

**In this issue:** *Charles Whitehead: "We're going to see a more relaxed, open and simple papacy, a more collaborative and collegial approach to the government of the Church, a simpler and more direct proclamation of Jesus the Saviour of the world." For Charles was Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio the man the Cardinal electors were going to choose. He tells us why.*

## POPE FRANCIS, RENEWAL, EVANGELISATION AND ECUMENISM

Charles Whitehead:

'Just after 7 p.m. on Wednesday, March 13th, like millions of people all over the world, Sue and I were watching television, eagerly awaiting the announcement of the name of the 267th Successor of St. Peter. As the Senior Cardinal Deacon pronounced the name of *Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio* of Buenos Aires, Argentina, we were absolutely delighted. This was not a name that had featured very much in the speculation of recent weeks about who was '*papabile*', but I had begun to feel increasingly confident that this was the man the Cardinal electors were going to choose. Why did I feel this, and why were we so excited when his name was announced?

### Charismatic Consultation 2005

In February 2005, in my role as the new Chairman of ICC, the *International Charismatic Consultation on World Evangelisation*, we had travelled to Buenos Aires with some members of the ICC Council, Lutheran, Reformed, Pentecostal and Catholic, some accompanied by their wives, and with our Anglican administrator Fran Armitage, to meet the leaders of a number of different churches and fellowships. Our purpose was to promote ecumenical relations and activities in accordance with the vision of ICC.

The International Charismatic Consultation was formed in 1984 by Rev. Michael Harper, Fr. Tom Forrest and Rev. Larry Christenson with a vision for 3 things: Renewal in the Holy Spirit; greater unity among Christians; and the call to take the Gospel to the whole world together. So we had gone to Buenos Aires to further this vision among the churches there, and our first visit was to the Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

### Support for our vision

He received us very warmly, welcoming us to his city and clearly expressing his support for our vision and mission. As we talked together it was immediately clear that here was a man who was already doing what we had come to promote - he was in good and open relationships with the leaders of the other denominations and fellowships. We found him to be a gracious, humble, humorous, courageous and very intelligent man, pastorally sensitive, prayerful, and totally committed to the Person of Jesus Christ and the task of making Him known to all. For this to happen, he recognised the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in creating harmony among church leaders. As our discussions came to an end and we prepared to leave, he knelt down and asked us to pray for him - particularly the women, whose prayers were always very powerful! Hands were laid on him as we prayed for him and with him, and we left with his encouragement and blessing for all that we were going to do in the days ahead.

### Surprising ways

Since that day I have thought of him and prayed for him from time to time, and was encouraged to hear that in the previous conclave, when Pope Benedict XVI was chosen, he had attracted good support. The short time we spent with him in 2005 had convinced us that he was a remarkable man of God, and my feeling in the run-up to this latest conclave was quite simply that he was a man '*for just such a time as this*' (Esther 4:14). What we have seen since his election has confirmed me in this view, and I'm eagerly looking forward to the Holy Spirit powerfully working through him in surprising ways in the weeks and months ahead. His choice of the name Francis is very significant and I'm sure we're going to see a more relaxed, open and

simple papacy, a more collaborative and collegial approach to the government of the Church, a simpler and more direct proclamation of Jesus the Saviour of the world, and an even greater concern for the poor and oppressed. It's my hope that the important place of the laity will be promoted and developed and we'll see even closer relationships between church leaders. All of this is Good News, so please join us in praying for this humble but courageous man of God - Pope Francis.'

(c) Charles Whitehead

### **Renewal, evangelization and ecumenism**

Ralph Martin, President of Renewal Ministries, knows that pope Francis is friendly towards the charismatic renewal, evangelization and ecumenism. Ralph wrote on his website: 'Several people have sent me photos of Pope Francis, while he was still Archbishop of Buenos Aires, asking a group of evangelical pastors to pray over him with Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa standing at his side. In fact, a Pentecostal minister posted this picture on the

web, noting that Cardinal Bergoglio was very involved over the years in the annual dialogue between Catholics and Pentecostals (Encuentros Fraternos entre Católicos y Evangélicos en el Espíritu Santo) as well as in the retreats for priests and pastors that were organized before each meeting. He went on to write: "I'm overjoyed with the election of Bergoglio, a man filled with the Spirit and with a deep commitment to ecumenism." (See <http://www.renewalministries.net/wordpress/?p=402>)

### **Renewal in Argentina**

Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was the contact person for the Renewal in Argentina. The 'Basic Guidelines' in 2012 approved by the Argentinian bishops recognise and define the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Argentina as a 'stream of grace'. (See [http://iccrs.org/en/index.php/blog/comments/argentinian\\_bishops\\_recognise\\_ccr\\_as\\_a\\_stream\\_of\\_grace](http://iccrs.org/en/index.php/blog/comments/argentinian_bishops_recognise_ccr_as_a_stream_of_grace))

Kees Slijkerman

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