

Resurrexit - A History

by Jerry Carbery

Early Vision

Early in 1979, a friend of ours, John Peters, had a chance meeting, in a library, with Fr Jack Finnegan. Fr Jack told him about an upcoming meeting of leaders of charismatic prayer groups from Co Kildare and surrounding counties to be held in the convent school in Kildare town.

Fr Jack asked John to pass on the information to the Athy prayer group, which he did. I was asked by the members to represent them at this meeting. There were about 25 people present at the meeting. It was led by Fr Jack and Jim Cogley, who was then studying for the priesthood at the seminary in Maynooth.

This was the second meeting of this group, the first was held in the Cross and Passion Convent, Kilcullen, on March 12th 1979.

The original call for these meetings came in 1977 when Fr Jack Finnegan was praying in Guirt Mhuire in Dublin with some friends. They were given a visual image of a number of stone pillars, standing apart from each other, in marshy ground, and they were led to read Isaiah chapter 40, verses three to five:

*A voice cries, "prepare in the wilderness a way for Yahweh.
Make a straight highway for our God across the desert.
Let every valley be filled in,
Every mountain and hill be laid low
Let every cliff become a plain,
And the ridges a valley;
Then the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed
And all mankind shall see it ;
For the mouth of Yahweh has spoken"*

The discernment was that they were being asked to bring the apostolic groups in Maynooth Parish together. So they set out to do this, with the help of then Maynooth chaplain Fr Pat Egan.

But after a while they realised their efforts were not succeeding, and decided that this was not what the Lord was asking of them.

Bog of Allen

Some time later, Fr Jack and Jim Cogley were asked to give a talk to a newly formed Charismatic prayer group in Dunboyne. On their way home, they became aware that the countryside around them was "marshy ground". They remembered the original vision from the meeting in Guirt Mhuire and realised they were being asked to come and talk to newly formed charismatic prayer groups in and surrounding the Bog of Allen. They concluded the prayer groups were the "stone pillars standing apart from each other in marshy ground", and that their task was to join them with a "straight highway for our God".

So after a time of reflection with some prayer group leaders in the John of God convent in Edenderry, they decided to call the leaders of prayer meetings around the Bog of Allen, to the first meeting in Kilcullen, as mentioned previously, of the "Allen Leaders' Group".

This group had leaders from prayer groups in Abbeylaxey, Athy, Baltinglass, Bagenalstown, Carlow, Castledermot, Clane, Clondalkin, Dunlavin, Edenderry, Enfield, Kilcock, Kilcullen, Kildare, Leighlinbridge, Monasterevin, Maynooth, Mountmellick, Naas, Newbridge, Portarlinton, Portlaoise, Rathangan, Rathdowney, Stradbally and Mountrath.

The "days of renewal" and meetings were held in different towns. This was the time of the renewal of the charismatic gifts in the Christian churches in Ireland. The Spirit, as always, "blowing where the Spirit wills", was encouraging the formation of "Charismatic Renewal Prayer Groups" in various places.

Very few people involved in the leadership of groups, were fully aware of how best to welcome and use these re-emerging charismatic gifts, and so these meetings facilitated the appropriate teaching for that time, and the opportunity to encourage and to share with each other.

A core group emerged from these gatherings, and they met on a regular basis in Arthur and Ger Burke's house in Newbridge. These meetings always started with times of praising God with the gift of tongues (vocal contemplation), times of silent contemplation, sharing of scripture, of mental images and their interpretation. We prayed for healing for each other, and we were always encouraged by the gift of teaching given to us by Fr Jack.

It was after this time of prayer and ministry, that we decided on the organising of days of renewal, retreats, healing services etc. And of course lifelong friendships were made.

I can still remember the great excitement and energy around the weekend retreats in Bray, the Dominicans in Tallaght, and Mount St. Anne's in Portarlinton, all under the encouraging guidance of Jack and Jim.

Days of renewal

In 1980 we organised what we called "A School House Of Prayer", held one day a week for seven weeks in Mount St. Anne's Retreat centre. There were 81 of us involved, and through teaching and group work, we explored all forms of prayer, liturgical celebrations and scripture.

We held regular "days of renewal", mainly in school halls and parish halls. These gatherings started with a time of praising God through song and the gift of tongues, interspersed with inspired verbal and visual sharings. After this we had a teaching, mainly given by Fr. Jack. We also had outside speakers on a regular basis. The day generally finished with the celebration of the Eucharist, and prayers for healing.

We taped a lot of the talks given over the years, and the following is an extract from a talk given by Fr Jack in Portarlinton, which always inspires me;

*"Praise is entering into the flow of love between the Father and the Son.
 Praise is an everytime form of prayer.
 Praise is directing my will towards God.
 Praise is surrender to God.
 When praise is gone, we are no longer looking at Him our goal.
 Praise is contemplation spoken out.
 The reason for praise is God, His reality.
 Praise is immersing myself in His love.
 Praise is my sole response against my own weakness.*

*We can thank him for His works, but face to face we can only praise Him.
 Praise is the song of the redeemed.
 Give glory to God by accepting His forgiveness.
 Praise is standing firm in the victory of Christ.
 Every renewal in the church, brings us face to face with praise.
 Praise is a gift.
 We seek God through praise.
 How do I lift up the barrier of my weakness – through praise.
 Praise is not the noise, it is the acknowledgement.
 Praise wants to share, praise is contagious
 In brokenness we experience ourselves being healed (through praise).
 Praise is a decision."*

Place of our own

Around 1985 we decided we would benefit by having a place of our own in which to hold meetings. So we advertised in the daily papers, for a place to rent. We followed up on the replies, even looking at a house in Gorey, but found nothing suitable.

It was shortly after this that John Dempsey died. John lived in what is now called "Resurrexit" but was then a cottage with three rooms. He was the father of Myles Dempsey, who was the leader of a charismatic community in England. In his will, John left his house to Myles's daughter Ronnie, who in turn very generously offered it to us as a permanent place for our meetings. And so started a new phase of our journey in faith.

We, the "Allen leaders' group", now found ourselves in the parish of Allen, in the middle of the "Bog of Allen". We formed a charity trust in 1988, calling it "The Oremus Trust". Its aims are to "own, develop and maintain the premises and property for Christian development, and for use as a place of prayer; to promote Christian and human development". We called the house Resurrexit, meaning "He is risen."

The "Leaders' meetings were held on Saturday evenings, and the local Charismatic renewal prayer meetings were held on Wednesday evenings. A weekly prayer meeting for young people started in 1989, and they met with other youth groups on a regular basis. It was around this time that Sr. Briege Mc Kenna came to Resurrexit for a day, and was part of a healing service we held in Allen Parish Church. We have continued with this healing service, once a month, since then.

Each week Nicholas and Maureen Keary would write "The Resurrexit News", and send a copy to the prayergroup leaders. This newssheet contained the scripture readings that had been shared at the meeting, as well as any "words of knowledge" or "pictures" that were shared. It finished with a summary of what they discerned the Spirit was saying through the meeting.

"Life in the Spirit" seminars were very much part of the initiation experience for those of us involved in the Charismatic renewal. Because Resurrexit at this time had only a kitchen and two bedrooms, we asked permission from the parish priest of Allen, Fr. O Reilly, to hold these seminars in Allen Parish Church. Probably about 70 people from the surrounding area attended the seven nights, and some continued to come to Resurrexit afterwards and become very much part of the life there. God was blessing us in a special way during these years giving us an experience of His love and of His presence within each one of us.

Benefactors

Around this time we decided to form the Resurrexit Community. Some members have since died, some have left, new people have joined, and some of the original group are still with us.

We also realised that our toilet facilities were not as they should be, and Arthur Burke drew up drawings that would enable us to put in a septic tank etc. We had a couple of hundred pounds in our bank account, and had no idea where the money for the work would come from.

Suddenly a man started to call at my door, and later at the door of our treasurer, Mairead Tiernan, with a plastic bag containing bundles of notes totalling in value from two to three thousand pounds. We decided that we were being asked to continue with the instillation of the septic tank, and to build the extension that was badly needed.

We engaged an architect, got planning permission, and as we started to build, the bundles of money continued to be handed in., and we still have no idea of the identity of that man or men.

The total amount we received came to approximately £120,000, and that was enough to complete all the work. We are very grateful to our benefactor(s), and we continue to pray for them. We are also grateful to our neighbours, the Walsh family, who gave us some land to accommodate the septic tank. The extension is just right for the work we think we are being called to do, The extension was opened and blessed by Bishop Ryan.

Today when I sit in one of the white plastic seats in the main hall of Resurrexit, I am reminded of one of the many "coincidences" that have happened us when we went about doing what we discerned was God's will.

During the seminars in Allen Church, we created a wide space down the centre aisle by pushing the seats out to the side walls. In this larger area we could then arrange for sharing groups to sit on chairs in small circles during part of the evening. Each week, on the evening of the seminar, we borrowed chairs from a club in Athy, and returned them the following morning. My wife Mary and I decided to find out the

cost of buying new chairs. As the lowest price was £300, and as the group had very little money, we dropped the idea.

On the next seminar night, as I was unloading the borrowed chairs with one of the group, I told him about pricing the new chairs. He stood with a smile on his face, and said to me that himself and his wife had decided the previous night, that as they had some spare money, they would give it to me to spend on the work of Resurrexit. As he took out an envelope from his back pocket, and handed it to me, he said “ you will find £300 in this”. And that is how we got the white seats in Resurrexit.

We have continued to experience marvellous blessings over the years, as we try to say yes to what we think The Spirit is asking us to do.

Sincerely,

Jerry Carbery

A member of the Resurrexit Community.