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## 25 YEARS OF CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

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To celebrate twenty-five years of a movement is to pay tribute to its founders, take stock of its vitality today and evaluate its future.

### GRATITUDE TO THE PIONEERS

Despite the fact that the Charismatic Renewal is relatively recent, its story must be written. The memory of the heart and that of documents will give coming generations a better understanding, hence a greater appreciation of the precious heritage to be passed on. The diocesan director has promised me that a history surrounding the birth of the Charismatic Renewal in the Diocese of New Brunswick will shortly be written. The birth took place in 1974, in the days of Bishop Fernand Lacroix, C.J.M. [But prior to its being established as a diocesan office, the Charismatic Renewal was already in the diocese, at the parish level. As early as 1972 *Life in the Spirit* seminars and evenings of prayer were taking place at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Plaster Rock.] Born of the Pentecostal Movement which developed in the United States at the turn of this century, the Charismatic Renewal was implanted in French Canada in 1970. We can say without risk of error that the Movement penetrated Christendom during the 1975 Holy Year, when the International Congress took place in Rome on the feast of Pentecost, with ten thousand pilgrims gathered from fifty different countries.

### A CHANCE FOR THE CHURCH

It was during this Congress that Pope Paul VI spoke the well-known words that the Charismatic Renewal was an opportunity for the Church and the world. *"Nothing is more needed in our more and more secularised world,"* he said, *"than the witness of this spiritual renewal which the Holy Spirit is raising up in most diverse regions and places. Manifestations are varied: profound communion of souls, intimate contact with God in faithfulness to one's baptismal commitments, often in community prayer where each one freely expresses himself and helps, supports, nourishes the prayer of others and, at the root of this, a personal conviction whose source is not only a teaching received in faith but also in a certain lived experience, that is, the knowledge that without God man can do nothing, and that with Him, everything is possible. Hence the need to praise God, to thank Him, to celebrate the marvels He works all around us and within us. Human existence rediscovers its relation to God, what we call the 'vertical dimension,' without which man is irremediably mutilated. Not that this search for God is a question of conquest or possession; it seeks to be genuine welcome of Him who loves us and gives Himself to us freely, wanting, because He loves us, to give us a life we must freely receive from Him in humble faithfulness. And this fidelity must join action to faith, according to the teaching of Saint James: 'Just as the body without a soul is dead, faith without works is dead.' How then could this spiritual renewal not be an opportunity for the Church and for the world? And how, in this case, do we find the means necessary for it to remain thus?"*

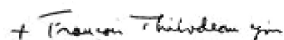
### THREE PRINCIPLES OF LIFE

Not wanting to stifle the Spirit working in our world, Pope Paul VI set forth three principles of discernment: faithfulness to doctrine, gratitude for gifts received, love above all. Faced with the rapid growth of the movement in Canada, the Canadian bishops were not long in pointing out the importance of spiritual renewal in the life

of every Christian: *"The Charismatic Renewal is focused on the role of the Spirit in the Church; its aim is to establish ever greater union with Jesus, one which allows the Christian to better know the Father. The basic purpose of the renewal can be stated as follows: To intensify in the believer his loving knowledge of the Father by developing his familiarity with Christ through ever-growing availability to the action of the Spirit."* While pointing out the many positive points of the Renewal, the Canadian Bishops counsel caution about certain negative aspects, especially a search for the marvellous, excess brought on by belonging to the Charismatic Renewal, emotionalism, fundamentalism, a closing on oneself, distorted ecumenism; but they did not only advise caution, they also offered the aid especially of intensive reading of Holy Scripture, continued formation of facilitators, and serious commitment to working for the Church in the world.

## SIGNPOSTS TO THE FUTURE

In joining with you in thanksgiving for the first twenty-five years of the Charismatic Renewal in our milieu, I urge you to generously and enthusiastically pursue the work already begun. It is more important than ever in the Diocese of Edmundston the prayer network be strengthened and increased. It is more important than ever for the Charismatic Renewal to contribute to the evangelisation of our milieu; it is necessary that all the faithful be made aware of their dignity of baptised and confirmed: our future as Church depends on this. The Renewal must motivate one to encounter Jesus, the living Christ. We expect from them much creativeness in action and work, indicative of a life in harmony with the Gospel. Finally, I would hope that the Charismatic Renewal contribute to the formation of men and women who can influence, according to their own vocation, public life and direct it to the common good. *"America needs lay Christians who can take on roles of direction in society,"* Pope John Paul II declared in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in America. May this exhortation be your guide of action and prayer in years to come. May the Spirit continue to rekindle in each of us his marvellous gifts of counsel, strength, knowledge, filial affection, wisdom, intelligence, adoration, and praise. May He continue to build up our Church and make of each one of us witnesses to the Love he has placed in our hearts.



+ François Thibodeau

Bishop of Edmundston

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