

# CHARISMATIC RENEWAL OFFICE NEWSLETTER

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## A Conversation with Babsie Bleasdell

*Editor's Note: The January 1999 issue of NEW COVENANT magazine published an interview with Babsie Bleasdell which was conducted by Katrina J. Zeno. With Babsie being one of the featured speakers at the upper midwest regional conference on Friday and Saturday, March 19-20, 1999, that interview is republished below to introduce her to those readers who are unfamiliar with Babsie and to remind readers who have heard Babsie speak before of her love for the Lord. Thank you to Katrina for her granting permission for this republication. Reprinted by Request.*

## God's Bulldozer

*Babsie Bleasdell is founder of Word of Life Prayer Community in Trinidad and Tobago, an author and a dynamic preacher of the Word. At 77 years old, she's still circling the globe and growing in grace. Here's what's been on her mind recently.*

**NC:** *You've been speaking a lot on refurbishing the soul. Why that topic?*

**BABSIE:** I'm convinced God wants to reactivate an understanding of the soul today. My mother used to say, "Aren't you afraid to lose your soul?" We used to say, "Jesus came to save souls." Jesus himself said, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul." And the night before He died, Jesus said, "My soul is sorrowful, even unto death."

**NC:** *How does God refurbish the soul?*

**BABSIE:** He wants to heal the faculties of the soul -- our memory, understanding and will. So when God enters the soul, He must deal with a lot of junk. As He tries to deal with it, the amount of psychological pain we experience is so great that we begin to wonder if it's worth it, and we backpedal.

But if we willingly accept suffering, it purifies the soul. I was amazed at a little booklet I picked up recently entitled "The Healing Flame of Love," by Brother Leonard. He says: "We must believe that evil would not be allowed by God if He could not get good out of it. So we accept the fact of evil in our particular situation, but we do not accept the evil itself. God posits each situation to obtain a particular result."

by Katrina J. Zeno **NC:** *How have you experienced this in your life?*

**BABSIE:** One night, I was devastated because a young woman I had helped through a difficult time said to me, "You're a bulldozer." I went to God and said, "Did you hear what she told me? You know the last thing I want to be is a bulldozer." And I swear I heard God chuckle and say, "The kingdom of God needs bulldozers, too." I perked up and said, "Is it OK for me to be a bulldozer?" And He said, "What city can be built without a bulldozer?" In my spirit I understood that a bulldozer is brought in to fill up the hollows and level the ground so the building can start. When the workers are finished with it, they park the bulldozer on the side and don't use it until there's another lot to clear. So I thought, "This means when your work is finished, get out of the way and give the building time to grow."

That's been one of the greatest revelations of my life. It came out of intense suffering, but the Lord was giving me the gift of self-revelation. Embedded in each of us is the charism God wants to use every day, but it only gets drawn out over time, through suffering and painful circumstances.

**NC:** *We've all seen friends suffer despite their best efforts to do something about it. What's going on?*

**BABSIE:** God wants to move our knowledge from the head to the heart. The night of the bulldozer story, I told the Lord, "I want you to slash my heart and put the knowledge in my heart because that's where the action is." As I said, "Slash my heart," I felt as if my heart would break. But then I thought, Jesus has a wounded heart, and Mary, too. A true Christian will have two foolproof marks: the anointing of the Holy Spirit and a slashed heart. And out of that slashed heart will flow grace to others.

**NC:** *What do you mean by grace?*

**BABSIE:** If I were to give one simple definition of grace it would be this: Grace is the unmerited gift of God given to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All we need to do is appropriate it. We don't even ask for it if we've been baptized and confirmed. Every sacrament is an encounter with Christ that imparts grace to us if we are smart enough to receive it. That's my whole concept of grace.

**NC:** *It sounds simple, but what about in practice?*

**BABSIE:** Let me tell you what happens in practice. Five years ago I experienced a great trial. My younger sister was diagnosed with terminal cancer. The last three weeks of her life, I was very tired. I was working all day and staying with her all night. Then, after a particularly rugged night, I entered her room and

thought, "Lord Jesus, I'm going to have another night like last night, and all I want to do is scream." But then I said to God: "If I scream, You'll get no mileage out of it. My family will say, 'When things are going OK, it's easy to praise God, but now that Babsie is tired, she screams -- and any pagan can scream.'" So I continued: "Lord, You promised to be with us always, and where You are, there is everything I need. I'm going to sit here until You give me the grace of peace. Infuse me with grace. Let Your peace penetrate every pore of my body, touch every nerve, artery, every vital organ. Let my whole nervous system come under Your grace."

Total peace enveloped me, and I was able to look after my sister until she died, attend the funeral, do the eulogy and everybody was saying, "How can you be so peaceful?" and I'd say, "It's grace."

**NC:** *What would you say to someone who's in a dark night?*

**BABSIE:** I would take them to the psalms. When I had a dark night, I was led to Psalm 63, where it says, "As dry land longs for water so my soul longs for you my God." As I read it, I thought, David experienced this dark night and he cried out to God. If David was so special to God, and he had this dryness, then it's OK for me to have it.

After the dryness passed, God looked to me bigger, more loving, more powerful, more visible, more available than before. The longing God puts in our hearts in the dark night is a preparation for the next coming, when He's going to reveal himself in a deeper way. Since He's infinite, none of us can bear Him all at once, so He gives himself to us in portions. We think we have enough, but God knows how much more He has to give, so He withdraws. When we are threatened by His absence, then we long for His presence and cry out day and night, "My soul longs for you, my God."

**NC:** *Is there another kind of suffering besides the dark night?*

**BABSIE:** In the dark night, you experience the absence of God more than the presence. All the anointing and consolations are gone, but you know God is somewhere. There's another kind of suffering brought on by life circumstances that seems like a death. We experience some kind of loss that we think we can never retrieve. We think we can't live without it and we are consumed by the pain.

**NC:** *What's the best way to handle this pain?*

**BABSIE:** You have to look it straight in the face and confront it. When the Israelites were stung by snakes in the desert, God gave Moses a remedy against death. He said to make an image of the snake and put it on a pole and those who look at the snake will be healed. It's the same thing with our deepest pain -- if we can look at it and realize that God has allowed it not to kill us, but to continue to heal us and to refurbish our souls.

*Katrina Zeno, a writer and speaker, is cofounder of Women Toward the Third Millennium.*

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Readers may have noticed that the first event listed under "UPCOMING EVENTS" in the January NEWSLETTER indicated that the All City Prayer Meeting at St. Mark Church in St. Paul was rescheduled for "Thursday, February 28, 1999". February 28 is, of course, a Sunday, and the event, in fact, occurred on Thursday, **January 28**. Our sincerest apologies for anyone who might have wanted to hear Matthew Cramer speak on GOD, THE FATHER.
- Please note that UPCOMING EVENTS will no longer be listed in the NEWSLETTER proper. We are taking this step not only to attempt to eliminate errors such as occurred last month, but also to provide you with the most current information possible and to

allow you to "stick" the listing, now done in an insert format, to your refrigerator or bulletin board.

- Hopefully, in view of the fact that registration forms have been sent with prior mailings of the NEWSLETTER, all readers are aware that the Regional Conference this year is going to be at Gangelhoff Center on the campus of Concordia University on Friday and Saturday, March 19-20, 1999. Speakers at the conference will be Archbishop Harry Flynn, Rudy Pruden, a member of the National Service Committee, Fr. Bob Bedard, pastor of a charismatic parish in Ottawa, Ontario, and liaison for the Charismatic Renewal in Canada, and Babsie Bleasdel, a well-known international speaker and founder of the Word of Life Prayer Community in Trinidad and Tobago. The conference will close on Saturday evening with a concert by Bob Bennett, a popular Christian recording artist.
- The conference will also include a Priests' Track from 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. on the afternoon of Friday, March 19. The speaker at the Priests' Track will be Fr. Rick Simon from Chicago. Fr. Simon is involved in charismatic renewal and is the liaison of the Archbishop of Chicago to Hispanic prayer groups. Fr. Simon is also a frequent speaker at Marian Conferences. His theme for the Priests' Track is "Pleasing the Father". Please pray for our priests and encourage them to attend what should be a very meaningful event.
- Thank you to Otto Lausten of the Immaculate Conception Prayer Community for providing the graphics for last month's issue of the NEWSLETTER.

## Charismatic??? (Revisited)

*Editor's Note: In the November/December 1998 issue of the NEWSLETTER, readers were encouraged to submit their definitions of the word "Charismatic". It was indicated that representative definitions would be published in a future issue of the NEWSLETTER. Published below is a definition submitted by **Doug Yocum**.*

In order to explain my concept of the word "charismatic", I must first state my understanding of the meanings of the Greek root words "charis" and "charism". I understand "charis" to mean grace, a quality of the divine life of God Himself. "Charism" is that grace or quality of God when in the form of a gift given by God. Founded upon those concepts, "charismatic" means having a habit or practice of actively seeking to receive and use the quality of the divine life of God (the grace) which He willingly gives. So, "charismatic" is an adjective describing both a recipient and that recipient's response to God's gift-giving, specifically because that response results in the recipient becoming more like the Gift-Giver Himself. This concept of "charismatic" may include, but certainly is not limited to, conduct such as participation in prayer and praise groups; manifestation of any gifts of the Holy Spirit as named by St. Paul; and experiences of exuberant and ecstatic worship. Private contemplation and silent or solemn worship of God can be equally "charismatic". One might suggest that my understanding of "charismatic" is rather broad. But God is infinite, after all.

### Questions & Answers

Have any questions about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, charismatic spirituality, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal as a movement of the Holy Spirit? Send them to:

Q & A CRO  
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We'll do our best to answer all questions in a future issue of the CRO NEWSLETTER.

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## **Eventos Próximos Latinos**

**Seminario de vida en el Espíritu**, sábado, 20 de marzo de 9am-5pm en el Gangelhoff Center de Concordia University (equina avenidas Marshall y Hamline en St. Paul). Para más información llame al (612) 721-2543 o al (612) 574-0092. **Misión Redentorista**, 21 al 26 de marzo de 6-8pm, (además habrán sesiones por las mañanas de 10:03am-12, lunes a viernes) con la Comunidad Sagrado Corazón de Jesús en la iglesia de San Esteban (St. Stephen) en Minneapolis. Para más información llame al (612) 870-2268.