

## ADDRESS BY FR. VINCE HOBBS AT THE CCR GOLDEN JUBILEE MASS

Your Grace, brothers and sisters in Christ!

I have been asked to say some words about the beginnings of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Queensland. There is only a remnant of us still alive, the rest have gone to heaven.

Early in 1970 I read a book by Kevin Ranaghan called "Catholic Pentecostals," and I was fascinated by it. About this time, I did a Cursillo Renewal and Father Frank Gerry (Bishop John Gerry's brother) was there and he mentioned that he had attended catholic Charismatic Renewal in U.S.A., so I invited him to come to a small meeting of people at Bardon to tell us about his experience.

We had an interesting discussion, then someone suggested that we stand and "sing a hymn," we did so and then we prayed. We were touched by God during that prayer time. We wanted more!

We met again and again; we were onto something good of God here. So, we approached Archbishop O'Donnell and received his approval to keep the group going. It was very important for us to have the blessing of the church on our meetings and to be seen as a valid part of our church in our Archdiocese. Perhaps my most important role was to be a visible link with the Catholic Church and visible sign of the churches' approval. It was obvious that we were not starting a new church.

In our early days we enjoyed a day at Marburg Seminary. Someone challenged us, "how do you people stand in relation to the Catholic Church?" "Dead Centre" was the answer. Another person added "dead centre because we have found the living heart": the risenness of the risen Christ was our tangible experience. The centre of our lives both personal and collective was our personal relationship with Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God, Saviour, brother and friend. We knew where we belonged, we knew we were not Catholic Charismatics, we were Charismatic Catholics. In the early days we learnt that Sydney already had a Catholic Charismatic Renewal group for a year.

We contacted Professor Alex Reichel, their leader. He experienced Charismatic Catholic Renewal in USA during a sabbatical. On returning to Sydney he received Cardinal Gilroy's blessing to introduce the renewal in Sydney. We wrote to him asking questions. He wrote back. I remember reading his letter to our group. It was just like Paul's letters being read to the people. And soon, like Paul, he visited us.

Locally, we received help from Clark Taylor, a former Methodist Minister, now a Pentecostal leader, who respected our church and our relationship with it. He taught us regarding the charismatic aspects of our renewal. Father Eugene Stockton, a scripture Scholar also gave us help and encouragement. Soon charismatic leaders visited from overseas. At the same time our own group was growing, and new groups were springing up in the suburbs of Brisbane, country towns and cities, as far away as Cairns and Mount Isa. Bardon had a role as a mother figure, a birthing place for new groups, new beginnings for example Emanuel Covenant Community, which has made a significant contribution to our church.

In 1973 a dozen leaders went to the big conference of 20,000 people with Cardinal Suenens in Notre Dame, USA. The following year we joined the First National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in Melbourne. It gave us a sense of being part of a worldwide move of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer for healing, especially inner healing, has always been a feature of this renewal, till now we have enough people trained and experienced in this ministry to offer the public the service of three healing centres at Darra Jindalee, Northgate and Petrie.

Ecumenism has been a feature first with Protestant Pentecostals. This was a new experience for us and later with people in charismatic renewal in the main denominations for example we enjoyed Sunday afternoon rallies In St John's Cathedral, a central Uniting Church and St Stephen's Cathedral.

While people in other denominations argued over the meaning of “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” we Catholics rejoiced that we already had a good Scriptural theology of baptism. What we were experiencing was a spiritual awakening, and a new appreciation of our Sacramental baptism.

We saw that the Holy Spirit was changing people not doctrine and bringing new life, vitality, faith and joy in the risenness of the risen Christ.

A distinctive feature was praying in tongues a new way of praying in addition to the ways of prayers we already enjoyed. Tongues gave us an experience of contemplative praying. And we prayed and sang in our own language also.

We enjoyed simple faith-filled Scriptural prayer / songs like:

- The eightfold alleluia
- Jesus is Lord
- I have decided to follow Jesus
- We are one in the spirit
- Turn your eyes upon Jesus
- Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us
- His name is wonderful

As we move into the future, my prayer is: “Spirit of the living God fall afresh on us, melt us, mould us, fill us, use us, for the sake of God’s Kingdom” **PRAISE GOD.**

#### **ARCHBISHOP’S HOMILY AT CCR GOLDEN JUBILEE MASS**

If you know the geography of the Holy Land, you will know that there is something very strange about the route that Jesus takes from Galilee to Jerusalem. He is on His way to Jerusalem but we are told that He travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee which means, in fact, that he is going sideways, which doesn’t seem to make sense at all or it is at least a surprise but that’s been the story of Catholic Charismatic Renewal as well – one of the surprises of the Lord who in one sense always goes sideways to Jerusalem. He never takes quite the route we expect. In fact, when Catholic Charismatic Renewal first emerged and I’m old enough to remember it, (I’m not quite as old as Fr. Vince Hobbs) but I’m heading in that direction. I can remember that it seemed incredibly alien, this wasn’t part of the Catholic thing at all. In fact, it was a little dangerous because it was kind of, Protestant.

Back in those days, the Catholics and the Protestants were not quite as friendly as they have become in the meantime. So very often, the Renewal was treated with some suspicion or was treated as a little bit of a joke. However, in the meantime and Fr. Vince has traced some of this story, Charismatic Renewal has gone everywhere in the life of the Church and I do mean everywhere. That is one of the reasons why we gather to give thanks this morning in the Cathedral, not in some corner but in the Mother Church of the diocese and it is not just in this diocese. If you look around the world, charismatic spirituality, which has always been part of the Church’s journey, from the very earliest days, until now – sometimes going underground other times as now, bubbling up to the surface of the Church’s life and mission. Charismatic Renewal is found everywhere and that is a good thing. We can’t quarantine it in this community or that prayer group – it is everywhere, both seen and unseen in the Catholic Church and that has been most certainly the grace of God.

Charismatic Renewal has been one of the great graces given to us in the years since the second Vatican Council and were it not for the Council, which is also the work of the Holy Spirit, the Renewal would not have taken root and flourished as it has and gone everywhere in the Catholic Church. It is very hard to think of a genuine renewal movement or community in the Church since the Council which hasn’t in some way be affected by charismatic spirituality. That is what I mean when I say it’s everywhere – it’s overground, it’s underground, you see it and now you don’t but it’s still there. It is everywhere and that is the way the Holy Spirit is. You can’t isolate or quarantine the Holy Spirit. The Spirit breathes where it wills, everywhere, everywhere, everywhere. So, what

we can say, I think, is that this is now a charismatic moment in the life of the Church. It is certainly true in this country. The question is not the administrative question, "What are the gaps and how do we fill them?" The question now is the charismatic question, "What are the gifts that God has given and how do we enable them to flourish for the sake of the body of Christ, for the life and mission of the Church?" That's the question. In other words, we have come largely, not exclusively, but largely through the influence, the ever widening influence of the Charismatic Renewal, we as the Church universal, have come and are coming to a much greater awareness of the Holy Spirit.

Western Christianity has always focused more on the figure of Jesus Christ than the person of the Holy Spirit. Eastern Christianity by contrast, and I mean orthodox Christianity, has tended to focus more on the Holy Spirit. Of course, they focus on Jesus, it is not one or the other. What we are learning in the West is to enter more deeply into the awareness of the Spirit as God with us in the most extraordinary way and this is what I have seen in my own life's journey.

I'm just 48 years ordained as a priest and the Charismatic Renewal has been part of that journey through 48 years in all kinds of ways dating back to my first parish in Melbourne where I met extraordinary people like Claude Lopez, who will be known to some of you, and became a leader internationally of the Renewal. Alan Panozza was another one. These were people who affected me profoundly and shaped my sense of the Church and even of the priestly ministry. What I saw again and again and again and Fr. Vince referred to this, is the way the Charismatic Renewal provided a kind of ignition. It sometimes seemed to me that we had a garage of great cars, the best cars that money could buy but there was only one problem, they didn't go – there was no ignition.

What the Charismatic Renewal has done in the lives of millions and in some ways the life of the whole Church, is to provide that spark of ignition and once you've got that, everything becomes different – the Church looks different; the Sacraments look different; Scripture comes alive and I'm sure you know what I am talking about - that's the gifts. "Spiritual awakening" was the phrase Fr. Vince used and that ignition leads to and God alone knows that is what we need.

I say this is a time when I think the great gift being given to the Church, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is the Plenary Council where we will have to make decisions about the future of the Church in this land. It is a time when we are under pressure in all kinds of ways that were unimaginable 50 years ago. So here as we look back, and give thanks for this extraordinary grace to you and to the whole Church, I want to entrust to your intercessory prayer, the Plenary Council for the second assembly for which we are preparing at this moment and the preparation's very intense and the stakes are high. So, I entrust to your intercession, you who represent the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Brisbane, the work of the Plenary Council calling down upon the Council in ways that will surprise us, even astonish us, calling down the Holy Spirit particularly on this weekend of fire, because if the Plenary Council is not the work of the Holy Spirit, then it's a waste of time, it's nothing more than Church politics and if that's all it is, forget it. But if it is the work of the Holy Spirit, it won't be what you or I expect perhaps but it will be something extraordinary, a gift we can never deserve but which we badly need.

So why should we not stand here today and in the words of the prophet Isaiah we have heard, "praise the Lord's goodness, His marvellous deeds" that we didn't see coming and why should we not, like the Samaritan leper who is healed, throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus as He does and give thanks for the gift which is life. Amen.

**ADDRESS BY AUDREY CHAN-SEOW, CCR BRISBANE PRESIDENT AT CCR GOLDEN JUBILEE MASS**

We are 2 years late due to Covid lockdowns but praise the Lord we are finally celebrating our 50th Anniversary in our 52nd year. Congratulations everyone on the Golden Jubilee of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Brisbane.

Your grace Archbishop Mark thank you for being a good friend to Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Our wonderful chaplain priests Fr Vince, Fr Ihemelandu, Fr Michael, Fr Angelo and Fr Lam thank you for your support and guidance.

Amazing Charismatic Catholic family, thank you all for being here today and for all that you have done to make this celebration finally happen. Some of you have come from all over Brisbane, the Gold Coast and even Hervey Bay.

We are grateful to Fr Anthony, Sr Kari and the Cathedral Team, Emmanuel Worship, our readers, gift bearers, Miriam Holmes who put together the liturgy, Len Airey Coordinator of Bardon and Mission Team Coordinator of CCR Brisbane who has been the driving force for today's celebration for almost 3 years. Thanks, Len, for your perseverance and many, many emails. Also, to Helena Healey and the hospitality team – who will help us in continuing our celebration at the Hanley Room (in the building on your left) after Mass. Please do join us.

I stand here as President of Catholic Charismatic Renewal Brisbane but this is not only a celebration of 50 plus years for Bardon or for all the many charismatic prayer groups that eventually formed as a result of what started at Bardon. As Fr Vince has described, Bardon was also the birthing place for Emanuel Community and eventually NET, IGNITE, Emmanuel Worship, Emmanuel City Mission, as well as Women of the Way, Catholics Come Alive, the Healing Prayer Centres and more recently Awaken Community. Shayne Bennett who is our Charis Oceania Representative sends his apologies as he is catching a flight to Canberra today. Shayne said just a couple of nights ago at Maranatha PG at Kenmore, that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that began at Bardon has spread throughout Brisbane, throughout QLD and Australia and also internationally to places like Africa through NET, Impact Uganda as well as people like Fr Jack Soulsby and Jan Heath.

At the same time the Holy Spirit has also brought to Brisbane other charismatic realities that have been birthed in other parts of Australia and the world such as Couples for Christ, The Risen Lord Community, Light of Jesus, Jesus Youth, Shalom World, El Shaddai, Anointing Fire Ministry, Encounter School of Ministry and religious orders such as the Missionaries of God's Love. We are so incredibly blessed to have all these grace-filled groups and communities within our Archdiocese.

Today we have fulfilled our Holy Father, Pope Francis' desire that all the different streams of Catholic Charismatic Renewal come together to form one united Current of Grace, right here in the heart of our Church in Brisbane. As one united stream, imagine what an unstoppable current we can be, just like that current of Grace that was poured out more than 2,000 years ago in that Upper Room at the feast of Pentecost and has flowed through Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. That was the birthing place for Bardon and today is OUR celebration of CCR in Brisbane, today is our celebration as a Charismatic Catholic Family.

So, we thank you Fr Vince Hobbs, Vince Kearney, also Norma who is unable to be with us today, John and Gabrielle Harris and all the originals from Bardon who said YES to the Holy Spirit 52 years ago. Thank you too to those who have continued to keep the home fires burning at Bardon over these past 52 years and still continue to meet every Friday night, even on Christmas night and New Year's night. You are an inspiration to us all.

Thank you to all who have gone before us, and all of you who continue to say YES and who continue to work tirelessly for the Lord and His people, through the power of His Holy Spirit.

Jenny McCormack, the Coordinator of Charismatic PGs QLD, is very sorry to not have been able to join us today as she is recovering from surgery, but I would like to end with this prayer that Jenny has prayed for all of us here today: I pray that the celebration will be a deep blessing for all who attend and upon all who have been part of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the past, present and future, that the Holy Spirit will flood the whole cathedral with His presence with a consuming fire to cleanse, purify, impassion and empower towards mission and ministry. Amen.