

GOODNEWS

"I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God"

FEB 2022

THE CHARIS COMMISSION FOR PRAYER GROUPS

BY CHARIS INTERNATIONAL

Charis International has set up a Commission to care for Prayer Groups. This is their mission statement.

The Charismatic Renewal is a current of grace in the Church and for the Church.

Prayer groups have an essential place in it.

A prayer group can be born from the desire of some people or from the intuition of a single person. Some of these groups have been already existing for decades. They may consist of hundreds of people or just a few.

Prayer groups are often the gateway for many people in need of encountering God.

Many of them come with hurts and limitations. People who come to one of these groups quickly experience an atmosphere of fraternity where they can confidently express their prayer spontaneously to God.

The prayer groups carry the grace of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit which irrigates the Body of Christ as a vascular termination irrigates a limb, an arm, a finger.

Present in the largest parishes and also in the humblest ones, prayer groups are the main actors of the great mission of CHARIS:

"To share with everyone in the Church the grace of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit".

It is often in the prayer group that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is received.

It is a place where the little ones and the poor have an equal place.

It is where Christians of all denominations can feel good together. It is a group of brothers and sisters who do not hesitate to pray for one another.

They are Christians who are connected to their bishop and trust him.



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issue is **Friday 8 April 2022**.

ACROSS MY DESK

BY LENYCE WILLASON



2022... A fear free year?

In the annual end of year clean up I rediscovered the following reflection written by Nelson Mandela. It seemed to me, in the midst of the gloom around us over the past two years, that a little bit of faith in God and in who we are, or who we could be if e really allowed ourselves to be, could only be good for us.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves:

'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?'

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small doesn't serve the world.

There's nothing enlightening about shrinking,

So that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It is not just in some of us.....it is in everyone.

As we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear our presence automatically liberates others."

What a world changing experience if we all took the above seriously and made it our New Year resolution. A resolution to not allow fear to overtake us but rather allow the love of God to help us grow in trust of his goodness and protection.

It is such Good News to know that many Prayer Groups are beginning to gather again. Although Zoom meeting were a great blessing for us it is not quite the same as when we gather. I am a fervent advocate of Romans 1:12 - Now, this means that when we come together and are side by side, something wonderful will be released. We can expect to be co-encouraged and co-comforted by each other's faith! Passion Trans.

Please be encouraged to focus on Praise and Worship. Worship is so important for us, as it is the praise and worship of God that opens our spirit to surrender to the living lordship of Jesus Christ, which is at the heart of the charismatic and prophetic. It is this yielding in the Holy Spirit to the Lordship of Jesus that makes possible the reception of the charismata pneumatika (spiritual gifts).

A challenge for us in this new year is to examine how much teaching is being given about yielding, surrendering to the Lord. The Renewal is not just about having a nice experience or feeling much better about ourselves. It is about hearing the Word of the Lord. "The depth of prophecy is directly related to the depth of the knowledge of the Word of God. When people do not have a deep knowledge of the Word of God, you can get nice words that can bless people for a moment but they lack lasting impact because they have no depth" says Fr Peter Hocken (European Catholic Charismatic Renewal Info-Letter).

Let us pray together: Father God, we need fresh fire from above today in Jesus' name. Pour out your spirit upon us like never before. Grant us a deeper knowledge of your Scriptures as you draw us to a deeper intimacy with you. May we walk with fresh oil flowing over us helping us to yield to your Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

A CHARISMATIC NEW YEAR CHECK UP

BY FR. PAT COLLINS

At the start of a new year, Fr. Pat Collins asks about our charismatic health- and suggests ways, with the Holy Spirit's help, to make changes.

We surely need regular spiritual check-ups. They should look at important aspects of our spiritual lives, with a view to ascertaining what changes might be needed.

A Questionnaire

1. At some point you experienced a spiritual awakening, one that enabled you to have a new, personal awareness of the length and breadth, the height and depth of the unconditional love of Christ for you. Have you had subsequent in-fillings that have strengthened that sense of God's merciful love?
2. A spiritual awakening is often associated with the granting of the charismatic gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. If you received one or more of the charisms when you were filled with the Spirit, or afterwards, e.g. the gift of praying in tongues, do you exercise them as much now as you once did?
3. Charismatic spirituality is Scripture based. The Holy Spirit leads those who prayerfully reflect upon it into the truth about God and God's purposes. When you read the Scriptures, does the word of God regularly leap alive off the page into your heart with such inner meaning and relevance that it guides your everyday actions?
4. The exhortation, "Walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16), is the key to an inspired Christian ethic. The spiritual guidance required to carry out this injunction can come in different ways, such as an inner prompting, a twinge of conscience, a prophetic word of knowledge etc. Are you sensitive and docile to such forms of guidance?
5. The gift of discernment of spirits enables you to identify the origin and orientation of

your inspirations. Those that come from God, and lead to God, are prompted by the Holy Spirit and are associated with feelings of consolation, such as joy and peace. Those that come from ourselves or the Evil Spirit are associated with feelings of desolation, such as sadness and dissatisfaction. Are you reflective enough to notice what spirits are motivating you?

6. St Ignatius of Loyola pointed out that God may withdraw the consolation of the Spirit as a result of such things as spiritual laziness, neglect of prayer, lack of effort in resisting temptation, or because the person is focusing on the consolations of God rather than the God of consolation. When you suffer from desolation of spirit, do you prayerfully try to recognise how God is trying to purify you?
7. Genuine religious experience and divine guidance usually lead to a greater sense of inner freedom. As St Paul observed: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17). Do you find that, instead of living your life on the basis of cheerless duty, you are increasingly motivated by a joyful sense of inner conviction?
8. St Paul asked rhetorically in 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Do you not realise that Jesus Christ is within you?" Besides being aware of the transcendence of the loving

God beyond you, are you also aware of the immanence of Christ's loving presence within you, enabling you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live in Him all that He Himself lived?

9. When you are conscious of the love of God, do you try to see and love in others-especially the poor and the oppressed-what the Lord is seeing and loving in you? Does your love find practical expression in deeds of mercy and action for justice?
10. Those who have a spiritual outlook appreciate the fact that the existence of the world around them, as well as the countless blessings they have received, are all gifts from God. Moreover, they also believe that evil, both their own and that of others, never has the last word. It belongs to God and it is always a word of blessing. Do you express gratitude always and for everything (Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18), by thanking and praising God in all circumstances, good and bad alike?

Conclusion

The check-up proposed here not only intends to help you gauge your charismatic state of health, but also aims to help you to identify what you could do to improve it. However, the questionnaire is experimental and tentative in nature.

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TO VAXX OR NOT TO VAXX...

BY DAN HEWITT



Covid 19 is not the first pandemic and probably won't be the last!

Historically, any deadly disease causes social rejection, fear and often a violent backlash toward those who have the disease. We need only look at the leprosy problem in Jesus' time as evidence of this. In our own time, Polio still existed in the 50's and the Spanish flu killed millions in 1918–1920. Ebola still erupts occasionally in Africa, and just passing on the flu can cause bitterness between people.

When these pandemics erupt people become scared, and the fear causes them to forget about God and focus on the disease. The problem is exacerbated when people don't know what God has already said about handling these situations.

One unique aspect of the current pandemic is the environment of global communication in which we live today. An opinion can be immediately transferred by anyone to everyone instantaneously!

How to handle the virus

Most would be united in that we all want to see an end to the COVID! We don't want the deadly consequences; we hate living in fear and our lives are disrupted in so many ways. Basically, our peace all but disappears and anxiety becomes all too common. So, how should we handle the COVID problem?... this question causes unity to give way to factionalism, disunity and even violence!

While politicians, experts and the 'common man' argue over our physical responses, Christians need also to look at our spiritual responses which are arguably the most important of all, especially when human 'common sense' clashes with the authority of God.

The Current Questions

Much of the debate today is, "should people vaccinate?", "should governments and workplaces be able to demand vaccination?", "how can I receive vaccination when rumours abound (such as abortion tissue being used) that offend my conscience?"; "What about my human rights?"; "how can I know which answers are correct?"

It is perfectly normal for people to assess situations based on the input they receive from others, from their own personal experiences and the advice of those considered to be 'experts'! ...and many are led to speak out with the certainty that their opinions are correct, and they will push a particular course of response to the problem.

The blatantly evident result of all of this is that society has multiple suggested responses, widespread confusion, growing fear, anger, mistrust and, ultimately, social violence.

While the world debates these questions in their typical worldly ways, we Christians should turn back to God to find His answer in every case:

COVID: a Challenge to Faith

Christian faith, more than just belief in Jesus, is a statement of how we allow that belief to control our life choices. We are required to live in obedience to Christ and His word, but how can we obey Christ's directives if we don't know what His word says?!

Ignorance of scripture is not just a mild inconvenience... it can be an absolute disaster! The phrase "My people perish for lack of knowledge" (Hos 4: 6), clarifies that, ignorance of God's word can even lead to eternal separation from God!

The previously mentioned 'panic mentality' coupled with a general ignorance of the will of God as revealed in scripture, causes 'good Christian people' to respond to the pandemic in ways that are not productive and even prevent them from experiencing the peace and providence of God which was promised to all who would obey His word (see Prov 16: 20). Yes, even good people will suffer the consequences of not obeying the Lord, even if their disobedience comes from ignorance!

The difficulty of handling all those questions can lead people to just do whatever they decide for themselves ... but this, too, God has cautioned against, for in scripture we read, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov 3: 5-6).

Divine Authority

Since revealing Himself to the Hebrews in Egypt, God has appointed human leaders to exercise His authority over His people. Despite giving them laws to follow (the Ten Commandments), God still required the Hebrews to subject their understanding of those commandments to the authority of His anointed leader, Moses, and to the leaders who followed him. When Moses' brother and sister questioned his authority, God punished the sister with leprosy (see Num 12).

One might assume that God wants His people to obey that authority only if the authority is acting in accordance with the will of God, but in fact this assumption is baseless and false! ... "baseless" because scripture does not give us permission to reject the authority over us (see Rm 13: 1-10); ...and "false" because Jesus directly instructed His apostles to obey the Pharisees (because they held the seat of Moses), even though their behaviour was reprehensible! (see Mt 23: 2-4). It doesn't make sense to our human sensibilities, but remember! ... "God's ways are not our ways."

In placing authorities over us, God is actually setting us free from the worries and responsibilities involved in having to make the right decisions. We should offer our opinions in the various forums of debate while acting in accordance with the instructions we've been given.

Conclusion

So how should we respond to the vaccination requirements?

- Be obedient to all authorities over us. The Pope and our Archbishop have urged us to get vaccinated! Our governments and medical authorities have urged us to get vaccinated. Therefore, God Himself is saying, "Get vaccinated"

Elements of the vaccine may offend my conscience. Should I still get the vaccine?

- No-one can require you to go against your conscience, and there will be no sin if you refuse the vaccine because it offends your conscience. However, God requires us to inform our conscience

so that it feeds us reliable, accurate information (CCC para's 1795-1802). Thus, failing to vaccinate may result in 'unnecessary consequences' which may be God's way of teaching us to reset our conscience. Pope Francis, in agreement with the 'Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,' has already said that there is no guilt in receiving vaccines which involve the use of foetal cells in their production.

What if the authorities are wrong, will I be punished for obeying them?

- We will still not be punished if authorities make judgements that prove to be incorrect. One of the great aspects of God commanding our obedience to His authority, is that responsibility for 'getting all the right answers' no longer hangs over us... that responsibility is now between God and His appointed authority.

Does obedience to God's authority mean I can no longer speak opinions contrary to government or professional opinion?

- Certainly not! We can, and should, express our opinions regarding government policies and practices. We can express any opinion we want, so long as we act in accordance with the directions issued by our authorities.

What if I'm the 'one in a million' who will have a bad reaction to the vaccination?

- Those who live lives of faith will only experience suffering which God chooses to permit! ...they cannot accidentally suffer consequences of blind misfortune (or 'dumb luck!') as could befall those who have rejected Christ. When describing features that would be characteristic of Christians, Jesus said, "...They will pick up serpents [with their hands], and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them" (Mk 16: 18). Thus, we can expect that, as people living in faith, even if the vaccine is harmful to me it cannot hurt me because my faith brings God's protection into every area of my life.

What about my human right to decide what goes into my body?

- While the Church acknowledges that all human beings have rights to life, and all that is involved to prosper that life, God does not focus on your individual right to control your environment, but He focusses on your responsibility to love and serve your fellow man, and that love is a sacrificial giving for the good of others rather than a set of demands for yourself. On reflection, does the scripture actually say we have any rights for ourselves individually??!!

Pope Francis, whose view of the pandemic counts for me, has said that getting the vaccine is "an act of love". "Love for oneself, love for our families and friends, and love for all peoples. Love is also social and political... Getting vaccinated is a simple yet profound way to care for one another, especially the most vulnerable."

Dan Hewitt is the Director of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Western Australia.

PRAYER GROUP PROFILES

ST PETER CHANEL, DEER PARK

My name is Hilda and I'm the leader of the prayer group at St Peter Chanel Parish in Deer Park.

My journey with the Holy Spirit began in 1994, when I first participated in the school of John with Bishop Joe, that was my first Life in the Spirit Seminar. Since then, I haven't looked back. After that every time I went to the Renewal Days I would cry bitterly when the Praise and Worship was taking place. I soon came to realise that I was not losing my mind as my family members thought, instead, I was in love with the Lord.

I soon found out that our Parish had a prayer group. I began attending and spent a lot of time in prayer groups, days of renewals, listening to inspirational speakers, etc. I couldn't have enough of the Lord, my heart was on fire for Jesus, I had found the greatest pearl and the rest was history. I've been in the renewal for 29 years and I have never wanted to leave no matter what personal situations arose. I found a peace that no one could give me except Jesus. I started attending daily Mass, the scriptures became more alive and I wanted to read it more and more. I wanted everyone to experience what I was experiencing - the presence of Christ in me.



But the Lord hadn't finished with me. We lost our second son Cyril to cancer in October 2000. It was a struggle for me, but the Lord kept me strong all through his the two and a half years of his illness.

Our Prayer meeting is a small group but there are people who have been

faithful for 33 plus years. Through their commitment and prayers, we've been able to reach out to many parishioners in our Parish and other neighbouring parishes. Many parishioners have come and gone through the prayer group. They were fed and nourished by the many Life in the Spirit seminars that were held in our prayer group.

Our relationship with the Lord, has helped us to reach out and conduct many other services in the parish like the Divine Australia retreats held by Fr Michael Payyapilly (Doveton Parish) every first Saturdays of the month. These retreats ceased because of Covid. We also have first Sunday Healing Masses in our parish, supported fully by our prayer group. This enabled many people from the surrounding parishes to participate. It has always been very well attended; people know they need that personal touch of the Lord, especially when we would offer prayer ministry at the end of Mass. Newcomers who attended the Life in the Spirit seminars, when touched by the Holy Spirit, have remained strong in the Lord. As a result, they're far more involved in the life of the Church, in roles like readers of the Word, Extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, taking communion to the sick and elderly and as intercessors.

My own journey with Lord has continued to move forward and upwards. Since the Holy Spirit touched me 29 years ago, I've been very involved in the life of the parish. I've come to realise my calling as a baptised member of Catholic Church. I hungered for the Lord in the Holy Eucharist, and I was privileged to attend daily Mass even during my working years. I had a greater understanding of the scriptures; I saw God's mighty hand in all things seen and unseen and at the same time, I was also aware of my own sinful nature. I desired to read spiritual books and the books of saints and the fathers of the church. I no longer enjoyed the things of the world; movies, jokes, books, magazines, or gossips. There is a sense of peace within me and the joy to know that I've acquired the pearl of life - JESUS.

I also became conscious of God's continuous presence in my life and in the life of others. Mt 28:20 "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

This is not to say, that I don't have my daily struggles, but I know that my Lord is with me now as I'm fully equipped with the armour of God (Eph 3:17). The Lord has armed us with His weapons to do the warfare daily if necessary.

We are no longer victims but victors, because the Lord has defeated our enemy. I'm no longer ashamed of my past sins and it no longer holds me as a prisoner, as my Lord has forgiven me completely by nailing them to the cross. The slate has been wiped clean.

Our plans for the coming year include ecumenical outreach as the Holy Father has requested. We also intend reaching out to the children's ministry. Ideas and suggestions have been proposed by the group, CCR and parish priest.

Included here are some testimonies of the impact of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit on the lives of some of our people.

HAZEL

Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, I have grown in the knowledge of God and of myself. I am aware of who I really am in Christ. I realise how weak and helpless I am and how easily I fall into sin and how much I need His love and forgiveness every moment of my life. The Holy Spirit makes me aware of the enormity of the price Jesus paid for me and that He did it purely out of love - I did not deserve it at all.

I have developed a passionate love for the Crucified Jesus and the Holy Eucharist. I cannot imagine the Father allowing His Son to go through all that pain and humiliation for me and I can't imagine Jesus being willing to do this for the Father. There's no greater love than this... (Jn 3:16).

With every outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the gifts He brings I have become a more compassionate person. I'm able to forgive more easily and to accept others just as



Joe saying to me in these exact words “not to sell myself short”.

Immediately, following that I joined the prayer group in the parish, and I’ve been part of it since. I am also the part of the music ministry, singing praises to Our God. I have also been involved in the singing at our monthly healing Masses and on Thursday night Masses before our prayer meetings.

I know that the Lord has changed me from what I was before Catholic Charismatic Renewal. I also know that God is with us through all our situations in life; through all our trials and troubles. The Holy Spirit uses us if we only let go and let Him have His way in us. Amen.

MARY

I have been in the Renewal for over 30 years, and I can see clearly that my life has been changed. Now I know the love of God for me, and I am no longer afraid of Him. I know that he is my refuge and my life.

I can see that I have more patience with my loved ones and others, whereas, before I used to lose my temper. I am less judgemental and give others the benefit of doubt. I also noticed that I could easily forgive those who hurt me or my family. I always have a listening ear and a compassionate heart to those who come to me and are hurting.

I like to speak to individuals about the unconditional love of God and His mercy. I thank God every day that He is in my life. I also thank God for sending Jesus and the Holy Spirit, to whom I give permission to convict me, so that I can remain close to my Father’s loving care.

Truly, I would not know what I would do without the Lover of my soul. Amen!



they are - as God accepts me. No prejudices or criticisms. I want everyone to share this experience and awareness.

Praise and Worship and praying in tongues is a joyful experience. Praying together for each other’s needs and the needs of the Church and the world is very satisfying. Only the Holy Spirit can express what’s in my heart.

I consider the Prayer Group, a second family and love all who come and join us. Thank you, Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

JOSIE

The Seminar in preparation for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has been a wonderful experience in my life. It opened my eyes to the treasures (God’s Holy Spirit) that I had been given at my first baptism, but so far, my faith had been a list of do’s and don’ts.

Accepting to surrender to God’s Spirit as an adult has been a joy and a freedom to know the Father and experience JESUS. I learnt how much love God has for humanity, including myself. He has given me a fire in my spirit to want to share His love and make anyone I come across to realise how much God loves them.

The Holy Spirit has opened my spirit to understand clearly what I had been taught over the years. The gift of faith is precious and needs to be guarded and enriched by the Sacraments Jesus has given the Church. I now see the need to place more importance on Spiritual

life rather than focus too much on material possessions. Things that I used to do as a routine have more meaning to me now, like Holy Eucharist, Rosary, etc. I have been given a great love for the Church, the scripture, and the Mass. Attending Mass is a daily occurrence out of love rather than as a duty. I thank God for the gift of His Spirit, who guides me on the journey and convicts me when I err, so that I can repent. Rom 8:7 “ if the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death lives in you, then He who raised Christ from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of His Spirit in you”.

LEANNE

As I recall, I started to yearn for the Lord about 30 years ago. Always practiced my faith as brought up in a Catholic family. I reached a time in my life when I was expecting my third child. I was yearning and wanting to know more about my faith in a deeper, more personal way.

My first experience was the life in the Spirit seminar which I was drawn to attend at St Peter Chanel Parish. I was curious and that curiosity was what has drawn me to know Our God in a personal way. On the sixth week of the seminar at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when Bishop Joe Grech prayed over me, I remember my prayer to the Holy Spirit was that I wanted to cling onto Jesus’s garment and for Him to never let me go. I cried like a baby, and I very specifically remember Bishop

WEEDS ON YOUR SOIL

BY DINA MANANQUIL-DELFINO



To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

After many excuses to avoid cleaning up my backyard, I had to face the truth that it needed clearing badly. I was fortunate that hubby was in a good mood to help, so together we spent one day of our Christmas break uprooting the unwanted invaders. Little did I know that there was a divine purpose to the exercise. As I started to break their further growth with my left- over strength from the holiday gatherings, although it was not really fun at the start, undertaking the hard yakka gave me such joyful reward.

As I diligently hand-pulled and hoed the weeds, the workout led me to reflect on my spiritual health too. How healthy have I been spiritually? I experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus, had my Baptism in the Spirit in 2000, and I have had many humbling privileges and opportunities to become a better person, through the leading of the Holy Spirit. There were many “ouch” moments of growth, that challenged me to work harder, not so much in trying to perfect myself (for there is no such thing as perfection here on earth), but yes, getting closer in holiness in my walk with God was possible every day, as long as I tried. But have I really worked hard this year towards this goal? Covid 19 detracted me from my focus, as I got immersed instead in fear, anxiety, uncertainty, grief and bereavement for friends and community who lost loved ones, jobs, property and peace this year.

Well, in my weeding time, I was confronted by different kinds. A weed (reference: <https://www.almanac.com/content/common-garden-weeds>) is “a plant that causes economic losses or ecological damages, creates health problems for humans or animals or is undesirable where it is growing.” There was the field bindweed, a hardy perennial vine that has been given many names.

Google says that unfortunately, tilling and cultivation seems to aide bindweed spread. The best control is early intervention. Seedlings must be removed before they become perennial. After that, buds are formed, and successful control is more difficult. Lord, what is in me that is like the bindweed? Pride, lust, lies, offense, arrogance, prejudice?

Then there is the quackgrass that is a creeping, persistent perennial grass that reproduces by seeds. Its long, jointed, straw-coloured rhizomes form a heavy mat in soil, from which new shoots may also appear. We are advised to dig out this fast-growing grass as soon as we see it in our garden, being sure to dig up the entirety of the plant (including the roots) and to dispose of in our waste bin rather than the compost pile, as it will likely continue to grow in the latter! Lord, what is my quackgrass? Gossip, envy, malice, jealousy, materialism, laziness?

This next weed I truly dislike. Canada thistle is an aggressive, creeping perennial weed from Eurasia. It infests crops, pastures, ditch banks and roadside. If Canada thistle becomes rooted, the experts say, the best control is to stress the plant and force it to use stored root nutrients. Yet believe it or not, this weed can be edible! Lord, what is my Canada thistle? Stress, worry, anxiety, control, over-confidence, self-sufficiency?

The next one I had to deal with were the nutsedges, perennial weeds that superficially resemble grasses, but they are thicker and stiffer and V-shaped. Their leaves are arranged in sets of three from their base. The presence of nutsedge, often indicate that soil drainage is poor or waterlogged. However, once nutsedge is established, it's very difficult to control. Lord, what is my nutsedge? Lack of prayer time, laziness to study your Word, being lukewarm in sharing the Good News to others, lack of compassion, diminished empathy, anger, impatience, irritability, lack of gratitude? Then there is the buckhorn plantain that is

low-growing which makes it difficult to remove by hand. This plant has a long taproot so it can become drought-tolerant. So, to remove this weed, be diligent about pulling up young plants and destroying it before the plants go to seed. As a last resort, several herbicides are effective. Lord, what is my buckhorn plantain? Addictive behaviour, selfishness, gluttony, vanity, getting into debt, depressive and oppressive tendencies?

Ah, and this one- we can learn to love them- dandelions with their bright yellow heads in the springtime. They provide an important source of food for bees early in the year, too. In time, dandelions will also take over from your garden. They have the most- weedy characteristics. Removing dandelions by hand pulling or hoeing is often futile, unless done repeatedly over a long period of time, because of the deep tap root system of established plants. Lord, what is my dandelion? Narcissism, over-spending time on social media, games and videos, thinking negatively, making too many excuses, playing the blame game, spending too much time with toxic people, procrastinating, people-pleasing?

The site mentioned that of approximately 250,000 species of plants worldwide, only about 3% behave as weeds that we don't want in cultivated areas. “Weeds” aren't inherently bad. Many weeds stabilize the soil and add organic matter. Some are edible to humans and provide habitat and food for wildlife, too. This has given me much hope - that I can use and turn my weaknesses, bad habits, ingrained sinfulness and limitations to good use by asking the Lord for help and healing, becoming fully dependent on Him to prune me and use me for His purpose. I know that change is hard, and some essential changes can only be made with God's help.

The New Year is an opportunity to start this process of regeneration, rejuvenation and renewal. Let's take it as both a challenge and a rewarding time.

GOD'S 26 GUARD'S - A TRUE STORY OF FAITH

Here is a message that will give you chills. Have you ever the urge to pray for someone and then just put it on a list and said, "I'll pray for them later?" Or has anyone ever called you and said, "I need you to pray for me, I have this need?"

Read the following story that was sent to me, and it may change the way that you think about prayer and also the way you pray. You will be blessed by this...

A missionary on leave told this true story while visiting his home church in Michigan.

"While serving at a small field hospital in Africa, every two weeks I travelled by bicycle through the jungle to a nearby city for supplies. This was a journey of two days and required camping overnight at the halfway point.

On one of these journeys, I arrived in the city where I planned to collect money from a Bank, purchase medicine and supplies, and then begin my two-day journey back to the field hospital. Upon arrival in the city, I observed two men fighting, one of whom had been seriously injured. I treated him for his injuries and at the same time talked to him about the Lord.

I then travelled two days, camping overnight, and arrived home without incident.

Two weeks later I repeated my journey. Upon arriving in the city, I was approached by the young man I had treated. He told me that he had known I carried money and medicines. He said, "Some friends and I followed you into the jungle, knowing you would camp overnight. We planned to kill you and take your money and drugs. But just as we were about to move into your camp, we saw that you were surrounded by 26 armed guards."

At this, I laughed and said that I was certainly all alone in the jungle campsite. The young man pressed the point, however, and said, "no sir, I was not the only person to see the guards, my friends also saw them, and we all counted them. It was because of those guards that we were afraid and left you alone".

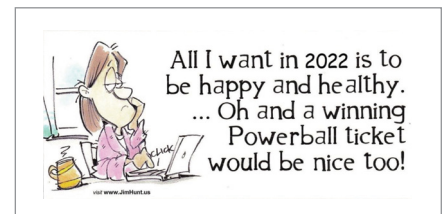
At this point in the sermon, one of the men in the congregation jumped to his feet and interrupted the missionary and asked if he could tell him the exact day this happened. The missionary told them the date, and the man who interrupted told him this story.

"On the night of your incident in Africa, it was morning here, and I was preparing to go and play golf. I was about to putt when I felt the urge to pray for you. In fact, the urging of the Lord was so strong, I called men in this church to meet with me here in the sanctuary to pray for you. Would all of those men who met with me on that day stand up?"

The men who had met that day to pray stood up. The missionary wasn't concerned with who they were... he was too busy counting how many men he saw.

There were 26!

This story is an incredible example of how the Spirit of the Lord moves in mysterious ways. If you ever hear such prodding, go along with it. Nothing is ever hurt by prayer except the gates of hell. If we all take it to heart we can turn this world toward God once again. "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).



THE DUIKERS GO NORTH!

The beginning of this new year saw the departure of one of our beloved brothers. John Duiker, his wife Sharon and their 11 children left Melbourne to take up residence in Townsville, Queensland.

It was after much discernment that John and Sharon took this huge step believing that God was calling them to northern climes. We wish them well and all of God's blessings for this move.

A wonderful gesture was shown them by the Townsville Prayer Group who welcomed the Duikers by



holding a barbeque on the Strand, Townsville. As well as this some of the ladies worked very hard to receive the furniture and household

goods when it arrived in Townsville earlier than the family. What a wonderful example of the grace of the Holy Spirit they demonstrated.

AN EASTER REFLECTION

At the end of time billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God's throne. Some of the groups near the front talked heatedly – not with shame before the throne of God but with embittered anger.

'How can God judge us? How can he know about suffering?' said an angry woman jerking back her sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. 'We endured beatings, terror, torture and death'.

A black man lowered his collar. 'What about this?' he demanded, showing the rope burns. 'Lynched for no crime but being black?'

Hundreds of such groups were visible across the plain. Each had a complaint against God for the evil and suffering he permitted in his world. How lucky God was, they all seemed to agree, able to live in heaven where all is sweetness and light: without weeping, fear, hunger or hatred. What does God know about humanity? What does he know about being forced to endure the pains of life?

So each group sent a leader, chosen because they had suffered the most. There was a Jew, a black person, an untouchable from India, someone from Hiroshima, a Gulag veteran and others who had known the depths of bitterness and despair. At last they were ready to present their case. It was simple. Before God would be qualified to be their judge, he must endure what they had endured.

Their decision was that God should be sentenced to live on earth as a man... a real man, as helpless as all humanity. They said:

- let him be a Jew
- let his birth be in question and his parents' refugees
- let him champion a cause so just, but so radical, that it brings upon him the hate, condemnation and destructive attacks of political and religious authorities
- let him be betrayed and forsaken by his dearest friends
- let him be indicted on false charges, tried before a prejudiced jury and convicted by a cowardly judge
- let him see what it is to be terribly lone and abandoned by every living being
- let him be tortured. Let him die. And let his death be humiliating: let him be jeered at, mocked, spat on and executed beside common criminals

As each leader announced a portion of the sentence loud murmurs of approval went up from the great throng of people. But suddenly, as the last one had finished pronouncing sentence there was a long silence. No one moved. They understood the truth.

God had already served his sentence.

CELEBRATE LENT AT HOME

- **Get up an hour earlier.** Pray in tongues for that hour.
- **The Holy Father has called us to care for the poor.** Organise a family action. Pool your resources to assist those in need. Collect food for distribution to the homeless, which can be distributed by the Holy Spirit of Freedom Community. Suggestions are cans of tuna, baked beans (ring pull cans), instant noodles (cup container), fresh fruit or even Easter eggs.
- **Share family funds.** Adopt a Lenten project. Pool a portion of each person's income or pocket money.
- **Look for simple ways to say 'sorry.'** In word and action, for the ways in which we hurt one another.



"MY PARENTS ARE GIVING UP DESSERTS FOR LENT, SO I'M BALANCING THE FAMILY DIET BY GIVING UP VEGETABLES."

WHY DO WE MAKE SACRIFICES AT LENT?

People make sacrifices for many reasons. They pump iron to get fit. They study long hours to forge a career. They diet to shed extra kilos. When our goals are important and clear enough, we are willing to 'take on' whatever draws us closer to them and to 'go without' whatever draws us away.

Lent is a time for making sacrifices. It is a time for taking on extra commitments and 'giving up' distractions so that we may draw closer to the heart of Christ and his body, the church.

Through prayer we build up our spiritual 'muscle'. Through self-denial we shed unessential 'baggage'. By reaching out to others we become other-centred. We do these things to open ourselves to the endless possibilities of God's love taking hold of our lives. By our Lenten commitments we are 'training' our attitudes and behaviour patterns into a Gospel lifestyle.

A WORD... FROM MIRIAM

BY MIRIAM MARKIS



After grappling with patience and asking the Lord's help for me have more of it, I had an insight into the various letters of the word 'PATIENCE' and offer the following short reflection which I hope can be helpful to anyone also struggling with this 'fruit' of the Holy Spirit.

- P =** Praise. In every situation it is imperative if we are to overcome impatience. Remember that God can '...turn all things that work together for good for those who love Him.' (Romans 8:28)
- A =** Ask and you shall receive. Matthew 7:7 says. It continues "seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will be opened unto you". Invoke the Holy Spirit to flood us with the patience that God has towards us creatures even though we trip us so many times. God's patience is humbling and evidence of how much He loves us and wants us to seek His help in overcoming our shortcomings.
- T =** Trust that God knows our weaknesses but if we turn to Him he will help us. Jesus chose twelve imperfect men as His disciples but He saw their potential and He sees ours.
- I =** iPRAY should be the motto we practise to grow in communion with God. We can then, like John the Baptist, say, "HE must increase, and I must decrease." We are surrounded in our world today by an increase in the 'I' phenomenon. It's a lot about 'me, myself and I'. This is a trap of the enemy. Jesus came so that we might be servants of all and put others before ourselves. See Matthew 20:28.
- E =** Exalt the Lord your God as the second Commandment says : 'I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.' Our egos are false gods and need to be put to death at the foot of the Cross to avoid this most grave temptation.
- N =** Never judge: 'You hypocrite! First take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.' (Matthew 7:3)
- C =** Care for one another with the love of the Lord for Christ has no hands or feet on earth but yours.
- E =** Endurance. Jesus said "By patient endurance you will gain your soul" (Luke 21:19). This is not a one-time race but a daily one. A continual practise so that like St Paul, we can conquer all imperfections and be able to say, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

Come Holy Spirit, help and guide each of us to attain the perfection of this much desired fruit of the Spirit. Amen.



PRAYER FOR COMMITMENT TO JESUS

Heavenly Father, give me the grace right now to place Jesus at the very centre of my life.
 Jesus, I embrace you now as Lord of my life.
 When I am sick, you are my healer.
 When I am sad, you are my joy.
 When I am weak, you are my strength.
 When I am lonely, you are my friend.
 When I am bound, you are my freedom.
 When I am downhearted, you are my victory.
 When I am in darkness, you are my light.
 When I fall into sin you are my Savior.
 When I am rejected, you are my love.
 When I am hungry, you are my bread of life.
 Lord Jesus, you are the answer to all my needs.
 I now commit my life to you.

Let Jesus gaze on you. Pope Francis tells us that the gaze of Jesus always lifts us up. "It is a look that always lifts us up, and never leaves you in your place, never lets us down, never humiliates. It invites you to get up - a look that brings you to grow, to move forward, that encourages you, because (the One who looks upon you) loves you."

MARK YOUR DIARIES

RENEWAL DAYS FOR 2022

An opportunity for fellowship with others and growth through teachings.

This year Renewal Days will be held in each region. This will allow more people to attend who currently have difficulty in travelling.

19 FEBRUARY

Western Region

St Peter's Church, 31 Guinane Street, Hoppers Crossing.

Commencing at 1pm with welcome cuppa.

18 MAY

Eastern Region

St Scholastica's Church, 348 Burwood Highway, Bennettswood. 10.30am – 1pm

SEPTEMBER

Northern Region

St Monica's, Moonee Ponds.

NOVEMBER

Southern Region

Holy Family, Doveton.

HEALING MASSES

Each Sunday	7pm, followed by Ministry. Holy Family, Doveton.
First Saturday	2.30pm–5pm Adoration, followed by Healing Mass. St Peter's, 38 Guinane Ave, Hoppers Crossing.
First Sunday	2.30pm. St Peter Chanel, Deer Park. 3pm Praise & Worship, 3.30pm Mass. St Christopher's Parish, 5 Doon Ave, Glen Waverley. <i>Suspended until further notice</i> 5.30pm Praise, Worship, Adoration 6pm Mass, followed by Prayer Ministry. St Marks, Fawkner.
First Monday	7pm Praise, 7.30pm Mass. St Joseph's, Springvale.
First Friday	8pm. St Anthony's Glenhuntly, Cnr Neerim Rd & Grange Rd, Glenhuntly. <i>Suspended until further notice</i> 7pm – 8pm Rosary, Reconciliation, Mass. St Peter's Church, 13 Davisson St, Epping. Choir – St Peter's Youth.
Third Wednesday	7.30pm. St Mary's, Castlemaine.
Third Thursday	7.30pm Praise & Worship, 8pm Mass. St Thomas the Apostle, 251 Diamond Creek Rd, Greensborough North.
Third Friday	7pm Mass, Adoration & Devotions to the Holy Cross. 707 Holy Cross Parish, Caulfield South. <i>Suspended until further notice</i>
Third Sunday	5.30pm. St Francis Xavier, Frankston. 5.30pm Praise, 6pm Mass. Good Samaritan Chapel, 1-29 Southern Cross Drive, Roxburgh Park.
Fourth Tuesday	10am Healing Service. St Joseph's, Chelsea.