



B.C. Charismatic

Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services of B.C. newsletter Fall 2022

Sharing the Spirit

CHARIS calls us to restore the Catholic charismatic mission

By RICHARD DUNSTAN
chair, CCRS of BC

Question: Why was the Holy Spirit poured out on the Apostles on the first Pentecost?

(Hint: It wasn't just to form a prayer group.)

Jesus actually gave them the explanation in advance: "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8).

Pope Francis has read that verse, too. That's one reason he created CHARIS, the new (very much "work in progress") structure for the Catholic charismatic renewal.

Here's what he said to charismatic leaders in the 2014 speech which led to the formation of CHARIS:

"I expect you to share with everyone in the Church the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

"I expect you to evangelize with the word of God, which proclaims that Jesus lives and that He loves all men and women.

"To give a witness of spiritual ecumenism to all our brothers and sisters of other Churches and Christian communities who believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

"To be close to the poor and to those in need, so as to touch in their flesh the wounded flesh of Jesus."

Hmmm. Sounds like a lot more than your average prayer meeting.

The Catholic charismatic renewal has been accepted in the Church for more than 50 years, but it hasn't exactly been front and centre. Most often, our pastors know us as a group of good,

loyal Catholics who meet once a week in the church basement, for an unfamiliar form of prayer. We serve our own membership, we welcome any newcomers who happen to drop by, and most of us are involved in parish life in other ways as well. And usually, that's about it.

How is CHARIS going to improve on that picture? In two major ways.

First of all, for decades now, the renewal has been a "private pontifical association"—fully approved, but still just one Catholic movement among many. Now CHARIS has been given a "public juridical personality," or in normal English, it will be an actual arm of the Church, in the service of the Pope, and acting, in the Pope's words,

as "a current of grace for the whole Church."

Secondly, there's a lot more to the Catholic charismatic renewal than prayer groups, and CHARIS is intended to combine all those "expressions and realities": covenant communities, youth ministries (and actual youth representatives), schools of evangelization, Bible colleges, publishing houses, religious communities, ethnic organizations—any group that has its roots in baptism in the Holy Spirit and wishes to be a part of CHARIS. In the words of Brian Sullivan, co-ordinator of the newly-established CHARIS National Service of Communion for Canada, it will be "all hands on deck working together preparing the Church to embrace her call." (*continued on Page 8*)

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Exulting again in Kelowna

“Who rejoices during the time of pandemic? Only the charismatic renewal!”

—*Father Obi Ibekwe, August 2022*

“Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory” (Revelation 19:7) was the scripture for the 14th Our Lady of Pentecost Gathering in the Spirit Aug. 7-12 in Kelowna, and more than 30 participants took the Bible literally as they gathered in person at St. Elizabeth Seton House of Prayer for the first time in three years.

It was indeed a time of rejoicing—for the fellowship, for the success of overcoming not only two years of covid but last-minute cancellations, and especially for the presence of Jesus in our midst.

Theme for the gathering was The Light of God’s Glory, and attendees from across BC and even out of province gathered under a tent on the lawn for praise and worship. All events were held at Seton House except for a healing Mass at St. Charles Garnier parish.

Scheduled speaker Father Peter Sanders was forced to cancel six weeks before the gathering due to surgery. Local speakers stepped up: Father Obi (Sylvester) Ibekwe, bishop’s liaison to the charismatic renewal, took over half of the eight scheduled talks, with Father Gerald Sekanga taking two and Deacon Peter d’Aoust and Deacon Rod Attwell one each. Lynne Williams was co-ordinator for the event, with Maria McManus as co-coordinator and registrar, Loree Renwick as chair of the sponsoring body, Nelson Diocesan Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services; Roy MacIntyre leading music ministry, Maureen Watson and Marcia Lawrence word gift, and Gladys Miller and Richard Dunstan as emcees.

Father Gerald covered God’s glory, and rejoicing in God, in his talks (**see page 3**), while Father Obi, Deacon Rod and Deacon Peter all spoke about how to rejoice in difficult or tragic circumstances.

Father Obi noted that the “rejoice and exult” text comes from Revelation, written at a time of great suffering in the Church.

“The book of Revelation becomes the final shout of praise of the people of God,” he said.

“We come this week, side by side with the first century Christians.”

Praise, he said, is the opposite of complaining, and brings the opposite results. Look no further than the ancient Israelites, who complained all the way to the Promised Land.

“What should have taken a few days took them 40 years,” Father Obi said.

“When we complain, we complain our way to defeat. When we praise, we praise

our way to victory.”

But none of this, he said, is any guarantee we will always be in the mood for praise. Frustration, sorrow and tragedy are real.

“There are days when you feel like crying, not for just one hour, but all day long. Those days do come. If they do not come today, they will come tomorrow.”

Father Obi, Deacon Rod, and Deacon Peter all took on the challenge of personal suffering in their talks. Most of us aren’t ready for that, Deacon Peter said. He said most of us have lived our lives in “unnaturally prosperous times. We’re always surprised when bad things happen to us. Jesus says ‘take up your cross’—but do we? Yet He raced toward the cross.”

Deacon Peter said he had to begin a second time when he was preparing his talk.

“When I started to write this I realized it was all pious platitudes,” he said. Like the Footprints poem, or “all things work together for good.” Those are both true, he said, but too often we use them to defuse other people’s pain. We need to confront our own ‘my God, my God, why have You forsaken me?’”

In times of tragedy, he said, we are powerless, and if we try to paper over our suffering, we can end up doubting God’s very existence. He said we shouldn’t try to “pray it away.” We can ask God to take it away, but we also need to enter fully into our suffering, talk to God honestly, and allow the Holy Spirit to change our perspective so we’re no longer turned in on ourselves. God’s work in our lives is often hidden: we need to be patient.

(continued on Page 5)

Gathering in the Spirit

Where to find God's glory

"Let us rejoice and exult and give Him glory." (Revelation 19:7)

The glory of God is hard to describe, Father Gerald Sekanga told Our Lady of Pentecost Gathering in the Spirit, but it's easy to find. And we have a long list of reasons to exult.

Father Gerald, pastor of St. Pius X parish in Kelowna, was one of four speakers at the gathering. (See also main story, **page 2**)

Fr. Gerald titled his first talk What Is Glory? He noted that in Moses, after all he had seen from God, still asked "show me Your glory." (Exodus 33:18). We're a lot like Moses, he said. "God has showed us His glory, but how do we explain it to others? I think that is the sign of the Christian faith: 'as much as the ways You reveal Yourself to me, I'll communicate that, but I still want more.'"

He said it's the work of the Holy Spirit to teach us to perceive the glory of God. "To see the manifestations of God's glory, we need to tap into the life of the Spirit."

Top of the list of manifestations is a person: Jesus Himself. "We keep asking for more manifestations of God's glory because we have forgotten that truth. If you want to know God, you have to fall in love with a Jewish carpenter who was born in a barn and died on a cross. Jesus didn't say 'I show you the way.' He said 'I *am* the way.'"

Glory also shows in gratitude and thanksgiving. "You can see the glory of God on people who give thanks to God and don't complain. The heart that is not grateful cannot see the glimpse of God's radiant light."

His glory is also visible in transformation—of ourselves, and in our reconciliation with others. Abba Apollo, an ancient desert father, said the devil looks just like the rest of us, except that he has no knees, and cannot kneel in prayer or repentance. "We have knees for a reason—to transform ourselves," Father Gerald said.

Above all, God's glory may be seen in his infinite, unmerited love for us. "God's passion has always been to adopt you," Father Gerald said. "God wants you to be like Jesus. We think that there are things I have to do to get me there. It is what *He* does *in* you, not what *you* do. Christ gives us divine life, not

because He knows where it is, but because He *is* where it is."

And that, in turn, leads to Father Gerald's second talk: Let Us Rejoice. Again, there are so many reasons.

Jesus tells us in Luke 10:20, "rejoice that your names are written in heaven." "You're more than just a name or a face in the crowd," Father Gerald said.

We may rejoice, too, that He feeds us His very self in the Eucharist. We need to take the Eucharist more seriously in our Western world, with an abundance of parishes Masses, Father Gerald said. In many places, such as outstations of enormous African parishes, people may receive the Eucharist once every six months, and if the priest is late—as can easily happen—people will wait all day. "We should receive it like our life depends on it."

We should rejoice that we share in Jesus' crucifixion, and can join our suffering to His. "You bring your own 'yes' and graft that onto the cross of Christ," Father Gerald said, quoting Pope Benedict XVI.

We may rejoice that Christ will come again, and complete the ultimate turning of the tables. Jesus gave His life for slaves, and will wait on them at table in the heavenly banquet (Luke 12:37). Meanwhile, we're already there at the Mass: "a slave can come every day to the table of the Master."

We rejoice because Jesus forgives our sins. "God is mercy within mercy within mercy," Father Gerald said, quoting the motto Archbishop Donald Bolen of Regina took from Thomas Merton.

And most of all, we rejoice in our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Father Gerald asked the congregation to imagine if somebody told you that your furnace repairman was God. Jesus is just that ordinary, he said; "you couldn't tell Him from a few people in the village. Thanks be to God for that man—born in simplicity, died in simplicity. Thanks be to God for the ordinary Jesus Christ.

"I can relate to that guy. He's my guy!"

All eight talks from the Gathering in the Spirit are accessible on the Nelson diocesan charismatic website, <https://www.holyspiritbaptizer.com/gathering-in-the-spirit>

No more make-believe Christians!

We need to make a difference, says Summerland speaker

A good Christian should stand out like a sore thumb, says Father Trevor Nathasingh.

Just going to church, and doing nothing else, is make-believe Christianity, he told the annual Nelson diocese charismatic conference April 29 and 30 in Summerland. Christians need to be out in the world making a difference. And they need to *be* different from the world around them.

“Peter says we are supposed to be a peculiar people,” he said, citing 1 Peter 2:9 (KJV; NRSV “God’s own people.”) “Christians are not supposed to fit into the world. Christians are supposed to be a sore thumb.... People of darkness are not afraid to show their darkness. We are supposed to let our holy light shine.”

Father Trevor, from Trinidad, converted to Catholicism from a Muslim-Hindu background when he was drawn into a charismatic prayer meeting while walking past a church. He is founder and spiritual director of Franciscan House of Prayer lay community in Trinidad, and has a worldwide preaching ministry. The Summerland conference was the first in-person conference in the Nelson diocese since 2019, due to the covid pandemic. About 75 attended.

Theme for the conference was Jesus, the River of Life, based on Rev. 22:1-2. Father Trevor said we have been given the water of life through the Holy Spirit, but “the water of life that has come to us is not for ourselves. God nourishes us so that we can nourish others. You are meant to bring hope to the world.”

Seldom, he said, has the world needed hope more, but not enough Christians are paying attention. “We live in a time of spiritual war, but we act as if it were a time of peace. We are always being seduced into believing

that all is well, when the danger is right at the door.”

“People in the Catholic charismatic renewal cannot stand aside and only go to prayer groups. We need to get involved in the mess of the world. We have the power to clean it up. It isn’t social work—it’s spiritual transformation.”

The power, he said, comes from the Holy Spirit and from the Eucharist. But

Catholics have been guilty of reducing their faith to ritual, and the troubles plaguing the Church today are God’s judgment on that.

“We are so concerned about what’s happening on the altar that we forget what happens on the altar is supposed to influence the world,” he said. “The Church is more than the altar. Without the altar we would lack the power, but we need to go somewhere with that power. We have God’s power but believe and act as if we had none. The world needs the truth of the Roman Catholic Church, but first you have to believe it.”

In his sermon at the closing Mass, he asked how many people in the Western world would be willing to die for their faith as Christians did in the book of Revelation. “We aren’t challenged now,” he said, “but don’t ever think that day will never come to Canada. It may come sooner than you think.”

He said we should all be as visibly Catholic as possible—wearing crucifixes, for example, or making the sign of the cross as we say grace in restaurants.

“Very often God puts someone in your path that you can share the good news with,” he said. “Make sure people meet joy and life in you, and then tell them the reason.”

In particular, he said, every Catholic has the duty to seek out fallen-away Catholics and invite them back in, feeding them spiritually. “People don’t hate the Church, but they are leaving because we aren’t meeting their needs.”

Nelson conference

Leaders learn to draw close to God

By **MARCIA LAWRENCE**

The annual leaders' retreat, serving the Nelson diocese, was held once more on the spacious grounds of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton House above sunny Kelowna, Sept. 23 and 24.

Prayer leaders from the interior and southern regions of the province were in attendance. Father Sylvester (Obi) Ibekwe, pastor of the parishes of St. Ann's and St. John Vianney in Penticton, was our speaker and spiritual director for the two day session, assisted by Father Marcel Côté, who resides at Seton House.

In Father Sylvester's talks we heard that all people should know, "We are completely dependent on Jesus Christ" and "That's why He made me (us) to remain in Him." Salvation lies in constant contact with the Lord. Father further pointed out that Jesus' "secret" was that "Even Jesus was dependent on the Father." "The Father and I are one" John 10:30.

Some of our "tools" for allowing God to draw us close and continually abiding in Him are as follows: As Blessed Carlo Acutis said, "The Eucharist is my highway to heaven"; morning prayer, which Father referred to as "an antiseptic for the day"; and prayer time which includes silence, wherein we receive life-giving joy, peace and an awareness that Jesus is "friend." Keeping in touch with Jesus ensures that our crosses will not diminish our joy.

This relationship with God requires our response to be "count me in" when He asks us to go on mission. We are all privileged members of the household of God, allowed to enter into His presence and partners in the work of salvation.

"There is redemptive power in love" and it enables us to speak God's words into other people's hearts because it is the Spirit who is speaking those words.

We thank Fr. Sylvester and Fr. Marcel for shepherding the "flock" so capably and giving us wisdom and insight to bring renewal in our own lives and to equip us to share with others. Amen.

GATHERING IN THE SPIRIT: REJOICE AND EXULT

(Continued from Page 2)

Deacon Rod had the congregation breathless with attention as he laid out the story of how he and his wife embraced the tragedy of a stillborn child, in the power of Jesus' love. The love of Jesus, he said, is the foundation of the entire Christian life. "Saints didn't become saints because they followed the rules," he said. "They became saints because they encountered the love of Christ and allowed that love to shape their hearts. We can't exult and rejoice if we haven't encountered the living Christ."

"The crosses in your life may not go away," Deacon Rod said, "but they will be transformed into the abundant wine of Christ's love."

Father Obi gave an inside account of a story everyone had read in the news last year. Sacred Heart, the church burned on the Penticton Indian Band reserve June 21, 2021, was part of his own Penticton parish.

The church caught fire around 1 a.m., one of several BC churches burned last summer following the discovery of unmarked graves in Kamloops and at other residential school sites. Awakened by the news, Father Obi hurried to the site and tried to get to the tabernacle, but the firefighters would not let him get close enough.

At 11 that evening, exhausted from emotion and lack of sleep, he wondered how he would face the next day's Mass. "I cried that day like I never did before." Then he felt Jesus telling him to go back to the ruins. He took the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance from his church in Penticton. "I drove off with our Lord. I blessed the place and the people on the reserve."

Back home, God showed him Psalm 90 ("LORD, You have been our dwelling-place in all generations.") "The Lord gave me some light that night." He was cheerful at Mass that morning.

PROPHETIC WORDS FROM GATHERING IN THE SPIRIT

(Prophetic words received during Our Lady of Pentecost Gathering in the Spirit in August. See also Pages 2 and 3.)

These dry bones are going to dance. Expect great things from the dry bones that dance.

There's a tapestry. Each one of us is one of the colours of the thread and we're being woven into this beautiful tapestry, and the tapestry is Jesus.

Jesus said, "I am all you need. If you stay focused on Me nothing will go wrong."

I see Jesus from behind and He is standing with His arms outstretched; and in front of Him there are many, many people laying on mats. They are all in need of healing. I have a sense that He is interceding with the Father. And the light of God's glory is bright and flooding over all the people.

I have an image of a very large cross...about 30 feet tall. Jesus is nailed to this cross with heavy, large spikes. In the background I see a big fire raging down the mountainside, destroying everything in its path. The fire is hot and the smoke forms billowing clouds as it moves toward the cross. Jesus is not dead. He is alive; He opens His eyes and looks directly into mine, and with a strong, clear voice He says, "The gates of hell will not prevail against the Kingdom of God. Blessed are all who believe this. Blessed are those who know that I conquered sin and death by My resurrection. If you believe; blessed are you because your hope is in Me and your faith has saved you." At the word "resurrection" the spikes came out and Jesus was freed.

It only takes a few coals to set a fire burning. And there are enough embers here in this place to start a large fire. Carry that fire out to whatever place we're going when this week is over.

You are chained, each of you is chained in some way. Our families are chained, our children, our grandchildren, our great grandchildren are chained. The Lord wants us to remember that when Paul and Silas were praying and singing and praising God a great earthquake shook the building and the chains were broken off of them; and not only off of them but all of the prisoners; and the Lord would say: praise, praise, praise! For this will bring deliverance from the chains in your heart and soul, your families. Praise Me, My people!

Open your heart to My blazing love. Let the fire of My love purify and refine your heart. Let the fire of My love heal your wounds and transform them. Just as My wounds have been glorified, so will your wounds be filled with My glory. Let the fire of My love remove the dross from your heart to reveal My love. Your life, your heart will become a reflection of My love, of My glory, a reflection of Me. Come, My precious ones, open your heart. My desire is to fill your heart with the fire of My love, to fill you with My glory, and then you will be My light ablaze in the darkness of this world.

I hear the Lord saying "you want to build the city of God. What does it look like? It looks like this, where your attention, your focus, everything, every moment is about Me. When you speak to each other in love, when you tell stories of how I am working in your life, when you eat together and play together and laugh together and you praise Me together, this is the city of God. But the city of God has to be bigger than this week. The city of God has to go out to your places of worship, to your homes. My people, I want you to reflect today on how you can do that when you go home. How can you take this home with you, because it's not enough for it to be just for today or tomorrow. It has to be your life, your mission, your desire to build the city of God. In the city of God there is no room for criticism, there is no room for grumbling and complaining. The people of Israel ended up for 40 years in the desert because they grumbled and complained against one another and against Me, and I'm telling you, My people, I don't want you walking in the desert for 40 years. You need to learn to be a people of praise, a people of thanksgiving, a people who do not dwell on the darkness but dwell on the light that is shining in the darkness. My people please let me transform your hearts that you will be such a Holy people that others will ask you. What do you have? Then you will be able to share your hope with them. Let us be the people of God building the city of God.

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PROPHETIC WORDS FROM GATHERING IN THE SPIRIT

(Continued from Page 6)

Now, children, listen to me; happy are they who keep my ways. Listen to instruction and grow wise, do not reject it! Happy the one who listens to me, attending daily at my gates, keeping watch at my doorposts, for whoever finds me finds life, and wins favour from the LORD."

My people, I am here in your midst, I am here in your presence, I am doing something new, I am doing something beautiful, I am doing something awesome. Can you not see that I make all things new?

I have sense of the Lord pouring His Holy Spirit on us like a great river. It is flooding over us. It is higher than this tent, bigger than we can imagine. I hear the Lord saying to us "how much of this river do you want? Do you want to just be damp? Or do you want to be dripping? I want you to be dripping with my Holy Spirit. Soak in it, be filled with it, overflowing with it and to be dripping this river wherever you go.

So many times in the last year the Lord has told us that He wants to pour out His spirit in abundance. He has given us so many images. The waterfall that some people didn't want to go in and get their clothes wet. Some of us don't want this bigger portion of the Holy Spirit because we're afraid it might mess up our lives, our plans, but that's what he wants for us. At the conference in April we had a word that it was pouring outside and we were standing outside with a little thimble. How much Holy Spirit can we contain in a thimble? But the Lord just told us in this word that He wants to pour a river of his Holy Spirit over us – not a thimble, not a dipper, but a

river! The Lord wants us to know, even those who have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit years ago, that there is always more, and this week is a special gift given to us so we can come and ask for that abundance of the Holy Spirit in our lives because we need it!

Yes, you are going to do something new, Lord, and I receive the new that You have for me I say Yes Lord! Yes Lord! I receive all You have for me. I want it. Lord you only want what is good for us.

Song: God has no body now but yours, no hands no feet on earth but yours, yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world, yours are the feet with which He walks to do good, Yours are the hands with which He blesses all the world." Our role is to be ambassadors for Christ.

*Song: child I hold you, yes I hold you
Every hour I hold you
My life treasure without measure
Child I am holding you*

You need to listen, My people. You need to take time apart with Me and listen to what I say to you, and don't expect a sudden answer. Take time to really listen and I will reveal to you as you are ready, as your ears are open to hear. I will direct you, show you which way to go, but you must take the time to listen.

For international charismatic news: CHARIS Magazine

CHARIS Magazine, a publication of CHARIS international service of communion for the Catholic charismatic renewal, is available free on the CHARIS website. It may be found at <http://www.charis.international/en/> along with a great deal of other material. Articles

from the latest edition are on the right, partway down the home page, and previous issues are available under "magazine" at the top of the home page.

Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services of B.C.

Richard Dunstan, Victoria (chair) 250-477-4700

Nitz Baylon, Vancouver, 604-202-2998

David MacIntyre, Victoria, 250-383-9955

Loree Renwick, Nelson, 250-354-7223

Janet Tng, Vancouver, 778-998-8098

Frans van der Woning, Kamloops, 250-851-5751

Lynne Williams, Nelson, 250-489-1702

CHARIS IS RESTORING THE CHARISMATIC MISSION

(Continued from Page 1)

CHARIS is organized by “services of communion” at the international, continental, national and regional levels. These are not governing bodies—all authority within the renewal is held by the Pope, bishops and pastors—but offer communication, service, fellowship and leadership.

The international and continental levels have already been set up; the Canadian national service of communion was initiated this year and currently has 12 members from the existing English and French service committees; another half dozen representatives of other “expressions and realities” will be added soon. Brian Sullivan, of Ontario, is co-ordinator. Work has begun on a Western Canadian regional service of communion, the smallest level of reorganization; provincial service committees such as ours in BC will remain unchanged under CHARIS.

Next, a national meeting of diocesan charismatic leaders will be held to bring them up to date on CHARIS and continue identifying “expressions and realities” which might wish to be part of CHARIS. Ultimately, a national general assembly of expressions and realities will be scheduled.

Meanwhile, the national service of communion will present the Canadian bishops with a major plan for promoting baptism in the Holy Spirit: a long list of specific proposals for offering this baptism in many groups and settings, with the aim of having all Catholics baptized in the Spirit.

But at the provincial and local levels, we don’t have to wait for all these steps to be completed. We can act *now*. The Holy Father’s list of goals

for the renewal consists of things we are already doing; what we need to do now is recommit ourselves to them:

We need to **take the lead in spreading baptism in the Holy Spirit**. We already do that, with the Life in the Spirit Seminar, and now it will be more urgent than ever.

We are asked to **encourage the exercise of gifts of the Spirit, and help those baptized in the Spirit deepen their spiritual lives**. Again, this is something we do in our prayer groups already.

We need to **promote ecumenism and Christian unity**. Charismatic Catholics have had a good record in this area over the decades, and we must continue our efforts.

We are asked to **have a special concern for the poor**. There are many forms of poverty, and charismatic prayer groups tend to be more open to unrepresentable newcomers than many parish groups. We must not lose this charism.

And most important, **we need to support, or even initiate, evangelization**. That’s what all of this is ultimately about: the good news of Jesus Christ. It will take prayer and discernment, but we must never lose sight of the fact that this is our absolute top priority.

So...what’s CHARIS all about?

It’s a call for all hands on deck, to spread baptism in the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the saving work of Jesus Christ, and to be a current of grace for the whole Church.

Let’s all get into the swim!

(Richard Dunstan, chair of CCRS of BC, is a member of the Canadian National Service of Communion for CHARIS.)

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editor Richard Dunstan
308-225 Belleville St.
Victoria BC V8V 4T9

rcharismaticbc@gmail.com

phone: 250-477-4700

bccharismatic.ca

[www.facebook.com/
groups/bccharismatic](https://www.facebook.com/groups/bccharismatic)