condomínio Espiritual Uirapuru (CEU).

Today they all work with the poorest who suffer even more from the pandemic caused by the Covid virus - 19.

### Solidarity

The “som da Esperança” (“Sound of Hope”) has reached many generous hearts who have contributed to the goal being reached and, even more, to raising more than was foreseen. The R\$ 120,000 were divided equally among the four institutions so that they could continue the work of assistance and evangelisation of the poor.

For the priest of the Shalom Community, Silvio Scopel, Halleluya Solidario was a great experience of evangelization, ecclesial communion and solidarity. “It is fitting of solidarity, as the name already says, to meet the difficulty of the other, the solitude of the other, to meet what the other needs,” says the priest. In addition to the financial collection, the online event also evangelized through moments of prayer, adoration, announcing God’s Love and about 100 people were advised and received prayer over the phone.

### Event

The project emerged from the Halleluya Festival, considered the largest Catholic music festival in the world, which

traditionally takes place in July in six Brazilian capitals such as Fortaleza, São Luís, Teresina, Natal, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In the capital city of Ceará, the event gathers more than one million people, during five days of event.

The live broadcast took place on YouTube at the Halleluya Festival, the Shalom Missionary, the Shalom Community and of Canção Nova. On TV, the images were shown on the REDEVIDA channel. Thousands of people were reached by the sound of hope. This solidarity movement is a way to help

those most in need in this time of pandemic.

In all, there were more than 13 thousand spectators and on the Internet there were more than

600 thousand interactions with Halleluya Solidario. Among the attractions, the presence of Father Marcelo Rossi stands out, granting a special blessing to the public.◊



## Pledge your support to CHARIS!

Dear brothers and sisters in the Renewal,

At Pentecost 2020, CHARIS celebrated its first anniversary in the service of the grace current. On this occasion, Pope Francis addressed us: “You too, those of CHARIS, who are all the charismatics together.” Yes, as our Pope says, all together we are CHARIS, the great family of the Charismatic Renewal! All together we are building CHARIS.

This common construction is manifested in the world through the work of thousands of volunteers who, in many countries, give themselves selflessly to the service of the Renewal. We saw it with emotion during the vigil of Pentecost: brothers and sisters, technicians from many countries have spared neither their time nor their efforts to make this event a worldwide success. All this for free...

This work is also that of the headquarters of CHARIS in Rome which centralizes all the international services. The small team that is at your service in Rome needs your prayers, your support, including financial support.

As you know, CHARIS lives only on donations. From your gifts, you who are “those of CHARIS”. But Covid-19 has not only upset our projects, it has also affected the finances of CHARIS. In the first 6 months of this year, we received almost no donation. But without your donations, without your generosity, CHARIS cannot live!

Very soon, it will be possible to support us financially via PayPal or on our website by credit card. This is why we are launching a pledge campaign. We propose you to write to us at [info@charis.international](mailto:info@charis.international) with the promise of your donation. Even the smallest donations are welcome. If all the charismatics around the world gave 1 € or 1 \$, CHARIS could work for more than 400 years!

We will write to all those who have pledged donations as soon as our banking system is effective to ask to actually send your donation.

We remind you that 10% of the donations received are allocated to charity.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.



# CHARIS National Services of Communion

The CHARIS National Services of Communion are being set up all over the world. We publish here those that have been communicated to us. Some of these CNSC are transitional services. We will continue to publish in the next magazine the CNSC of your different countries of which we will be aware.



## CNSC CROATIA

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Absent on the photo: Matija Ricov



## CNSC MEXICO

Leon Reyes (*Coordinator*), P. Loui Alfonso Martinez Gallo, Rodolfo Dario Galvan Morales, Marcela Paredes Serrano, Lina Gonzalez, Victor Tomas Ramirez Gonzalez, Luis Fernando Martinez Rivera



## CNSC GERMANY

Fr. Josef Fleddermann (*Coordinator*), Werner Nolte, Benedikt Brunnquell, Sabine Ditzinger, Marie-Luise Winter, deacon Christof Hemberger and Karl Fischer



## CNSC KOREA

YOUNG-SOO Stephano YOON (*Coordinatore*), Fr.GWANG-BAI Dominico SON, SUNG-SUB Thomas NO, IN-SOO John The Apostle SHIN, NAM-KON Mattaios KANG, WOO-JO Perter HAN, YOUNG-SUB Perter YOUN, HAE-BONG Thomas More LEE, SEON-HO Joseph KIM, KI-SEO John The Baptist PARK, HA-YOUNG Monika JUNG, HYUN-JA Julliana DOO, KYUNG-SOOK Lucia CHOI, HYANG-SOOK Mathilda KIM, SUNG-JIN Peter KIM, MYUNG-KYU Thomas Aquinas LEE, HYUN-JA Bona YEOM, Br.SANG-HYUN James SHIN, BONG-GUEN Titus CHOI

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## Veronica O'Brien (1905 – 1998)

### and her role in the Catholic Church's welcome of the Charismatic Renewal

# God First



The family of Dr. Brien- Kathleen Leavy. Veronica, 11th of 13 children, is on her dad's lap.

Louise-Mary O'Brien was born in Midleton, County Cork, in the south of Ireland, on August 16, 1905. She was the eleventh of thirteen children.

Her father was a surgeon and her mother, a very stylish lady, was very committed to the Christian upbringing of her children. From an early age, Veronica wanted to be able to evangelize full-time. She chose celibacy, she lived in chastity, poverty and obedience. Since the beginning of the Second World War and for more than 20 years she was very involved in the Legion of Mary. Then she was fully in the service of Cardinal Suenens for the Second Vatican Council and, subsequently, she played an important role for the Charismatic Renewal, which the following article develops.

In the early days of the Renewal, the leaders of the Charismatic Communities knew Veronica O'Brien quite well. Yet only those close to Cardinal Suenens witnessed Veronica's role with him and from there, the influence she exerted during the first twenty years of the Charismatic Renewal.

In the second book of his "Memoirs", Cardinal Suenens reveals his close collaboration - for nearly half a century - with Veronica, of Irish origin. Veronica was very close to Pope Paul VI and Cardinal Benelli and, thanks to their confidence, she played a discreet but

decisive role in the reception of the Charismatic Renewal by Rome.

#### Mary - the Church - the Holy Spirit

Pope Francis has repeatedly referred to Cardinal Suenens and Veronica O'Brien in the context of the "Documents of Mechelen". What is striking in Cardinal Suenens' writings about Veronica O'Brien's life is how she was already living the graces of the Charismatic Renewal before it was talked about as it is today.

Indeed, 50 years before the Second Vatican Council and

the grace of the Renewal that followed, Veronica had made the decision to live full-time an apostolate oriented towards evangelization. She lived this apostolate in the Legion of Mary, which she founded in France and in other countries in Europe. There she discovered the depth of Father Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort's "True Devotion to Mary". Veronica had an infinite trust in the Holy Virgin who was the "secret" of the fruits overflowing with her apostolate.

It was in the context of the Legion of Mary that Cardinal Suenens, then Auxiliary

Bishop for the Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels, met Veronica. This first meeting took place in Paris in 1947. A second meeting in Lourdes on 15 August 1948 was decisive. Both Cardinal Suenens and Veronica had a strong experience of "life in the Spirit." Here's what the Cardinal writes:

... During one of our conversations, Veronica told me that she loved St. Paul with a very special love and that she lived in a kind of unique and continuous spiritual communion with him. One evening, while she was praying in the grotto, her fear that she might be deluding herself led her to beg him for some sign to confirm this inner presence.

It was pouring rain. With some difficulty, Veronica opened her Bible at random, protecting it beneath the folds of her cape, and, under the pelting raindrops, read a few verses from the Letter to the Colossians - Col 2:5. With deep emotion and intense gratitude, she received the words that St Paul had written to the



Veronica O'Brien received in audience by Pope Paul VI on the sidelines of the Congress of Renewal held in Grottaferrata (near Rome) in 1973.

Colossians: I may be absent in body, but in spirit I am there among you, delighted to find you all in harmony and to see how firm your faith in Christ is.

One day this familiarity with St Paul, this mysterious spiritual telepathy, inspired her to ask him a precise and practical question. In prayer, she told him that she needed the visible, constant and concrete assistance of a bishop who could help her, here on earth, to transmit the graces that she felt she was receiving for the Church. She asked St Paul to help her to meet a bishop who could write.

#### Towards spiritual communion

Cardinal Suenens continues: ... Our conversations in Lourdes opened new perspectives for me, and determined the direction of my pastoral ministry and of my future literary efforts. On a personal level, those days were extremely significant for me. On the last day - or, to be more precise, during the last night - which I spent in my hotel room in Lourdes, the Lord poured out his grace on me, in a way that marked my life for ever. What I experienced was an outpouring of the Spirit, a baptism in the Spirit. In those days, these were not familiar terms.



After this meeting in Lourdes, Veronica wrote this to Bishop Suenens:

*... I discover in my soul an extraordinary union with you, a deep affinity and understanding, as through in some way I had been made for you. It is terribly daring to be thinking and writing such thoughts, but I am doing it very naturally. Is this an illusion? I don't think so, because at the same time, I am overflowing with insights about Our Blessed Lady and about what she will do, in you and through you, if you humbly and meekly receive from the hands of her poor little servant what she is putting into them. And she will put so, so, so much. ...*

In these excerpts we discover three important elements of Veronica's life: her union with the Virgin Mary, her openness to the Holy Spirit and her communion with the Church.

Cardinal Suenens developed this in his teachings and in all his writings; he repeated them on every journey and in all the languages he spoke.

## A great concern for evangelization

To understand Veronica's apostolate and its influence in France during the Second World War, here is what Canon Guyot, then spiritual director of the Legion of Mary, wrote: ... *There is one particularly interesting aspect to this apostolic work which she carried out in almost sixty French dioceses: the influence it has had on so many priests. Several have told me that since their ordination to the priesthood, they have received two special graces: the first was being introduced to the Legion of Mary and, through the Legion, to the Treatise on True Devotion; the second was meeting this Irish woman. Miss O'Brien did not seek this kind of seemingly paradoxical influence; Providence used her. ...*

As for Veronica's commitment in the '60s, the Cardinal sums them up as follows:

*... Veronica's entire life has been a sorrowful and heart-rending call to reform seminaries, novitiates and active religious communities,*

*in order to introduce and train their members to direct religious apostolate through personal contact. ...*

It was in this context that Veronica became close to Cardinal Montini, the future Pope Paul VI.

## The Charismatic Renewal

In the early days of the Charismatic Renewal, Veronica was sent to the United States by Cardinal Suenens. Here's his reaction: ... *We must say 'yes' to the grace of Pentecost, and 'no' to Pentecostalism. We must free the immensely precious pearl from its shell; we must believe, with a living and daring faith, that the Holy Spirit is always active in his Church, giving miracles and charisms; We must be ready to receive its surprises.*

*She immediately understood that the Renewal was not a "movement"- a label that is used far too freely in our circles. She realized that it was rather a powerful grace for our time - a breath, a movement of the Holy Spirit, a grace of Pentecost, which could be captured by all the baptised and by every "movement", whatever its name. All her hopes sprang from this awareness.*

*This grace, however, had to be received in full harmony with the doctrine of the Catholic Church. On this level, some ambiguities remained to be sorted out and dispelled.*

*The sheep, left without a shepherd, were being guided by self-styled leaders; there was an urgent need for direct and trusting communication between Rome - the centre of the Church - and Catholic leaders of the Renewal.*

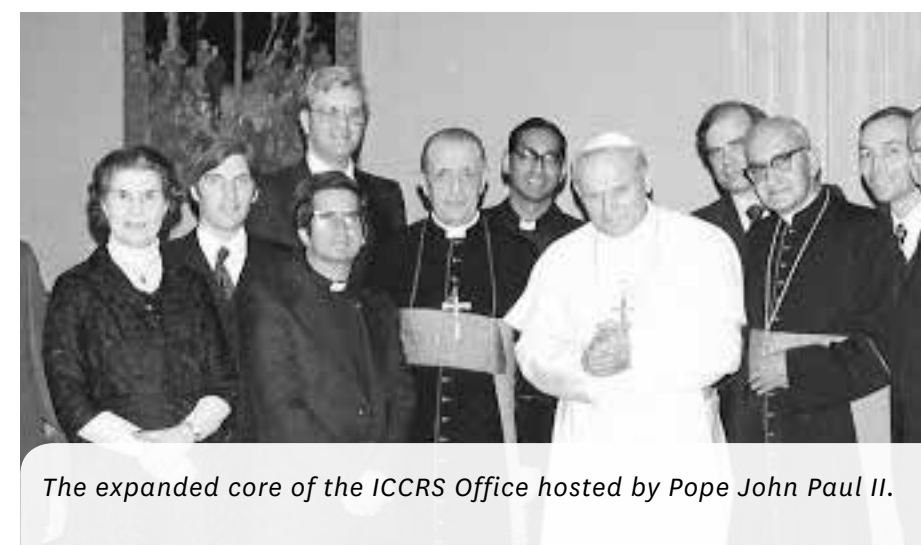
## Pentecost 1975 in Rome

Cardinal Suenens continues: ... *At that time, plans were being made for another international congress of these leaders. Geographically, the most appropriate venue for such a meeting would have been Puerto Rico. Veronica managed to convince them to meet at the gates of Rome instead.*

*Veronica was invited to give a talk to an ecumenical gathering of pastors. This was most unusual. St Paul's admonitions to women are still held in great respect in these circles, and women are expected to remain silent at assemblies.*

*Veronica told the gathering of her hopes for an ecumenical future for the Renewal. At the end of the talk, she knelt and asked the assembly to pray over her. Finally, she improvised a prayer of her own, and addressed a bold invitation to those assembled, who were deeply moved.*

*"Do not be afraid," she told them, "to go to Rome and pray on the tombs of Peter and*



*The expanded core of the ICCRS Office hosted by Pope John Paul II.*

*Paul. All ecumenical paths lead there."*

*She added these surprising words: "I see in my mind that one day Cardinal Suenens will welcome the pilgrims of the Charismatic Renewal to Rome, and will celebrate the Eucharist in St Peter's Basilica, on the occasion of Pentecost."*

*This prophecy, which she later repeated to me, seemed to me so contrary to Roman custom that I considered it implausible, even impossible. Nevertheless, it was to come true one day, as we shall see, taking its place among the surprises of the "Hidden Hand of God". The memorable Pentecost congress was the result of Veronica's initiative and mediation, in close collaboration with Bishop Benelli. It ended on a positive note.*

*Through countless open and fruitful encounters, Veronica endeavoured to free the Catholic Renewal from all*

*ambiguity, making it immune to the temptation - which recurs intermittently through the ages - to gather Christians together, beyond their own Churches, into a kind of super Church of the Holy Spirit.*

*In friendly conversations, she pointed out to the main Catholic leaders some of the important points that needed to be clarified.*

*It is from this reflection that Cardinal Suenens invited a group of American leaders to his residence in Brussels where they stayed for several years.*

*It was from this team that ICCRO was created, as well as a communion review for the Renewal. Later, under Veronica's influence, ICCRO was transferred from Brussels to Rome, from where this service continued on its way. ♦*

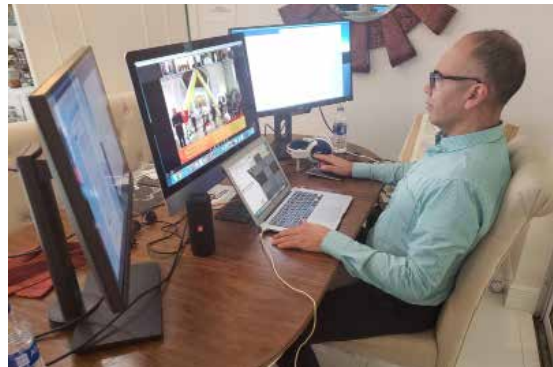
*Roger Matthys*



*The group of leaders of the Renewal in Belgium with some leaders of the Renewal in the United States, resident in Belgium at the invitation of Cardinal Suenens following the meeting of Pentecost Monday 1975 in Rome.*



**THANKS TO OUR TECHNICIANS AND MUSICIANS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD!**



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