



B.C. Renewal

(formerly B.C. Charismatic)
Serving the Catholic charismatic renewal in British Columbia

Spring 2025

Joining hands in the Spirit

CHARIS brings Western Canadian ministries together

Prayer groups, youth ministries, schools of evangelization, religious communities, and street outreaches are joining together in the Holy Spirit in Western Canada.

This year, CHARIS, Pope Francis's initiative for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, is taking its next step.

Leaders of more than a dozen ministries from the four Western provinces, plus the Yukon, have met twice this spring on Zoom to start work on forming a Western Canadian regional "service of communion" for CHARIS.

Earlier, CHARIS leaders met with the bishops of the

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West to explain the project, which is intended to work together with the bishops in carrying out the mission of the whole Church.

The object of CHARIS, created by Pope Francis in 2019, is to gather all the "expressions and realities" of the renewal into a single network, to preach the good news of Jesus, serve the

poor, and reach out to other Christian churches.

It means going beyond parish prayer groups and covenant communities to include all the ministries and groups that rely on the power of the Holy Spirit for their work—regardless of whether they use the word "charismatic."

"We all know the Holy Spirit doesn't live in the church basement waiting for the weekly parish prayer meeting," Richard Dunstan, chair of Catholic Renewal Services of BC, told the Zoom meetings.

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Fall conference in Vancouver

Take Courage and Build! will be the theme of a charismatic conference to be held Sept. 26-27 at St. Mary's Church hall in Vancouver.

The event is being organized by Catholic Renewal Services of Canada, the national charismatic service team, and local prayer group members. Speakers will be Father Gabriel de Chadarevian OP and members of the national team.

The theme is based on Jesus' greeting to His disciples when they saw Him walking on water (Mark 6:47-51), and God's admonition to the returned exiles from Babylon to stop delaying and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem: "Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured, says the LORD." (Haggai 1:8).

Organizers see this as an opportunity to encourage one another to get on with the Lord's work in the renewal.

The event will take place in the church hall. It will begin Friday, Sept. 26 at 7 p.m. and resume Saturday, Sept. 27, at 9:30 a.m., ending at 4:30 in time for the parish Mass.

More information will be posted online at bccharismatic.ca as it becomes available, or contact rccharismaticbc@gmail.com.

Kelowna gathering expands

Weekend conference added as speaker returns

A popular speaker is back this year at the annual charismatic gathering in Kelowna, but the schedule has changed, giving participants more choices in attending the event.

Our Lady of Pentecost Gathering in the Spirit will run Aug. 13-16, Wednesday through Saturday, in two locations. The main program will begin Wednesday at 9 a.m. at St. Elizabeth Seton House of Prayer, with official opening Mass after supper at Mary's Grove on the Seton House grounds. Presentations will continue at Seton House through lunchtime Friday, then move Friday evening to St. Pius X Church for a conference open to the public. An all-day session Saturday will end with the parish Mass, followed by supper.

Featured speaker will be Pauline Dumas McGrath, returning for a third year following last year's ground-breaking program that sent participants out into the streets of the city as two-member prayer teams. Theme will be Jesus Hope of the World.

Dumas McGrath is a graduate of Encounter School of Ministry and currently second-year co-coordinator at Encounter's Ottawa campus. She previously studied at Catholic Bible College of Canada, spent two years with the Madonna House apostolate, and was trained in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

The 17th annual gathering is presented by Nelson Diocesan Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services and endorsed by Catholic Renewal Service of BC, the provincial service committee.

Gathering in the Spirit

This year's program will be offered to registered participants Wednesday through Friday morning. Friday evening and Saturday will be a conference, open to the general public. The presentations will be arranged so that they will fit together for those attending both sections, but also so that the material will make sense to people who attend only the conference.

Cost is \$560 for accommodation and meals Wednesday through Saturday night at Seton House (\$640 for those who need to stay Tuesday night); for program and meals only, \$260. Register at ndccrs2020@gmail.com. There is no charge for the weekend conference, but a love offering will be taken, and lunch and dinner will be served.

Loree Renwick, co-ordinator for the gathering and chair of the diocesan service committee, said adding the weekend conference will provide an opportunity to hear the speaker's message for people who can't attend the whole program. "It's an opportunity for us to reach out to other people and to grow," she said. "We're meant to evangelize."

Dumas McGrath is the only speaker to be invited for a third appearance in the history of the gathering. Renwick said organizers want to solidify her teaching about evangelization.

"Pauline has stretched us," Renwick said. "We just need another year to be confident in going out."

– Richard Dunstan

Thursday Zoom series resumes in May

The spring session of Nelson diocese Thursday Zoom prayer meetings will take place May 8, 15 and 22.

The 90-minute meetings begin at 1:30 p.m. and run 90 minutes, with praise and worship, teachings, breakout rooms for small group prayer and interaction, and intercessory prayer. For the link, email ndccrs2020@gmail.com. Everyone is welcome, regardless of location.

Theme for the spring session is The Power of the Holy Spirit. Overall theme for the 2024-2025 series is Rediscovering the Power of the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist.

Previous sessions have covered the Heavenly Father and Jesus in the Eucharist. Talks are available on the NDCCRS website, <https://www.holyspiritbaptizer.com/>

The Zoom meetings began during covid and were held weekly during the pandemic, but are now scheduled as special events, because most prayer groups in the diocese are once again meeting in person.

The power of prayer to change us

By LYNNE WILLIAMS
teaching from People of Unity prayer group,
Cranbrook

Q: What is the power of prayer? What is your answer to this question?

For me, the first thing that comes to mind is the miracles reported in the Bible that were performed by Jesus and the apostles – miracles still being performed by faithful followers throughout history and today, things like the lame walking, the blind seeing, the dead being raised. When Jesus began His ministry, the Jewish people were asking, “Who is this man?”

The miracles of Jesus were signs to get people’s attention, to alert them to the presence of the Messiah in their midst. People were drawn to Jesus, and to His healing ministry. In the beginning, most began to follow because of miraculous signs and the feeding the 5,000 and 4,000. (The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain). They desired to learn more, and followed Him throughout Galilee and beyond. Along with healings came teaching. He was so novel, so different from the Pharisees and Levites. The miracles, in addition to catching their attention, opened their hearts and minds to *listen* with new ears, to see with new eyes and to *love* with new hearts.

Yes, the miracles of Jesus are obvious examples of the power of prayer. These are extraordinary events. But for most of us, we experience everyday miracles, answers to prayer so subtle that we may not even notice them. These miracles surround us every day. For the majority of us then, what is our experienced power of prayer?

Let me share a recent everyday miracle. The 2025 Nelson diocesan conference is the weekend after Easter. Two guest speakers were discerned and had agreed to do the three talks. Because of various circumstances, we found out recently that neither speaker was able attend. This is a story of the Lord’s intervention. Loree Renwick, our diocesan chair, contacted John Connelly of Saskatchewan. (Some of you may remember John, who was guest speaker during the 2019 Conference in Cranbrook.) John had just had a cancellation, and said, “Yes” to

Loree’s invitation. If she had asked him sooner, he would have said, “No,” because of his previous commitment. Trivia: I had initially proposed John as our speaker. The Lord always goes before us and shows us the way. Trust in the Lord.

I suggest that the power of prayer is in its power to change us, to change hearts, to change lives – to turn sinners into saints, disbelievers into believers, those who doubt into those who trust; it’s the power to open hearts and minds, to the love of God, who constantly pours out blessings, upon His people. Prayer turns those who rely totally on themselves, who depend totally on their human giftedness, into those who learn to trust God and rely on Him to take care of everything. Prayer, therefore, has the power to change us. Prayer is powerful because God is powerful.

St. James writes in his letter, “The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” (James 5:16)

Listen to this wisdom from Maria Schleicher, who writes: “How wonderful is it to hear that our earnest prayers have great power! But what does that mean? Do we have the power to control the outcomes of our lives or how the Lord will move? Thankfully, no! Prayer is so powerful that it changes *us*. It changes our hearts, and the Holy Spirit uses it to allow us to know the Lord more deeply. He reveals His character and His love for us through prayer. He gently rebukes and guides us on His right path when we meet Him in prayer... I spent countless hours in prayer, fervently pleading with the Lord to change His mind so I wouldn’t have to step out in faith and submit to His command... The most amazing thing happened during those countless hours of prayer: God didn’t change His mind—He changed me!” (Christian Broadcasting Network)

“What is prayer?” St. Teresa of Avila described prayer as “a loving conversation with the one who I know loves me.” “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” (James 4:8 NRSV)

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The spirit of joy: a permanent gift

We are to have joy all the time, in good times and when we have trials, Father Obi Ibekwe told Nelson diocesan prayer group leaders at their annual retreat last fall.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:4-10 NRSV.)

We are to rejoice *in* the situation, not because of it, Father Obi said. We are to stand on the word of God, which is true, past, present and to come.

We have no word in English that translates accurately from the original Hebrew meaning of "joy." Some words that clarify the original sense of it are *glad, rejoice, favour, thanksgiving, goodwill, celebration, abundance, not fasting, not completion in this world*, (acceptance, surrender). It has the sense of action – leaping, shouting, laughter, playing, dancing.

"... so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever." (Psalm 32:12 NRSV)

"Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy." (John 16:20 NRSV)

Song: "God You Are My Firm Foundation:"

- Firm foundation
- Peace that makes no sense
- God never fails us
- Same yesterday, today and forever
- Life, like a river, ebbs and flows
- *Jesus is the constant!*

Paul and Silas had been preaching, and after being accused of disturbing the peace, they were thrown into prison. "After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the

prisoners were listening to them. [Fruit of joy]. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. [God is present when we rejoice.] When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God."[(When others see joy in difficulties, they are mystified and curious and compelled to ask, "How is this possible?") (Acts 16:23-34 NRSV)

The devil wants us to be sorry and sad in difficult times. "Fight it!" Father Obi said. The devil hates joy and laughter, and wants to bring us down. A way to feel better is to stop looking at the situation and decide to rejoice, praise and be thankful in spite of it.

"When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord." (John 20:19-20 NRSV)

Picture the scene: The disciples are in the upper room. Jesus comes into their midst, and there is a great commotion. What might they be thinking? "I abandoned Him, and now He comes to me. I thought it was all over. He is giving me a second chance. I betrayed His

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THE SPIRIT OF JOY

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friendship, yet He still forgives/loves me. I'm in awe in His knowingness. (Thomas).

When they understand that Jesus came in love and not condemnation, what might they be thinking now? "I am joyful, loved by the Lord. He is still my friend. He lives in residence here, (my heart.) He gives me freedom from shame and regret, taken it all away. His love, which is better than life, fills my heart, and I will praise Him! His love never changes; it is the same today, yesterday and tomorrow. "Because Your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise You." (Psalm 63:3 NRSV)

What do I need to do to be joyful?

When I say, "I believe," joy and faith come together: who God is, what He has done and will do.

- *Declare*, and claim your joy in all circumstances. Refuse sadness, bitterness, etc.
- *Declare* your faith, the blessed assurance of what is hoped for and the conviction of what is not seen. Jesus is mine, my king and my friend, and He lives in residence here. We have assurance because the word of God is true. He says "let there be light," and there is light; "this is My body, My blood," and we have the living presence of Him in the Eucharist. "... So shall my word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.", (Isaiah 55:11 NRSV) "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,' "(Luke 1:46-47 NRSV) "He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, according to the promise He made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to His descendants forever." (Luke 1:54-55 NRSV) God has done everything He

has promised, and will not fail with me. He is my firm foundation.

Satan is a liar and brings death. God is truthful and brings life. Question: Where does your joy come from? Answer: God's performance. Bask in who God is, what He has done, and in His goodness. Joy is confidence, hope, assurance, peace, and knowledge of the immutability of God. "Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10 NRSV); "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. ...I long for Your salvation, O LORD and your law is my delight. Let me live that I may praise You, and let Your ordinances help me." (Psalm 119:105, 174-175 NRSV)

Joy qualifies us for suffering, Father Obi said. When our spirit is oppressed, the smallest trial becomes a burden. Under Satan's influence, we blame ourselves and blame God. When our soul is joyful, afflictions appear light. When joyful, we have faith, hope, and assurance in God's Word. We ask the LORD to lighten our burdens, and trust that He will do so. Using the Word of God, declare your needs and situation to Him. (Luke 1:46-55, Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 1:34-38) All truth is in the Word and the Word is for us.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. ...Let my cry come before You, O LORD; give me understanding according to Your word. Let my supplication come before You; deliver me according to Your promise. My lips will pour forth praise, because You teach me Your statutes. My tongue will sing of Your word, for all Your commandments are right. Let Your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen Your precepts. I long for Your salvation, O LORD, and Your law is my delight. Let me live that I may praise You, and let Your ordinances help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek out your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments. (Psalm 119:105, 169-176 NRSV).

—Lynne Williams

Kindness: a fruit of the Holy Spirit

Excerpts from Gladys Miller's talk to NDCRS 2024 Leaders' Retreat Additions by Lynne Williams

With God there is always more. He fills us with His Holy Spirit, but every day we inevitably leak, and need to ask for a fresh infilling.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 733: "God is Love," and love is His first gift, containing all others. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom 5:5)

CCC 735: He, then, gives us the "pledge" or "first fruits" (Rom 8:23) of our inheritance: the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as "God [has] loved us." This love (1 Cor 13) is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received "power" from the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; ...")

Because of the power of the Holy Spirit, we can bear much fruit. The more we renounce ourselves, and the more we walk and live by the Spirit, the more perfected we become in the fruits. (CCC 736)

Being kind is being obedient to God: "... do what is good," and, "Love your neighbour as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, it is the fulfilling of the law." Rom 13:3

Roy Fowler, a preacher, says that kindness is love, active and alive, towards those around us. Kindness is love in action.

God's plan is for us to have all the fruits. Some fruits will be more dominant than others. Personally, I find it easier to be kinder in some situations than in others. There are times when I struggle to be kind, and at other times it's no problem. I believe it's important to prayerfully reflect on both my kindness successes and failures, and to make plans to change what needs changing. Celebrating my successes are important too. Changing a bad habit is hard work. It begins with a decision. Some people I know reflect on their day before sleeping at night. They go over their actions, acknowledging what was good and confessing what was not. Then, they prepare a plan to do better the following day.

With God's help and our determination, change will happen. Our strengths are always

easier to embrace. Our weaknesses require attention, diligence, perseverance and hard work. Knowing our identity in Christ is important, because Satan is always trying to undermine us. He knows our strengths and weaknesses, and subtly plays on our fears and doubts, anger and unforgiveness. Stand up to him. Tell him where to go! Don't forget, "The Spirit of God who dwells in you is greater than the Spirit of this world. You are not alone. You've got this." (Fr. Dave Pivonka)

The Lord is merciful and gracious, but we can't take His kindness for granted. In Exodus 34: 6-7, the LORD proclaimed to Moses, "... The LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

Rom 2: 4: "...do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" We need to realize how good God is to us. When we pursue the fruits, we are being purified.

The Lord is never content leaving us where we are. He always wants more. There's a difference between being nice and being kind. Nice is being pleasant. Kind is actually seeing the person, and acting in the Spirit of Love to address a need; it is listening to the Spirit and being obedient. Kindness requires perseverance. It does not expect a reward.

John 15:16 "You did not choose Me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask Him in My name."

Ephesians 4:31-32 "Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you."

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KINDNESS: FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

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Ask yourself this, "How do I act differently when I'm at church or at home?" Do I have a problem with some people and not others? We should be the same wherever we are, and kind to all whom we meet. If we allow, the Holy Spirit will put people in our lives that are "sandpaper." Our diocese received this prophetic word recently, "Suffering is wonderful." Welcome the sandpaper! As Bishop Bart would say, "Bring it on!" Challenges provide us with opportunities for growth and sanctification. Embrace them. God provides. He doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called. The Lord is always with you and, He will help you in your struggles, He will teach you, and He will challenge you.

Why should we bother to refine ourselves in kindness?

CCC 736: Through the Holy Spirit we:

- are restored to paradise
- led back to the Kingdom of heaven
- adopted as children and given the confidence to call God "Abba Father"
- also, through the holy Spirit, we share in Christ's grace
- we are called children of light
- and given a share in eternal glory.

It doesn't get better than that!

Tips:

1. Try empathy. Do our best to understand why people are so difficult.
2. Have compassion for a person whose actions are inappropriate.
3. A list of synonyms: gentleness, consideration, being responsive, warm heartedness, empathy, compassion, understanding, ...

Read Phil 2:5-8, Eph 5:8-12, Matt 7:13-14, Jer 15:16, Rom 8:14, Eph 5:1-2

Visit the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, as often as you can. You are what you eat!

THE POWER OF PRAYER

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Monsignor Frank Bognanno writes: "Prayer is a love-talk with God. With the eyes of faith, I see His acts of love in my life. Love draws love. I spontaneously want to love Him in return. When I pray, first I thank God for His love and spend time simply saying, 'I love You, too.'

"Secondly, I try to listen for God's words, inspirations, and ideas, usually by prayerfully reading the Scriptures. And finally, I ask for God's support and guidance. Try praying like this: Thank, listen, and ask. It's a great prayer formula. Another way to pray is with the acronym ACTS: Adoration, Contrition (for our sins), Thanksgiving, and Supplication (asking for what we or others need). On different days we might pray with more emphasis on one or two of these than on the others. Let your heart and God's love lead to the prayer you need.

"Prayer: Lord, show me how to draw near to You. Amen."

(Franciscan Spirit Blog (Oct. 17, 2023).

"Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise." (James 5:13)

You are here tonight because you believe. You have been paying attention to the promptings of the Lord. You are on a journey and have been your whole life. A journey implies movement, not just standing still. With the Lord, there is always more. He desires your movement, your love, and He wants to love you back. He desires to teach you, and have you listen, learn, and act on His promptings. He wants you to forgive and be forgiven. He wants you to strive for, and grow in holiness, for He has prepared a place for you in His heavenly kingdom.

CHARIS GATHERS WESTERN MINISTRIES

(Continued from page 1)

"The Holy Spirit lives in every baptised Christian, but most abundantly in groups and ministries such as we see here tonight."

Melvin De Paz, chair for the Manitoba service committee, and Dunstan are serving as the steering committee for the Western group, working with national CHARIS co-ordinator Brian Sullivan and their fellow members of the national service of communion.

Canada's other three regions—Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces—are also setting up services of communion.

CHARIS has services of communion at international, continental, national, and regional levels, but it is at the regional level that most of the group's programs will be offered. This will include joining together in praise, worship and discernment; sharing communications and resources, and joining in retreats, days of renewal, and conferences. Eventually, a general assembly of representatives and a smaller co-ordinating team, will be created.

The two spring Zoom meetings were information sessions for the ministry leaders who attended. De Paz and Dunstan explained the goals of CHARIS, and representatives described their ministries' works, hopes and needs. A meeting has been scheduled in June for more formal planning.

Involvement for the ministries is voluntary. No CHARIS service of communion, at any level, is a governing body; they exist to provide service, communication, support, fellowship, and leadership, but they have no authority. Authority will remain with the Pope, bishops and pastors. No one is forced to join CHARIS, and no one who does join will be receiving directives from CHARIS.

"None of this means you stop or change what you're doing now," Dunstan told the ministry representatives. "You've been invited here because of the value we place on what you're already doing. It just means we'll all be holding hands as we work, and supporting each other the best we can."

However, CHARIS does give the renewal a higher standing in the Church, even without authority. Previous international charismatic bodies were classified as "associations of the faithful," treating the renewal as one movement among many. But CHARIS has been given "public juridic personality," which makes it an actual arm of the Church in the service of the Pope. This is in keeping with Pope Francis's statement that the renewal is "a current of grace for the whole Church."

National CHARIS co-ordinator Brian Sullivan told the Western bishops that this fulfils the prophecy of Léon Joseph Cardinal Suenens (1904-1996), an early supporter, that the Catholic charismatic renewal would only be a success when it ceases to exist as a separate entity, because "to be faithful to its origin, the river must lose itself in the ocean."

—Richard Dunstan

B.C. Renewal

published spring and fall

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