

ABSTRACT

Roman Catholic teaching developed since Vatican II (1962 – 1965) enunciates that Jesus Christ established and ordained a male clergy through his appointment of twelve male disciples. Predicated on this, Roman Catholic women over the epochs have been denied ordination and access into the most influential positions of spiritual authority. In the island of Trinidad however, a handful of women created a unique space for agency that has not been a focus of in depth inquiry. This has been achieved through the emergence of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement (1971), a spirit filled upsurge that energized the entire Church. Through the establishment of powerful prayer ministries, women became the founders of a new “female centred” spiritual wave; they were all pioneers establishing their own Renewal Communities, and in many instances singlehandedly administering spiritual affairs.

These meetings formed an environment for divine visitation, manifested through the mass bestowal of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of Glossolalia/speaking in tongues. This phenomenon could not be contained - the meetings soon expanded throughout the island and as the years progressed, some felt called to establish residential communities, which enhanced the visibility of the Renewal.

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Methodology, this study examines the lived experiences of female pioneers and leaders of the Renewal. The dissertation explored the conditions which led to the creation of a cadre of female leadership within the Roman Catholic Church which I have termed the “*Women Eklektos*” or Women Elect. The Renewal in Trinidad has produced an autonomous theological space created by women for women, independent of a feminist agenda, however undeniably woman centred in its character.

Key Words: Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement, Glossolalia, Interpretative Phenomenology.