

CELEBRATE

CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL SERVING THE CHURCH



DISCOVER

HOW THOUSANDS
OF CATHOLICS ACROSS THE UK AND BEYOND HAVE FOUND NEW
INSPIRATION IN THEIR FAITH THROUGH THE **CELEBRATE CONFERENCES** £1.00

THE CELEBRATE VISION

CELEBRATE SEEKS TO:

- Provide an atmosphere of friendship and close fellowship, thereby promoting a real sense of community for formation and mission.
- Celebrate the Liturgy in the best possible way for the people present.
- Offer the best available teaching, based on the Scriptures and the teaching documents of the Catholic Church.
- Include among those invited as speakers men and women from Protestant, Pentecostal and Non-Denominational charismatic churches and fellowships, so that we benefit from their gifts and thereby promote unity among Christians.
- Hold to the central truths of the Catholic faith without emphasising those devotions which are a matter of personal choice.
- Provide spiritually for children, teenagers and young adults in streams or groups according to age or academic year.
- Show our young people in particular that it's exciting, fun, and challenging to be a Christian today.
- Encourage on-going friendship among those who attend Celebrate events.
- Give everyone the freedom to be fully charismatic, while remaining sensitive to those not coming from this faith experience.
- Offer Baptism in the Holy Spirit & Life in the Spirit Seminars.
- Encourage creative activities and use drama, mime, art and music to emphasise the Gospel message.
- Invite everyone to participate in lively praise and worship, and include the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Offer personal prayer by trained prayer teams.
- Use money raised in the Celebrate Offering to sponsor training and development for individuals, communities, groups and special ministries.
- Promote and support an awareness of social, moral, ethical and justice issues, and provide funds from the Offering for Christian work in disaster areas.
- Support financially and practically Christian organisations which share a similar vision, and work for renewal in the church.



CELEBRATE WILL BE A BLESSING AND A JOY TO ALL WHO ATTEND. IT WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL WHO PARTICIPATE TO DEEPEN THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST, TO SHARE THEIR FAITH IN HIM AND DISCOVER MORE ABOUT THE RICHES OF THAT FAITH IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

**+GEORGE STACK
ARCHBISHOP OF CARDIFF**



SINCE 1994 THE ANNUAL CELEBRATE FAMILY CONFERENCE HAS BEEN A GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT TO ADULTS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN OF ALL AGES, WITH IT'S EMPHASIS ON GOOD, PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN TEACHING, CELEBRATION, SERVICE AND FUN.

**+CRISPIAN HOLLIS
BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH**



CELEBRATE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY THE COMPANY OF OTHERS OF A LIKE MIND AND A LIKE FAITH. IT'S A CHANCE TO RECHARGE BATTERIES, THINK MORE DEEPLY, AND BE INSPIRED TO PUT FAITH INTO ACTION.

LORD ALTON



I AM VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO CELEBRATE, AND TO TAKING PART WITH YOU ALL IN THIS WONDERFUL, SPIRIT-FILLED AND SPIRIT-FUELLED WEEK. I VALUE THE FREEDOM OF OUR WORSHIP AND THE JOY OF OUR FRIENDSHIP TOGETHER. THE RISEN LORD BREATHED THE HOLY SPIRIT INTO HIS APOSTLES, GIVING THEM POWER TO LIVE THE GOSPEL AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST; HE DOES THE SAME FOR US TODAY, AND AT CELEBRATE WE REALLY DO EXPERIENCE THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND ARE RENEWED SPIRITUALLY AND PHYSICALLY. MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL!

**+MALCOLM MCMAHON
BISHOP OF NOTTINGHAM**



THE JOY AND ENERGY OF THE FAITH OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO TAKE PART IN CELEBRATE HAS AN INFECTIOUS QUALITY AND IT IS GOOD FOR DEVON AND WEST COUNTRY CHRISTIANS TO BE TOUCHED BY IT. ONCE AGAIN THANK YOU FOR COMING AMONG US, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO BEING WITH YOU ON EASTER MONDAY.

**+CHRISTOPHER BUDD
BISHOP OF PLYMOUTH**

WELCOME TO CELEBRATE

THE FAMILY CONFERENCE WITH A DIFFERENCE



CELEBRATE is now in its 19th year, so what is it that makes CELEBRATE different? Simply the fact that it was conceived as a Conference for ALL the family, where we do our best to cater for the particular spiritual and social

needs of everyone at every age and state of life. This is why our vision statement includes the commitment that Celebrate seeks *"to provide spiritually for children, teenagers and young adults in streams or groups according to age or academic year"*. The children and young people are just as important as the adults, which explains why almost half the 1,500 who attend the main Ilfracombe conference are aged 22 years and below and most of the children's streams and the on-site accommodation are booked up very quickly.

SEEING THE VISION BECOME REALITY

To make this part of our vision a reality, we depend on the commitment and hard work of the seven gifted and qualified teams who run the streams from The Crèche up to The Pulse, as well as the leaders of the 200 young adults in Joel's Bar. We also offer some afternoon sessions for those in their 20s and 30s. This is in addition to the very full programme for adults, which includes the evening Celebrations and the morning talks based on the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church with a wide range of afternoon workshops addressing appropriate spiritual and practical issues to help us live as Christian men and women in today's challenging world. All this makes CELEBRATE a genuinely inclusive Family Conference and to complete the picture, the evenings conclude with The Fringe, a time for everyone to relax, dance, and join in family games in the friendly on-site John Fowler Centre. Whilst we ensure that there is always age-appropriate spiritual content in every part of the programme, we are also very aware of the importance of giving opportunities for fun and relaxation for everyone. Our vision statement says that Celebrate seeks *"to provide an atmosphere of friendship and close fellowship, thereby promoting a real sense of community for formation and mission"*.

As part of this social aspect, the Wednesday is a free day, offering everyone the chance to visit some of the local Devon beaches, and giving all the hard-working teams the chance to re-charge their spiritual and physical batteries! To complete the day-off, Wednesday

evening offers special entertainment for the younger children, followed by the Celebrate Concert.

CELEBRATE'S OWN RADIO STATION

At CELEBRATE we encourage everyone to pace themselves, so for those who may choose to take some time out in their chalets, or are involved in baby-sitting, we offer CELEBRATE FM the Conference's very own radio station, carrying the Conference events and talks, Christian music, interviews and news, it adds an extra dimension to the Conference experience.

REGIONAL WEEKENDS

We always wanted to see the CELEBRATE vision extended to include local weekend events, and we started the first CELEBRATE Weekends in 2008. In 2012 there will be seven Weekends around the country, all following the vision and providing for the whole family.

Finally, I want to refer to two other quotations from our vision statement, both emphasising values which lie at the heart of what we are trying to do. Firstly, we seek *"to celebrate the Liturgy in the best possible way for the people present, and to offer the best available teaching based on the Scriptures and the teaching documents of the Catholic Church"*. So Mass is celebrated in the different streams as well as all together in the Main Hall, we encourage people to read and study the Bible, and we try to help everyone become more aware of the wonderfully rich and comprehensive teachings of the Church. Secondly, Celebrate seeks *"to include among those invited as speakers men and women from Protestant, Pentecostal and Non-Denominational charismatic churches and fellowships, so that we benefit from their gifts and thereby promote unity among Christians"*.

Whilst CELEBRATE is a Catholic conference, we are delighted to welcome brothers and sisters from other parts of the body of Christ, both as participants and as contributors. We have so much to celebrate together, and so much to learn from one another.

I hope this has given a flavour of what CELEBRATE is all about, and may I encourage you to come along. CELEBRATE is not ours, it belongs to God and we willingly give Him all the glory.

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CHARLES WHITEHEAD, CELEBRATE CHAIRMAN





ATMOSPHERE OF FAITH

experience the deep joy of God's presence and the expectation that through Him all things are possible.

The contrast to this hit me recently while watching a film called 'Lourdes'. It was a strange French subtitled film that I had chosen to watch based purely on the title and the brief accompanying

review. As the title suggests it was about a pilgrim to Our Lady's shrine in France by a young woman with multiple sclerosis accompanied by her mother. I watched the film with trepidation concerned that it would ridicule the Marian shrine. The film was very slow and would not be high on my ratings, and had it not been for the subject matter I would not have persevered. The pilgrims and the place were portrayed as fairly grim, in total contrast to the Lourdes I have visited and had found to be full of hope and joy. It really did not at all convey the true picture of this wonderful place of faith and selfless service of others.

ATMOSPHERE OF SCEPTICISM

The story begins amidst an atmosphere of scepticism to a belief in miracles amongst the pilgrims, apart from the mother of the young woman who is fervent in her approach to attain a miracle for her totally

incapacitated daughter, and so expectancy begins to build in the viewer. Then it happens! Slowly over a few days we see the young woman begin to move until eventually she can leave her wheelchair and is able to walk.

At this point I was thrilled that the film actually showed the healing power of God and so was now expecting to see a change in the pilgrim's attitude from cynicism to one of delight. However, that wasn't the case, instantly there began jealousy and debate over 'Why her and not me'. Slowly.... very slowly, you see the young healed woman, who was full of excitement and anticipation, notice the envious looks and comments. To begin with she appears undeterred in her joy but in the final scene, the pilgrim's farewell party, while she is dancing with a handsome man, we see her fall to the ground. She gets up hastily and makes her way to the edge of the dance floor where she becomes acutely aware of the whispers around her commenting on what they have decided is not a miracle after all. Then comes the saddest part of the film, her mother silently agrees with the crowd and pushes the wheelchair across the room towards her daughter. The young woman states clearly she doesn't need the chair, but as we watch her for a long time we observe her faith level dropping. The pressure of the thoughts and views of others dilute her hope and her belief in her healing and she quietly gets back into the chair.

For days after I reflected on this film and the demonstration of how faith can be eroded when

there is no atmosphere of expectancy among those around us, and hope is not evident.

CONTRAST OF EXPECTATION

Celebrate is a wonderful contrast, full of expectation, hope, and belief that God will meet us. It is a place that is precious to feeding our faith and witnessing to the fact that Jesus is alive and wants to work in and through us. To be surrounded by people who love to praise and honour what God is doing in their lives is uplifting. Conversion can happen in an atmosphere like this, a new excitement can be born even in the youngest or oldest of people.

To be involved in the main conference and the regional weekends is such a privilege. To hear the stories of how God has changed lives through these faith-filled events, gives me such a desire to want more people to come and see for themselves what is possible when we stand and declare our faith in the God that can do all things.

This year the main conference is at Ilfracombe from Easter Sunday and seven regional weekends will take place to include a new location in Torquay (come and have a Celebrate weekend on the English Riviera!)



To find out more visit www.celebrateconference.org or see contact details on p.27

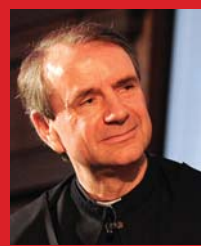
JENNY BAKER is the **CELEBRATE** Regional Coordinator

When compiling the last Celebrate magazine, which is full of testimonies and stories, I was struck by how many commented on the personal affect that the faith-filled atmosphere had on them and their families.

'With the hall bursting with people of all ages, the worship was awesome and the atmosphere was charged with faith.....With the power of our renewed faith, we came away with the strength to tackle the challenges of everyday life.' Claire Healy

'Having seen the effect the fun faith-filled activities had on my young children, I was keen to continue this for them and all our parish children.' Federica Ali

It made me realise that an atmosphere of faith not only deepens our desire for God but it can also be contagious -to witness people



FR CHRISTOPHER JAMISON is a Benedictine monk and Director of the National Office for Vocation.

He is best known for his work in TV and radio, as well as his books and articles.

ILFRACOMBE FIRST CLASS PLEASE

Celebrate lives up to its name and I was happily pleased to discover that it's more festival than conference. Like all the best festivals, there are plenty of surprises. Among these is the fact that Celebrate is the largest

annual gathering of Catholic families in the country. The organisers are exceptionally good at enabling parents to attend adult events while the young are engaged creatively by enthusiastic youth leaders. The inclusive ethos of the week strikes everybody who attends but the centre of every activity

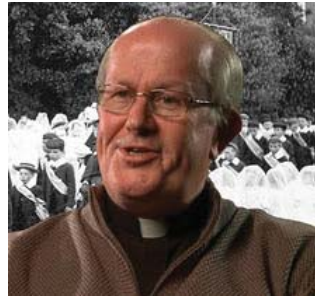
is deepening faith in Christ within the context of the power of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic Renewal is the tradition from which Celebrate springs, so the presence of the Spirit is a constant theme but never in way that excludes those who are not so familiar with this aspect of the Church's life. Speakers from

all parts of the Church are given a platform, creating an event that is uniquely catholic and Catholic at the same time. I will never forget leading a Celebrate workshop on vocation when Ann Widdecombe came into the room accompanied by Lord Alton. While it's difficult for such a pair not to make an impact

when they arrive, nevertheless, they simply joined in with everybody else. In the Church, there is no First Class. Hang on a moment, that's not right: Celebrate reminds us that in the Catholic Church, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the famous and the unknown, all alike are travelling First Class.

A TASTE OF COMMUNITY

CANON MATTHEW JONES OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CARDIFF REFLECTS ON HIS EXPERIENCE OF CELEBRATE COMING TO WALES FOR THE FIRST TIME



A week or two after Celebrate Wales, I asked Pam, whether she had enjoyed the experience. Pam had decided to go with a friend, both of them parishioners, and both of them had been a little hesitant at the prospect. She now

looked a little alarmed at my question. "Enjoyed?!" Pam exclaimed, and I thought perhaps something had upset her during the weekend. "It has changed my life!" she said, with a big smile on her face, and proceeded to tell me about her wonderful healing during the weekend. I heard many stories like Pam's over the following weeks, and it all helped to make me so glad that Celebrate had come to Wales for the first time. In Wales we sometimes feel that we get a little left behind, in church as in other matters, but again and again at the Cardiff "Celebrate" people were saying how sure they were that this was a great chance for things to really start moving here in Wales.

Pam came away from the weekend renewed and made whole, in her faith, and simply as a human

being. As a parish priest of three busy communities, I know that many, many parishioners long for that same renewal in their own lives. The possibility of attending a retreat or pilgrimage is not always there, but a weekend is something that most could manage. What a difference I think it could make to parish life if more and more people could find out how Catholic life and worship could be.

A WONDERFUL SENSE OF COMMUNITY

I believe we must be offering opportunities - times, places - where folks can experience the fullness of Christian faith and life, and a vital part of that is Christian community, in its full richness. Many people nowadays speak about a spiritual crisis where people's difficulty is not with the spiritual life - but with the Church. Sometimes the problem is that they have never enjoyed the experience of the welcoming, learning, worshipping and caring community that the Church should be. Jesus spent three years forming the apostles, and that meant not only forming them in the Gospel but also forming them into the Church. They had to learn that they belonged to one another as well as to him. During a Celebrate event it's amazing how quickly a wonderful sense of community springs up, and

we soon realise how much we all need that. In the Gospel we have so much to teach our world, a world which can seem to be fragmenting or breaking up. It needs a model of unity. Jesus himself forms part both of the divine community of the Trinity and of the Holy Family, and we must build the Church founded by him into a community of love that is that model for the world. And that is what we can see happening at Celebrate.

Mention of the Holy Family makes me aware of another feature of Celebrate that has struck me, and that is its family dimension. So often one of those reasons I already mentioned for people being unable to attend retreats or events is the lack of facilities for the children. At Celebrate events not only are children of all ages taken care of, but they have their own streams, geared to the different age groups. It made such a difference to the families that I knew at Cardiff to know that their children were being looked after, and that they were enjoying good teaching and activities aimed appropriately to their ages. What a blessing for our families, and what a great message it gives about how important we believe family life to be.



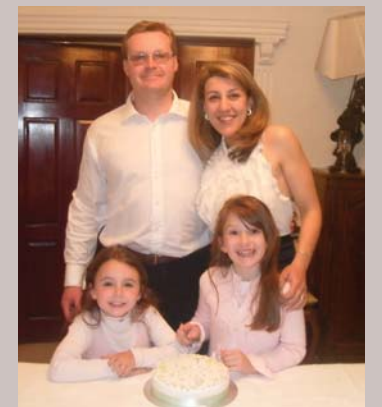
A FAMILY ENCOUNTER

CHRISTIAN MAHONEY WRITES ABOUT HIS FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE OF A CELEBRATE WEEKEND

It all started one Sunday morning at the end of 10:30am Mass with an inspiring address by Deacon Rev Rob Coyne who invited the congregation to a Celebrate Weekend at Corpus Christi High School in Cardiff. The weekend was promised as a way of showing that faith can be alive and relevant to everyday life and the needs of families. So myself, my wife, and our two children aged nine and six decided to go.

The first day kicked off at around 9:00 am on a Saturday morning with a great talk by a husband and wife team. It was heartening to see so many families present as well as people of every age. Any initial formality was quickly dispelled with some really good music. This was a great way of joining the community of all those present by together praising God.

The children were then organised into their own groups called "streams" and had a wonderful time thanks to their helpers who brought the faith of the children alive in a vibrant and fun way. The mixture of colourful music over the course of the two days coupled with inspirational talks gave us all a real and tangible experience of the Holy Spirit. We as a family truly discovered and encountered in a special way the Third Person of the Holy Trinity at the Celebrate Weekend and we will definitely be attending again when it returns to Wales.



UNEXPECTED WELSH FRUIT

When asked to help out with car park duties and general stewarding at the Cardiff Celebrate Conference, Tom Heseltine and Steve Ebsworth didn't really know what to expect and without a doubt they got far more than they ever imagined! Both their wives had been to events like this before, but not them, and they hadn't any intention of going had it not been for Sharon the site team manager asking them to help out.



Tom said 'As non Catholic and non Church goers, when we were asked if we would like to be on the service team at the first Welsh Conference I thought this could be hard work - and we were right! Moving equipment, car parking (we got so wet we had to get changed), we were on the go all the time.

However, the work was made much easier because of everyone's enjoyment and joy. I found it a pleasure meeting so many happy and friendly people and I enjoyed the talks I heard'

It was a total surprise to then be asked to take up the offertory gifts during the Mass. 'I was very pleased and humbled to be part of the Eucharistic procession, it took me back to my childhood as I had done things like that in the Church of England'.

The Celebrate conference had an unexpected impact on both of the husbands. On return home they started accompanying their wives to Church and then went on to do an Alpha course, RCIA followed in preparation for being received into the Church at Easter 2012!

CELEBRATE IS FOR EVERYONE AND IS DELIGHTED TO WELCOME UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. LUKE DOWLE INVITED THE BRISTOL UNI CHAPLAINCY AND ROSANNA CASSIDY BROUGHT FRIENDS ALONG FROM NOTTINGHAM

OFF CAMPUS!

Luke explains 'we had started a regular prayer and praise evening each week at the University chaplaincy, to begin with we had just five or six of us but as time went on fifteen people were coming. They were enjoying the evenings and it provided a good chance for Catholics at the Uni to experience a bit of the Charismatic Renewal, which is new to many. Through this we encouraged a small group to go to the local Celebrate weekend in Bristol. The newcomers loved the conference and came back to give witness to the rest of the chaplaincy as to how much they gained from it. This then was the catalyst to a larger group going to Cardiff to experience Celebrate for the first time. Over ten of us went and every person enjoyed it. It was great seeing how interested everyone was and this was particularly underlined when in the afternoon session a number of workshops were on offer, there was a choice of five talks and everyone went to different ones!'

The students said 'they had never experienced something like this in the Catholic Church and they wanted to go to more events!' Luke was particularly impressed that people were so friendly to the group and made an effort to talk to them, which definitely had an important impact. 'Since the Cardiff conference our praise and worship group has continued to grow and now we are hoping to take a crowd to the main Celebrate conference at Easter.

This is amazing considering most of the students had never even heard of Celebrate, God has truly been working in our chaplaincy!'

Rosanna, a student from Nottingham University, was really looking forward to attending the weekend in St Albans 'I hadn't been to a Catholic Charismatic conference for a number of years and I had forgotten the sheer power of the Holy Spirit that makes these gatherings such a blessing to be a part of. It was so beautiful to realise that there were people of all ages who felt the same passion for Christ, and the same love for the Church. The conference gave me hope that it is possible to bring this eagerness for Christ into all parts of life. The atmosphere and the praise and worship at the conference probably would have been enough to set my heart on fire, but the talks that I heard blew me away. The ones that made the biggest impression on me were the talks about evangelisation. I had heard a lot at World Youth Day about the importance of evangelisation, and the urgent need to bring Christ to the world and I had readily agreed with it all, but really was quite daunted by the task of actually going about it. The talks at Celebrate made me realise that it is not a chore to be daunted by, but rather it should be the natural progression flowing from our passion for Jesus. I am so grateful for the Celebrate weekend, for the transforming talks and for each and every person who attended. I found it inspiring.'

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This Georgian farmhouse, together with its Conference Facilities in the adjacent barn conversion, can accommodate groups from 5 - 80 people in a peaceful setting and provides an ideal venue for awaydays, retreats, meetings and conferences.

In addition to a full range of courses and study days, the Catholic Bible School has a wide range of CDs of talks given by "Celebrate" speakers and many others.

Need prayer support?
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ALICE HALL is a member of the Sion Catholic Community, and has been involved in Celebrate for many years where she led the 'Joel's Bar' stream. She spoke at Brighton Celebrate on the theme of the conference: "Who do you say that I am?" In this extract of her talk she explains that the answer to this question leads us to explore who we are!

"WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?"

MATTHEW 16:15

Jesus is unique for each of us, and to every single person in the Gospel Jesus was someone different. Although the Church enables us to understand our faith, we mustn't forget that Jesus is asking us this question personally 'Who do you say that I am?'

C S Lewis, said: "Jesus is either who he says he is, and he's God, and we have to listen to him, or he's a liar, which means he's a bad man, or he's insane. The one thing we must not say is that he is merely a man, a great moral teacher. You must make your choice, either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse." If Jesus is who he said he was, then the Gospel is true. He is God. He rose from the dead. He is alive and with us. He promised always to be with us, *so He's with us right now*, and this demands a response.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS IS LORD?

It means entering into a relationship with Him, inviting Him to be a part of our lives. It means asking if He's got an idea for my life that maybe is better than mine! I like the analogy of driving a car, I humbly get out of the driving seat, and say: "Lord, do you want to drive my car? He's not going to leave us behind, I get to be in the passenger seat and go for the ride. He made this car, He knows how fast it can go, and He doesn't get any speeding tickets! If we let the Lord drive our lives it's going to be so much more of an

exciting adventure than the one we're planning. I'm beginning to realise that this is a choice I need to make everyday, to let God drive the car, to let Him be in control.

Recognising who Jesus is and making the decision to follow Him is only the start of the journey. What happened to Peter after he made this response to the Lord? "Peter answered Jesus' question 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.'" Then Jesus said "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." (Matthew 16:16-20) Whoa! That's a response! Peter is then catapulted into this crazy mission that takes over his life, the first Head of the Church, the first Pope. He's been given authority over Heaven and earth. Jesus prophesied what's going to happen to him, He's giving him his mission. Jesus told Peter *who he is!*

THE INNER JOURNEY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THAT WE'LL EVER MAKE.

This exchange between Peter and Jesus reminds us of what is needed to build a relationship. In order for this exchange of offering myself to the Lord, and Him offering Himself to me what needs to happen is I need to know myself. I need to know myself to be in relationship with him. This journey of coming to know ourselves is phenomenally important for us to be Christians, to be in this relationship with Jesus. St Teresa of Avila says that "the inner journey is the *most* important that we'll ever make". St Bernard of Clairvaux says: "Self-knowledge *is* knowledge of God", so this journey of self-knowledge must be a worthwhile one, as it is how we come to know God.

So how do we practically live this journey? Just look at people in relationship, at people falling in love with each other, they spend time with each

other. David Matthews said in the previous talk "Only lovers can delight in such wastage". We can 'waste' time just looking into the eyes of the Lord in prayer. We waste so much time in front of the TV and on our smart phones so how can it be a waste of time to spend it with the Lord in prayer.

I think this is a challenge for everybody, however many Celebrates we've been to. How can you be in a relationship with Jesus if you don't talk to Him? If we treated our best friend like we treat Jesus, would they be our best friend?

We're very busy people, and there is constant noise in our lives. At times we're almost afraid to be silent, because the first thing we meet in prayer is ourselves, our thoughts. To overcome this we often *do* a lot when we're praying...I've experienced being stripped of my *doing* in prayer, which means you come naked before the Lord, and this can be very uncomfortable, as we've got nothing to hide behind. We then have to say 'Lord, look at *me*, this is who I am.'



A DAMASCUS ROAD MOMENT

Two RCIA (The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) helpers came to see what Celebrate might have to offer those who were on the journey of faith. Sue Hollow a retired deputy head from a Catholic School, and James Swale a convert of five years, both volunteer with the busy St Peter's Church RCIA group in Hove.

'The first thing I noticed' said James 'was the organisation and planning of Celebrate. Caring came through in how comfortable and smoothly things went. There was a delightful mix of tradition and joyful worship. The talks and workshops were very good and gave me lots to unpack, particularly the exploring prayer workshop. There was a busy schedule of events but many opportunities for quiet reflection and prayer. I found Celebrate inspiring, being surrounded by people who loved God.'

Sue, who in the past taught pastoral skills at St John's seminary Womersley, explains 'I went to Brighton Celebrate with some trepidation. I confess that my attendance was more filled with curiosity than hope.'

The speakers I heard were each highly effective in their own way and the workshops offered a frustrating choice – I would have liked to have gone to at least two simultaneously!

CELEBRATE IN CONNECTION WITH AN RCIA PROGRAMME?

'Many people arrive at RCIA as 'searchers' says Sue. 'They will be exposed to, and interact with, the programme provided. In the time we have we can give glimpses of scripture, an exposé of the sacraments, pray with the group, introduce the person of Jesus, introduce the catechism etc. However, we must not forget that the Holy Spirit calls people into relationship when He chooses. Celebrate could provide a chance for a RCIA candidate to have that 'Damascus Road' moment, a time for the Holy Spirit to light the fire in a context where the large number of others present can give support and affirmation. I was both surprised and impressed by the number of local clergy who came to support the event and the system for follow up; something very necessary for someone new.'



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LED TO WORSHIP

Worship is an essential part of the Celebrate conference. We recognise that we are all different and some delight in raising their hands and singing aloud while others prefer the silence of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. There is no right or wrong way, and at Celebrate we offer the opportunity to experience and participate in many kinds of worship. Worship fulfils a profound need in us, to be loved by Him, and then to respond to that love.

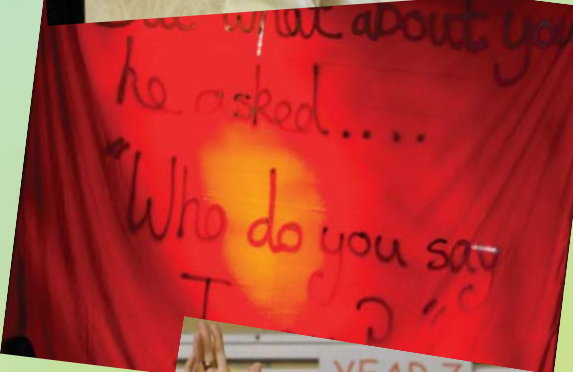
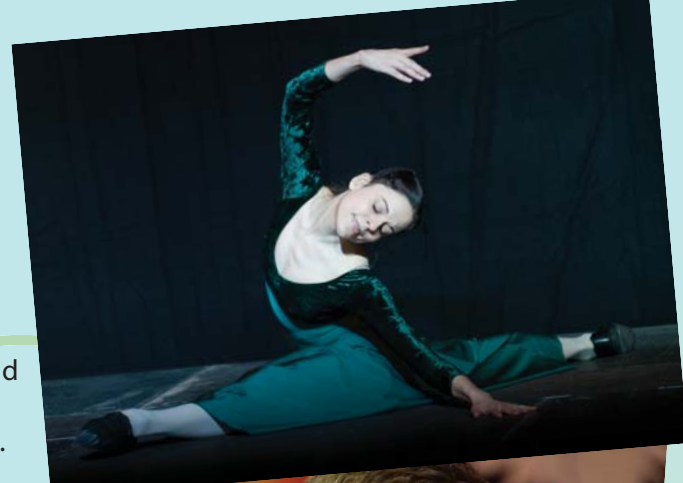
At the conferences we use the talents of a variety of people to help us find ways to reflect on and convey our gratitude to God for all that He has given, from mime artists to dancers, actors and musicians, bringing heartfelt expression to our liturgy and praise.

Eamonn Pugh a longstanding worship leader at Celebrate Ilfracombe explains 'There is a sense of anticipation, excitement and expectation each day. When I see people walking down the road from the holiday site to the college where the main conference is held, and ascending the hill up to the entrance, I often have a sense of what it must have been like in biblical times for the people of God going up to the temple to worship. I have been involved in leading worship at the conference since it started, and have been blessed to experience the sense of the magnitude, awe and wonder of God as the enthusiastic throng of voices sing out to the vibrant music. As a worship leader, there is nothing more fulfilling than to look out at a sea of people with their hands and their voices lifted high.'

Drama, mime and dance also play a part within the conference and bring a different dimension to the way in which we worship. We have our home grown drama company 'RISE' who attend the main Celebrate conference and many of the weekends, as well as the beautiful dancer Kate Snowden, and the much loved mime artist Steve Murray as well as Monica McArdle, whose creative performances can move us to reflect more deeply and impact our praise and worship times.

'At the regional weekends we want to ensure we don't deliver a lukewarm version of the main Celebrate conference' says Eleanor Agius who is part of the band at Brighton Celebrate. 'We are called to draw regular 'Celebrators' and newcomers together into one praying community. It has been a great privilege to be part of the worship team over the last few years, working with the Holy Spirit to create a space for people to be renewed and awakened. We are aware that a first experience of Celebrate can be rather daunting for some but for others it is hugely liberating, allowing them to praise God with their whole self when the limits of language have been reached. Just as in our parishes we stand, we kneel, we make the sign of the cross, at Celebrate we hope to introduce people to new languages for expressing their love of God, not forcing anyone to pray without integrity, but rather giving them the freedom and challenge to step out in faith and meet Christ.'

In all areas of our worship at Celebrate from the rousing hymns, the moving dramas, to the silence of our hearts as we adore Christ in the Eucharist, we pray that all may find their way to a deeper encounter with the living Lord.



DAVID MATTHEWS who spoke last year at Celebrate Bristol, has been a regular speaker for many years at the Celebrate Conference in Ilfracombe and at the regional weekends. He is a larger than life character with a warm Northern Irish sense of humour who leads audiences to experience the love of Christ through laughter and stories. His interesting journey of faith has led him to recently embrace Catholicism after decades as a Protestant Pastor.

HUMBLED BY LOVE

I have been involved with the Celebrate conference for more years than I care to recount. I have been privileged to be a speaker at many different kinds of conferences around the world and in my opinion Celebrate is one of the very best!

Why do I say that? Well it is charismatic and full of life. It is also very well organised and administrated. On site there are numerous people from stewards to 'stream' leaders who work tirelessly to make your stay pleasant and enjoyable. I really appreciate that. It's what allows Celebrate to be so 'spontaneous' and spiritually enriching.

Celebrate is a family conference. It is not full of holy people doing holy things 24/7! It is full of families of all kinds with a full programme of activities with something for everyone. You can opt in or opt out to whatever level you like after all it is a holiday!

The all age aspect in my view is its strongest aspect. From 'Little Lights' to grandparents they all find a place with lots of encouragement and support. Over the years it has been my greatest joy to see teenagers and parents rediscover their faith and find their level of service in the Church and society.

NO PRESSURE TO CONVERT OR CONFORM

Celebrate is a Roman Catholic conference that has maintained a very healthy and productive ecumenism. I attended for many years as a Protestant Pastor. In that time I was always respectfully received and warmly listened to while speaking, with even a few 'amen's' of encouragement thrown in for good measure! This aspect of Celebrate is particularly important. Often we have wrong ideas about each other simply because we don't get a chance to meet the other side or interact with them.

This interaction at Celebrate allows for healthy social encounters and even theological discussion (for those who like that kind of thing). Having said all that there is of course no pressure whatsoever to convert or conform. In many many years of involvement with Celebrate I cannot remember even one attempt to get me to become Roman Catholic. I can say that I was many times almost embarrassed and often humbled

with the warmth of love and appreciation I received. Let me give you one example of that.

Some years ago I was sitting in on a Celebrate team meeting. We were reviewing the progress so far and praying for the few days left that we would be able to follow the Holy Spirit. By the way there is a lot of prayer before after and during Celebrate. Much of it, not all, is 'hidden' and maybe all the more powerful for that. Anyway back to the committee meeting (must we I hear you say), one person there

thoughtfully felt that "we have not honoured Our Lady yet".

Charles, the Chairman, suggested that we pray and discern what we might do. I being an evangelical Pastor and not known for my shyness, shared that I had a teaching on Mary quickly adding the condition that it was only what the Scriptures said about her. "That is what we want" said Charles encouragingly and so with the full approval of all present I was duly appointed to deliver said talk to the conference.

AN EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT PASTOR GIVING A TALK ON MARY!

I will never forget that night. Having boldly put myself forward I was now wracked with doubt and foreboding. What was I doing! How can an evangelical protestant Pastor give a talk on Mary to a Roman Catholic audience, not to mention all the Priests and Religious that were present!! To my amazement, gratitude and relief it was warmly received and even applauded. That is Celebrate for you.

I have given that talk on Mary many times since but it was my involvement with Celebrate that taught me that if we speak in love and respect to each other we just might discover that there is more that unites us than divides. Ecumenism at Celebrate is a healthy holding to one's own traditions and norms while seeking to understand and listen to the others point of view.



RECEIVED INTO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Since that time it has been my great privilege to be received into the Roman Catholic Church, on Easter Saturday (2011). As you can guess that was a momentous decision for me and my wife Mary and we have prayed, laughed and cried over it.

We as a couple are now living out ecumenism, as I enjoy the sacraments and friendships at my local parish church and she remains part of our local evangelical church where we enjoy fellowship and good Bible teaching.

Many have asked me why I have taken this step. It is hard to explain. I feel a bit like Peter in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). It all feels a little bit alien and I know the church is where God wants me to be, but am still trying to understand more fully the customs and language of this household.

My wife's advice is both practical and spiritual. She simply says, "Let the dust settle and then we will see the way forward". So watch this space as the dust settles. I do know that Celebrate and its people had a lot to do with my joining the church as I have seen there a Catholicism that is charismatic, vibrant and very very attractive.



RELEASE

A CELEBRATE INITIATIVE FOR YOUNG LEADERS

The Main Celebrate Conference has been running for 19 years and many of those who have been through the children's streams and have ended up in Joel's Bar, the 16+ stream, proudly describe themselves as 'Celebrate Babies'. Over the years they have received teaching that has been relevant to their age group and have engaged with the worship,

prayer and community. Some of these young people have now moved into serving at the conference and have begun to help at the regional weekends. To be asked to serve at Celebrate is regarded as a privilege to these young adults, following in the footsteps of those who have been their role models and have taught

them so much. Recently, the opportunities for service have extended, with the growth of the conferences and requests for young people to speak and help at other events where their living faith can challenge and teach others.

Last year the Celebrate leadership team recognised there was a challenge to be met to equip these new young leaders. Formation had to be available to help them take the step from receiving to giving, and there needed to be a structured approach, so that they were properly supported, not just 'thrown in the deep end'. RELEASE: A Celebrate Initiative for Young Leaders was launched to meet this challenge. A number of young 'Celebrators' aged 18-24 years were approached to attend the year formation programme and 25 of them took up the invitation.



The programme had four contact events during the year; one week where we met at Worth Abbey, two weekends (one sadly called off because of snow!) as well as a service project. Through the marvel of the internet a 'cyber' community was created during the year and support and friendship was shared as well as the swapping of thoughts and advice. The young leaders were given a wide variety of spiritual and practical teaching at each of the events and supplied with a number of resources; books, magazine subscriptions, accountability partner guidance, daily Scripture reading, and a website with downloadable podcasts. Many of the delegates mentioned how valued they felt by the investment in them.

The launch week at Worth Abbey was a great start to the year.

CLAIRE ASHBOURNE reports *'the week was packed with incredible teaching and a loving community atmosphere. We were given the opportunity to join with the monks in their daily rhythm of prayer. God moved very powerfully during that week, and while most of us had started the week wondering why we were there and feeling that we were not quite strong enough Christians or leaders, by the time we left, it was so clear to every one of us that God had called us all, and was doing amazing things in our hearts. The teaching was broad and inspiring, ranging from a history of Scripture by Fr Paul Keane, to training in preaching to young people from Soul Survivor's Andy Croft, who as a leader of a huge Evangelical Charismatic Youth Festival left the Abbey saying that he felt "inspired, encouraged and humbled". The week was particularly practical in its emphasis, and gave us ways to put into practice all that we had learned. We were also challenged to take part in a "service*

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project", by either volunteering to help at a Celebrate regional weekend, work in our parishes or get involved in some sort of Christian activity that would help us to start using the skills and advice we had received.'

The challenge of the service project meant that a number of the RELEASE leaders took up the baton and got involved in a variety of activities.

JOHN WRIGHT helped out at his parish church this summer with 'Blaze' a one-week youth event for children in Years 3-6. The theme of the week was "Outer Space", focusing on the book of Exodus, and the Israelites journey out of Egypt. It was a hectic but fun filled week with 60 children all enjoying faith related activities, a number of which were pretty noisy, especially the infamous "Blaze Olympics", in which the groups competed in activities such as space-hopper races! The week ended with a bang when a circus skills workshop taught them juggling, plate-spinning, uni-cycling, and many other exotic skills. It was a pretty exhausting week but John was helped by his experience at RELEASE using the practical advice he had been given and the confidence that God had called him to be there. During the year he also lead youth streams at both the Cardiff and St Albans Regional Weekends building on his gifts of communication with young people. John has now begun an internship in his parish while studying for a degree in youth work.



EMILY BAKER

spent a month in Indonesia with an orphanage full of children that had been affected by the recent Tsunami. It proved to be a tough time with



challenges in communication, cultural differences, food and living conditions. Despite this she got stuck into the routine by helping with the everyday duties and work of the orphanage and prayed that she could make a difference in a small way to the lives of these children. She believes she learnt more about herself during that time than anything else and felt that the Lord was underlining the words 'you are called to serve and not to be served'. She drew on her previous experience of volunteer parish youth work and what she had learned through RELEASE, knowing that many friends were supporting her in prayer, which helped her to face each day with patience and humility.

CAROL PARRA

has been heavily involved in media at her university, and during RELEASE she shared how the week at Worth Abbey had helped her to feel more equipped and



challenged about working in this area. So when World Youth Day asked her to come and work on social media for them in Madrid this year, she jumped at the opportunity to be evangelising in this medium. It was a busy time for Carol and she was rushed off her feet with the work, constantly updating the Twitter and Facebook aspects of WYD and sharing with the world what was happening in Madrid. She learnt that there is a great need for Christians to witness in social media, not only through sharing with friends and family, but also through actively engaging with the issues discussed.

Through the RELEASE programme, which will run for a new group of young people from September 2012, we hope that this experience and the investment in the future of these incredible young people, will help them discern what God is calling them to, how they can contribute to the future of Celebrate, and how we can further equip them for this journey.

If you are aged between 18 and 24 years from Sept 2012 and would like more information about applying for RELEASE 2012 please send an email to info@celebrateconference.org

Which speaker will you take home from Celebrate this year?

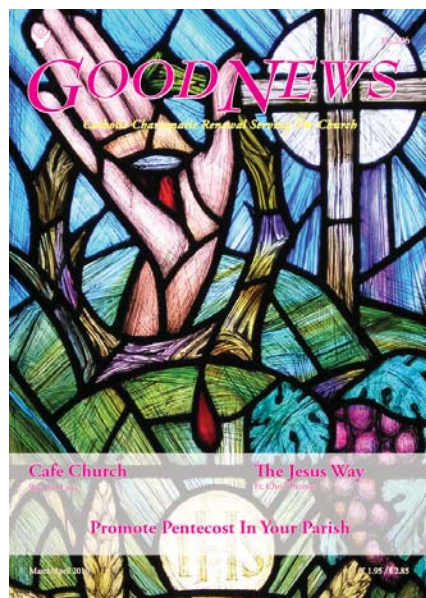
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JOHN WRIGHT
explains the impact of the Celebrate Conferences on his life - and his cycling

FROM CELEBRATE TO CYCLING!

About five years ago, when I first attended Celebrate, I was a non-Catholic husband doing his best to support his wife, Clare, and our children, Izzy, Joe and Amy, in their faith. Back then we'd been married for just over ten years, but I had a distant memory of Father Phelim McGowan, of Edge Hill, telling me that getting married to Clare meant that I was promising to bring up our children in the Catholic faith. At the time I nodded, but didn't really put much thought to what that meant.

I'd always encouraged my wife to go to Mass and parish events, and it was through a family-focused faith group that we met a family who have been regulars at Celebrate for probably twenty years. Their living testimony intrigued me and it was because of them that I found myself at Celebrate.

I was open-minded but by no means a committed Christian. I was bemused by all the smiling faces and passionate praise and worship, but reassured that this charismatic declaration of faith was backed up by thought provoking talks grounded in scripture. By the end of that week of indulging myself in the possibility of a life with Christ, I found an amazing sense of peace and a longing to know more.

To satisfy this desire I was encouraged to go on an Alpha course in Baldock, and spent time thinking about what God meant to me - love and union. My son was now preparing for his first Holy Communion; I wanted to fully support him in this so while he was going through his preparation, I went through mine. Weekly discussions with our parish priest, Canon Eddie Matthews, culminated in a joint celebration of new life, the baptism of our fourth child, Emily, and my confirmation at the Easter vigil mass.

But it was at one of the regional conferences in St Albans that after being prayed with I felt filled with the Holy Spirit and a desire to explore my faith with others. I now talk about my faith openly at work and have helped run the Alpha course in our parish. I'm also thinking of setting up a Christian Cycling Club, where something as simple as wearing a Christian Cycling Club jersey will prompt questions and provide me with an opportunity to witness and bring Christ into other people's lives!

Celebrate is now the first thing that goes in our family diary every year, it provides a time for our family to come together in Christ and unite us in His love.

BEYOND THE BARRIERS

Although Celebrate is most definitely a Catholic Conference it has an ecumenical heart. Each year we invite speakers from different Churches who bless us with their teaching. In 2011 both Rev. Jim Graham from Gold Hill Baptist Church in Buckinghamshire and Steve Murray a Pentecostal international mime artist spoke at Southampton's regional weekend.



STEVE MURRAY has been serving the conference for many years and is much loved by the audiences he ministers to through his creative expression of the Gospel. Steve talks about his

fondness for the conference and how much he has learnt that has taken him beyond the denominational barriers.

'Celebrate is a conference I have been performing at for many years and still enjoy every single moment of it. It is a true Charismatic Catholic conference and yet with a strong ecumenical ethos. This I am sure, is because Charles and Sue Whitehead embrace an ecumenical marriage and have ensured this is foundational to the vision. Through their acceptance of my ministry they gave me, a Pentecostal mime artist, a platform to serve God and opened up the doors into the Catholic world.'

CHRIST AT THE CENTRE

Celebrate has adopted me and I don't feel left outside looking in, I feel as one. I never think about differences because the people, the beautiful people of Celebrate and other Catholic events that I serve at, have taught me over the years how it is only through ignorance and lack of understanding that sectarianism is created. The Catholic Church is Christ centred and I feel at home in it. All churches and denominations have faults and bad tastes, why? Because people go there! But my vision is to see the scaled eyes between groups melt away and then we shall see ourselves as Christ sees us. Of course I know church history has created rifts and divisions but the fact is clear, we are human beings and we are all different, each to enjoy different flavours and different colours and it's our differences that help make up the wonderful multi coloured tapestry of the Kingdom of God.

I thank God for all the denominations, because they provide for all the different diversities of the body of Christ. Some people like to be more meditative whilst others like to be more spontaneous. In my ministry I have worked in all styles and flavours of church and I would be a liar if I said I enjoy every type of service. But what I really do enjoy is that Christ is the centre in all denominations.'



GOD'S AGENDA IS NOT DENOMINATIONAL, IT IS RELATIONAL

REV. JIM GRAHAM a long serving Baptist minister was brought up in West Scotland, where rivalry between Protestants and Catholics was a normal

part of everyday life, and it was not until he moved to England many years later that he and his wife discovered that there could be anything other than hatred between denominations. Even more of a shock was the discovery that there could be unity, understanding, and love. Having come across a local Catholic prayer group in a Catholic Convent that many of his congregation were attending he decided to drop in and cast an eye over the proceedings. He was surprised to be welcomed by "Godly people", full of warmth and love. Through this introduction into Catholic circles Jim met Charles Whitehead, and through him became involved in Celebrate. His attendance at the main conference a number of years ago left him feeling "warmly welcomed" and commented that the priest who blessed him and his wife, Anne, when they came up for a blessing at communion "prayed as if he had known us all his life". Jim and Anne continued to be involved in ecumenism and particularly in Celebrate. Jim says he's learned that "God's agenda is not denominational, it is relational". When asked if he feels things have moved on in ecumenism, Jim said: "Unquestionably", and his continued contribution to Celebrate shows his enthusiasm to keep this moving forward.



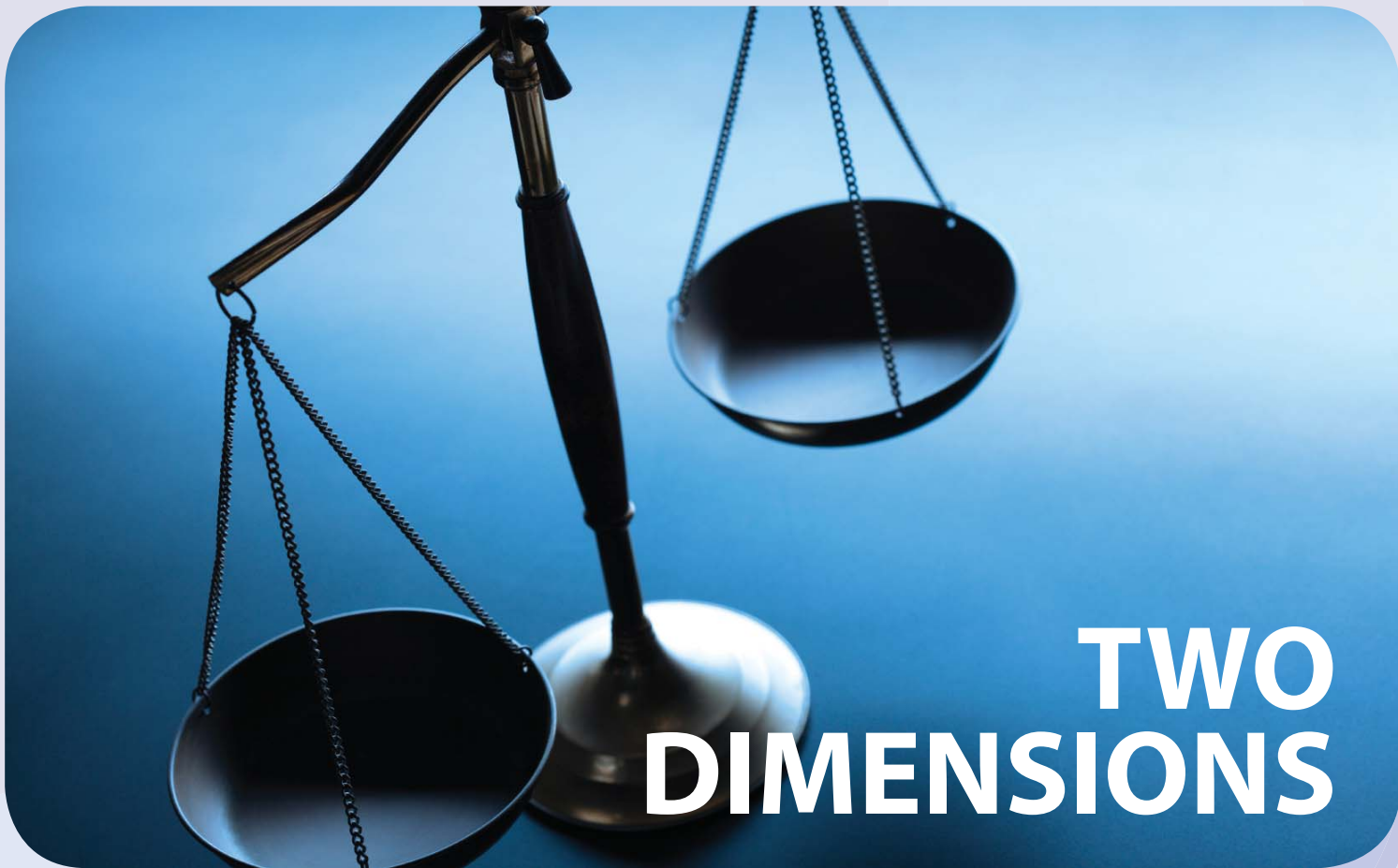
A PERSONAL NOTE FROM SUE WHITEHEAD, CO-FOUNDER OF CELEBRATE WITH HER HUSBAND CHARLES

Jim, Anne and Steve have been part of our lives for many, many years – much loved brothers and sisters in Christ. I'd like to add a few words as an Anglican - mainly about the Easter conference in Ilfracombe.

Celebrate is a real joy - a truly Catholic Conference with contributions from other members of God's family. Many of us never need to step outside our denominations in our daily walk with the Lord but at this conference we also experience riches from other traditions. We realise, sometimes for the first time, that God's children come in many shapes, sizes and confessions.

Mass is celebrated beautifully every day but during the week we also celebrate a communion service of another denomination. Everyone is invited to join us and when communion is distributed, the Catholic delegates come forward to receive a blessing, as we have done during the daily Eucharist. Very often the Holy Spirit moves very strongly at this time as we experience the pain of division in the body of Christ - a reality that exists; a brokenness that needs healing.

It has been a privilege to help organise Celebrate - a blessing to meet so many people on fire for God. The theme is always a scripture verse and based on that, Christian teachings are developed and shared. The diversity of the delegates reflects the natural mixture in families and we all learn that more unites us than divides! When we go home at the end, many of us feel that we have experienced "church" - a week of community, teaching and friendship. And above all - loving acceptance of each other.



TWO DIMENSIONS

FR CHRIS THOMAS WHO SPOKE AT THE MACCLESFIELD'S REGIONAL WEEKEND WRITES ABOUT EXPERIENCING BOTH THE CHARISMATIC AND INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS AT CELEBRATE.



I have been involved in Catholic Charismatic Renewal since I was fifteen. In 1975 the Lord invaded my life when I was least expecting it and turned me upside down. That experience took me back to Church and made my life worth living. I was catapulted into a life of

prayer and reading the Scriptures. All my free time was spent at prayer meetings and conferences as I drank in more and more of God. I was so thirsty for God and I knew that I only wanted to live for the Gospel. I was eventually ordained a Priest in 1985 and continued to be fully immersed in Charismatic Renewal.

I have never really understood Church without the charismatic dimension. The Church by its very nature is charismatic, infused and led by the Spirit of God. Without the Spirit the institution would have no life and no way of hearing the voice of God. The Church in its fullest expression is both institutional and charismatic. It can never be one or the other. The institution needs the charismatic and the charismatic needs the institution. The two should

work in harmony with one another and do so often. When you read the wonderful life-giving teaching that emerged from the Second Vatican Council and in lots of Documents since then and before then, you have to know that the presence of the Spirit is within the Church as well as beyond the Church.

AN EXPLOSION OF POWER

In that coming together of the institution and the charismatic there is an explosion of power, the kind of power that is available when people stop relying on themselves and start to rely on the Lord. It's the kind of power that transforms hearts and minds and opens people up to the living Lord. It's that kind of power that will enable the Church to become what God wants it to be. It's the kind of power that will enable the Church to be prophet and herald and servant and real community while being both authentically charismatic and institutional. At Celebrate I experience both the Charismatic and the Institutional dimension of Church.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

I talk to people whose lives have been extraordinarily blessed by God and whose awakening by the Spirit has propelled them into the centre of the Church where they work and encourage and endure all kinds of hardship for the

sake of the Gospel. I meet people who work and pray without losing heart, with young people, with those who go out on the streets to pray with people and talk about their faith. I meet people who live heroic lives of service and who don't see themselves as anything out of the ordinary. In their openness to the Spirit I sense hope for the future and that fills me with hope.

I also see the institutional church at its best in the liturgy at Celebrate. Yes it's free, with the Spirit of God leading people to praise in a liberated way with hands outstretched and singing and dancing. Yes it's anointed with the gifts of the Spirit flowing in tongues and prophecy. To some it can appear strange but there is a sense of dignity and awe that only comes when really faith filled people come together to worship God.

I have spoken at many conferences and weekends within Charismatic Renewal and have loved them all. I have spoken at many not within the confines of Renewal and they too have had their own unique quality, but for me Celebrate has a rare ability to draw together all elements of the Church and to celebrate them.

As a priest that fills me with hope for the future. It reminds me of what the Church can be. It is fantastic to see so many people working together to proclaim the Kingdom of God. The Christian Church is often pilloried in the Press and sometimes deservedly so. The Catholic Church in particular has deserved much of the criticism levelled against it in recent years. Celebrate stands as a reminder to me that in the words of Julian of Norwich, 'All shall be well, all manner of things shall be well'.

"I AM NOT A CHARISMATIC!"

HELEN SUMMERS shares the experience of having her faith reignited

I am 47 years old, married to Andy, and have three children. Over the years my faith has been found, lost, rediscovered, neglected and had a fire set under it occasionally. The strains of life have often distracted me from my hope and trust in God, and I have often found myself feeling cynical and doubtful.

My husband, was a convert to Catholicism, and came to his faith through the Charismatic Renewal. My renewal of faith also came through relationship with people who were actively involved in Charismatic Renewal. But I cannot call myself a 'charismatic'. I am drawn by the power and joy of the style of music, prayer and worship, and have been deeply impacted by some of the teaching and example of life I have experienced from this part of the church. But there has always been a part of me that is afraid of what I don't understand – the speaking or singing in tongues, for example. I have often asked God to give me that gift, so I could stop

being suspicious and nervous of it, but it doesn't seem to be the right approach!

So, as you may imagine, I ventured off to the 2011 Macclesfield Celebrate with my husband and daughter Elizabeth, carrying plenty of conflicting emotions – wanting to find ways of deepening my relationship with God, but feeling that I wouldn't quite 'fit in'. I was also a little worried for Elizabeth (aged 9), who is quite shy and gets anxious about new situations. This latter worry was quickly dispelled. The overwhelming warmth and joy of the team running Elizabeth's 'stream' just drew her in, wrapped her up and gave her such a wonderful experience of God's love. She responded with her own abundant love and joy, and the sight of her taking part in the shared worship times over the weekend was so moving. As for myself, I decided to just keep my heart and mind open to everything on offer!



Though it took a while for me to relax into the weekend, I did experience another 'relighting' of the fire of faith. Some of the talks were profoundly moving, and caused a shift deep in the core of my understanding of God. Despite my reluctance, I even found myself raising my hands to join in the shared worship at times! I didn't feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. On the contrary, I felt very much accepted for who I am, and found comfort and inspiration from being part of a very diverse group of people all on their own unique journeys.

So, my advice to anyone wondering whether to go to the next conference is – just try it and see – you have nothing to lose, but much to gain!

WHAT THE CHURCH OF NOW SAY...

ERIN went to St Albans Celebrate for the first time 'I had heard a lot about it so had high expectations for the weekend and it was even **better than I expected!** The stream leaders were inspirational and fun. I especially loved that we did a lot of worship with the live band. Most of all I **loved that I could just be myself.** At the end of Saturday evening, we had Adoration and the opportunity to be prayed for, this gave us a chance to reflect on everything that had happened that day. **The weekend had a huge impact on me and strengthened my faith.** One quote that has stuck with me from the weekend is 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' My weekend at Celebrate has helped my belief that I can.'

HANNAH who is seventeen said 'I've been to every St Albans Celebrate and the larger Celebrate in Ilfracombe has been part of my life since the age of eight. I've **always loved coming to these events.** For the past two years, I've been in the Impact stream. This year the talks focused on believing YOU are called by God. I didn't really understand what that meant for me until I heard a great talk that explained it in practical terms as being all about our life choices and the need to know our own identity. The weekend was brilliant with chances for prayer ministry and a lot of good worship, ending with **the best bit of every Celebrate for me – the huge final Mass.** My sister and I brought five extra people between us this year and they really enjoyed it. It's been a real influence on my faith and I can honestly say that **I wouldn't miss it for the world.**'

Eighteen year old **AARON** explains 'Celebrate has been a **huge inspiration to my life and my faith.** I was privileged to have been brought to the first conference week in Ilfracombe 18 years ago. Every year I leave with a closer relationship with my friends and more experience of the Holy Spirit. I am incredibly grateful for what Celebrate has given me and it's been at the centre of my growth towards a personal relationship with God. I honestly have no idea where I would be now without it and **I can't wait to come back each year.**'

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE YOUTH?

EVERY YEAR LARGE NUMBERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ATTEND CELEBRATE. IN 2011 ST ALBANS CELEBRATE REGIONAL WEEKEND HAD 200 UNDER 18'S IN THEIR FIVE YOUTH STREAMS. A QUARTER OF THEM WERE IN THE 16YEAR+ STREAM, 'IMPACT' LED BY LOCAL PARISH YOUTH WORKER, **PETE EMMOTT.** HE SPOKE TO US ABOUT WHAT HE THINKS IS THE REASON SO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE LOVE TO COME TO CELEBRATE.

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN CELEBRATE?

I have been in youth work for 14 years, originally as a volunteer, then trained as a youth worker and have now spent 6 years in parish youth ministry. When I left school I was doing a totally different job but I had a bizarre change of career as I started work with a firm of stockbrokers! Eventually I realised I had a gift and God called me into a vocation to serve young people. I was brought up as a Catholic; I have always had a love of the Church, Catholic theology, Mass, and particularly the Eucharist.

I came across the Celebrate youth streams at Ilfracombe and I was inspired by the team 'Cross Purposes'. They were so creative and put in so much time and effort, they lovingly and prayerfully prepared to help the young people engage with what was being taught.

WHY DO YOU THINK CELEBRATE WORKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

It allows them to celebrate Church in their own way. They are given opportunity to hear from others, positive experiences, testimonies, times of sharing and make friends. Many of the young people don't have other committed Catholic friends so being with people who believe really helps them to know they are not alone.

At Celebrate we always have a stream Mass as well as one with the main conference and they are encouraged to be involved by preparing something to share or the readings. We also have beautiful times of reflection in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Surprisingly it doesn't take long for them to be comfortable, to engage with worship and listen to the speakers and we see a hunger in them to meet with God.

There are many temptations placed before you every day—drugs, money, sex, pornography, alcohol—which the world tells you will bring you happiness, yet these things are destructive and divisive. There is only one thing which lasts: the love of Jesus Christ personally for each one of you.

Message to young people from Pope Benedict XVI, Bellahouston Park, Scotland

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY GO HOME?

We encourage the youth to show commitment to their parishes and help them see they have been planted in parish for a reason. We are honest and explain that it's not easy, but the more they read their Bible, stay attentive at Church and the celebration of the Sacraments, listen to worship music, they will build on what they have been given. We put them in touch with other events and promote the idea of keeping in touch with each other. We challenge them to be a witness knowing that God has a plan for their lives and explain it's not about what we can get, it's about what we have to offer and learning how to be faithful. Coming to Celebrate is a good way for parish youth groups to bond and learn together.

WHAT IS YOUR HOPE FOR THESE YOUNG PEOPLE?

That we as the Church can offer good input on leadership and that we would really mentor them. My hope is that we would not miss the opportunity to be a vehicle of discipleship and encourage them in taking realistic active roles. There is no doubt they need strong support, young people live extremely hectic lives and have to cope with many cultural struggles. I want to see the Gospel presented in a relevant way to young people, teaching them life is measured not in what you do, but on what happened on the Cross, which is bigger, stronger, more faithful than many of the experiences they are being offered by the world today. That the good news of Jesus is the only thing you can truly rely on.

What Celebrate offers is not just words; it demonstrates how the Spirit is outwardly working in the Church. It recognises that Church is not always brilliant, it's messy, but it's about celebration, community and is our vehicle for making the world a better place. Celebrate allows people, young and old, to experience the move of the Spirit in the Church in a friendly, joyful, community focused way.

Many say that young people are the Church of the future, but I believe they are the Church of NOW, and I am excited to see what God is doing NOW!

THE CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

AT THE HEART OF THE CHURCH

People often wonder what exactly the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is, and worry about whether the Church has really accepted it and where it fits in. Let me make it clear that I am personally convinced there is nothing to compare with being part of this mighty move of the Holy Spirit. It's exciting, rewarding, challenging, stimulating, and fulfilling in equal measure. You will have gathered that I'm an enthusiast, but I hope I'm also a realist. I'm always seeking a better understanding of what the Holy Spirit is doing, how this Renewal fits into the life of the Church, its particular call today, the effects it has, and how I can remain open to whatever the Lord has in store for tomorrow. It's now 36 years since I first surrendered my life to Jesus, praying that he would release the power of his Holy Spirit to equip and guide me in my Christian life day after day. The complete transformation I experienced then has led me to believe that this grace of Pentecostal refreshment will bless and transform every Christian man and woman. We are to receive it enthusiastically and live it out spiritually and practically day by day. Am I right? Let's look at what the Catholic Charismatic Renewal really is and at what the Church has to say about it.

A SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD

No grass-roots movement in the Church has ever travelled as fast or as far as this one. It was and remains unlike any other movement in the life of the Church, for there is no inspired human founder, no universal programmes of initiation or formation. It is simply, powerfully and uniquely a sovereign work of God whereby he touches the lives of men and women in many different settings and circumstances through his Holy Spirit, bringing new faith and setting them on fire with a love and zeal to serve him and his people in new ways. In the words of the late Cardinal Suenens: *"To interpret the Renewal as a movement among other movements is to misunderstand its nature; it is a movement of the Spirit offered to the entire Church and destined to rejuvenate every part of the Church's life. The soul of Renewal, Baptism in the Spirit, is a grace of Pentecostal refreshment offered to all Christians"*.

A PARTICULAR CHANNEL OF GRACE

We Catholics often have difficulty receiving God's grace – we feel we must somehow earn or deserve whatever God gives us. But by describing the Charismatic Renewal as a grace of Pentecostal refreshment, Cardinal Suenens meant that it's a particular channel of grace freely given to individual men and women to bring alive the power of the Holy Spirit they received at their baptism and confirmation. Those who have experienced the new life it brings are called to promote a personal openness to this grace, a lively renewal of individual faith, and a more radical commitment to the Church and her mission to evangelise. The aims of those involved in the Charismatic Renewal are one and the same as the objectives of the Church – the conversion, sanctification and salvation of every single human being. *Our distinctive characteristic is an understanding that the role of the Holy Spirit in this work has not changed since the Day of Pentecost, and that we can experience his outpouring, his power and his gifts in the very same way they were experienced and recognised by the early Christians.* The proof of the authenticity of all this depends primarily on a study of its effects in people's lives, for its aim is not to provide religious experiences but to help people live renewed and more effective Christian lives. Whilst emphasising the essential role of the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal remains Christ-centred, clearly proclaiming Jesus as Saviour and Lord of all, and teaching that to know him is man's only path to true fulfilment and peace. This is accompanied by the realisation that we are children of a loving Father who wants us to turn to him and receive his love. Our renewed life is then to be lived out in the community of the Church and to be carried forth into the world.

AT THE HEART OF THE CHURCH

In all of this, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal owes much to the inspiration, example and encouragement of many Christians in Protestant and Pentecostal churches who had already experienced this same grace in their own settings. Whilst the context, the out-

working, and the responsibilities are clearly different for Catholics, the grace received is the same. So whilst the ecumenical beginnings must never be disregarded, it was always to be expected that the Charismatic Renewal would find its own place and identity in the life of the Catholic Church, bringing with it a call to seek a continuing outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a radical conversion to Jesus Christ for every Catholic. Its place at the heart of the Church has been secured through the warm welcome of successive Popes. Pope Paul VI described it in 1975 as *"a chance for the Church and the world"*, and Pope John Paul II expressed his personal support on numerous public occasions. On January 22nd 1987 he spoke about it as *"a grace directed to sanctify the Church, to renew in her a taste for prayer, to rediscover with the Holy Spirit the sense of freedom, of joyful praise, of confidence in intercession, and to be converted into a new fountain of evangelisation"*. On May 11th 2008 Pope Benedict XVI publicly challenged the whole Church to rediscover what it means to be baptised in the Holy Spirit: *"Today I would like to extend this invitation to everyone: let us rediscover, dear brothers and sisters, the beauty of being baptised in the Holy Spirit; let us be aware of our baptism and confirmation, sources of grace that are always present"*. So the hierarchy recognises the need for a strong charismatic dimension in the life of the Church, and fully understands that a renewed life in the Spirit is the gift brought by the Charismatic Renewal. It is not, therefore, some strange fringe organisation with a private agenda, but an accepted, approved and fruitful current of new life at the very heart of the Church, bringing new spiritual power to ordinary Catholics. My prayer is that you, like millions of Catholics all over the world, will open your heart to the Holy Spirit of Jesus, so that he can bless, encourage and help you to live your Christian life more effectively in his love and power, to the glory of God the Father.

© CHARLES WHITEHEAD
CELEBRATE CHAIRMAN

HOW TO BOOK

For all information and to download booking forms see www.celebrateconference.org

Celebrate Ilfracombe runs for one week from Easter Sunday evening until the following Saturday contact info@celebrateconference.org

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Watch out for new locations coming in 2013!

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