

Charism As of Old: A Search into the Original Vision and Mission of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

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Abstract: Our search into Charism as of Old is simply an enquiry into the vision and mission of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. This led us into a painful realization that in many respects, the entire members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, nay the entire Catholic fold have, perhaps missed the mark at one instance or the other. That as a movement or an initiative which sprang up at a certain stage of the Church, certain unhealthy ideas, practices or abuses have cropped up, which would have crippled the original vision and mission under one cloak or the other. Applying the sociological, historical and descriptive methods in this work, relevant epochs were highlighted, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is redefined in the light of its original vision and mission, basic contemporary abuses of Charisms were identified and salient recommendations were made with a clarion call to a focus on servant leadership, leadership by example, teamwork, discernment, prayerfulness, mentorship, authentic devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, taking of bold and new evangelistic initiatives, Media initiatives, etc. Thus, the overarching reminder is in the need to be patiently and hopefully watchful on what the Spirit is about accomplishing in Christendom.

Key Terms: Charism, Old, Vision and Mission

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I. PREAMBLE

Cyril John, one time prominent leader of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Council in Rome briefly and prayerfully surmised what looks like the focus of the Renewal. Thus, it is aimed at,
A new vision of God's glory
A new experience of His power
A new faithfulness to His word
And a new consecration to His service.
That his love may grow among us and his kingdom come (3).

This paper is an attempt at assisting Catholics, Renewal members and especially, leaders of the Church to do some soul-searching so as to see whether they have carried with them the original warmth of the "first love" (Rev. 2:1-7). This comes especially in form of an indictment or complaint against some apparently waning/faded love through certain activities exhibiting lack of the spirit of discernment, patience, perseverance, hard-work, etc. There is an emphasis here on the urgent need to RENEW THE RENEWAL in the light of history. The emphasis is meant to be on the need for rejuvenating the initial zeal or fervor, rekindling the spirits or revivifying the common resolve to be on fire for the Lord. It is believed in many circles, for instance, that the Renewal has passed its peak and that it is waning or declining in impact. However, this assertion may not be quite true about West Africa, Latin America, South Africa, India, Philippines and other places where it is spreading like wild-fire. Yet, it might, perhaps, have to be admitted that there is less of focus and initial zeal.

II. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Two basic concepts that need clarification in our topic – namely, "CHARISM" and "OLD".

i. Charism

Is derived from its Greek root "*Charisma*" (plural *charismata*), which denotes gifts of holy grace, manifestations of grace or gratuitous gift emanating from the Holy Spirit (Harrington 180). This could also be referred to as the "finger of God" (Lk. 11:15-26) – by this means demons are cast out, deliverance, liberation, healing are announced abroad and the kingdom of darkness is put to shame.

As mentioned in Eph. 4:11, Apostles are sent with a commission; Prophets are public expounder/mouth-piece; Evangelists announce goodnews; Pastors are shepherds; Teachers are instructors. 1 Cor. 12:28-29 mentions Helpers with the ministry of supporting and assisting (*diakonia*) e.g. Onesimus (Philemon V. 10) and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25); Administrators – with the grace of piloting, steering or directing. As it were, these sorts of leaders ought not to be dictatorial, egotistical or dogmatic, but humble, gracious, courteous, kind and filled with love. Though at times, they must be very firm (1 Tim. 4:11, 6:11) by not speaking through both sides of the mouth i.e. not Machiavellian or Maradonic (cf. Greene, *48 Laws of Power; The Mafia Manager*).

In addition, Rom. 12:8 mentions **exhortation** (counseling). However, the classical list is 1 Cor. 12:8-10 which ought to be present in every local Church. They are simply classified under three headings:

- a. The intellectual gifts (power to know) – word of wisdom, knowledge and discernment.
- b. The word gifts (power to say) – tongues, interpretation and prophecy.
- c. The sign gifts (power to do) – faith, healing and miracles (Egbunu 54-59).

NB: the list is inexhaustive. There could also be gift of tears, vision, dreams (Joel 2), levitation, stigmatism, reading of minds, etc.

- ii. **OLD** – simply refers to the former or previous, that which goes with deep-rooted or thorough experience which in a sense belongs to the past (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English*). The emphasis in this context is not so much on how outdated, old-fashioned, faded, stale, wearied or worn-out the experiences are. In our context, it refers to the Original Resolve.

What is referred to here is more on the need for regeneration, revival, renewal or restoration. We are harping on the need for a general Re-Awakening. Many Catholic Charismatic Renewal members could be likened to Jonah (Jonah 1:5). They are slumbering and sleepy souls unaware of the danger they are in. They are sometimes caged and dull, dormant and at the point of death. Rev. 3:2 – are reputed to be alive but dead. They are living in “Sodom and Gomorrah” (Gen. 19:12); no longer zealous in faith and fervent in prayer. But they are being charged in Ephesians 5:14 to be “awake!” that Christ might give them light.

As an anonymous renowned author once put it,

They need to awake and come out of their sleepy dormant state of inaction (or slumber). They have been made new but now they need renewal; are cleansed already and they need further cleansing; they have been pardoned and they need purging. The power of old has evaporated. The consecration of old has depleted. Charism as of Old means therefore POWER AS OF OLD. That is, the power to create and co-create or recreate (Gen. 12); the power which made Abraham and Sarah fruitful (Gen. 21); that which made Jacob tap into God's blessings – (Gen. 27; Gen. 32:23) in his wrestle with God; power for liberation of captive Israel (Ex. 14:15-16) which made all Egyptian magicians, sorcerers and soldiers perish; power that made the raising of hands the defeat of the Amalekites (Ex. 17:16); that which made their song of power crumble the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6:20). The right hand of the Lord became triumphant and dashed to pieces the enemy (Ex. 15:16). Yes, in this circumstance, the power of David against Goliath is manifest (1 Samuel 17:32-54). It is akin to the contest between Elijah and the Baal prophets (1 Kings 18). It is also true that Elisha drew a double portion of the anointing (2 Kings 2). God has spoken once, twice has the servant heard that “power belongs to God” (Ps. 62:11) – to heal, deliver, liberate, break yokes, move from curses to blessings and turn vices into virtues. In God is the ultimate power and authority. All powers in heaven and on earth have been given unto Jesus (Matt. 28:18), to heal (Lk. 5:17); raise the dead; raise the lame (Acts 3:16) and bring joy to captives (Acts 8:5-13).

III. REASONS FOR THE DECLINE IN THE USE OF CHARISMS

Over the centuries, the enthusiasm and power that was being exhibited, diminished. Six basic reasons were adduced for this decline:

- i. The practice and increase of Infant Baptism whereby they receive graces but could not experience the full manifestation till adulthood. This led to the loss of the conscious and deliberate conversion that was clearly evident among the adult converts in the early Church (McDonnell and Montague 106).
- ii. The emergence of some “Charismatic heresies” such as Montanism. The Church's reaction to the real and perceived abuses of these heresies affected the tempo. Montanism was an enthusiastic and apocalyptic movement which was begun by a priest called Montanus. It paid extreme attention to charisms. (McDonnell and Montague 108-109).
- iii. Other arguments put forward include:

The growth in the numerical strength of the Christian communities and its adverse effect on the regular gatherings and fellowships (John-Cyriel 27; McDonnell 8, Suenens 27).

iv. In the fourth century were the emergence of theologians in the ilk of St. John Chrysostom and St. Ambrose who argued (in the line of St. Augustine) that Charism in the early Church were only an “extra-ordinary grace” or “rain of gifts” to strengthen the emerging Church. And so it is argued that charisms were no longer needed in the present dispensation.

But Fr. RamieroCantalamesa, a renowned theologian and charismatic leader and Papal preacher, for over three decades harps on the fact that charisms have never ceases. That they only gradually came to be associated with the clergy, the Saints and mystics (as if they were their exclusive preserve) (John-Cyril 28).

v. The arrival of the Age of Monasticism which emphasized the personal (non-charismatic) gifts of the Spirit in such a way that displaced the use of charismatic gifts also played a substantial role (John-Cyril 28).

vi. The newfound freedom under Roman Emperor Constantine in 313 AD also led to rapid expansion of Christianity. And this brought about the undue influence of State over the Church. The respect for the emperor overthrew that which was due to God and the earthly city was being preferred to the heavenly city. Christians became more privileged and powerful and more politically ambitious with the official recognition of religion (John-Cyril 27).

IV. EMPHASIS ON A PERPETUAL PENTECOST

The Church admits that she is not yet all that Christ meant her to be or what she should be. This plain truth laid bare by Pope John XXIII threw open the windows of the Church to let the strong breath of God renew the Church (McDonnel x).When Pope John XXIII summoned the Church into praying “renew your wonders in our time as though for a New Pentecost” (in 1959), it was perhaps owing to the fact that he had observed that there existed a lacuna. In a sense, Christians were neglected, overlooked or disused in our time.Thanks to God, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) opened the windows of the Church not only to the world outside the Church but more especially to the Movement of the Spirit within.This was indeed the watershed and the turning point. It gave birth to what we call the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the goal of which is for everyone in our Church of over 800 million to be charismatically renewed. The goal is not for everyone to belong to the Movement. The grace of the Renewal re-actualizes in a concrete manner what the Christians have already received in baptism and confirmation. It has helped many Christians to know that God is really real (John-Cyril 31).Earlier on, between 1895 and 1900, Pope Leo XIII had issued Apostolic Novena to the Holy Spirit between the Feasts of Ascension and Pentecost. So, on January 1, 1901, he invoked the Holy Spirit by singing the hymn, “Come Holy Spirit” (*Veni Creator Spiritus*) in the name of the whole Church. This ushered us into what is popularly referred to as “The Century of the Holy Spirit” with its waves of Pentecostalism – and its characteristic new hunger for a more direct New Testament experience of the reality and power of God in the life of Christians.

And it was Pope Paul VI who said the Miracle of Pentecost should continue in history as (in 1976) he had foreseen the springtime of the Church and declared that “we live in the Church at a privileged moment of the Spirit” (*EvangeliiNuntiandi*). He accepted and encouraged this “new move of the Holy Spirit” in order that it grows “not in isolation but at the heart of the Church” (Cyril John 30).Pope Paul VI tagged the Catholic Charismatic Renewal “a chance for the Church and for the world” when he stated, Nothing is more necessary for an increasingly secularized world when God has become a stranger than the witness of this “Spiritual Renewal” in which we see the Spirit stirring up today in the most diverse regions and environs (*Then Peter Stood Up*, 17).

A process of study and discernment eventually led to a “cautious acceptance” and later to a “full recognition” of this “new current of grace” in the Church. That the Renewal is at the heart of the Church is owing to the hierarchy of the Church. And its almost miraculous security is especially for the prophetic intuition and guidance of Pope Paul VI.As a matter of fact, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a new expression of an old reality.Pope John Paul II reminded participants of the 6th International Leaders Conference in 1987 that “the history of the Church is at the same time the history of two thousand years of the action of the Holy Spirit”. We may say that the mustard seed group which started in Duquesne University in Pittsburg in February 1967 has grown like wild-fire to impact on the whole world.

John Paul II could therefore be said to be responsible for its recognition and growth. He was so open to the surprise of the Holy Spirit. He met leaders both privately and publicly and once shared his Testimony on how he had been part of the Renewal in spirit. That at age 12/13, he had difficulty in Mathematics and his dad gave him one book on prayer to the Holy Spirit which he used everyday till that day since fifty years (1979).

The Church is part of that broad history of the Spirit. The Spirit is always doing a new thing. And as it were, the Church is capable of rejuvenating because the Spirit has never withdrawn. It is a perpetual Pentecost. Integral to that ongoing, ever-present Pentecost are the charisms – which are gratuitous.

The Holy Spirit cannot be sequestered or caged by any groups within the Church as being exclusively their property. Not even the clergy will succeed in covering the Fire with any form of “basket”. The society, sodalities and movements can never succeed. The Spirit draws people to contemplation and Praise. It also

impels them to evangelization, as a river must go beyond its source. It is in fact a privileged generation! We do not in any way intend to state that this marks the first appearance of a love of prayer or a zeal for evangelization. Neither is it a claim that the Charisms are present for the first time in the history of the Church. Nor do we mean the working of the Spirit is limited to one movement. It is believed that God has always done new things by raising up Saints endowed with power, holiness and Charisms in different epochs.

Now, in this generation, God is again doing a new thing in a new context, with new modalities which makes this generation privileged in a new way. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement becomes therefore, symbolizes the action of the Spirit which manifests eloquently what the Spirit is saying to the Churches in our time. This is perhaps what Pope Benedict XVI meant when he admonished that, “we need to be contemporaries with the people of today, but without ceasing to be contemporaneous with the Church of all times” (Ratzinger 88). The emphasis seems to be on being in tune with the signs of the time. It is noteworthy that Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes that “freedom in the Spirit calls for Responsibility”.

Karl Rahner and others used the expression “Winter Period” in the Church (Ratzinger 20). In Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenen’s words, “the power of the Holy Spirit is at work deep within the heart of His Church, breathing into it a fresh youthfulness” (Suenens x). In other words, the Council opened a few windows in the Upper Room to let in the first breeze of springtime. As Cardinal Suenens succinctly puts it, “the Church today needs first and foremost the miracle of Pentecost: the wind and fire and spiritual Power which is the Holy Spirit” (Suenens xi). Neither laity nor hierarchy has an exclusive right to Charisms. Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away, Christ stays in the past, the Gospel is a dead letter, the Church is simply an organization, authority a matter of propaganda, the Liturgy no more than an evocation, Christian living a slave morality.

But in the Holy Spirit, the Gospel is the:

Power of life, The Church shows faith – life of the Trinity, authority is a liberating service, mission is a Pentecost, the Liturgy is both memorial and anticipation, human action is deified (19-20). As it is often said, long before the Holy Spirit became an article of the Creed, He was a living reality in the experience of the primitive Church (Edward Schweizer in Cardinal Suenens 19). Yes indeed, the Holy Spirit was the life Principle of the early Church. Acts of the Apostles shed off their lethargy and fear and made them shine forth on Pentecost morning with great radiance as the first glimmer of dawn. How this “imperfect”, “unfinished”, “undone” and “raw-persons” were on the day of Pentecost transformed by the Fire of the Holy Spirit into cooked and pliable vessels of honour. He inspired boldness in them, especially in their evangelistic efforts and even before the Sanhedrin or the Roman Proconsuls or governors. He gave strength to the Martyrs, chose those to be sent; gave them joy even in the face of persecution; presided over every decision they made in the newly born Church. The Holy Spirit united, purified, vivified and led them in all truth. And as a matter of fact, Charisms are gifts conferred for the up-building of the Church (Suenens 25). And they have never disappeared from the Church (unlike what Chrysostom holds). St. Irenaeus was aware of the permanence of exceptional Charisms. St. Simeon known as The New Theologian states that, “Pentecost is always a present reality in the life of the Church... only those who have experienced the Holy Spirit, be they laity or clergy, are able to guide others” (Suenens 29). It was the power of Discernment in St. Ignatius of Loyola, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila that made them great instruments of God. It was considered beneficial when life of Saints are written. Instances of Miracles or rare Charisms are to be recorded e.g. cure of Ars, reading of minds at the confessionals, Don Bosco (helping the youths), Padre Pio (the stigmatist). They dreamt, prophesied, read people’s hearts, healed and manifested other powers.

It is emphasized that Charism belongs even to our age (Suenens 38). The Holy Spirit gives to the faithful special gifts as well as being a source of Liturgical Renewal. It makes the past of Jesus present.

For instance, opening of the lectionary each day in a Spirit of faith is to “keep an appointment” with the Holy Spirit (38). He it was who sanctifies the water of Baptism and seals the candidates of confirmation (40). He is responsible for the transformation of individuals and the Church (40). And He continues to tell his people that we are His Chosen, not His Frozen people!

As Cardinal Suenens graphically captures it,

Those who allow themselves to be possessed by God, resemble the log that little by little becomes white hot. Their life, nourished by the Fire of the Holy Spirit becomes fire in turn. Is not this the fire of which Jesus spoke when He said (Lk. 12:49) “I have come to bring fire on the earth?” (70). In the Holy Spirit, Christians also become Holy magnets e.g. a big magnet let down among iron picks up loads of iron and carry them away. No matter how hardened a soul is, no matter how thick the iron-curtains of division, they all melt before God’s Holy Fire. When one is at his wits end, God begins His marvels! Indeed, the Church itself is by nature Charismatic.

V. THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL REDEFINED

The emergence of the new move known as the CCR which is also referred to as Catholic Pentecostalism is termed variously as “a Move of God”; “a mighty river of grace”; “a breath of fresh air” (Pope John XXIII); “a chance for the Church and for the world” (Pope Paul VI – The Pope of the Holy Spirit); “a new current of grace”; “a shining sign of the beauty of Christ and of the Church, His Bride” (Pope Benedict XVI). Imagine such an overwhelming power! Quite like the electric current and its latent power.

In redefining the renewal, we simply employ Cyril John’s (41-45) framework. We begin by tabling what the Renewal is not before clarifying what it is. Thus, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is **NOT**: Just renewal of certain Charisms of the Holy Spirit; just weekly fellowship or prayer meetings; just a movement like other movements such as Monasticism, Reformation, Liturgical Movement, etc. It has given birth to other Movements. It began as a movement and it is now a Renewal; the renewal has no human founder – it is Holy Spirit propelled; not like other Movements which have a particular cause – it is for people of all walks of life, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, religious, lay faithful, teenagers, old and young; it is not a structured organization like other Movements with written constitution – it is meant for service; it is not a homogenous Movement claiming to have a monopoly of grace; it turns us out to be Renewed Evangelizers, Priests, Catechists, Religious, lay faithful (knights, lay readers, extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion, Cadets, Prayer leaders, etc); it is not something to be entered into – it enters into us; it is not a Movement in the Church but it is the Church in movement and Church on the Move – it is in the Spirit of *argionamento* or constant updating (*Semper Reformanda*); it is not merely shouting Alleluia – Praise the Lord, Clapping of hands, Jumping, Singing, raising hands, speaking in tongues or going into emotional gesticulations – it is really both a state and a process. What the Catholic Charismatic Renewal **IS**:

It is Renewal of the whole Christian life via the charismatic, gratuitous workings of the Holy Spirit; as Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens would put it, “it is normal Christianity because the Church herself is Charismatic”; Charles Whitehead, former President of International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Council observes, it “exists to help people live a new life in the power of the Spirit (not to bring them into something called the Catholic Charismatic Renewal); in this case, it is the Sovereign work of the Holy Spirit among Catholic Christians which is Trinitarian with its focus on personal relationship with Jesus and doing the will of God the Father; it fosters the use of Charismatic gifts (*Charismata* 1Cor. 12:4-11), growth in holiness (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; 26; 1Pet. 1:15-16), working of Evangelization (Acts 1:8, Matt. 28:19-20) on the non-Christians, nominal Christians, Cultures and Social structures by word and deeds together, which entails transformation of an inherited Christian faith into an active life of faith; having been sufficiently Sacramentalized, the Christian needs to be appropriately evangelized.

According to Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens, “it provides an answer to one of the most urgent pastoral questions facing the Church today: How to transform nominal Christians into authentic Christians” (47). By way of life in the Spirit Seminars, the enabling environment is created for Baptism in the Holy Spirit whereby the Christian is helped into opening up for the outpouring of the Spirit. The dormant grace of Baptism and Confirmation gets revived. It virtually “fans into flame” (2Tim. 1:6) or re-awakens the Baptismal gifts so that the Christian is able to bear abundant fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) which are of three different dimensions (Egbunu 63-68):

i. Our Relationship with God

Love – the distinctive mark of a Christian (1Cor. 13:15)

Joy – which should be constantly available irrespective of the circumstances (John 15:11; 1Thess. 1:6).

Peace – it is not just absence of conflict or war. It entails deep and aiding peace (Jn. 14:27). It carries with it the idea of unity, completeness, rest, ease, security.

ii. Our Human Relationships

Patience – no anger, revenge and retaliation. It entails long-suffering, steadfastness under provocation. Ability to persevere under weariness, strain and persecution (II Cor. 4:19).

Kindness – gentleness – love enduring – not harshness. II Tim. 2:24 – not quarrelsome but kindly to everyone. Not basket-mouth, stationless radios or over-floating.

Goodness – highest moral and ethical values – being like God. Readiness to please God without expecting medals/rewards.

iii. The Inward Dimensions

Faithfulness – trustfulness – not just faith exercised by every Christian. It’s fidelity – being faithful in little things (Matt. 25:21). Gentleness (or Meekness) – mildness in dealing with others, not timidity. It’s being

tamed like a horse in self-control. Col. 11:18 – Desire Christ to have pre-eminence. Self-Control (Temperance) – Being strong, having mastery or ability to control oneself. One's thoughts and actions as signs of nobility. Paul taught its importance – I buffet my body (I Cor. 9:25-27).

Temperance – on food is moderation; on alcohol – soberness; in sexual matters, its chastity/abstinence; in dress, its modesty; in defeat, its hopefulness. Thereby turning our obstacles into stepping stones, handicaps into crowns; abnormality into normalcy, coldness into warmth.

This brings us into intimacy with God in Prayer; makes one hunger for the Word of God and Sacraments, to Love the Church and become more zealous evangelizers, fruitful Christians, discerning, victorious, holy, one in mind and heart; selfless servants of God and humanity as good stewards of God's time, talents and treasures. Improvement in devotion to the Eucharist, new sense of value of frequent confession, better devotion to the Virgin Mary. Discovery of many spiritual gifts which were thought of as mere folk-tales meant only for the early Church.

It has been discovered by many that one is virtuous to the degree of availability or yieldedness to the Holy Spirit. In this respect, St. Augustine of Hippo asserted, "if the Spirit does not vivify us, direct us, move us, then we are dead members of Christ's body"

VI. ABUSE OF CHARISMS

With the opening of the window for fresh air to come into the rather suffocating Church at the Vatican II era, we also discovered some hurricane, storm or evil-wind trying to have a sway in the leadership, fellowship and day-to-day activities of the members of the Renewal. The leadership is often entangled in dangerous politicking and unnecessary bureaucracy; greed for power and money i.e. "Love of money" (I Tim. 6:9-10); arrogance and autocracy instead of servant leadership – (Jesus came as one who serves – Lk. 22:27); some leaders have made themselves life-time governors and maximum rulers, more vain and arrogant than even political leaders. They lack of accountability in financial matters – ask them, then you are suspecting them; some are lone rangers, no team work/harmony; they exhibit serious lack of discernment; planlessness, remains their habit, with the presumption that the Holy Spirit will always take-over. Many of the avowed leaders go around fellowships and prayer-meetings filling others without re-filling or re-energizing themselves; they are so busy with the work of God that they rarely have time for prayers, fellowship or personal retreat and so they get fagged out before ever they realize it; in the course of their private ministries some are busy making name for themselves instead of focusing on God and on the common good. Vainglory, adulation or self-glory, self-affirmation becomes the order of the day. Rather than speaking of the mighty deeds of God, it is the self "I" all the way (Acts 2:11) with the air of materialism. Others are busy sowing seeds/weeds of division and lack of cooperation or disunity – I am for Apollos, I am for Paul, Cephas, etc. (I Cor. 1:12). But is Pentecostal (Charismatic) experience synonymous with the Babel experience? (Gen. 11:14). Disunity, disagreement, resentment, bitterness, envy, jealousy, competitiveness, lack of submission, selfish ambitions, etc. are so prevalent. Many have turned back to their vomit like dogs (2 Pet. 2:20-22). They persist in sin after receiving the truth (Heb. 10:26-27) in which case, "Contracticism" has stolen the place of Charismatism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Abuse of a thing does not make it innately bad. The baby must not be thrown away with the bathwater. On this note, therefore, we make a few recommendations:

There is need for servant leadership. One who is a "bible" for others to read, an open Bible, an example to imitate (II Thess. 3:9). The leaders especially, ought to lead by example in speech, conduct, love and faith (I Tim. 4:12). Team work is indispensable. No man is an island. There is need for team-work; the lone ranger is dangerous. Even Jesus gathered disciples. Discernment is a necessary aid to leadership. There is therefore serious need for discernment of spirits. God should be given quality time. There is need to constantly retire to the womb of prayer to re-energize i.e. to have audience with God in order to have adequate and edifying audience with His children. Iron, they say, sharpens iron as communal life brings out the verve in the Christian life (Acts 2:44-47). To do otherwise is like having religion without the power thereof. Even Jesus took time out to pray. There is so much power in silent prayer. Unless the Lord builds a house the labourers labour in vain (Ps. 127:1); cut off from me you can do nothing (Jn. 15:5). The power of whatever ministry one engages in emanates from one's personal intimacy with Jesus in Prayer. Prayer remains the spiritual umbilical cord channeling oxygen and nutrition to the Christian. For St. John Chrysostom, "to stop praying is to cease breathing – like taking the fish out of water". We must possess the "Obamaic mindset or sloganeering, "we can" or "I can" do all things (Phil. 4:13). The Lord is with you while you are with Him (2 Chro. 15:2). Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His power (Eph. 6:10).

There is every need for mentorship; Samuel and Paul were guided. So we need someone to guide us on our spiritual journey (An Eli – 1 Sam. 3:2-5; An Ananias – Acts 9:15-17; An Elijah – in case of Elisha – 2 Kings 2). Even St. John Paul II in his earlier days had a tailor as his spiritual director.

Authentic devotion to Mary is a sure sign of being at right with the Spirit. She is the first Charismatic and Mother of the Church. There is need to take new initiatives in Evangelization. The future of Renewal lies in Evangelization. The Renewal must not end up as a Bible Study or sharing group. It has to be redolent with warm-fellowship, empowered with love of the word, fed on the wings of anointed praise and worship and the manifestation of Charisms. Media initiatives are, to say the least, necessary. This is in relation to books, periodicals, Radio and Television ministries, etc. There is every need for ongoing formation programmes for incumbent leaders and carrying former leaders along. This would go a long way to aiding current leaders to gain from the wealth of experience of their predecessors. In fact, whoever refuses to learn lessons of history is doomed to repeat it. As renewal members busy themselves all around praying for others vicariously in order to rescue souls from dangerous "flames", it would be wise enough to also pray against fierce attacks. More so, that Charismatics be not only remembered when it is labour time but that they be recognized too in times of Favour.

VII. CONCLUSION

Charisms have not ceased. They have always existed because the Church is itself charismatic in nature. However, Charismatics need to be jealously guided. The need for watchfulness cannot be overemphasized as this would stand against abuses which could easily creep in to stifle or cripple individual lives and the Church. Tapping from Charisms as of old is a duty, a task and a responsibility that remains indispensable if we must be genuine/authentic viral agents of evangelization.

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