

The History of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Peoria

“Renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the Church.”

The Mission of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Peoria is to stir into flame the grace of Pentecost within and beyond the Church, to evangelize, and to broaden and deepen the understanding that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the Christian inheritance of all, and to strengthen the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

In January, 1982, Bishop Edward W. O’Rourke commissioned the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois. Deacon John and Donita Curry were appointed directors of the office at 604 W. Richmond, Peoria. Under Deacon John and Donita, servant teams were formed to visit prayer groups to encourage them and to assist in spreading the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. They also sponsored retreats and conferences. After five years as Director of the Renewal, Deacon John accepted another position, and Fr. Kevin Morrison was appointed Director.

Fr. Morrison met with the prayer group leaders of the diocese and advised them in the business of the conference and in other matters. In 1988, he took a leave of absence.

At that time, plans were made to form an Advisory Board of lay people to oversee the business of the Renewal in the diocese. In January, 1989, the newly-formed Advisory Board met to elect officers and approve by-laws for presentation to the Bishop. On April 1, 1989, Bishop O’Rourke officially gave his endorsement and support to the members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Advisory Board. The Board began quarterly meetings that have continued to this time. The Advisory Board consists of Chair, Secretary, Coordinator, Treasurer, Spiritual Advisors, and a representative and alternate from each diocesan prayer group.

In 1989, Father Tom Mizeur, Spiritual Advisor, assisted the Office of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in finding more suitable office space in the Sheen Center. Later, the office moved to the Sheen Center North at 417 NE Monroe Street, sharing space with the Diocesan Archivist; and on February 15, 2006, the office moved to its current location in the Bishop Franz Center at 613 NE Jefferson Street.

The Spiritual Advisors for the Advisory Board have been Father Tom Mizeur, Father Edward Harkrader, Father Casey Kolesar (deceased), Father Terry Cassidy, Fr. Eugene Radosevich, and Deacon Greg Serangeli. The current Spiritual Advisors are Fr. Radosevich and Deacon Greg Serangeli.

The activities of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal include an annual conference, the annual spring retreat at King’s House, the annual fall Day of Recollection or Day of Reflection, and the annual Pentecost Celebration. The conference is held in either Peoria or Bloomington, and the Day of Recollection/Reflection and Pentecost Celebration are sponsored by prayer groups in their home parishes.

Deacon Bill Meyer has been Coordinator of the Renewal since 1989 and is the Diocesan Liaison. He travels throughout the diocese to assist with Life in the Spirit Seminars, Healing Masses, and other events. He will also represent our diocese at regional and national meetings for Diocesan Liaisons. Joe Skomal has been Treasurer since 1994. He works as a volunteer in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Office and takes care of daily business with the help of two or

three other volunteers. Monies from the conferences and donations by groups and individuals support the operations of the office and the expenses of the monthly newsletter. Ten percent of the income received is tithed quarterly to charities and ministries that help people in need.

In 1990, Deacon Greg Serangeli was invited to join the Advisory Board of the National Catholic Charismatic Renewal. The Diocesan Advisory Board agreed that a connection with the National Advisory Board and the work of the Holy Spirit across the nation and the world was very important for the Diocesan Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and that Deacon Greg's talents and gifts would be valuable for the work of the National Advisory Board. The Diocesan Advisory Board supported him while he served from 1990 to 2003, ministering on prayer teams, national liturgy teams, and planning committees. He continues to serve the local and national Catholic Charismatic Renewal communities as speaker for conferences and retreats.

Individual prayer groups meet weekly or biweekly, and host Life in the Spirit or Catholic Faith in Action Seminars usually either annually or biannually. Several prayer groups host monthly Healing Masses. There are currently twelve active prayer groups meeting at the following: St. Pius X Church, Rock Island; St. Joseph, Pekin; Epiphany, Normal; St. Malachy, Rantoul; St. Edward, Chillicothe; St. Thomas, Peoria; St. Anthony of Padua, Streator; Immaculate Conception, Manito; St. Mary's Cathedral, Peoria (Hispanic); St. Ann, Peoria; Holy Cross, Champaign; and in a private home in Chenoa.

A 2004 survey of the prayer groups revealed that approximately 138 people are members of the diocesan prayer groups. They and their immediate families are involved in a total of 516 ministries for the Church with many people serving in more than one ministry.

One couple serving in Israel responded to the survey as follows: "Because of our involvement in the Charismatic prayer group in Rantoul, Illinois, my wife and I [Mary and Paul Hewerdine] have been blessed by the Holy Spirit and led into serving in an ecumenical ministry in Israel for two years and now founding a Prayer and Healing ministry (Plowman Ministries, Inc.) in Tiberias overlooking the Sea of Galilee bringing our time in Israel to 5 1/2 years. We have been involved in reaching the unsaved and have been used by the Holy Spirit to change lives. We have been used to dispel misunderstandings about the Catholic Church and remain active in our parish here. We regularly work closely with a Franciscan priest involved in inner healing. The love for Christ imparted to us from the prayer group has touched Protestants, Muslims, Druze, Jews, Atheists, and Catholics from many countries of the world."

From the time of the formation of the Advisory Board in 1989, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Peoria deliberately "derives its authority by direct approval and guidance of the Bishop." (By-Laws, Article II) Each prayer group is under the approval and guidance of the pastor of the parish where they meet, and under the guidance of the Spiritual Advisors of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. At recent meetings, the Advisory Board received a calling from the Holy Spirit to go forth without fear and bring the Good News to others. The response to that calling continues to evolve.