

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS

Laity Today

*The Ecclesial Movements
in the Pastoral Concern
of the Bishops*



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FOREWORD

In the teachings that John Paul II has dedicated to the ecclesial movements and the new communities ever since the beginning of his pontificate, the relation between the charismatic dimension of the Church and her institutional dimension returns again and again. Recently he wrote: "I have often had occasion to stress that there is no conflict or opposition in the Church between the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension, of which the Movements are a significant expression. Both are co-essential to the divine constitution of the Church founded by Jesus, because they both help to make the mystery of Christ and his saving grace present in the world" (Message to the participants at the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 28 May 1998, 6). The Holy Father excludes any ecclesiology that presumes an incompatibility or dialectical opposition between these two dimensions. He sees, on the contrary, a relation of complementarity between them.

Two further texts of John Paul II may help us to better understand this complementarity between the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension. I refer to two passages in which the Holy Father speaks of the relation between the Marian dimension of the Church and her Apostolic-Petrine dimension. The Pope here refers to a theology of the Christian experience based on archetypes and models of faith, founded on the relation between Mary, Peter, John and Paul. Addressing the Roman Curia on 22 December 1987, John Paul II said: "This *Marian* profile is just as—if not even more—fundamental and characteristic for the Church as the *apostolic* and *Petrine* profile to which it is fundamentally united [...] The Marian dimension of the Church is antecedent to that of the Petrine, without in any way being divided from it or being less complementary" (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II* 10, 3 (1987), 1483-1484). In his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris*

Dignitatem of 1988, the Holy Father reaffirmed that the Church is both “Marian” and “Apostolic-Petrine” (no. 27).

In these two texts, instead of speaking directly of the charismatic and institutional dimension of the constitution of the Church, the Pope preferred to emphasize the fact that the Church in her essence has a Marian profile and a Petrine profile. But there is a close analogy between the Marian-Pauline profile of the church and its charismatic dimension, on the one hand, and between the Apostolic-Petrine profile and its institutional dimension, on the other.

The Pope’s references to the Marian-Pauline and Apostolic-Petrine profiles of the Church suggest another way of considering the theological *locus* of the ecclesial movements. In view of the perspectives that these teachings open up to reflection on the constitution of the Church, I would like briefly to dwell on them.

The New Testament presents a constellation of four of Jesus’s disciples who became the representative paradigm of the Christian experience: namely, Mary, John the Evangelist, Peter and Paul. Three of them—Mary, John and Peter—were the persons closest to Jesus. The fourth, Paul, describes himself as “one untimely born” (1 Cor 15:8). These four disciples compose what Hans Urs von Balthasar called the *Christological constellation*.

The law of the Incarnation requires that the continuity of Jesus’s relation with his disciples after his Ascension should occur in human form: Jesus’s experience of God is incommunicable in its fullness. But having ascended to the Father (Jn 6:38-39), he is offered to those eyewitnesses who served him, who did not seek their own honour, and were willing to surrender themselves to him and to others even to the point of martyrdom. They proclaimed that they had seen, touched and heard the Father in Jesus.

The relationships of these four disciples with Jesus and among each other set up an essential model or paradigm that holds good for the community of disciples in every period. They have a normative character for the Church in every time and in every place.

Also to understand the relation between charismatic realities on the

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one hand and bishops and priests on the other, it is useful to meditate on the Gospel constellation we have just mentioned. The Pope clearly interprets these movements as charismatic manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The model for the relation between the new communities and the hierarchical structure of the Church may therefore be sought in the original community gathered round Jesus, especially in Peter, Paul and Mary.

Peter is the one whose name was changed by Jesus. Hans Urs von Balthasar has offered us some useful points for reflection in this regard. Suddenly, at Caesarea Philippi, without any warning, Peter was stripped of his person, his civic identity ("Simon the son of John"), and assumed into office ("You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church") (cf. *Mt* 16:17-18). There was a profound purpose in this. In the community of disciples called the Church there is no room for roles, only for mission. Try as he might Simon would never have been able to discover his identity as a disciple of Jesus simply by analysing his role as Simon. He could have explored every region of his personality and would never have found Peter there. The form of Peter was only present in the mystery of the Lord's intentions. It is Jesus who presents it to Peter. He is unyielding, demanding obedience. Only in the form of Peter will Simon be able to understand Christ's word. Whenever Simon follows the idea he had of himself as Simon, he will go dangerously astray. Contrariwise he will hit the mark when he refuses to listen to the promptings of his flesh and blood and attends only to the mission that reveals the Father's will to him.

Throughout all ages Christians have acknowledged that the one of the Twelve whom Jesus condemned bitterly as a "scandal", "a stumbling block" (cf. *Mt* 16:23), was the one he appointed as the shepherd of the whole flock, as the rock on which the whole Church is founded. The Petrine and Apostolic succession rests on an horizontal dimension in the history that begins at Caesarea Philippi. Peter has the right to claim authority in doctrine and leadership and to demand unity. This prerogative is his alone. But it does not isolate him from the others; above all it does not separate Peter from Paul and Mary.

Paul too has a mission as founder and he too continues to live and

be represented within the Church. Paul, on the other hand, was foisted on the Twelve without having been chosen by them. His calling, however, was authenticated by them and he knew that this authentication was absolutely essential for his apostolic ministry.

The Pauline experience of faith and witness in the New Testament proceeds vertically from heaven to earth. It is clear, therefore, that his position as apostle, chosen directly by the Risen Lord and accredited by the college of the Twelve, is unique in its own way. But there may be experiences in the history of the Church that are analogically close to that of Paul: there can be charismatic vocations, whose official recognition and acceptance into office are, so to say, compelled by divine evidence. The Christological constellation of Peter and Paul thus offers a perspective for considering the mission of the ecclesial movements in the Church in a new way.

The Marian dimension of the Church indicates the action of the charisms of the Holy Spirit beginning with the *fiat* with which Mary replied to the word of God. There can be no genuine objectivity in the Church, there can be no persuasive exercise of the hierarchical office that does not presuppose the characteristic contemplative dwelling of the Holy Spirit and then of Mary. The unity-in-distinction between the divine Word (institutional) and the Spirit of the Father (charismatic) is sacramentally and archetypically revealed in the two disciples Peter and Mary. The Petrine-hierarchical-institutional dimension of the Church always presupposes the Marian-charismatic action of the Holy Spirit to which it owes its origin. The Marian dimension reaches its fulfilment in the Petrine-sacramental dimension of the Church. The Marian and Petrine dimensions presuppose the fusing together in the Church of objectivity and subjectivity, of the Word and of the Spirit.

The papal Magisterium thus offers us an undoubtedly stimulating perspective on the reality of the ecclesial movements.

In the light of these considerations it is easier to understand why the Pontifical Council for the Laity decided to invite a significant group of bishops to Rome in June 1999 to reflect and dialogue on the reality of the movements in the Church. On 30 May 1998, on the Vigil of Pentecost, the movements had been the protagonists of an extraordinary

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meeting with the Holy Father in St. Peter's Square. In the days preceding this event a congress had been held, at which theological reflection on the nature of the movements had been deepened and the representatives of the various ecclesial groups had had an opportunity to meet among each other and with other guests, including numerous bishops. In his address in St. Peter's Square John Paul II launched a heartfelt appeal to all Christians: "Open yourselves meekly to the gifts of the Spirit! Accept gratefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow on us!" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 1-2 June 1998, 6). A year following these events the Pontifical Council for the Laity believed it appropriate to continue the reflection on the movements by promoting a dialogue on the questions they raise among those who have pastoral responsibility for them in the Church. We are delighted that the Prefects of the Congregations for Bishops and for the Doctrine of the Faith warmly shared our intention and actively contributed to its realization. We are also, it goes without saying, very grateful to the bishops who, in spite of all their many serious commitments, have found the way to come to Rome, in many cases from distant lands, and to dedicate three whole days to the work of this seminar.

These days spent together were very demanding. Apart from moments of reflection and dialogue, the programme of the seminar comprised each day the celebration of lauds and the celebration of vespers and of the Eucharist. In the judgement of many of those present, these moments of common prayer helped to give to this seminar its particular spiritual character: it was not just an occasion, however precious, for study, but an authentic expression of ecclesial life. I am convinced that we have been placed in the presence of the Holy Spirit in a genuine experience of the Church as communion. The attentive listening, the sympathetic sharing of positive experiences, and also of some painful ones, turned this seminar into a dialogue of redemption. This meeting of bishops from every continent and from so many different countries offered us a universal perspective that opened up new horizons for us all.

What has been most evident to me is the profound sympathy of the bishops. I use the word *sympathy* in its profoundest Christian sense.

James Francis Card. Stafford

The participants at the seminar repeatedly emphasized how important it is that the bishop should *accompany* the various communities present in his diocese. The phrase often used to describe this responsibility of the bishops is very significant. It was said that the bishop ought to show a father's solicitude for the movements and communities; he ought to exercise a spiritual paternity towards them. This phrase finds a confirmation in the appeal that the Council made to bishops: "In exercising the office of father and pastor the bishop should be with his people as one who serves, as a good shepherd who knows his sheep and whose sheep know him, as a true father who excels in his love and solicitude for all, to whose divinely conferred authority all submit. He should so unite and mould his flock into one family that all, conscious of their duties, may live and act in the communion of charity" (Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, no. 16). If we apply this text to the pastoral care of the ecclesial movements, it is clear that the bishop is urged to accompany them as one who serves. This service of the bishop is essential if the charisms that the Spirit gives to the Church are to be accepted and bear fruit.

For this reason the Pontifical Council for the Laity is glad to be able to offer the present volume in the first place to the bishops. We are certain that the bishops and all those who have pastoral responsibility for the movements will find in these pages valuable aids to guide them in the exercise of their delicate task. The material produced by the seminar's work and published here represents as a whole a further contribution towards a better understanding of the relation between the charismatic dimension and the institutional dimension of the Church. It testifies to a dialogue which will have to be continued for the good of the movements, for the good of the Church, and for the good of the men and women to whom the Church is called to announce the Gospel today.

J. Francis Card. Stafford
President
of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

EDITORIAL NOTE

The present volume contains the proceedings of a seminar held in Rome from 16 to 18 June 1999, promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in collaboration with the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on the theme: "Ecclesial Movements and New Communities in the Pastoral Concern of the Bishops". Participation in the seminar was reserved for diocesan bishops and the heads of the various offices of the Roman Curia invited by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Over one hundred cardinals and bishops coming from every part of the world thus gathered together for three days of work, prayer and community in the seat of the Pontifical University "Regina Apostolorum", kindly placed at the seminar's disposal by the congregation of the Legionaries of Christ.

After the opening address by the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Cardinal Stafford, the seminar was opened on Wednesday, 16 June, with a report by the Council's Secretary, Bishop Stanisław Rylko, who discussed the ecclesiological and pastoral consequences of the Pope's meeting with the movements on the occasion of Pentecost 1998. Immediately after, the Under-Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Prof. Guzmán Carriquiry, offered his reflections on the significance of the movements in the religious and cultural context of the present day.

Apart from the reports, the programme of the seminar provided ample scope for discussion. During the periods set aside for it there was a lively exchange of views of the bishops present among themselves and with the invited speakers. Unfortunately it is not possible here to provide a comprehensive documentation of these debates, enriched by the wide-ranging experiences of bishops coming from very different situations. But an exception needs to be made for the dialogue that the Pre-

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fect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, His Eminence Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, had with the bishops present on the afternoon of Wednesday, 16 June. The important report that Cardinal Ratzinger had presented to the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in the previous year, had in fact been adopted as point of departure for the joint reflection.¹ In view of the historical approach that Cardinal Ratzinger had adopted on that occasion, it seemed appropriate to precede the dialogue with the Cardinal with a report entrusted to Father Fidel González Fernández, M.C.C.I., Professor of History of the Church at the Pontifical Urbanian and Gregorian Universities. As will be seen, the dialogue between the bishops and Cardinal Ratzinger was widened to consider the reality of the movements in the overall perspective of the life of the Church and her mission in the contemporary world.

On Thursday, 16 June, the pastoral experience of the individual bishops came to the fore. The morning was dedicated to a round table chaired by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Bishops, His Eminence Cardinal Lucas Moreira Neves. After he had recalled some fundamental aspects of the relation between universal Church and local Church, five bishops and cardinals described what the movements have represented and still represent for them personally and for the life of their local Churches. His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, who was unable to attend the seminar in person, had sent a written text of his intervention. In the afternoon, the exchange of experiences continued in various work groups.

Although the seminar was essentially characterized as a forum to enable the invited bishops to meet together and exchange views, it was of course appropriate that they be given an opportunity to engage directly with the reality of the movements as it is lived by their mem-

¹ Cf. J. RATZINGER, "The Ecclesial Movements: a Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church", in *Movements in the Church. Proceedings of the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, Rome, 27-29 May 1998*, (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 23-51.

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bers. To this end, a round table was planned for the morning of Friday, 18 June, to which the founders or directors of the various movements or communities participated. The testimony of Msgr. Giussani, who was unable to be present in person, was read by his close assistant, Father Stefano Alberto.

The last session of the seminar, on the afternoon of Friday, 18 June, was dedicated to the questions of a juridical character, with the contributions of three leading canon lawyers: Archbishop Lluís Martínez Sistach of Tarragona (Spain), Father Gianfranco Ghirlanda, S.J., professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University, and Giorgio Feliciani, Professor at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan.

The Holy Father sent an autograph message to the bishops participating in the seminar. It was read out at the end of the proceedings.

Message of His Holiness John Paul II to the Participants in the Seminar

Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate!

1. **Y**ou have come to Rome from countries on every continent to reflect together on your concerns as Pastors for ecclesial movements and new communities. It is the first time that the Pontifical Council for the Laity, in collaboration with the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith and for Bishops, has assembled such a large and distinguished group of bishops to examine together ecclesial realities which I have not hesitated to describe as “providential”,¹ because of their encouraging contributions to the life of God’s People.

Thank you for coming and for your commitment to this important pastoral field. I also express to the organizers, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith and for the Bishops, my warm congratulations for this initiative which will certainly benefit the Church’s mission in the contemporary world.

The seminar, which has occupied you over the last few days, happily belongs to an apostolic project very dear to me, which stems from my meeting with the members of over fifty of these movements and communities in St. Peter’s Square on 30 May last year. I am certain that the results of your reflection will make themselves felt, thus helping to ensure that this project and this meeting yield ever more abundant fruits for the good of the whole Church.

¹ Cf. *Address on the Occasion of the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities*, 30 May 1998, no. 7, *L’Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 3 June 1998, p. 2; reprinted in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 223.

2. The Council's Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops expresses the very heart of the episcopal ministry in these words: "When they exercise their teaching role, Bishops should proclaim the Gospel of Christ to people. This is one of the principal duties of Bishops. Fortified by the Spirit they should call on men and women to believe or should strengthen them when they already have a living faith. They should expound to them the whole mystery of Christ, that is, all those truths ignorance of which means ignorance of Christ".² Every Pastor's concern to reach people and to speak to their hearts, their minds, their freedom and their thirst for happiness is born of Christ's own concern for man, his compassion for those whom he compares to a flock without a shepherd (cf. *Mk* 6:34 and *Mt* 9:36), and it echoes Paul's apostolic zeal: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (*1 Cor* 9:16). In our times the challenges of the new evangelization are often presented in dramatic terms and spur the Church, in particular her Pastors, to seek new forms of missionary proclamation and action that best meet the demands of our era.

Among today's most urgent pastoral tasks, I would first like to point out the need to care for communities in which there is a deeper awareness of the grace connected with the sacraments of Christian initiation, which give rise to the vocation to be Gospel witnesses in all areas of life. The dramatic events of our time spur believers to the essentials of the Christian experience and message in their everyday encounters and friendships, for a journey of faith illuminated by the joy of communication. Another pastoral priority, not to be underestimated, is the formation of Christian communities as authentic places of welcome for everyone, with constant care for the specific needs of each individual. Without these communities it becomes more and more difficult to grow in faith and one succumbs to the temptation of reducing to a fragmentary and occasional experience a faith which, on the contrary, ought to enliven the whole of human experience.

² VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus*, no. 12.

3. It is in this context that the theme of your seminar on the ecclesial movements should be seen. If on 30 May 1998 I spoke in St. Peter's Square of "a new Pentecost", referring to the growth of charisms and movements which has occurred in the Church since the Second Vatican Council, I wished, by using this expression, to acknowledge the development of the movements and new communities as a source of hope for the Church's missionary action. In fact, because of the secularization that has weakened or even extinguished faith in many hearts and led the way to irrational beliefs, the Church finds herself in many parts of the world having to respond to an environment similar to that of her origins.

I am well aware that the movements and the new communities, like any endeavour that develops in human history, even under divine influence, have not only aroused positive reactions in recent years. As I said on 30 May 1998, their "unexpected newness [...] has given rise to questions, uneasiness and tensions: at times it has led to presumptions and excesses on the one hand, and on the other, to numerous prejudices and reservations".³ But in the common witness given that day by those gathered round the Successor of Peter and numerous bishops, I saw and still see the arrival of a "new stage [that] is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity", although in full knowledge that "this does not mean that all problems have been solved". Rather, this maturity "is a challenge. A road to take".⁴

This journey requires of movements an ever stronger communion with the Pastors whom God has chosen and consecrated to gather and sanctify his people in the light of faith, hope and charity, because "no charism dispenses a person from reference and submission to the Pastors of the Church".⁵ Thus it is the task of the movements to share their charismatic riches with humility and generosity within the communion and mission of the local Churches.

³ JOHN PAUL II, "Address on the Occasion of the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities", 30 May 1998, no. 6, in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 222.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 24.

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Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, I ask you, whose task it is to discern the authenticity of charisms in order to make the best use of them within the Church, to show fatherly magnanimity and far-sighted charity (cf. *1 Cor* 13:4) towards these realities, because every human achievement requires time and patience for its proper and indisputable purification. The Second Vatican Council's words are clear: "Those who have charge over the Church should judge the genuineness and proper use of these gifts, through their office, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good (cf. *1 Thes* 5:12, 19-21)",⁶ so that all charisms in their diversity and complementarity may work together for the common good.⁷

I am convinced, venerable Brothers, that your attentive and heartfelt willingness, together with appropriate meetings for prayer, reflection and friendship, will make your authority more welcome but also more demanding, your instructions more effective and incisive, and the ministry entrusted to you to use the charisms for "the common good" more fruitful. Your first duty, in fact, is to open the eyes and heart and mind to recognize the many forms of the Spirit's presence in the Church, to examine them closely and to lead them all to unity in truth and charity.

4. In the meetings I have had with the ecclesial movements and new communities, I have frequently stressed the close connections between their experience and the reality of the local Churches and the universal Church of which they are the fruit and, at the same time, a missionary expression. Last year, in addressing the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, I publicly noted "their willingness to devote their energies to the service of the See of Peter and the local Churches".⁸ In fact, one of the most impor-

⁶ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 12.

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 30.

⁸ JOHN PAUL II, "Message to the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, no. 2, in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 16.

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tant fruits produced by the movements is precisely that of knowing how to release in so many lay faithful, men and women, adults and young people, an ardent missionary zeal, which is indispensable for the Church as she prepares to cross the threshold of the third millennium. However, this objective is only achieved where “these movements humbly seek to become part of the life of local Churches and are welcomed by bishops and priests within diocesan and parish structures”.⁹

What does this really mean in terms of the apostolate and pastoral action? This was precisely one of the key questions posed at your seminar. How should this special gift which the Spirit offers to the Church be received at our time in history? How can it be welcomed in all its importance, in all its fullness and in all its dynamism? Answering these questions in a satisfactory way is your responsibility as Pastors. Your great responsibility is not to impede the Spirit’s gift, but, on the contrary, to make it bear ever greater fruit in service to all Christian people.

I fervently hope that your seminar will be a source of encouragement and inspiration for many bishops in their pastoral ministry. May Mary, Bride of the Holy Spirit, help you to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church today (cf. *Rv* 2:7). I am close to you in fraternal solidarity and accompany you in prayer. I gladly bless you and all whom divine Providence has entrusted to your pastoral care.

From the Vatican, 18 June 1999.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joannes Paulus II". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line under the final "II".

⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 72.

I

The Reality of the Movements in the Church

The Event of 30 May 1998 and its Ecclesiological and Pastoral Consequences for the Life of the Church

Bishop STANISŁAW RYŁKO

Anyone who was able to be present at the Pope's Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities on the vigil of Pentecost 1998 will have immediately grasped that he or she was witnessing an event of extraordinary importance. On that day, a large segment of the people of the ecclesial movements and the new communities thronged St. Peter's Square. And to contain this crowd, filled with an almost tangible enthusiasm for the faith and with missionary fervour, the piazza seemed to have expanded outwards to reach the banks of the Tiber. In huge numbers, and from all over the world, they had come to Rome in response to the invitation of John Paul II. It was indeed the Pope himself who had desired this meeting and who had wanted this "common witness" to take place in the year dedicated to the Holy Spirit in the context of the preparations for the Great Jubilee.¹

The meeting of 30 May 1998 was the outcome of a long and demanding process of spiritual preparation, which the movements had undertaken under the guidance of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and which was, in itself, an extremely significant experience. This preparation had begun immediately after the Holy Father's invitation and lasted for almost two years, during which dialogue and collaboration created a climate of extraordinary communion.

¹ JOHN PAUL II, "Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities", in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 220.

The “common witness” called for by the Pope had two phases. The first was the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements. It too was an event of great importance. It was held in Rome from 27 to 29 May 1998. It was attended by some 350 delegates from about fifty movements coming from all over the world, together with many bishops and priests. The Congress was intended to provide an opportunity for a more direct exchange, and more immediate contacts between founders and leaders of the movements. But, above all, it aimed to provide a forum for a deeper reflection—from an ecclesiological and pneumatological standpoint—on the reality of the movements in the life and mission of the Church. The starting-point for this reflection was the Pope’s autograph Message to the participants. It was followed by various theological contributions, including the fundamental report of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on the theme, *The Ecclesial Movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church*.² Round-table discussions and working groups further enriched the debate. The Congress thus represented a serious step forward in the necessary reflection on the ecclesial identity of the movements, and aroused great interest.

The second and culminating phase of the “common witness” was the Meeting of the Pope with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities on 30 May 1998. This was an unprecedented event, because it was the first time that John Paul II had met the movements all together. It was an extremely important ecclesial event, because it was a true epiphany of the Church in the wealth of the gifts and charisms lavished on her by the Holy Spirit. In that open-air pentecostal gathering, where each person’s diversity was respected, an experience of genuine communion was shared. It was not—as some had feared—a form of self-glorification by the movements. Rather, it was a great festival of the Church, in her desire—in preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Redemption—to deepen her self-awareness and to

² Cf. J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesial Movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church”. in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 23-51.

assume, with renewed fervour, her mission in the world. John Paul chose the significant moment of the vigil of Pentecost to reaffirm the salient points of his magisterium on the movements and to reconfirm the trust and expectations he places in them. At the close of the celebration, the missionary mandate took place, another eloquent reminder that it is the movements' mission to respond fully to their own vocation. With great force the Pope told them: "Today, from this Square, Christ says to each of you: 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation' (Mk 16:15)". And with particular emphasis he added: "He is counting on every one of you, and so is the Church".³

The Meeting of 30 May 1998 left a deep imprint on the life of the ecclesial movements and new communities. They consider it a real milestone along their way. Not by chance did the Pope say to them that day: "Today a new stage is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity. This does not mean that all problems have been solved. Rather, it is challenge. A road to take. The Church expects from you the 'mature' fruits of communion and commitment".⁴ The Pope's words are demanding, his programme is arduous.

As time passes, the more the providential nature of that event becomes clear. During the meeting of delegates from the movements, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity on 7 November 1998, a preliminary assessment of it was attempted. What emerged, in the first place, from this review was that the Pope's meeting with the movements had been felt as an experience of the Church. And here I would like to share with you some of the more eloquent testimonies in this sense: "It was an extraordinary expression of the beauty of the Church in the wealth of her charisms"; "a manifestation of the Church as mother, who welcomes and values all charisms, even the smallest"; "an experience of the Church as a family"; "a manifestation of the Church's vitality expressed in her lay component"; "a moment of powerful and

³ JOHN PAUL II, "Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities", 224.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

convincing witness". In the second place, the Meeting aroused in the movements a new awareness of their role within the Church. Some testimonies to this may also be cited: "The 30 May was an experience of the movements' catholicity"; "a new qualitative level in relations between the movements": "an expression of the 'identity' that is common to the movements; "a sign of the need for unity and brotherhood"; "an experience of the complementarity of charisms within the Church".

This first assessment was, in a way, confirmed by the Pope himself. In his Message to the International Meeting of the Movements, held at Speier, in Germany, 7-8 June 1999, he wrote: "You wish to assume direct responsibility yourselves, and together with the other movements, for the gift received on 30 May 1998. The seed, scattered so abundantly, cannot be lost; it must bear fruit within your communities, in the parishes and in the dioceses. It is wonderful and gives us joy to see how the movements and the new communities feel themselves coming together in ecclesial communion, and try with concrete gestures, to communicate the gifts they have received, to support one another in difficulties and co-operate with each other in facing together the challenges of the new evangelization. These are eloquent signs of the ecclesial maturity which, I hope, will increasingly characterize every member and every group of the ecclesial community".⁵

The event of 30 May 1998, however, is not only a challenge for the ecclesial movements and the new communities. John Paul II laid great stress on this: "From St. Peter's Square, on 30 May, there went forth an important message, a powerful word which the Spirit wished to address not only to the movements, but to the whole Church".⁶

The movements are a gift of the Spirit for the whole Church. And a gift always implies a task: it challenges the responsibility of the person who has received it. For a response needs to be made to the gift; it

⁵ *L'Osservatore Romano*, 9 June 1999, 9.

⁶ "Message to the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships", *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, no. 23, 10 June 1998, 5.

needs to be made to bear fruit. The gift that the movements represent for the Church thus implies a special responsibility for the bishops; they are challenged at the heart of their concern as Pastors. On them is incumbent the onerous duty of evangelization, which at this turn of the millennium assumes features of dramatic urgency. In this context—the Pope assures us—the movements may become a “providential” instrument.

So, during this seminar, inspired by a deep sense of pastoral responsibility, we will be listening carefully to what the Spirit is saying to the Church (cf. *Rev* 2:7) as she prepares to pass through the door of the Great Jubilee of the Redemption. Together we will engage in serious pastoral and theological reflection on the ecclesial movements and the new communities in the context of the mission entrusted to us by the Lord for the evangelization of the world. We will share our experiences, our concerns and also our hopes with regard to the contribution they can make to the life of the particular Churches and parishes.

In this introductory report it seems useful, therefore, to trace a general picture of the ecclesial movements, taking as our starting point the above-mentioned meeting of 30 May 1998 which represents an important key to their interpretation. The teaching of John Paul II will guide our analysis. It is well known in fact that the ecclesial movements have a special place in the Pope’s pastoral concern. “From the beginning of my pontificate I have given special importance to the progress of the ecclesial movements. [...] They represent one of the most significant fruits of that springtime in the Church which was foretold by the Second Vatican Council;”⁷ they are a luminous “sign of the times” through which the Holy Spirit indicates the way forward to the Church “in this great moment in history, made especially dramatic by occurring on the threshold of the Third Millennium”.⁸ And in his thought, these realities are one of the forms of the “new era of group endeavours” of the lay

⁷ “Message to the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements”, in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, *Laité Today* no. 2, 1999), 16.

⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 3.

faithful in the Church: “Alongside the traditional forming of associations, and at times coming from their very roots, movements and new sodalities have sprouted, with a specific feature and purpose, so great is the richness and the versatility of resources that the Holy Spirit nourishes in the ecclesial community, and so great is the capacity of initiative and the generosity of our lay people”.⁹

The Nature of the Ecclesial Movements

What are the ecclesial movements? Due to their novelty and the multiplicity of their forms, it is still extremely difficult to give a definition of them according to precise categories. Even the term “movement” does not have a single well-defined sense (in France and Spain, for instance, it is inseparably linked to the specialized movements of Catholic Action). In many movements, moreover, the way they understand their own identity is still rather fragmentary. So, instead of trying to offer specific definitions, it will be more useful at this stage of our reflection to identify the constitutive elements of these new ecclesial realities.

The Original Charism

The charism is the source of every movement’s spiritual strength and innovative character. The original charism is, in essence, a new expression of the following in the footsteps of Christ and of participation in the Church’s mission. The Pope describes the impulse of the charism’s action in persons and communities as follows: “Even in our times there is no lack of a fruitful manifestation of various charisms among the faithful, women and men. These charisms are given to individual persons, and can even be shared by others in such ways as to continue in time a precious and effective heritage; serving as a source of a particu-

⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 29.

lar spiritual affinity among persons”.¹⁰ Given for the good of the whole Church, the charism has an universal character: it fascinates, attracts, involves persons who are different by culture, tradition, age. Even though the ecclesial movements are lay in character, they do not involve only the lay faithful. Their specificity consists not only in their capacity to be “collective”, i.e. to bring people together (like the charism of religious congregations), but in being able to unite, within the same community, members who represent different vocations in the Church and who belong to different states of life: lay people, priests, consecrated persons.¹¹ Finally, the charism, as a gift of the Spirit, always brings with it an amazing newness of life. Impossible to predict or plan, it is always given to us as a free gift, which it is up to us to accept. As the Holy Father said: “Whenever the Spirit intervenes, he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history”.¹²

The Person of the Founder

In communicating a movement’s charism, its founder has an irreplaceable role. John Paul II explains it in this way: “The passage from the original charism to the movement happens through the mysterious attraction that the founder holds for all those who become involved in his spiritual experience”.¹³ The founder is the pivot of the life of every movement, because he/she is the bearer of the original charism from which it is born and through which it lives. As the founder gradually discovers the various dimensions of the charism, he/she indicates the goals to be reached and defines methods and organizational structures. From the founder’s special position springs his/her spiritual pater-nity/maternity and the authority—unique of its kind—that he/she

¹⁰ Ibid., no. 24.

¹¹ Cf. B. ZADRA, *I movimenti ecclesiali e i loro statuti*, (Rome: PUG, 1997), 82.

¹² JOHN PAUL II, “Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities”, 221.

¹³ Ibid., 222.

exerts over the movement's members. The founders are, obviously, very different from each other. They include lay men and women, but also priests and consecrated persons.

The Community

Within the movements—where authentic communities are formed on the basis of the original charism—the experience of community life is very deep. And it is an experience that exerts a very strong appeal in a society like ours, characterized by standardization, anonymity, depersonalization of social relations, fragmentation of personality. These problems do not even spare many of our parishes, in which there is a strongly felt need for a deeper community life. Yet the community dimension, however important, is not one of the main reasons for belonging to a movement. According to Cardinal Ratzinger, what is sought, above all, is “an integral form of Christianity, a Church that is obedient to the Gospel and that lives by it”.¹⁴ The community is seen as a place for encountering Christ and his Church, as a space in which to live the Christian vocation that springs from one's own Baptism in a full and coherent way, and as a way of actively participating in the Church's mission. In contrast to other groupings of the faithful, the ecclesial movements thus offer a total experience of the faith, embracing all the dimensions of Christian existence.

The Petrine Ministry

The ecclesial movements, while being rooted in the reality of the local Churches, maintain a strong attachment to the universal dimension of the Church. Cardinal Ratzinger writes in this regard: “Ministries and missions that are not tied to the local Church alone, but serve universal mission and the spreading of the Gospel, must always exist in the

¹⁴ J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesial Movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church”, 38.

Church. The Pope has to rely on these ministries, they on him".¹⁵ This is the basis for the movements' relationship to the Petrine ministry. Cardinal Ratzinger describes this in the following terms: "The papacy did not create the movements, but it did become their most important backer in the structure of the Church, their main source of ecclesial support. Perhaps the deepest meaning and true nature of the Petrine office as a whole was in this way brought into view: namely, that the Bishop of Rome is not merely the bishop of a local Church; his ministry is always referred to the universal Church. [...] It must keep alive the dynamism of the Church's mission *ad extra* and *ad intra*".¹⁶ That also explains the special interest that John Paul II takes in the movements.

To conclude our attempted identification of the constitutive elements of the ecclesial movements, we may quote a definition given by the Pope himself: "The term ['movement'] is often used to refer to realities that differ among themselves, sometimes even by reason of their canonical structure. Though that term certainly cannot exhaust or capture the wealth of forms aroused by the life-giving creativity of the Spirit of Christ, it does indicate a concrete ecclesial reality with predominantly lay membership, a journey of faith and a Christian witness which bases its own pedagogical method on a precise charism given to the person of the founder in specific circumstances and ways".¹⁷

Towards a Theology of the Ecclesial Movements

It is not by chance that the Pope's teaching on the movements is mainly situated in the context of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. Nor is it a coincidence that the growth of the ecclesial movements in our time is closely linked to the conciliar event. While it is true that the genesis of some movements preceded the Council—as in the case of the *Focolari*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

¹⁷ JOHN PAUL II, "Message to the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements", 18.

(1943) and *Communion and Liberation* (1954)—it is equally true that only in the light of the conciliar teaching on the Church and on the vocation and mission of the lay faithful was it possible fully to understand the theological importance of this phenomenon. Deeply rooted in the reality of the Church as mystery of communion, the movements cannot be perceived merely as the expression of specific spiritual experiences. They represent an important component in the life of the Church; and, in spite of the diversity of the forms they have taken in the various periods, they can be identified throughout her history. If we look at the history of the Church in the perspective of the movements, it is clear that the Holy Spirit has always responded to the challenges of the times with “charismatic” figures who have strengthened the life of the Church by bringing new spiritual energies and opened up new and unexpected horizons. We have only to think of St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic and St. Ignatius of Loyola.¹⁸

In the teaching of John Paul II the movements constitute one of the forms in which the Church is realized: “It is significant in this regard—he has affirmed—that in the contemporary Church the Spirit has raised up many ecclesial movements, continuing with humanity today the dialogue that God initiated in Christ and pursued throughout the course of Christian history. These movements are a sign of the freedom of forms in which the one Church is actualized; and they represent an authentic novelty, which has still to be adequately understood in all its positive efficacy for the kingdom of God at work in the today of history”.¹⁹ And on 30 May 1998, the Holy Father reaffirmed that “movements officially recognized by ecclesiastical authority offer themselves as forms of self-fulfilment and facets of the one Church”.²⁰

The Holy Father goes further. He adds that the Church herself is a

¹⁸ Cf. F. GONZALES, *Los movimientos en la historia de la Iglesia*, (Madrid: Ediciones Encuentro, 1999).

¹⁹ JOHN PAUL II, “Address to the Communion and Liberation Movement”, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VII, 2 (1984), 696.

²⁰ JOHN PAUL II, “Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities”, 222.

“movement”. And, above all, a mystery: the mystery of the Father’s eternal “Love”, of his fatherly heart, whence springs the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit. The Church, born of this mission, is “in statu missionis”. She is a “movement”, inscribed in the history of the human person and the human community. Movements in the Church must continually reflect the mystery of the “love” from which she was born and is continually being born. “Within the Church as people of God, movements express the multiple movement that is man’s response to Revelation, to the Gospel”.²¹

In the thought of John Paul II, therefore, the category of ecclesial movement is profoundly rooted in the category of mission. Bishop Angelo Scola comments on this expression of the Pope as follows: “The Church as movement guarantees the constant offer of the event of Christ to the freedom of man today. The *traditio* is the objective experience of the indefectible being of Jesus with us until the end of time. If the *traditio* is stripped of the power of the event, it no longer speaks to man’s freedom and is downgraded into mere traditions incapable of convincing; it can, at best, pursue an efficiency like that of a business as the way of an illusory modernization. If, on the contrary, man’s freedom abandons the *traditio* and betrays the event without obeying it (sacrament-authority), it then loses itself on the violent and hallucinatory paths of utopia”.²²

For this reason, the adjective ‘ecclesial’ referred to the movements is not, as it were, merely ‘decorative’. On the contrary, it signifies a precise commitment. The Holy Father never tires of reminding the movements that they must constantly examine themselves in the light of the “criteria of ecclesiasity” for lay groups enunciated in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*.²³ It is worth briefly recalling what these

²¹ JOHN PAUL II; “Homily during Mass for the participants in the Meeting ‘Movements in the Church’”, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VII.2 (1984), 696.

²² A. SCOLA, “The Reality of the Movements in the Universal Church and in the Local Church”, in *Movements in the Church*, 129.

²³ Cf. Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 30.

criteria are: a) the primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness; b) the responsibility of professing the Catholic faith; c) the witness to a strong and authentic communion with the Pope and with one's own Bishop; d) conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals; and e) a commitment to a presence in human society. In the light of these criteria, John Paul II's invitation to the movements to enter upon the way to "ecclesial maturity" takes on an even stronger significance.²⁴

Another way of elucidating the reality of the ecclesial movements in the teaching of John Paul II is through the conciliar theology on charisms. *Lumen Gentium* affirms that the Holy Spirit "guiding the Church in the way of all truth (cf. *Jn* 16:13) and unifying her in communion and in the works of ministry, bestows on her various hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her and adorns her with his fruits".²⁵ Further on, we read that the Holy Spirit, "not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church [...] makes holy the People, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts according as he wills (cf. *1 Cor* 12:11), he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church [...] 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit' (*1 Cor* 12:7). Whether these charisms be very remarkable or more simple and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation since they are fitting and useful for the needs of the Church".²⁶ Thanks to the teaching of Vatican II, there has been a notable increase among the faithful of awareness of the charismatic dimension of Christian life and of the Church herself.

The Pope stresses the fact that "in the Church both the institutional aspect and the charismatic aspect are co-essential and work together for

²⁴ Cf. *Movements in the Church*, 222.

²⁵ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 12.

the life, the renewal and the sanctification of the Church, although in different ways, and so that there is an exchange and mutual communion".²⁷ And he reaffirms that institution and charism are not to be seen in opposition to one another, "There is no conflict or opposition in the Church between the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension, of which the movements are a significant expression. Both are co-essential to the divine constitution of the Church founded by Jesus, because they both help to make the mystery of Christ and his saving grace present in the world".²⁸ The Holy Father had already touched on this question on another occasion, with direct reference to the reality of the movements: "An authentic movement is like a soul that nourishes the institution from within. It is not an alternative structure. Rather, it is the source of a presence that constantly regenerates existential and historical authenticity".²⁹ That is why, during the unforgettable Meeting with the ecclesial movements at Pentecost 1998, the Pope cried out to the whole Church: "Open yourselves meekly to the gifts of the Spirit! Accept gratefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow on us! Do not forget that every charism is given for the common good, that is, for the benefit of the whole Church!".³⁰

At this point a question must be asked: in the life of a Christian, what is the significance of the charism received through belonging to a movement? Some time ago, a well-known Italian theologian wrote that Christian perfection and the fullness of ecclesial character do not require us to belong to anything—movement, association, group—other than the radical and "sufficient" belonging created by the Spirit,

²⁷ Message to the ecclesial movements gathered for the 2nd International Colloquium, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, 1 (1987), 478.

²⁸ *Message to the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements.*, in *Movements in the Church*, 18-19.

²⁹ To the priests of Communion and Liberation, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII, 2 (1985), 660.

³⁰ JOHN PAUL II, "Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities", 221-222.

which is (so to say) the “normal” belonging to the Church.³¹ This opposition between belonging to a movement and so-called “normal Christianity” is rather frequent. Anyone adopting this position seems, however, to be forgetting that belonging to the Church in its fundamental sense always needs “bridges”, “mediators” in the form of the concrete witness of Christian persons and communities. Bishop Scola explains this very well when he writes: “The Christian fact [...] encounters the freedom of man in all its variegated diversity of situations, temperaments and sensibilities. It invites it to make a decision. Now, in making this decision freedom is not abandoned to itself. In fact, the Spirit supports the path of those who accept Jesus Christ also through the so-called *charisms*. These, by virtue of their pervasiveness, encourage the acceptance of the content of the *traditio* which is the event itself of Christ”.³² Msgr. Pietro Coda follows the same line of thought when he affirms that “if the ministerial and sacramental gifts transmit the objectivity of the mystery of Christ to the People of God, the charismatic and prophetic ones are aimed at revealing in ever new form the acceptance of the mystery of Christ in the subjectivity of individual believers and of the Church herself”.³³

Finally, we must touch on a crucial aspect of the life of the ecclesial movements, an aspect that directly involves the episcopal ministry. I refer to the question of discernment and to the verification of charisms by the Church. Recognizing and accepting a charism is not always easy. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, the Pope declares: “No charism dispenses a person from reference and submission to the *Pastors of the Church*. The Council clearly states: ‘Judgement as to their [charisms’] genuineness and proper use belongs to those who preside over the Church, and to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to

³¹ Cf. I. BIFFI, “Quel dono che non richiede ‘supplementi’”, *Avvenire*, 13 January 1998.

³² A. SCOLA, “The Reality of the Movements in the Universal Church and in the Local Church”, 126-127.

³³ P. CODA, “The Ecclesial Movements, Gift of the Spirit”, in *Movements in the Church*, 85.

what is good (cf. *1 Thes* 5:12, 19-21), so that all the charisms might work together, in their diversity and complementarity, for the common good".³⁴ In the case of the movements, this process is expressed in the course of juridical approval of their statutes by the competent ecclesiastical authority.³⁵ In the case of movements of a local character, juridical recognition and approval of their statutes fall within the competence of the diocesan bishop. In the case of ecclesial movements that are international in character, the competence is that of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.³⁶ In the life of a movement, approval of its statutes is a very important milestone, a moment of great joy and gratitude to the Church. This kind of "institutionalization"—which inevitably raises the difficulty of expressing the richness of a charism in dry juridical formulas—is a necessity. It not only guarantees the authenticity of the charism and of its proper exercise, but ensures that the movement's charism becomes part of the spiritual heritage of the whole Church.

These, in broad outline, are the main theological co-ordinates of John Paul II's teaching on the movements. In speaking of these new forms of expression, we have to be careful to avoid the trap of a superficial and over-simplified approach. It is up to theologians to pursue a systematic reflection on the movements. Various attempts have already been made, and the relevant bibliography is fairly substantial. The World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements in 1998 was in itself an important contribution to identifying the possible bases for a theology of the ecclesial movements.

Newness that Becomes a Challenge and a Task

The phenomenon of the movements and new communities, however, also poses challenges of a pastoral nature both at the diocesan and

³⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 24.

³⁵ Cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici*, canons 299; 301; 304.

³⁶ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia *Pastor Bonus*, art. 134.

parish levels. To complete the picture, we also need to examine this aspect more closely. The Holy Father summed up this dimension in the life of the movements as follows: “Their birth and spread has brought to the Church’s life an unexpected newness which is sometimes even disruptive. This has given rise to questions, uneasiness and tensions; at times it has led to presumptions and excesses on the one hand, and on the other, to numerous prejudices and reservations. It was a testing period for the movements’ fidelity, an important occasion for verifying the authenticity of their charisms”.³⁷ The difficulties the Pope mentions do not disqualify the movements as agents and means of evangelization. According to the Pope, they are, rather, a consequence of the newness of the way of life and apostolate they propose. These problems—as some have noted—are like “childhood diseases”: a natural and transitory consequence, as it were, of the process of growing up. To be more specific, let us look at some of these diseases: the tendency to *absolutize the movement* to which one belongs and a sense of superiority over other groups, combined with the temptation to impose one’s own grouping on everyone, perhaps to the detriment of others; the religious enthusiasm of the neophyte, which at times produces *unilateral exuberance and exaggerations* both in practice and in doctrine, and which may pose risks in the absence of adequate theological formation; the *self-isolation within one’s own group*, which can lead to estrangement from diocesan and parish life; the danger of seeing the community as a kind of *refuge*, in which to hide from the problems of family and social life.

These difficulties are more or less functional; they concern orthodoxy of practice more than they do orthodoxy of doctrine. Each of them is, however, a challenge both for the movements themselves and for their Pastors: what can be done to avoid these “traps”, which at times are really dangerous? How can the ecclesial maturity that the Pope wishes for the movements be achieved?

Nor in this context can we overlook the various obstacles posed to

³⁷ JOHN PAUL II, “Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities”, 222.

the life of the movements: a) by the hesitant, if not downright negative, attitude of some Pastors who are influenced by *ignorance*, or by a limited or one-sided knowledge, of the movements; b) by *pastoral prejudices* and mistrust in these new forms of lay life and apostolate (at times, too great a readiness to generalize particular negative experiences, as a reason for disqualifying the movements as a whole); c) by a *rigid conception of ecclesial communion*, which does not allow for any diversity, whereas the communion of the Church is organic, meaning not uniformity but unity in diversity; d) by an equally *rigid view of pastoral planning and co-ordination*, in the parishes and in the dioceses, which would like everyone to do the same thing, in the same way and at the same time; and e) by an inadequate understanding of the fact that every charism, if it is to develop, needs the *necessary scope for freedom*, because only thus can it bear the desired fruits.

Referring to his Meeting with the ecclesial movements and the new communities of 30 May 1998, the Pope said that “an important message, a powerful word”, was addressed to the whole Church from St. Peter’s Square on that day.³⁸ The phenomenon of the ecclesial movements is, in fact, a challenge for everyone: for Pastors and for the members of the movements themselves. Each has to accept his or her share of responsibility. The Pontifical Council for the Laity, which has the task of supervising the question on behalf of the Holy See, also tries to assume its own share of responsibility. A concrete example of this is the present seminar. But the responsibility of bishops in this field is fundamental and is expressed both in the warm welcome of these new groups³⁹—without letting themselves be conditioned by the difficulties encountered—and in accompanying them in a fatherly way, with patience and far-sightedness, in such a way as to help them grow and mature in the context of the local Churches.

With reference to the Pastors’ role in accompanying the move-

³⁸ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “Message to the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships”.

³⁹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 72.

ments, a word should be said to emphasize the role of priests.⁴⁰ We touch here a very delicate issue, especially in view of the shortage of priests in so many local Churches. How, in fact, can they devote time to the movements when they have great difficulty in dealing with the ordinary work of the parish communities? The hierarchy of pastoral commitments must, of course, be respected, but Vatican II must also be heeded when it reminds bishops of the “careful choice” to be made of “priests with the ability and appropriate training for helping special forms of the lay apostolate”.⁴¹ Priests, for their part, must be well aware that movements and other lay groups are not a “decorative extra”, but an integral part of parish life and a significant indicator of the religious vitality of our communities. If the movements are warmly “welcomed” in our parishes and accompanied in a friendly way, they can become an important means of increasing pastoral initiatives in the various fields, especially those more difficult for the priests themselves to reach. Besides, work with the movements and other lay groups represents a powerful stimulus for the priest’s own interior life. Experience shows that the movements’ specific charisms have helped many priests to experience the full richness of their own vocation. In this regard, John Paul II has said that “the priest must find in the movement the light and the warmth that will enable him to be faithful to his Bishop, ready to fulfil his institutional duties, and attentive to ecclesiastical discipline: in this way his faith will resonate to greater effect and his fidelity be more fruitful”.⁴² It is equally clear, however, that, in the life of a priest, accompanying a movement or having a spiritual bond with a movement or association cannot mean being closed to the other groups present in the parish or other fields of normal pastoral activity at parish level. Formation for this important ministry should, therefore, begin already in sem-

⁴⁰ Cf. *Priests within Associations of the Faithful. Identity and Mission*. Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Vatican City 1981.

⁴¹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 25.

⁴² JOHN PAUL II, “To the priests of Communion and Liberation”, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII, 2 (1985), 660.

inary and take place in the context of courses of pastoral theology genuinely inspired by conciliar ecclesiology.

“You will know them by their fruits” (Mt 7:16)

To have a deep knowledge of the nature of the ecclesial movements, it is essential to verify the fruits they bring forth in the Christian communities and in the individual faithful. The principle enunciated in the Gospel still holds good: “You will know them by their fruits” (Mt 7:16). And, objectively, we have to admit that these fruits are not few in number. Nor are they second rate, if the Pope attributes so much importance to the movements as to see in them “a sign of hope for the Church and for humankind”.⁴³ “In our world, often dominated by a secularized culture which encourages and promotes models of life without God—he said on 30 May 1998—the faith of many is sorely tested, and is frequently stifled and dies. Thus we see an urgent need for powerful proclamation and solid, in-depth Christian formation. There is a great need today for mature Christian personalities, conscious of their baptismal identity, of their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world! There is a great need for living Christian communities! And here are the movements and the new ecclesial communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium”.⁴⁴

Let us look more closely at some of these fruits.

Christian Formation

One of the main challenges the Church has to respond to today is that of forming the lay faithful for the union that must exist between faith and life.⁴⁵ There is an urgent need for new programmes and methods of

⁴³ *Homily on the Vigil of Pentecost*, cit.

⁴⁴ JOHN PAUL II, “Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities”, 222.

⁴⁵ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 59.

education, better adapted to the situation of men and women in the post-modern era, whose way of thinking and acting is often marked by relativism, inconsistency and confusion. In our time, the type of Christian formation proposed by the movements cannot leave Pastors indifferent. It is especially in the field of formation that we find the originality of the specific teaching methods of the different charisms. But these also have some fundamental common denominators. Among the most important are the following:

Christocentrism. This is a formation that stresses what is essential and is based on the baptismal vocation of every Christian. The personal, existential encounter with the living person of Jesus Christ always stands at the centre. An encounter that not infrequently results in an authentic conversion. It is not rare for members of the movements to have come, or returned, to the Church from situations very far removed, at times leaving behind them a turbulent history of a godless life. In this way they have become valuable and convincing witnesses to the power of God's grace, which is able to transform every human being.

Integral and radical formation. It is a formation that involves all the dimensions of existence. The movements are not afraid of making radical demands of their members. And it is perhaps this that explains the secret of their vigorous development. The Gospel is taken seriously and as something to be lived to the full. The experience of faith then becomes joyful; it arouses enthusiasm. "We are happy Christians", said one of the participants in the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements.

Strong Christian identity. It is a formation that develops in lay people the consciousness of their own vocation and mission in the Church and in the world, and so produces mature Christian personalities with a strong sense of belonging to the Church. Special emphasis is placed on fidelity to the Church's magisterium and to the Successor of Peter, with whom the movements feel a special bond.

Communities. Within the movements education in the faith is conducted in small communities in which deep relations of friendship are established. These communities are irreplaceable means of formation,

and become an important support, an important point of reference; as I have pointed out, this is a decisive factor in a mass culture characterized by standardization and resulting anonymity. They also represent a very effective means for correcting and curbing the ever more widespread phenomenon of the sects, which are a source of deep concern to Pastors. Moreover, the community that comes into being on the basis of the charism of a particular movement is experienced subjectively as an ecclesial community; because in entering a movement it is the Church that people seek.

Addressing the participants in the Meeting of 30 May 1998, the Pope summed up the fruits of this formation as follows: "The ecclesial realities to which you belong have helped you to rediscover your baptismal vocations, to appreciate the gifts of the Spirit received at confirmation, to entrust yourselves to God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation and to recognize the Eucharist as the source and summit of all Christian life. Thanks to this powerful ecclesial experience, wonderful Christian families have come into being which are open to life, true 'domestic Churches', and many vocations to the ministerial priesthood and the religious life have blossomed, as well as new forms of lay life inspired by the evangelical counsels. You have learned in the movements and new communities that faith is not abstract talk, nor vague religious sentiment, but new life in Christ instilled by the Holy Spirit".⁴⁶ To the fruits enumerated by the Holy Father many others can be added: for instance, the discovery of the value of prayer, the daily reading of the Word of God, the deepening of spiritual life, and the desire to pursue Christian holiness. In this regard, we read in the Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* that "recent years have been seeing a growth in the number of people who, in ever more widespread movements and groups, are giving first place to prayer and seeking in prayer a renewal of their spiritual life. This is a significant and comforting sign, for from this experience there is coming a real contribution to the revival of

⁴⁶ JOHN PAUL II, "Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities", 223.

prayer among the faithful, who have been helped to gain a clearer idea of the Holy Spirit as he who inspires in hearts a profound yearning for holiness".⁴⁷ I am convinced that many of you could provide significant examples and concrete testimonies of the way in which belonging to a movement has changed the life of so many persons known to you.

Mission

The second category of fruits, closely related to formation, concerns the field of mission. The Second Vatican Council recalled that "the Christian vocation is of its nature a vocation to the apostolate".⁴⁸ Here, too, there is a great diversity of methods and forms. And here too the originality of the charisms of the various movements finds expression. In his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, the Pope reminds us: "I call to mind, as a new development occurring in many Churches in recent times, the rapid growth of 'ecclesial movements' filled with missionary dynamism. When these movements humbly seek to become part of the life of local Churches and are welcomed by Bishops and priests within diocesan and parish structures, they represent a true gift of God both for new evangelization and for missionary activity properly so-called".⁴⁹ Let us try briefly to define the main features of the movements' apostolic commitment.

Apostolic drive and courage for mission. The movements have, unquestionably, the capacity to renew apostolic drive and missionary courage in lay people. They help to overcome the barriers of timidity, fear and inferiority complex in facing the world. They provide support for their members in the difficult task of swimming against the current which as Christians they have to undertake in situations dominated by a culture hostile to the faith.

⁴⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 65.

⁴⁸ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 2.

⁴⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 72.

Direct proclamation. Without neglecting witness, the movements stress, above all, the direct proclamation of the Word of God. As in apostolic times, preference is often given to the *kerygma* that concentrates on what is essential for Christianity and what tends to rekindle faith.

Creativity and originality. The movements do not limit their apostolate to traditional contexts, but dare to propose new methods and forms. They leave behind them religious environments and parish structures and move courageously towards the difficult frontiers of the modern *Areopagus*, in cultural, economic and political life. They pay special attention to non believers, to the poor, to those who bear the wounds of many spiritual sufferings. They give proof of creativity also in the social sphere (solidarity, health care, education). In the ecclesial context, they engage, not without success, in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

Missionary community. The community also plays an important part in the movements' apostolic work. It provides a space for spiritual "recharging". The bonds of friendship, formed through participation in the same charism, are a great support and an inspiration for missionary commitment.

As we have seen, the ecclesial movements and the new communities demand a considerable commitment on the part of Pastors today. The range of theological and pastoral problems they raise is wide and complex. Many questions still remain to be studied. It is not always easy to find an adequate response. One thing, however, is certain: the face of the Church of the third millennium depends on our capacity to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church of our time (cf. *Rev* 2:7), also through these new groupings of the lay faithful. It depends, therefore, on our capacity to be amazed by the charismatic gifts that the Holy Spirit is lavishing on the Church today with extraordinary generosity. And it depends on the wisdom and generous farsightedness of Pastors who do not quench the Spirit, but test everything and hold fast to what is good (cf. *1 Thes* 5:12, 19-21).

We have come to the end of our "reading" of the reality of the

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ecclesial movements and the new communities. Conducted in the light of the trustworthy teaching of the Successor of Peter, it has had as its fundamental point of reference the Meeting of John Paul II with the representatives of the ecclesial movements and new communities on 30 May 1998. This seminar, which has succeeded in bringing together so many Pastors, is a sign that the “powerful word to the whole Church”, spoken that day in St. Peter’s Square, is beginning to bear fruit.

The Ecclesial Movements in the Religious and Cultural Context of the Present Day

GUZMÁN CARRIQUÍRY

After twenty years of careful accompaniment, discernment and encouragement of the ecclesial movements and the new communities, John Paul II, in the important address he gave in St. Peter's Square on 30 May 1998, appealed to them to enter into the phase of maturity. Once again he recommended them to the whole Church as "providential response" to the critical challenges at the end of the millennium. "In our world—declared the Holy Father on that occasion—often dominated by a secularized culture which encourages and promotes models of life without God, the faith of many is sorely tested, and is frequently stifled and dies. Thus we see an urgent need for powerful proclamation and solid, in-depth Christian formation. There is a great need today for mature Christian personalities, conscious of their baptismal identity, of their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world! There is great need for living Christian communities! And here are the movements and the new ecclesial communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium. You are this providential response".¹ Considering the ecclesial movements as "providential response" means considering them as visible expressions of God's providential plan for history, of his economy of salvation, of the wonderful ways in which he governs and directs the life of people, of nations, of the Church. It means considering them as aroused by the tireless and fruitful work of the Spirit

¹ JOHN PAUL II, "Address to the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities", in *Movements in the Church. Proceedings of the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, Rome, 27-29 May 1998* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 222-223.

of God, who freely lavishes various charisms. The “movements” are “a gift of the Spirit for our time”.²

So, if we speak of the movements as a “providential response”, it is right that we should ask ourselves to what needs they respond, in other words: why were they destined by Providence for “this great moment in history, made especially dramatic by occurring on the threshold of the Third Millennium”?³ What may be the reasons for this timely and prolific irruption of charisms as gifts for the Church and for her mission today? This brings us to the theme we propose to develop here: the movements and the new communities in the ecclesial, cultural and religious context of our time.

First of all, I wish, by way of preface, to enunciate six propositions that should be borne in mind in tackling the question:

1) The relation between charism and mission should not be posed in mechanical terms. There is an over-hasty tendency to reduce everything to functional, operational terms. Charisms are not produced by the Church for reasons of expedience or necessity. They are not invented, nor are they programmed. They are certainly not generated by pastoral offices or plans. Their irruption is unpredictable. We cannot claim to confine or reduce them to our human categories and projects. “I find it wonderful—wrote Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, referring to the contemporary ecclesial movements—that the Spirit is once again more powerful than our programmes and turns to account values very different from those we had imagined”.⁴ But, at the same time, charisms are given to us for the good of the whole Church, for the growth and spread of the Body of Christ in the history of man. It is not therefore rash to relate them to the cultural, spiritual and ecclesial needs and requirements of various historical phases and situations, although we can scarcely perceive the infinite wisdom of divine Providence.

² JOHN PAUL II, “Message to the Participants in the 8th International Meeting of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships”, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 4 June 1998, 6.

³ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 3.

⁴ J. RATZINGER, *Rapporto sulla fede* (Turin: Ed. Paoline, 1985), 42.

2) The attempt to understand the significance of the movements in God's designs for the present moment in history requires the overcoming of any merely emotive approach—either in terms of uncritical enthusiasm and facile euphoria, or of visceral antipathy or denigration—to a reality that appeals to us all. We need to dismiss from our thoughts any preconception and tackle the question on the basis of the realism of experience and the judgement of reason, both penetrated by an attitude of faith illuminated by the magisterium of the universal Pastor.

3) Charism in its pure state is in God alone. It is accepted and lived through the most diverse temperaments, forms of conditioning, limitations and imperfections of every human enterprise. The movements are therefore called to a demanding process of purification. Presumptuous self-glorification—if it occurs—is an attitude in direct contradiction to the humility of those who recognize that everything comes from God, that every gift of his Spirit is given gratuitously and housed in vessels of clay.

4) The genuineness of charisms, guaranteed and endorsed by the canonical recognition of the movements by the Apostolic See, does not dispense from their responsibility those whom the Holy Spirit has chosen and constituted as pastors of the people of God, indeed it increases it. God assists them in the discernment and in the orderly exercise of charisms (cf. *Jn* 4:6; *1 Thes* 5:19-21; *1 Cor* 4:1),⁵ to conduct everything and everyone to the unity of truth and charity. The reality of the movements represents a challenge for the whole pastoral activity of the Church: only if that challenge is met can the charisms received bear abundant fruit for the good of the Church's communion and mission and the movements be ever more faithful and fruitful according to God's plans.

5) The theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar has written that in certain crucial periods it seems that the Providence of God operates through numerous charisms that emerge simultaneously as a "bunch". There is such an intercommunication of graces among them as to forge

⁵ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, "Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities", no. 8, in *Movements in the Church*, 223.

common profiles, accentuations and priorities. But, at the same time, what great diversity between them! So great that, at times, it seems somewhat conventional to speak generically of “movements”, and certainly it would make no sense to create a “movement” bloc in the Church. Here we will perforce express ourselves in general terms, but without ever forgetting that each movement and each community deserves and demands individual consideration, and appropriate discernment. Each of them has its own riches and its own limitations.

6) Lastly, we need to bear in mind that if for many Churches the movements—whether local, national or international in character—are a strong and consolidated reality, for many others they are still a distant prospect, a promise that has only barely begun.

The Movements, Fruit of Vatican Council II

The Holy Father has emphasized on various occasions that the movements, in the crucial context of our time, are a “providential response” because they “represent one of the most significant fruits of that spring-time in the Church which was foretold by the Second Vatican Council, but which unfortunately has often been hampered by the spread of secularization”.⁶ Already in his Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, the first of his pontificate, John Paul II, describing the legacy of ecclesial life in the postconciliar period, identified among its fruits the emergence of new lay groups with “a different outline and excellent dynamism”.⁷

The movements are the fruit of Vatican Council II, in as much as the Council made possible, if not their birth, at least their growth and maturation. It is true that the Council did not devote any particular attention to them (or, rather, to those already in existence at the time),

⁶ JOHN PAUL II, “Message to the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements”, in *Movements in the Church*, 16; cf. IDEM, “Message to the Ecclesial Movements gathered for the Second International Colloquium”, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, X, 1 (1987), 476.

⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, no. 5.

in relation to their peculiar character and significance. That is understandable, since they were only just then emerging in ecclesial life. But it is clear that, as major advent of the Spirit of God for the Church of our time, the Council sowed the teachings that were to regulate their growth and opened the channels so that streams of living water, springing from the one inexhaustible source, would fruitfully irrigate the life of individuals and communities.

If Vatican II is viewed from an historical point of view, considering it as an event of enormous consequence and as an organic totality—and not only as a sum of documents, comments and interpretations—it may be affirmed, in short, that, on the basis of a renewed consciousness of the Catholic tradition, the Council assumed and discerned, transfigured and transcended the critiques that provided the basis of the forces that have characterized modernity, in other words the Reformation and the Enlightenment.⁸ Was it not perhaps the Council's intention to “put the modern world in contact with the regenerating and perennial energies of the Gospel”?⁹ The Council's aim of *aggiornamento* (or modernization) was a way of responding to the dramatic “split between the Gospel and culture”.¹⁰ The conciliar event, on the basis of the Church's renewed consciousness of her own mystery of missionary communion, laid the premises for an authentic “Catholic reform” and a new civilization (“civilization of love”) as evangelical service to man and to society, in consideration of the vocation, dignity and destiny of the human person and in view of a commitment to more just, peaceful and human forms of brotherhood. Without capitulation or confusion, but also transcending a rigidly defensive posture, mere resistance or condemnation, the Catholic Church thus responded, by herself, to the best of those critiques, overcoming them but at the same time avoiding the

⁸ Cf. A. METHOL FERRÉ, “Karol Wojtyła nella comprensione del nostro tempo”, in *Karol Wojtyła: filosofo, teologo, poeta* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1984), 348-350.

⁹ Cf. JOHN XXIII, Apostolic Constitution *Humanae salutis*, in *Enchiridion vaticanum*, vol. I (Bologna: EDB, 1996¹⁵), no. 3*.

¹⁰ PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 20.

errors and blind alleys of modernity. Twenty years later John Paul II recognized in Vatican II “the foundation and start of a gigantic work of evangelization of the modern world, at a new turning point in the history of humanity, in which tasks of immense gravity and scale await the Church”.¹¹

An historical and spiritual task of this scale could not but arouse profound misgivings and moments of dismay in the Church herself, which immediately after the Council had to traverse a phase of crisis, of trial, of dramatic agitation. The windows were flung open to change an air that had become stale, but what entered was a hurricane. The process of secularization underwent a qualitative radicalization: it’s enough to think of everything that evokes the climate of the student unrest in 1968. Fruitful reforms also went hand in hand with counter-productive experiences and crises of identity. After the springtime of the Council, there were many signs of a rebirth in the Church, but there were also periods of renewed frost. The Church thus went through what we might define as a gigantic crisis of ecclesial renewal, also determined by the combined impact of the “hot years” of theoretical and revolutionary neo-Marxism—last battle of a communism in a phase of decomposition—and the emergence of the neo-bourgeois technocratic revolution with its scepticism, libertinism, nihilism and atheism.

Signs of the beginning of a second postconciliar phase then began to emerge. We may think of the celebration, in 1975, of the Holy Year, the third World Synod of Bishops and, especially, the publication of Paul VI’s luminous Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Everything that emerged in the critical, fruitful and tumultuous times of the period immediately following the Council was subjected to discernment so that the best results could be welcomed into the ecclesial body, and the abortive experiences, the ideological aberrations and the crises of identity progressively abandoned. The centrality of the Church’s evangelizing vocation was powerfully reaffirmed. It is on this basis that

¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, “Address to the Participants in the Sixth Council of the Episcopal Conferences of Europe”, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII, 2 (1985), 91.

John Paul II, continuing the holy and arduous task of Paul VI, could propose as his objective, ever since the start of his pontificate, the full and integral realization of the Council.¹² An impulse of reconversion, recomposition and revitalization was then released in the life of the Church. It was characterized by five needs connate with her mission but reformulated with particular impetus in that “journey of advent”:¹³

1) radical *reevaluation of the experience of meeting and following in the footsteps of Christ*, both in the individual person and in the community, on the basis of the universal vocation to holiness;

2) *renewed sense of belonging to and membership of the Church as mystery of communion*;

3) *greater responsibility* for the truths of the faith of the Church in the integrity of their content, proclamation and proposal;

4) *“new evangelization”* to be realized on the basis of a missionary impetus in all environments, situations and cultures, following the “way of man” to open up man’s heart and all the dimensions of human existence and co-existence to Christ;

5) *renewed commitment to Christian presence*, solidarity and service, as expression of the fruitfulness of charity in response to human needs, and as active participation in the struggle for the promotion and defence of the dignity of the person, of the family, and of peoples, in the light of the social doctrine of the Church, newly deepened and relaunched.

Now, while the Council had strongly recommended “group apostolate”,¹⁴ it had seemed that lamentations about the crisis of Catholic

¹² Cf. G. CARRIQUIRY, “L’esortazione apostolica *Evangelii Nuntiandi* nella Chiesa dell’America Latina”, in *L’esortazione apostolica di Paolo VI “Evangelii Nuntiandi”*. Storia, contenuti, ricezione (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, 1998), 260-276.

¹³ The Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* gives expression to these needs in formulating “clear and definite criteria for discerning and recognizing lay groups, also called ‘Criteria of Ecclesiality’” (no. 30).

¹⁴ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, nos. 18-22.

lay associations and many religious communities was gaining the upper hand. *Christifideles Laici*, by contrast, already recognized “a new era of group endeavours of the lay faithful”, and pointed out the “richness and versatility of resources that the Holy Spirit nourishes in the ecclesial community”.¹⁵ There was a growing consciousness, too, in the Church of the sudden and surprising newness of such group endeavours: of the thriving development of ecclesial movements and new communities as the fruit of a mature conciliar renewal and as providential agents for a fuller and more integral implementation of the Council according to the five priorities enunciated above.

Revitalization of the Christian Experience

The movements appear, in the first place, as a charismatic event that, together with many other ecclesial experiences, responds to the deeply-felt need today for a rediscovery and revitalization of the Christian experience in the life of the Church. What, in sum, is a charism if not a gift (*gratia gratis data*) of the Holy Spirit, given to a person in a particular historical context, so that he/she may give rise to an experience of faith that, in some way, may be useful for the Church? The apostle Paul already said so when he pointed out that the various charisms come from the one Spirit (cf. *1 Cor* 12:4-11) if they proclaim Jesus as the Lord (cf. *1 Cor* 12:3), concur to the growth of the body of Christ (cf. *1 Cor* 12:7; 12:22-27) and esteem the gift of charity above everything else (cf. *1 Cor* 13; *2 Cor* 6:6; *Gal* 5:22). The charisms open the mind and move the will towards new paths of meeting and following the Lord. Through the charism, through a human meeting, the presence of Christ reaches the person, touches his eyes, ears, mouth, heart, mind, freedom. By means of the charism, the presence of Christ becomes a living reality, a real presence, a source of newness, of capacity for affection and persuasion, just as the person of Jesus was for the apostles and the first disciples two

¹⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 29.

thousand years ago. That is why the movements are ways in which the event of Christ and his mystery in history, namely the Church, encounter the life of persons in a moving, formative and convincing way. A serene confession, full of joy and hope, without reservations or inhibiting quibbles, of the truth that Jesus is the Lord may be noted in them. Hence the essentiality, simplicity and freshness of the Christian proclamation and proposal. From all this I would like to draw three observations.

The first is that we cannot take everything for granted in our Christian communities and in the life of the baptized. How many times we end up concerning ourselves anxiously about the moral, social, cultural and political consequences of the faith, thus taking for granted that the faith exists in the first place, a presupposition that is not always realistic! Too much trust has been placed in ecclesiastical structures and programmes, in the distribution of powers and functions. But what happens if the salt loses its flavour? Thirty years after the end of Vatican Council II, the assiduity in celebrating, and thus proposing to the memory, so many witnesses of holiness is an index of the need to refocus the experience of the *christifideles*, to direct it back to its source, and link every authentic reform of the Church to the universal vocation to holiness, in accordance with the Council's original design.¹⁶ This was clearly affirmed by John Paul II on celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the promulgation of the conciliar decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*: "The Church especially has need for major currents, movements and testimonies of holiness among the *christifideles*, because it is holiness that gives birth to every authentic renewal of the Church, every enrichment of the intelligence of the faith and of the Christian *sequela*, a vital and fruitful re-actualization of Christianity in the meeting with the needs of man, a renewed form of presence at the heart of human existence and of the culture of nations".¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, chap. 5, nos, 39-42.

¹⁷ JOHN PAUL II, "Address at the Ceremony Marking the Twentieth Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Conciliar Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*", *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII, 2 (1985), 1303.

My second observation refers to the existential dynamic of communicating the faith by means of the charism and, hence, of the experience of the movement, in persuasive, convincing forms, consisting of proofs experienced and consolidated in the life of persons. There is no doubt that, in the current situation of de-christianization and radical secularization, the capacity to transmit the faith, its power of *tradere* (of communication, transmission), has been much weakened. The transmission of faith by osmosis within Christian environments no longer seems to work. On the contrary, we are all subjected to the ubiquitous influence of powerful and persuasive means of social communication, due to which our existence tends to conform itself to the predominant secular forces, to models of life ever far removed from any Christian reference. The Christian confession of many baptized thus tends to be reduced to residual episodes and fragments; its vital intellectual contents are impoverished. Baptism is of capital importance, as regeneration of the person: by being baptized the Christian “puts on” Christ (cf. *Gal 3:26-27*). But too often it remains forgotten, buried in oblivion and ignorance. In this situation, the mere verbal repetition of the contents of the faith is shown to be ever more inadequate. Now that the faith is no longer a common heritage, nor a serene possession, but rather a seed threatened and often hidden by divinities and lords of this world, it is very difficult for it to assume any existential relevance as a result of mere words or moral admonitions, still less of vague appeals to Christian values. Rhetorical sermons, the mere enunciation of the message, are not enough: they do not reach the depth of the heart of the person; they do not touch his freedom, they do not change his life. What attracts and fascinates, what persuades, is above all the meeting with witnesses who are walking testimonies of the presence of Christ. Thanks to the charisms, the radical message of the Gospel, the objective content of the faith, the living flow of its tradition are persuasively communicated and received as personal experience, as free assent to the presence of Christ. Paraphrasing Guardini, one might say that the Church is reborn in souls.

My third observation is intended to stress that this immediate reference to a personal meeting, to a personal familiarity with Christ—a reality

to which we were providentially recalled by the Great Jubilee, living memory of the Word become flesh—also serves to vaccinate us against any Christian proposal that is reduced to mere spiritual sentiment or religious ideology. Our age is one of the growing proliferation of a variety of spiritualist offers and vague religiosity in the supermarket of the “global village”. Many embark on esoteric, neo-gnostic spiritual quests, or forms of religious eclecticism, to respond to their need to hold onto something in the midst of the general confusion. The predominant nihilism is, in the last analysis, unlivable and, just for this reason, the attempts to find some kind of spiritual supplement proliferate. The spiritualist evaporation of the Christian message, its tendency to disembodiment, is the great threat of our time. The mystery of the Incarnation, the consequent sacramentality of the Church and its Marian dimension—points in which the Christian event is radically distinguished from all the religious “products” and spiritual quests that abound at this turn of the millennium—thus need to be fundamental in any Christian formation, in any Christian experience.

The Communion Experienced in a Community

Let us now pass to the second need to be satisfied for a reconstruction of ecclesial life in our time: how can the faith be kept alive as living event in the person? How can the person grow in the “newness of life” of the “new man”, ontologically regenerated by the grace of baptism? How can the freedom of the children of God be lived in the midst of the world, as sign of contradiction and hope? How can this be achieved without roots in, without active belonging to, a living Christian community able to provide a home for the person, to embrace the whole of his life, and to support and revive the memory of Christ in all the dimensions, in all the moments and gestures of his existence? From this point of view, too, the ecclesial movements and the new communities are revealed as a “providential response”. The “spiritual affinity”,¹⁸

¹⁸ JOHN PAUL II, “Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities”, no. 6, in *Movements in the Church*, 222.

aroused by the *sequela Christi* thanks to the charism shared, is realized in intimate bonds of friendship, in vocational and educational societies, in strong and ever new forms of community. The movements are a “sign of the freedom of forms”¹⁹ in which is realized the presence of the Church, her mystery of communion, in the midst of humanity.

It is not enough, in fact, to have an idea of the Church. If it remains at the abstract level, as a mere article of doctrine, as a theoretical model, it is reduced to a supplement in the life of the person. It is not a sum of ideas that brings us together in a community. It is no cause for surprise, therefore, that the Church has often been considered, in effect, a religious institution subordinated to our analytical dissection, our preconceptions, measures and projects. On the contrary, we need to participate in a concrete community that is experienced as sign and luminous reflection of the Church as mystery of communion, Body of Christ who prolongs his presence and whose sacramental gestures embrace and transform the existence of the people of God, pilgrim in history. The wonder before the *tremendum mysterium* thus emerges: the wall that separates persons is broken down; they recognize each other, by grace, as “members of the same Body”, all are made “one in Christ” (cf. *Gal* 3:28; *Col* 3:11), in that “sign of unity” and “bond of charity”²⁰ that has its source and culmination in the Eucharist.²¹

The magisterium of John Paul II and the synodal teaching of the Church have emphasized this need to deepen the consciousness and realization of the ecclesiology of communion in conformity with what is taught by Vatican II.²² We know of the heavy cross selflessly borne by

¹⁹ JOHN PAUL II, “Address to the ‘Communion and Liberation’ Movement”, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VII, 2 (1984), 698.

²⁰ Cf. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *In Iobannes evangelium tractatus* 26, 13, quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1398.

²¹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

²² Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Second General Assembly, *Relatio finalis*, II, C, 1, in G. CAPRILE, *Il Sinodo dei Vescovi. Seconda Assemblea Generale Straordinaria (24 novembre-8 dicembre 1985)*, (Edizioni “la Civiltà Cattolica”, n.p., 1986), 562. The development of this “ecclesiology of communion” can be found in all the subsequent postsynodal apostolic exhortations.

Paul VI, who felt the dramatic contradiction between the Council's profound and moving ecclesiology, enunciated especially in the fundamental Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, and the succession of challenges, disputes, crises and manipulations that the Church herself suffered in the period immediately following the Council. Today, thanks to this ecclesiology, we are all urged to rediscover the depth, beauty and profundity of the mystery of communion that has its source in the Trinity and that constitutes the Church as community of sinners reconciled and sent out, the Church founded and renewed by the sacramental, hierarchic and charismatic gifts that are co-essential to her.²³

I think it is not too hazardous to affirm that the movements are the beginning of just such a "providential response". They embody the mystery of communion and propagate it on the basis of the strong appeal exerted by their community experiences. They respond to the needs of the person, who is made for communion, but who is forced to submit to the anonymity of mass society that reduces him to a mere number, to a series of reactions and functions, to a cog in the productive machine, or to an unendurable loneliness, in the absence of true friendships or human contacts. The social fabric in which we live is subject to processes of disintegration and characterized by a radical individualism. We live in the global village of the revolution of the means of communication, but what is increasingly lacking is interpersonal communion: non-involvement and indifference, hostility and exclusion are the predominant factor in relations between persons at the secular level. Is it not where the social fabric has disintegrated, and where an adequate welcome of persons in living Catholic communities, attentive to all their needs, is lacking, that we are witnessing a growth in sectarian and pentecostal communities that attract many baptized of the Catholic Church?

I think it can be affirmed that, in general, the fragility of many

²³ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4; JOHN PAUL II, "Message to the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements", in *Movements in the Church*, 18-19; "Address at the meeting with the ecclesial movements and the new communities", in *ibid.*, 221.

Christian experiences is the direct reflex of weak, fluctuating and episodic modes of belonging to the Church. This needs to be borne in mind to be able to discern how the mystery of communion, which is the Church, is effectively realized in all its variegated community forms. The family and the parish are fundamental communities of initiation and growth in the Christian faith. They touch many more sectors of the baptized than do the movements. They can never cease to have a priority importance in the ever patient and persevering pastoral work of initiation, education and regeneration of the Christian people. But the same realism demands that due account be taken of the fact that the number of children from broken homes is multiplying today and the educational responsibility of parents is being progressively reduced. Only a minority of baptized, moreover, participate regularly in parish life and many of them reduce it to a “station” that provides more or less sporadic ritual services. The real influence of Christianity on people’s situations—situations ever more demanding and complicated, ever more secularized—is meagre. What supports the faith and changes life is the concrete experience of communion (in the family, in the parish, in the association, in the movement), not isolation or the diaspora, not the episodic participation in religious services, not the maintenance of the façade, not the functional activism in impersonal collectives, still less the mere label of Catholic. What happened with the first Christian community ought to happen today too: each community experience in the Church ought to arouse the exclamation full of surprise and admiration: “See how they love each other!” (why do they live like this?), since it is an unexampled testimony of unity, of more genuine, reconciled, brotherly human relations, full of humanity, miracle aroused by the Spirit of God for the conversion and transformation of the world. The appeal of the movements’ community life prompts a renewed consciousness and experience of the sacramental, eucharistic source as the only one capable of building the *communio* that the world, by itself, is unable to create (its utopias end up, on the contrary, as real hells). The experience of the movements only confirms the fundamental precept of *Christifideles Laici*, in affirming that to reconstruct the fabric of human

society what is needed first of all is to remake the Christian fabric of ecclesial communities themselves.²⁴

In this regard I would add that, in contrast to the case of the traditional associations of the lay apostolate, here we are speaking of “*ecclesial movements*”, both because they welcome the baptized in their various states of life, and because the charisms that arouse and animate them tend to educate in the totality of the Christian, ecclesial experience (“everything in the fragment”, according to the expression of Hans Urs von Balthasar, or “Church in miniature”, as one of the movements’ founders put it). Not partial, sectorial, fragmentary experiences, not even a particular spirituality, still less the claim of being *the* Church, but rather distinctive reflections of the one Church. Not a fragmentation of the Church, but original, albeit contingent modes of living the mystery of the Church. What a movement embodies and transmits is the life itself of the Church—not just a part of it in some way reduced or “specialized”. All this, needless to say, has nothing to do with the reduction of community forms to narcissistic and presumptuous groups that glorify themselves as the authentic Church, or to safe-havens far from the madding crowd, oases of elite gratification in the waste land of secularization, or to rigid forms of regimentation little respectful of the freedom and growth of persons, or to mere sentimental euphoria, or just as a way of relaxing in company.

Places of Education in the Faith

This affirmation allows me to pass to a third aspect of our examination of the ecclesial movements and new communities as “providential response”. They reveal themselves as such when their charisms are realized as teaching methods, so that “the fidelity to Christ and to the Tradition are supported and comforted by an ecclesial environment truly conscious of this necessary fidelity”.²⁵ Is it perhaps exaggerated to say

²⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 34.

²⁵ L. GIUSSANI, *L'uomo e il suo destino*, Genoa: Marietti 1999, 121.

that we have experienced, and are experiencing, very frequent situations of crisis of an authentic Catholic education, of greater difficulty in the formation of personalities of solid and mature faith, of more integral acceptance of the truths taught by the Church? Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, some years ago, pointed out the disproportion between the great investment in catechesis and courses of every type and their effective results. What can we say, moreover, of the results of many of our Catholic schools? Our age at the turn of the millennium is characterized by the formation of fragile personalities, by the lack of really formative societies, by the mistrust in and devaluation of reason (“weak thought”), by the banalization of life and by the poverty of ideals: an impoverishment, in sum, of the experience and conscience of the person of his own humanity. The reconstruction of the person, the rebirth of his personal conscience, the keeping alive of his “religious sense”—in spite of the gigantic machine of *divertissement*, distraction, entertainment of consumer society—requires a patient work of education, ever willing to start from scratch. And there is no genuine education without a hypothesis of meaning with which to confront the human condition and reality as a whole, and without an authentic paternity and maternity, in other words, without masters of truth and of life, without authority, in the etymological sense of the word: what cultivates the humanity of man and enables it to grow.

The movements, therefore, are places of education that propose Christ as the key to meaning and fullness, of everything and everyone, superabundant in relation to every human aspiration but corresponding to the inextinguishable desires for freedom, truth and felicity that constitute the heart of the person and that are present in the culture of peoples. That is why an authentic meeting with Christ and a faithful following in his footsteps tend to regenerate the whole of existence in a new way and transform it. It is not enough to confess Jesus Christ with enthusiasm. Temptations of pietism may exist here and there. Enthusiasm alone, no matter how well intentioned, runs the risk of soon burning itself out. The meeting with the Lord is real if it provokes a new conscience of the dramatic human condition: a conscience of sin and

humble supplication for grace. It is real if it animates and strengthens the mind as new knowledge, new sensibility and new attitude to the whole of reality. It is real if it leads the person to entrust himself to grace with the simplicity of a Marian *fiat*, in such a way that *metanoia*, the newness of life in all the dimensions of existence, may take place. Only then does the “new man” truly grow, witness to a changed humanity, that has become more human. The passage of *Gaudium et Spes* that John Paul II has placed as the crux and foundation of his whole magisterium—“In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear”²⁶—finds its pedagogical translation and practical exemplification in the teaching method of the movements. They educate in the faith in such a way that it has an impact on the life of man and on history. The separation between faith and life, between faith and reason, needs to be overcome.²⁷ For it tends, in general, to make the Christian confession superfluous—and hence useless—or to reduce reason to a sterile problematic.

The Christian experience of the individual and the group runs the risk, now more than ever, of subjectivism, hostage in the last analysis of power and its ways, if it fails to incorporate the whole richness of the great Catholic tradition, and find confirmation of its own authenticity in a fruitful relation with the sacramental and magisterial objectivity of the Church. The authentic charisms are directed at sanctifying grace, at the communication of supernatural life, at the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity that make us “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4). That is why they are aimed at the meeting with Christ in the sacraments, gestures of his salvific presence in the Church.

The way of the *sequela Christi* traced by the charism renders the sacramental grace more existentially expressive. That is why the experience aroused by a movement leads to the rediscovery of the sacra-

²⁶ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

²⁷ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 43; PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 20; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, nos. 45-48.

ments, and to a more intensive sacramental and liturgical life. On the other hand, the *fides qua* does not dispense us from the *fides quae*: what we believe in is not any old thing. How many opinion polls suggest that declared Catholics and even some so-called “pastoral agents” form their “mix” of beliefs by selecting and discarding them arbitrarily—thus reducing them to mere opinions—from the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Church? The movements are a “providential response” to a situation of this type, since they educate persons whose Christian experience grows in a more faithful and systematic intelligence of faith as the key to a deeper intelligence of the whole of reality.

Missionary Societies

In the fourth place, it may be affirmed, I believe, that the ecclesial movements and new communities are a “providential response” to the new phase of missionary mobilization that the present pontificate never ceased to recall and promote. What it entails, in sum, is a “re-evangelization” (“new in its ardour, in its methods, in its expression”).²⁸ This is all the more urgently needed since huge masses of people live “as if God did not exist”,²⁹ and “the number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase. Indeed, since the end of the Council it has almost doubled”.³⁰ The description given by the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* leaves no room for facile optimism: “Whole countries and

²⁸ JOHN PAUL II, “Address to the Assembly of CELAM”, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II VI*, 1 (1983), 698. The phrase “re-evangelization” was first used by John Paul II in Latin America (cf. also the “Message for the opening of the ‘novena of years’ promoted by CELAM in preparation for the fifth centenary of the evangelization of America”, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II VII*, 2 (1984), 896). Subsequently the use of this term in the ecclesiastical lexicon became very frequent. The Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* declares: “The hour has come for a re-evangelization” (no. 34).

²⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 34.

³⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 3.

nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing [...] are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing a radical transformation, as a result of a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism". This particularly concerns countries of the so-called First World. But even in other regions or nations in which "many vital traditions of piety and popular forms of Christian religion are still conserved" "this moral and spiritual patrimony runs the risk of being dispersed".³¹ Nonetheless, how difficult it is to overcome the routine of the Christian communities, sometimes too absorbed with their activism and problems *ad intra* to be able really to place themselves in a state of mission!

Mission is not an optional to the Christian experience, but its intrinsic communication, almost one might say its osmosis, from person to person, by means of the joyful witness of someone who has freely received a great gift, experienced it in all its truth, goodness and beauty for his own life, and therefore wishes to share it generously with everyone he meets. It is not an ideology, nor a specific pastoral programme; not a strategy, nor a change of façade, nor a marketing operation to boost the appeal of the product, but the witness of a newness of life presented as splendour of truth and promise of happiness for those who meet it. Mission is the vocation for which we were given life. What has been freely received, is freely given, as genuine passion for the destiny of each person. Love for our neighbour inspires the hope that divine Mercy may save him.

Now the ecclesial movements and the new communities are missionary societies projected *ad gentes*. How many rediscover their Baptism thanks to them! How many conversions of people far from any ecclesial contact they achieve! What generous dedication on the part of priests and lay people who live new forms of consecration, of itinerant catechists, of families, of workers and co-operators who set out for the remotest corners of the globe to passionately give what they have received! It may be affirmed with certainty, therefore, that the precon-

³¹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 34.

dition for the strengthening of the Christian, Catholic identity is not protective isolation in a ghetto, but, on the contrary, the renewed impetus to make the faith present in an explicit and visible way, without fear or calculation, in all the spheres and situations of life as communicators of the extraordinary gift of the meeting with Christ. For this same reason a positive charge multiplies and deepens all the movements' meetings. They are thus promoters of ecumenism, in the most variegated experiences of friendship, prayer and collaboration with Christians of other confessions and communities, in the fostering of the religious sense in meetings with believers of the great monotheistic traditions or of other religious traditions, and in cultural dialogues open to every aspect. There is no confused eclecticism in all this, although due care needs to be taken not to succumb to the risk of rather sentimental irenicism in the present-day cultural climate in which religions are reduced to opinions of equal validity. What prevails in the movements, thank God, is a Christian outlook that fosters each trace of goodness and truth, each sense of the Mystery, each nostalgia and yearning for God, within the divine plan that is enacted in Jesus Christ, the one Revealer, the one Mediator, the one Lord, the one Saviour. This brings me to the fifth and final aspect of the present reflections.

The Promotion of More Dignified Forms of Life

At the basis of every missionary impetus is the rupture of the dominating carapace of indifference—mere tolerance is a potential form of indifference—and a passionate involvement in the life and destiny of others. The “attitude of love for every human being, sharing the life of every human environment, the putting down of roots in every culture, the passion for the destiny of one’s own people, the human solidarity that transcends frontiers, are signs that characterize a Christian presence”.³² In this perspective is posed the challenge of the Christian con-

³² G. CARRIQUIRY, *Los laicos y la Nuova Evangelización* (Lima: Ed. VE, 1996), 45.

tribution in the promotion of forms of life worthier of man. Today it is no longer rhetorical or utopian to say that, since the early 1990s, we have been witnessing a major historical shift, an epoch-making change in the world. The modern parabola of messianic forms of atheism has closed. The totalitarian regimes have fallen. We are witnessing amazing scientific and technological innovations. We are in the midst of a revolution in biogenetics and communications. The restructuring of the economy under neo-liberal impetus has resulted in enormous concentrations in the world of finance and in that of the media and a radical metamorphosis of work. New forms of human alienation, awesome worlds of poverty, of exclusion, of marginalization of ever more abandoned masses of people, have appeared. How far are the ecclesial movements a “providential response” to help all these changes and guide them in a more human direction?

I think they have had to overcome, in some cases, the temptation that has led from the hyperpoliticism of the hot years of *engagement* to the forms of disembodied spiritualism currently being promoted by the dominant culture. If the ideological militancy of yesterday is now anachronistic and residual, it certainly has not been overcome by those who devote themselves to dreaming in light and soft ways of utopian worlds, without really tackling the plight of the human condition in its current historical context.

“New world order” and “civilization of love”: faced by the great scenarios and future prospects of the world, the experience and the conscience of the movements may seem disproportionate. But it is fundamental, in the sense that it is necessary always to begin from the person, from the reconstruction of the person that is the strength of society and of the Church. Basically, what this means is also abandoning the utopian claim that an *a priori* model or system of social engineering may substitute the fundamental change in the human heart. The event of faith in man tends to be integral: to involve his whole person. If a person is a new man in Christ, this newness has an impact, first of all, on his affections, on his family and on his work. In this way, he is educated to live the memory of Christ in the concrete circumstances of

life, according to the protagonism of the new man that Baptism introduces on the scene of the world. This newness of life spreads in renewed forms of presence, of involvement, in the various contexts of social life. We thus find the proposal of an “economy of communion” or of a “charitable society”, that promotes initiatives—inspired by an ideal of the good life—in the scholastic, educational, cultural fields, in health care and welfare, and in the support of families, in business and in co-operation in work. We also find volunteer service, with forms of work and services that translate the *caritas Christi* for the elderly, the disabled, juveniles in difficulty, refugees and immigrants, the sick, the unemployed, prison inmates. So great is the constructive power of the Gospel lived and shared: “The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and a power of liberation”.³³ In this way the principles of the dignity of the person, of subsidiarity, of solidarity that the social doctrine of the Church propounds for an authentic reconstruction of the social fabric are put into practice, beyond any absolute ideological faith in the power of the State and in the invisible hand of the market. Words and gestures that build peace, the defence of life, of the family, of freedom of education and parity of schooling, the safeguarding of personal and social liberties against the concentration of power, the campaign for human rights, co-operation for development: all this is the order of the day in the new sensibility in which the movements educate. At times a deeper Christian judgement and human competence are necessary to tackle the crucial questions of public life. The maturity of an adult generation of Catholics in political and international institutions, in the world of business, in the financial institutions, in trade-union leadership, in the universities and in the mass media is still generally lacking. Nonetheless, numerous original and even significant presences are emerging. They are beginning to fill the gap left by the crisis of the first post-synodal militant generation and by the diaspora—usually anonymous and insignificant—of Catholics

³³ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Libertas Nuntius*, in: *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, vol. 9, Bologna: EDB 1988², 866.

whose faith seems to have really little impact on their social, political and cultural activities.

A large part of the movements come from the Churches of Western Europe and the USA, but the truth and fruitfulness of their charisms have ensured that they took root and grew in the local Churches of the most diverse regions and countries. They especially grow in the middle sectors of society. Huge and densely populated worlds of the poor and the outcast—whose dignity, in spite of everything, is rooted in the religious sense—still await their missionary presence and their charitable work to grow together in humanity and hope.

A final observation: the last statistical yearbook of the Catholic Church reports that the number of Catholic baptized has for the first time topped the one billion mark. It seems an impressive figure, but in fact it only comprises 17% of the world population. Of each 100 people born into the third millennium only 8 will be Catholics, with enormous differences between the continents; e.g. in Asia 97% of the population is not Catholic. Of this 17%, moreover, only an average of only around 15% will participate more or less regularly in Sunday Mass. And even among this 15% the levels of assent to the faith are very heterogeneous. Those that conscientiously form part of the Church, one, Catholic and apostolic, form a tiny minority, a little flock. Every form of empty triumphalism is as misplaced as resigned despair.

The key question, at the dawn of the third millennium, is whether this minority of disciples of the Lord, in the diversity of ways and experiences in which the one Church is realized, represents not a marginal and insignificant community, but a reality that conserves and transmits the salt, the light, the leaven that keeps alive man's hope.

Charisms and Movements in the History of the Church

FIDEL GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ, M.C.C.I.

In the history of the Church we encounter one constant that is revealed with greater force especially in moments of cultural and ecclesial crisis or in times of epoch-making change: the great gifts of sanctity that the Bridegroom (Christ) presents to his Bride (the Church).¹ They are *providential* gifts. The same may be said of the phenomenon of the ecclesial movements that, in the course of the history of the Church, are frequently found linked to the great figures of saints. In the Church there exists a permanent and essential form, characterized by the sacramental structure established by Christ. United with it, however, we also find, a life of the Holy Spirit with its continuous interventions (charisms) that enliven and renew the sacramental life. These interventions, and the renewal they usually bring with them, do not occur without causing tensions and sufferings in the life of the Church.

Criteria for Interpreting the Phenomenon

How are we to interpret these phenomena in the history of the Church? As interpretational criteria or methodological constants, I would like first of all to cite some facts. But before mentioning them, it may be worth noting that the word *movement* is used in a very wide sense in ecclesiastical historiography. The same goes for the way in which it is used in this text: that is, in relation to those forms of group endeavour

¹ Cf. H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Sorelle nello Spirito. Teresa di Lisieux e Elisabetta di Digione*, 3rd ed. (Milan: Jaca Books, 1991), 26-29.

born within the Church on the basis of particular charisms and Christian experiences which have generated a new life in the Church and in society.

Event and Experience

We need to observe attentively what has happened within the successive ecclesial movements that have emerged in the history of the Church: a founder or a group of founders made an experience decisive for the rest of their life. We may define this experience as the mysterious meeting with the event of Christ. Later the same experience happened to other persons who met the founder/founders and as a result were called to share the same charism. Societies of friends, of sons or daughters generated by the same charism, were thus born. The fundamental factor at the root of all this is thus an event, i.e. something that happened, something that irrupted—sometimes spectacularly, sometimes discreetly—into the life of men and women, turning it in unforeseen, unplanned directions and impelling it into action.

The Significance of the Particular Meeting as Method

To manifest himself in the history of salvation, God normally uses men and women with whom he has identified himself through a gesture of totally gratuitous election. This reality composed of particular faces is the temple where God lives. It is a reality of living stones, i.e. of men and women in whom the Mystery dwells and in whom the Mystery is manifested, is active, is transmitted and touches us in the daily reality of the world.²

Profound Link Between Charism and Person

A gift of the Spirit of Christ is granted to a Christian once and for all to the benefit of the ecclesial community and of the world. It is an

² Cf. L. GIUSSANI, *Il tempo e il tempio* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1995).

event.³ The person who receives this grace communicates it during his mortal life and, once he has entered into the glorious communion of saints, continues to act with his power of intercession. That is what we profess in the Credo when we affirm: "I believe in the communion of saints".

So it may be said that every founder saint appears in the life of the Church as the visible ancestor of a family, of a lineage of saints. In this sense we may apply to the relation between the founder and his children what Bernanos writes in his biography of St. Dominic de Guzmán: "The Order of Preachers (the Dominicans) would appear to us as the same charity as that of St. Dominic realized in space and time, as the visible expression of his prayer".⁴

Charism and Temperament: How Christ Invests the Life of Each

"A group, a movement, an association of believers constitute the extreme outward reach of a real discourse, of a Christian memory. A reality of this kind is the outermost, most precarious, most contingent point in the great phenomenon of the event of Christ in history; but paradoxically the most decisive point for the life of the individual. It is where the mystery is communicated; the power of Christ is transmitted in fragility and in extreme weakness".⁵

This apparent precariousness is the place in which each person may experience the relation with the mystery of the presence of Christ by involving his whole life in it; but it is also the place through which the Church plays her role in every age.

Right from the days of the early Church innumerable ways can be identified in which the Holy Spirit drew Christians together to live and proclaim the memory of Christ. This variety was never an impediment

³ On the concept of event cf. L. GIUSSANI, S. ALBERTO and J. PRADES, *Generare tracce nella storia del mondo* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998).

⁴ G. BERNANOS, *San Domenico* (Milan: Longanesi, 1954), 25.

⁵ L. GIUSSANI, *Alla ricerca del volto umano. Contributo ad una antropologia* (Milan: Jaca Books, 1985), 87.

to unity in the Church, as St. Paul already recalled in his First Letter to the Corinthians, when he pointed out that the Gospel was proclaimed by various messengers, each according to the style and measure of Christ's gift given to him (*1 Cor 3:5-14*; cf. *Eph 4:7*).

What the apostle asks of everyone is a recognition of belonging each to each, or rather, of each to the unity in Christ. This is exemplified by the well-known episode of the meeting between Dominic and Francis, also represented iconographically. However different they were, they recognized and embraced each other as belonging to the same unity of the Lord.

So unity does not exclude variety: it does not preclude each person having a style of his own. Moreover, the personal temperaments and the circumstances of the life of each founder (place of birth, teachers, education received, friends) have an influence on the way he/she experiences and enacts the charism of God.

Charisms and Institution in the History of the Church

We also need to bear in mind other fundamental theological aspects which undoubtedly would need to be examined in greater depth but which I will limit myself to listing here.

Harmonious Communion in the Church

The dialectical opposition between institution and charism which some speak of, conceals a dangerous ecclesiological threat which has insinuated itself into the history of the Church, especially since the later Middle Ages with the various spiritual movements strongly influenced by gnosticism. These movements basically denied the mystery of the Incarnation in its concreteness; they despised the "flesh" and hence the visibility and sacramentality of the Church. They exerted a strong influence on the Protestant Reformation. As a result, the dialectical opposition between a spiritual Church and the visible Church,

between a charismatic Church and the institutional Church, was increasingly reinforced. The dangerous tendency also emerged within the Catholic Church itself more or less openly to propound the opposition between sacramental institution (hierarchy) and charism (often referred above all to the religious life). John Paul II, on the contrary, has, on various occasions, insisted on the need for a harmonious relationship, a reciprocity, between institutional dimension and charismatic dimension in the life of the Church.⁶ This position has been a constant in his magisterium. Already in 1987 he wrote: "In the Church, both the institutional aspect, and the charismatic aspect [...] are co-essential and concur to her life, renewal and sanctification, albeit in different ways [...]. The faithful who meet together in the associations and in the movements, for their part, under the impulse of the Spirit, try to live the word of God in the concrete historical circumstances. By their very witness, they seek stimulus in an ever renewed spiritual progress, evangelically inspiring the temporal realities and the values of man and enriching the Church with an infinite and inexhaustible variety of initiatives in the field of charity and holiness [...]. [We therefore need] always to avoid that deplorable opposition between charism and institution, that is as damaging for the unity of the Church as it is for the credibility of her mission in the world, and for the salvation of souls itself. This unity of the Church in the multiplicity of its components is a value that need to be constantly pursued, because it is always in danger, here in this world: and it can only be obtained through the efforts of everyone, of both pastors and faithful; it is a reciprocal encounter based on charity, humility, loyalty, in short on the exercise of all the Christian virtues".⁷

What are the permanent and fundamental institutional elements

⁶ JOHN PAUL II, "Message to the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 28 May 1998, 6; "Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1-2 June 1998, 6; cf. *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 18-19, 221.

⁷ JOHN PAUL II, "Message to the Ecclesial Movements gathered for the Second International Colloquium", *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, X, 1 (1987), 478.

that characterize the life of the Church?⁸ The sacramental ministry in its various levels (episcopate, priesthood, diaconate) constitute the one permanent binding structure that provides the Church with the stable form that Christ gave to her. This fact implies that Christ continuously assists her with the grace of his Spirit: hence this structure is not reducible to a merely sociological organizational order, but is sign of the presence of the living Mystery. Since it is a gift of Christ, transmitted and ever active, as in all the sacraments, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,⁹ the sacrament of Holy Orders must be continuously created anew by God: "It is not something that the Church can dispose of herself; it is simply not there. It is not something that can be determined by the Church on her own initiative".¹⁰ The Church is an instrument instituted by God for the benefit of man. The sacrament is therefore a grace that God grants for the benefit of all men. It is conferred through the grace of the Holy Spirit; we must therefore speak of the grace that God transmits in a charismatic and pneumatological way. This enables us to grasp that the sacramental ministry ordained in the Church is not a "ministry" of religious functionaries or a creation of the ecclesiastical institution to perpetuate the social form peculiar to it. Rather, it is a sacrament that belongs to the sacramental nature itself of the Church and that therefore implies the presence and intervention of the Holy Spirit. The sacrament of Holy Orders is therefore a vocation, a call and a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. There can never be any opposition between the ecclesiastical institution, that operates by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the charisms that the Spirit himself gives to the Church of Christ.

⁸ Cf. J. RATZINGER, "The Ecclesial Movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church", in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 25-29.

⁹ We may recall what is said in the Eucharistic Prayer II: "Truly holy, Lord, source of all holiness; sanctify these gifts with the outpouring of your Spirit, so that they may become for us Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord".

¹⁰ RATZINGER, "The Ecclesial Movements", 26.

The Relation Between Charism, Tradition and Renewal

We may note that throughout history God providentially gives his Church strong charisms. At the appropriate time these charisms give rise to genuine movements that realize new forms of ecclesial life and communities in response to the particular needs of renewal of the Church herself and of evangelization. These gifts of grace especially occur in times characterized by profound socio-political and cultural transformations and in coincidence with epoch-making transitions that often trigger a crisis of the Christian tradition. They are times in which the event of Christ seems forgotten, moments in which the life of the Church seems almost to be stagnant and in which the Gospel message either fails to advance or does so only in a superficial way. Charisms are the means of rejuvenation: they reproduce the event of Christ with all its power. They are a source of energy, holiness, ecclesial renewal.¹¹ John Paul II said to a group of priests participating in a course of spiritual exercises promoted by Communion and Liberation: "The Church [...] born from the Passion and Resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit, diffused throughout the world and in every period on the foundation of the Apostles and their successors, has been enriched through the centuries by the grace of ever new gifts. In the various periods, they have permitted her to be present in new ways suited to the thirst for truth, beauty and justice that Christ was arousing in the heart of man and of which he himself is the one, satisfying and complete response. In the same way the Church has a need to renew herself continuously, to reform herself, to rediscover in an ever more authentic way the inexhaustible fruitfulness of its own Principle!"¹²

In this sense it may be affirmed that the Church does not proceed merely from the mission of the Word which, at least as far as substance is concerned, has implanted in the world a definite form of faith, sacraments and ministries. The Church also proceeds from a second mission,

¹¹ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4.

¹² JOHN PAUL II, "To the Priests of Communion and Liberation", *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII, 2 (1985), 658.

that of the Holy Spirit, which is never reduced to the function, however fundamental that is, of guaranteeing the hierarchic, sacramental and ministerial institution, but continues to promote the work of salvation realized once and for all by Christ in the changing circumstances of history. For this very reason, the Spirit never ceases to inspire men and women, and continuously to rejuvenate his Church. Guiding the Church in the way of all truth and unifying her “in communion and in the works of ministry”, the Spirit of God “bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her; and he adorns her with his fruits”.¹³ John Paul II, in his above-mentioned address, expresses himself as follows: “The growth of the ecclesial body as Institution, its persuasive force and its mobilizing energy, have their root in the dynamism of the sacramental grace. But it finds its expressive form, its operational mode, its concrete historical incidence through the various charisms that characterize a personal temperament and history. Just as the objective grace of the meeting with Christ has come down to us propelled by meetings with specific persons whose face, words and circumstances we remember with gratitude, in the same way Christ communicates with man through the reality of our priesthood, assuming all the aspects of our personality and sensibility [...]. When a movement is recognized by the Church, it becomes a privileged means for a personal and ever new assent to the mystery of Christ”.¹⁴

The Relation Between Authority and Holy Spirit

The indissoluble union between apostolic authority and charism is continuously manifested in the New Testament doctrine. The investiture of the Holy Spirit that powerfully descends on the Lord’s disciples is revealed in the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁵

¹³ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4.

¹⁴ JOHN PAUL II, “To the Priests of Communion and Liberation”, 659.

¹⁵ Cf. *Acts* 2:6-13 (day of Pentecost); *Acts* 7:14 (in Samaria); *Acts* 10:44 (at Caesarea); *Acts* 19:6 (at Ephesus).

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To those who asked him what were his credentials as an apostle, Paul replied: "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:2-3).

Bearing in mind this essential dimension within the life of the Church, let us now review some features of the powerful manifestation of the grace of the Holy Spirit in her history.

From the Apostolic to the Subapostolic Period

With regard to the first steps in the progress of Christianity, the sources of the New Testament emphasize above all the way in which the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus created the unity and the communion of his first disciples, under the authoritative leadership of Peter and the Twelve. This community tackled daily life on the basis of faith, hope and charity: faith in the Risen Christ, hope in his triumph, and charity as the way of expressing the belonging to Christ. Slowly but surely the community grew. Its way of life was a source of astonishment to those who came into contact with it, so much so that many asked to join it (cf. *Acts* 2:43-47; 4:32-37). This growth of the community would become the reason for the first persecutions by the Jewish authorities.

In the life of the apostolic Church we may note two very important aspects for the history of the ecclesial movements in the life of the Church. First of all, we may observe that the direct mission of the apostles themselves included a very evident charismatic aspect. Other special gifts (charisms) were later given in the apostolic period to other members of the original community who did not belong to the college of the apostles: through them the Holy Spirit at times intervened rapidly to bring the apostolic mission of the Twelve and Paul to a successful conclusion.

"Several shocks were necessary to make Judaeo-Christianity grasp

by an effort that it was its duty to bring the message of the salvation worked by Jesus Christ also to the pagan world; so strong the consciousness of the election of the Israelites still was".¹⁶ Probably the decisive impulse for the evangelization of the pagans came from a group of Hellenistic Judaeo-Christians originally from Cyprus and Cyrene who had been forced to abandon Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen and the first persecution against the Christians. The group had then moved to the Hellenistic metropolis of Antioch. There these Christians—whether there were apostles among them is not known—"spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus" and "a great number that believed turned to the Lord" (*Acts* 11:19-26). A group of Christians, assisted and prompted by the Holy Spirit, took the fundamental step of bringing the Gospel to the pagan world. At a later stage we are told of prophets that descended on Jerusalem, of the way in which the Holy Spirit intervened in those situations, of the gestures of communion with the mother Church of Jerusalem and of the way in which the Gospel began to spread outwards from that great metropolis into Asia Minor.

In examining the early Church of the subapostolic period, the element that most powerfully emerges is the individual Christian community at the local level, hierarchically and sacramentally organized, subservient both to its own life and to its missionary growth. In this ecclesial community the Holy Spirit also bestowed various charisms for the building up of the Church herself (cf. *1 Cor* 12:11, 28-30; *Eph* 4:11-16). The letters that the bishop of Rome Clement (96-98 AD) sent to the Christians of Corinth make us understand that the Church was conceived by him as dwelling-place and temple of God, wherever he was worshipped. He also underlined her apostolic nature: the Church was served by a priesthood instituted by the apostles according to Christ's will and aimed at supporting this dwelling-place of God and maintaining the unity of the Church, body of Christ. Clement writes as follows: "[The] Apostles went about establishing those who were their first

¹⁶ H. JEDIN (ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol. I (Milan: Jaca Book, 1976), 125.

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fruits, after having put them to the test as regards the Spirit, as bishops and deacons of those called to believe".¹⁷ For the first Fathers, the Church was the temple of God, the place where he dwelt. What maintained this dwelling-place united, the source of its cohesion, was the Eucharist; the ministry of bishops and deacons was aimed at fostering the growth of this ecclesial communion. Such ecclesial communion was by its very nature missionary in character. Despite all the difficulties of those times, the Church began to be a movement: it had no frontiers, neither in charity, nor in space and time.

The Influence of the Monastic Movement on the Church (4th and 5th century)

A new stage in the history of the Church began with the so-called Edict of Milan of 313. From this moment, the role of fundamental importance played by the charism in the renewal of the Church in every age would become clear.

By the beginning of the fourth century, martyrdom had become something exceptional in the life of the Church, and the life of many Christians lost the consciousness and the intensity generated by the sacrifice of the martyrs. It was then that charisms emerged in the Church. They wanted to be a memory of martyrdom, and gave rise in various places—and hence with different characteristics—to the monastic movement. Martyrdom remained a fundamental point of reference for the monks: monastic life was conceived as a daily self-offering to Christ in a kind of bloodless martyrdom. The experience of monasticism would reinvigorate the somewhat enfeebled life of Christians. It would give renewed vigour to the life of the Church; help shape the liturgy; promote the development of new forms of ministerial life and new forms of spirituality among the faithful;

¹⁷ CLEMENT OF ROME, *Letter to the Corinthians*, 42, 4, ed. A. Jaubert (Paris: Cerf, 1971, *Sources chrétiennes*, 167), 168-170.

encourage the growth of ecclesial groups of various kind; and consolidate the ancient practice of virgins consecrated in their own homes or the consecration of widows.¹⁸

The Church thus witnessed the progressive formation of a kind of monastic *cenacles*. Some of these small monastic cells, especially in the big cities, had a structure similar to that of the modern secular institutes or the various forms of existing associations of laity consecrated to virginity. These societies of virgins conceived the *monasterium* or *conventus* as a dwelling-place and temple consecrated to God in the midst of society. They exerted a considerable influence on the renewal of Christian life.

A significant example of this is that of St. Augustine (354-430) with his monastic society or brotherhood, continued by his spiritual sons. The experience of communion shared by these Augustinian communities spread and continued to remain alive, in spite of the physical distance from their respective Churches-dioceses. The historians speak of some thirty male monasteries inspired by the Augustinian experience that still exist to this day in North Africa: Augustine still lives!

The Age of St. Benedict and St. Gregory the Great

From the fifth to the eighth century European history was characterized by a huge and impetuous migration of people southwards towards the Mediterranean. In the lands of the former Roman Empire the Germanic invasions were felt as a catastrophe. The Church too perceived in all its magnitude the catastrophe represented by the collapse of the Roman world: she therefore tried to succour the despairing, to give hope to the disheartened, by proposing a supernatural reading of events and trusting in the Christian hope of a future guided by a precise sense: everything co-operates to the glory of Christ. In response to

¹⁸ E. SASTRE SANTOS, *La vita religiosa nella storia della Chiesa e della società* (Milan: Ancora, 1997), 56. The numerous treatises devoted to the Fathers to virgins and widows are symptomatic.

the wave of invasions, the Church made herself present especially by her missionary message of communion. She exercised a moderating role; she tried to limit as far as possible the effects of the catastrophic events then taking place. A fundamental role in this ministry would be played by monasticism, especially that of the Benedictine order, which would give rise to one of the most incisive movements of renewal in the life of the Church in the whole course of her history.

St. Benedict, in founding his movement, did not of course foresee the enormous influence that it would exert on the history of the Church and of Europe. Welcoming into its ranks monks coming both from the populations of the former Roman Empire and from the Germanic peoples, Benedictine monasticism embodied the dialogue between the two worlds, a dialogue made possible in the light of the Christian perspective. So monasticism played a role of reconciliation among the new European peoples; it fostered the unification of the West from within.

Gradually the monasteries became genuine citadels of peace and dialogue, in a violent and strife-torn society. Both Christian life, and the culture it had generated, found refuge in the monasteries which, as a necessary defence against external invasions, were developed on the model of cities in miniature, of human communities of salvation and brotherhood. The monastic life began to be organized in a stable form. The first firm juridical ties between the various monasteries and abbeys began to emerge. From some of the larger monasteries, which acted as "motherhouses", the various monastic traditions and the means of communion and renewal spread out.

Concurrently another phenomenon, which would have great importance in the future, began to emerge: many rural churches were established for the evangelization of the peasants and the barbarians. This evangelization was promoted by ecclesiastics who led a life regulated by *canons* and were consequently called *canons* (*canonici*).

On reading the writings of the great bishops and monks of this early medieval period, what is especially striking is the affection and humanity of their relations, especially in the context of a violent and oppressive age. The monastic environment became a human refuge in

which the finer feelings of those who belonged to it were cultivated and in which the generosity and ardour of true friendship was in no way censured.¹⁹

*The Ecclesial Renewal during the Carolingian Period
of the Holy Roman Empire*

The long reign of the Carolingian emperor Charlemagne (768-814) inaugurated a new age in the history of the Church. It is summed up in the two mottoes inscribed on the coins that Charlemagne had minted: *religio christiana* and *renovatio romani imperi*. Charlemagne succeeded in grafting onto the society of the new Franco-Germanic kingdoms the wisdom of *romanitas* and the model of Christian life, with the help of a new and renewed monastic movement, especially Benedictine. It is thanks to this renewal achieved by the monks and bishops that the ancient ecclesiastical institutions established during the Roman Empire assumed a new character in which the Franco-Germanic component often remained predominant, but in which Christianized *romanitas* survived as an important substratum.

The writers of the time also insist on the loving and assiduous contemplation of the mysteries of Christ by all Christians: *cum amaris, apprehenderis*.

The period that covers the tenth and part of the eleventh century is sometimes called the “iron century”, since it was characterized by the disintegration of many of the political, social, cultural and ecclesial structures laboriously built up in the previous centuries. But during this long and harsh ecclesial and social winter, a renewal was also prepared which would explode on the threshold of the eleventh century and culminate in the twelfth with a general reform that would touch all sectors of the Church’s life.

How did the Christian experience succeed in saving the more pos-

¹⁹ Cf. C. MONTALEMBERT, *Les moines d'Occident*, vol. 5 (Paris 1867), 332-364.

itive aspects of this period, such as the conception of interpersonal relations that was based on the mutual fidelity of persons and that formed the heart of the feudal system (fidelity of vassals to the lord, of nobles to the king, of kings to God)? Or how did it succeed in transforming the more negative aspects, such as investitures and the Church conceived as the property or fief of the feudal lord?

It was above all thanks to the renewed monasticism that a ferment of Christian renewal could be inoculated into the society of the "iron century". In an age in which simony and many other abuses were rife among the clergy and among the laity, a series of reforms were set in train within the monastic movement. These impulses of reform prepared the way for that of Gregory VII.²⁰ Cluny was the centre of this reform movement. But Cluny represented, even before this, a goal of reform inside Benedictine monasticism. The life of the clergy was gradually rediscovering its proper role in the Church, despite many lapses, distractions and deviations.²¹ The Fathers, and the rules and experiences of the Early Church, were rediscovered. Those groups of Christians later to be called *congregationes*, or religious congregations, were created, each with its own particular *consuetudines*. Each of them would extend its influence throughout Europe, spreading far beyond the frontiers of the kingdom in which it had been born. A network of experiences of monastic life, that represented as it were the bone structure of Christian Europe, flourished everywhere.

The Benedictine Ecclesial Movement Renewed at Cluny

Towards the end of the eleventh century a fundamental role in the life of the Church was played by the Benedictine monastic movement of Cluny. It gave rise to a style of ecclesial life that historians call *Ordo Clu-*

²⁰ A. VAUCHEZ, *La spiritualité du Moyen Age occidental: VIII^e-XII^e siècles* (Paris 1975).

²¹ Cf. J.-F. LEMARIGNIER, "Le sacerdoce et la société chrétienne de la fin du IX^e siècle au milieu du XII^e siècle", in *Prêtres d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Paris 1954), 113-152; OTLOH DE SANT'EMMERAN, *Liber de admonitione clericorum et laicorum*, chaps. 4-5 (PL 146), 252-255.

niacensis Ecclesiae. Cluny exerted a considerable influence on the general renewal of the life of the Church, through the creation and multiplication throughout Europe of monastic communities of different size—abbeys, *coenobia*, *monasteria*, *celle*, *loca*, *prioriae*—which grew up round the Benedictine abbeys.

These movements, that developed during the reigns of the emperors Otto III, Henry II and Henry III, were supported by the popes and became the movements that would renew the Church's life. It is significant that the new charisms did not claim to destroy or replace the old ones. The new charisms roused the old monastic order from its torpor and by their witness challenged everyone—monks, clerics, laity—to live the Christian life in a more integral and radical manner. The Cluniac reform and the movements of the hermits and canons, each on the basis of its own charism, also played an important role in preparing the ground for the Gregorian reform. Many bishops, who were in favour of the reform, found assistance in these "friends of reform": they saw in them a valuable support and a point of reference.

The Age of Gregory VII: the Age of Christianitas

Western society arose and was slowly consolidated in its salient cultural traits and within its current geographical borders from the Carolingian period onwards. This period is rooted in a clear Christian experience. The institutions were pervaded by a Christian spirit and Christ was placed at the centre of life, as was emphasized by the artistic testimonies of the cathedrals, by the great cycles of frescoes and by the illuminated manuscripts in the monastic libraries. The empire of Otto III (980-1002) saw the birth of *christianitas*, the *tregua Dei* (1027),²² the great pilgrimages including those to Santiago, to Rome, to the Holy Land, followed by the Crusades.²³

²² Cf. R. BONNAUD-DELMARE, "Fondement des institutions de paix au XI^e siècle", in *Mélanges Louis-Halphen* (Paris 1951), 19-26.

²³ Cf. F. CARDINI, *Le Crociate tra il mito e la storia* (Rome 1971).

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This was a period of turbulent conflicts, but also of ecclesial vitality: in the Church of that period we find hermits, canons regular, monks, hospitaller and military orders, each with their own particular features. The Holy See often intervened too: it confirmed, juridically approved, protected and promoted these charisms.

The ecclesial reform movement of Gregory VII is explained in this light. Gregory was a former monk. On becoming the successor of Peter, he ardently desired to transmit to the whole Church the Christian experience that had fascinated him, but in many areas of the Church, he found himself faced by an unworthy clergy and Christian principles without conscience. From what has been said it will be clear that the period of the Gregorian reform was a period of crisis in the ancient forms of monastic and clerical life. It was also a period very rich in new movements, often torn between fidelity to tradition and commitment to innovation. Agonized debates took place, and there was a continuous search for forms of concrete ecclesial life for those charisms that sought a place for themselves within the Church. New forms of monastic and clerical life were created: the Cistercians, new forms of life among the canons, the experience of the Chartreuse, the itinerant preachers and the *pauperes Christi*. All those who, whether as monks, canons, clerics or laity, wished to embrace a new style of evangelical life, appealed to and drew inspiration from the Acts of the Apostles. Each of them belonged in some way to a different ecclesial movement. The men and women who founded these movements, or became members of them, included the celibate and the married, clerics and monks, and often bishops too and many nobles. Their decision to dedicate themselves to a reformed religious life roused the Christian people.

The Period of St. Bernard and the New Monks of Cistercium (Citeaux)

After the Gregorian reform, monastic life, though it had reached its maximum splendour, succumbed once again to crisis. The abbeys had multiplied and enriched themselves thanks to the accumulation of con-

tinuous donations and bequests: for this reason the powerful aspired to place them under their control. Many monasteries, although geographically distant from the cities, possessed enormous estates and hundreds of vassals. Attempts were therefore made to alleviate religious and ecclesiastical life by stripping it of heavy burdens and oppressive structures and returning to the original simplicity of the monastic experience. Many of these new monks were laymen who began to live alone, as St. Benedict had once done, and then in small groups. They led a life of simple prayer and austere penance. They were as a rule highly esteemed by the people, but not by the clergy who ended up by coming into conflict with them. They almost always made use of the Bible in their preaching, even if sometimes they were not exempt from misinterpretations, even to the point of succumbing to heterodox positions. Some of them would give rise to the *pataria* and other heretical movements of the period. Yet, with all due reservations, they represented a movement, fundamentally lay, that placed in question the lifestyle of monks and priests, who were frequently out of touch with the human and religious needs of the common people.

In this context of deep unrest and of pilgrimages throughout Europe—a great deal more numerous than can be imagined today—a movement of knights, crusades and pilgrims was born. It was the period in which Christian knights reached the height of their vocation to serve *christianitas*. Their service was characterized by a special dedication in defence of the poor and pilgrims and by commitment to the Crusades.

In conclusion, the ecclesial life of those times was rich in charisms and movements aimed at the renewal of Christian life in all its aspects. Given the great diversity in situations and ministries, there was no single form of living the Christian life. Though it is possible to identify basic coincidences and common denominators between them, the various forms of movement depended a great deal on the charism and temperament of their founders and their first disciples and companions in the charism. It was the end of an era, but at the same time the beginning of a new one, to which God would grant new and appropriate

forms of ecclesial charism: it would be the age of the twelfth century, the age of the “mendicants”, of the universities, of the great crises of thought, the age of the common man, of the emerging middle class, all heralds of the approaching modern age.

Dominic and Francis

The phenomenon of the movement of the mendicant Orders characterized the thirteenth century, a century in which Christian Europe moved towards the autumn of the Middle Ages and towards a new age, that of the modern period. The feudal structures entered into an irreversible decline. The cities, with their gradually emerging bourgeoisie, were slowly gaining the upper hand in social and mercantile life. Europe was fully opening itself up to commercial activity, overcoming the old frontiers. The prosperity of the population grew. Some grew rich, others remained locked in the poverty of an incipient urban underclass. The importance of the new social context was not wholly grasped by the old monasticism, the canons regular, the orders of knights and the ecclesiastical structures. These once flourishing realities now lived isolated, and often far removed, from the world of the new cities. The Church, as represented by her monks, her canons, her Christian knights, her priests, seemed lulled into somnolence by wealth and an illusory magnificence. Many clerics and monks were ignorant, concerned only by the accumulation of benefices and social power. Many of them were still linked to the ancient feudal privileges.

In so turbulent a context, new movements arose in the Church. They oscillated between the quest for evangelical authenticity and the appeal of ancient doctrines of gnostic origin that seemed to respond to the yearning for the renewal of man and of the Church. In this situation of contradictions and the sincere quest for an evangelical life based on the Gospels, the mendicant movements were also born. “In fact the Church had to solve three problems: that of the bourgeoisie,

that of poverty, and that of the anticlericalism that had mainly arisen due to the Albigensians. The new mendicant orders were like a breath of fresh air reviving the Church. Numerous groups of men, full of illusion and holy ambitions, wished to combat for Christ".²⁴ The charisms of Dominic and Francis and of the other mendicants were a providential response to these needs, an unique, unexpected and mysterious gift of God to his Church. These great Saints involved themselves in the midst of the social crisis mentioned above. They were not responses excogitated in the study, but *miracles*, interventions of God in the history of man. Their life immediately appealed to people, who regarded them with astonishment and wished to follow them. Those who became their spiritual sons, and shared their charism, very soon became numerous. And from now on they would be the main protagonists of ecclesial life both in the history of theology and in the history of mission, virtually down to the sixteenth century, when God enriched the Church with other new and providential charisms that aroused new groups of faithful and inspired incisive movements of new ecclesial life.

It should be explained, however, that the birth of the movements of Dominic and Francis and of the other founders of the various forms of mendicant life, did not wipe out the charisms of the monks or canons or the forms in which the *sequela Christi* had hitherto been practised, also in the clerical state. A charism in the Church never cancels another charism; it always helps it to recover, to renew itself, to rediscover its genuine original identity. The Roman Pontiffs supported the new charisms. They gave them a series of privileges, placing them under their own protection and granting to them the ancient exemptions they had previously given to the monks. These developments explain a great deal of the history of the missions, for example in the New World and in Asia, but also, at a later date, many disputes.

²⁴ J.M. MOLINER, *Espiritualidad medieval. Los Mendicantes* (Burgos 1974), 31-32.

The Ecclesial Movements at the Origin of the Catholic Counter-Reformation

The modern age opened a new era. It posed various and more complex problems to the Church and to European society. The new forces that were gradually released in modern Europe tended to detach themselves from the Church, to follow an independent course and often indeed to act against the Church. To their distant roots can often be traced back the great social revolutions and the grave crises of the modern world: violent political and social upheavals, European and world wars, rationalist and materialist ideologies. Even if the anti-Christian expressions of modern civilization would not manifest themselves before the eighteenth century, the progressive dissociation of man and his enterprise from the Christian experience, and hence from God, can be noted right from the origins of the modern period. Man was affirmed as the one measure of all things.

It is in the light of these aspects of the modern period that we will mention some charisms and movements aroused by the Spirit in the Church. In the history of the modern Church, the worldly spirit, which had widely penetrated the members of the clergy since the fourteenth century and culminated in the Renaissance, was combatted by an ecclesial reform promoted by various movements founded in different times and places. The Church's defensive attitudes served little to counter the multiple attacks made against her by the worldly culture. Often these attitudes, which were given concrete expression in the various disciplinary decrees of the Councils and in the establishment of coercive tribunals like the Inquisition, did not bring any significant renewal to the internal life of the Church, nor help to promote her missionary effort. These two dimensions—renewal of internal life and evangelization—were especially the work of the various founders of ecclesial movements and their sons and daughters: it is through them that the conciliar decrees of reform, from Constance to Trent, were implemented and became effective in the life of the Church.

A hard-won but irreversible movement of ecclesial renewal was born and developed from the end of the sixteenth century. It should

immediately be noted that the movement of the Catholic Counter-Reformation was not provoked by the Protestant crisis "as if the Catholic Church of the sixteenth century had been so depressed as no longer to have any internal capacity to reform herself without an impetus from outside".²⁵ The saints of this period and their fraternities promoted the renewal of preaching and aroused a movement of ecclesial renewal that preceded the Council of Trent and exerted an influence on clerical groups, associations, fraternities and movements also after Trent. Some experiences of fraternities among priests—which at times grew into religious orders of new type or societies of apostolic life such as the Theatines, the Oratorians, the Barnabites, the Somaschi—had their roots here. The new religious institutes, called orders of clerks regular, were born from this experience. Linked with them are also a host of confraternities, charitable works, apostolic societies, new ecclesial institutions of assistance to our fellowmen according to the needs of the time.

Various manifestations characterized the movement of ecclesial reform in this period of grave crisis. A ferment present everywhere gave birth to various ecclesial realities, new groups and associations of the faithful, or to the renewal of long-established ones (such as the "congregations of observance", St. Teresa in Spain, etc.). New religious orders were founded, and simultaneously lay associations and confraternities, whose life often revolved round them or derived their foundation from them, sprang up. In the seventeenth century the structure of the Church was thus penetrated by an impulse of rejuvenation. Everything concurred to promote reform on a large scale. Both the power of the charisms and the institutions that corresponded to this impetus and to the concrete needs of the time, proved necessary for it. Without all this, the effectiveness of the Tridentine reform and the history that followed would be difficult to understand.

Each group of friends gathered round a charism—irrespective of

²⁵ F. CALLAEY, "Reforma cattolica", in P. CHIOCCETTA (ed.), *Dizionario Storico Religioso* (Roma: Studium, 1966), 857.

the modes of their grouping, whether in religious orders, societies of clerks regular or other similar associations—produced in the life of the Church a broad movement of spirituality and rejuvenation that always went far beyond the corporate juridical configuration of their own society. One of the most significant examples of this is the Society of Jesus, which would come to play a fundamental role in the Church. So pervasive was its influence that the history of the Church in the following centuries, at least in some aspects (history of the missions, of theology, of religious life, of the formation of priests, of spirituality, of relations with political life, of the presence of the Church in European cultural and intellectual life) could hardly be studied without reference to the experience and fruitfulness of Ignatius of Loyola and his sons.

St. Ignatius of Loyola and his Time

There are words dear to a saint that express some essential connotations of his Christian experience. Ignatius of Loyola repeated some expressions with special insistence and almost with affection; they included the phrases “service of Christ”, “assistance to souls”, “serving and following Christ in company”, “*compagnia*”, “companions”. But there is one Ignatian phrase that perhaps epitomizes better than any the perception that Ignatius had of his charism: “He is a Christian sinner called by Christ to follow him in company for the service of souls”. The vocation of Ignatius and his companions was clearly in the tradition of the *sequela Christi*, which he served through assistance to souls performed within a society (“*scopus vocationis nostrae*”).²⁶

The experience of grace of Ignatius of Loyola occurred in a particularly crucial and taxing moment in the history of the Church. It coin-

²⁶ J.C. FUTRELL, S.J., *Making an Apostolic Community of Love. The Role of the Superior according to St. Ignatius of Loyola* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970); C. DE DALMASES, *Il padre maestro Ignazio. La vita e l'opera di Sant'Ignazio di Loyola*, 2nd. ed. (Milan: Jaca Book, 1994); G. SOMMAVILLA, *La compagnia di Gesù. Da Sant'Ignazio a oggi* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1985).

cided with the failure of the fifth Lateran Council, of the attempts to reform the Church *in capite et in membris* by decree, with the outbreak of the Protestant crisis and with the triumph of a world totally determined by the phenomenon of modernity. The Christian life, in particular that of religious and clerics, was in a pitiful condition. It was in this situation that the Spirit intervened in the Church through some Christians, who appeared as a sudden providential grace. These Christians were the founders of the oratories and the orders of "clerks regular", such as St. Antonio Maria Zaccaria, St. Cajetan (Gaetano da Thiene), St. Ignatius of Loyola and many others. They proposed new forms of communal life, in many cases also among priests, and always emphasized life in society, brotherhood and friendship as a fundamental dimension, alongside the apostolic dimension.

The society of Ignatius had a single aim: the glory of Christ. For Ignatius and his companions, their deep friendship, based on Christ and aimed at his glory, vanquished every form of dissension, every cultural or ethnic difference, every physical separation (in Christ "*cuius veluti glutino caritatis totam hanc conglutinari familiam et copulari par est*").²⁷ This gift and experience of grace in Ignatius and his first companions went far beyond the organizational fact of the Society of Jesus. It produced such a movement in the life of the Church that one can safely say it was the impulse by which a life that permeated a multitude of ecclesial experiences and activities was diffused. Significant from this point of view is the fact that the Society of Jesus in turn generated other movements: it gave rise to the Marian congregations, to the Movement of Friendship in France and not less that a thousand religious institutes and institutes of consecrated life of every kind, that were either founded by Jesuits or inspired by the experience of grace and by the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola.

Other saints, *providential graces* of God to his Church in this period, were Philip Neri, Camillus De Lellis, Charles Borromeo, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, etc. If the richness of sainthood in so tur-

²⁷ IGNATIUS LOYOLA, *Epistolae et Instructiones*, vol. I (Matriti 1903), 296.

bulent a century as the sixteenth is astonishing, no less striking is the fact that these saints were often friends; they mutually supported each other during their vocation, though very different in their respective ways of realizing it. Some became founders of congregations, others not; but what was clear was their fertile influence on the life of the Church both during their life and after their death.

After the Council of Trent, there was an extraordinary flowering of saints, of societies of "sons"/"daughters" formed around them, of congregations and fraternities of various kind, such as the Camillians, the Clerks Regular of the Mother of God (or Leonardini), the Fathers of the Christian Doctrine, the Piarists, the Priests of the Mission or Lazarists, the French Oratory, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and the Order of the Visitation of St. Francis de Sales. There was no area of life that was not touched by their presence. These foundations, with their respective forms of apostolate, were the visible expression of a great charismatic reality manifested through numerous saints.

From the Enlightenment to Liberalism

The history of the political, economic, social and religious upheavals begun in the sixteenth century was exacerbated in an anti-Christian sense in the eighteenth century with the triumph of the culture of the Enlightenment which would culminate in the French Revolution. The eighteenth century is a sad and sombre period in the history of the Church. From the eighteenth to the nineteenth century the life of the Church would be marked by dramatic events: slowly the real freedom of man dissolved in the hand of a State that constituted itself as an absolute power and invaded every sphere of life. This State stretched its tentacles with growing violence into social life and also into ecclesial life, which unfortunately went through a period of stagnation. The so-called liberal century (following the French Revolution) inaugurated a period of persecution, of abortive attempts at restoration, of attempted concordats with States to defend some hypothetical areas of freedom

for the Church, and of radicalization in the hostile attitude of the State to the Church.

“The rationalist influence [...] made the State autarchic, autocratic, and confirmed the absolute self-foundation of the State. The State thus became a power that was constituted in the hands of those who held it; it was identified above all as power. This is the ‘logic’ born from the affirmation of reason as the measure of all things: *man the measure of being*. In this way ideology clearly replaced all the modes of existence of the Christian religious fact”.²⁸ This mentality triumphed everywhere. It exercised a decisive control over the Church, over her institutions, over her property, her priests, her religious. The supremacy of the State was affirmed and reinforced not only in the political, juridical and economic sphere but also in the popular mentality.

In this delicate period, in which everything seemed to be on the point of being lost, and the old ecclesiastical structures within the individual States either withered away or were swept aside by the ideology and armies of the Revolution, the Catholic world was characterized by contrasting positions. Some lamented times past; they took refuge in nostalgia and tried in every way to ally themselves with those who were striving in vain to achieve a social, political and religious “restoration” of the past. Others by contrast thought it was better to dialogue with the world, using the same categories as it: these “liberal Catholics” ended up by being in part absorbed by the world with which they wanted to dialogue. New ecclesial associations were also born. They sought to return to the original experience of the Church. Representing a huge and wide-ranging movement, they were manifested in the history of sainthood, in the history of charity and of mission, and in that of the various foundations of consecrated life, both clerical and lay, in the Catholic associations typical of the period and in the involvement of many Catholics in social and ecclesial life. In this way the interesting phenomenon of the specific and direct involvement of the laity in the history of the contemporary Church began to emerge and develop.

²⁸ L. GIUSSANI, *L'uomo e il suo destino* (Genoa: Marietti, 1999), 66.

We have briefly mentioned the state of ecclesial life in one of its most characteristic charismatic dimensions, that of regular religious life. In this period there was a renaissance both in the history of traditional consecrated life and in the life of the lay Christian, deriving inspiration from new experiences of grace that from an organizational and structural point of view have little in common with the traditional forms. So the question posed is this: can one speak in the broad sense of the existence of characteristic ecclesial movements during this period? The answer seems to me to be yes. They were ecclesial initiatives certainly not planned by the Church's hierarchy. In many cases they were born "casually" and in circumstances hostile to the Church, as during the French Revolution. Their protagonists belonged to all the states of the Christian life: bishops, priests, former religious, lay men and women. This ecclesial reawakening may also be called in the broad sense an ecclesial movement of renewal and of missionary apostolate.

The liberal State tried in every way to control and curb the life of the Church. As far as its formal aspects were concerned, it has to be admitted that it frequently succeeded in doing so. But it did not succeed in controlling the creative strength of the Holy Spirit. The repressive laws forced Christians to develop their imagination. Ecclesiastics and religious were often forced into exile: it was a way used by Providence to give birth to movements of every type within the Church, to carry forward the mission in a world that had relapsed into paganism.

We may mention briefly some specific traits of the movements of this period.

A surprising fact is first of all the leading role played by Catholic women, whether nuns or virgins "in their own home" or the mothers of families. They were a support for ecclesial life in many areas of life. The female institutes accompanied the poor from the "cradle to the grave".²⁹ The role played by Catholic women in the Church worked a revolution in the field of the rights of religious.

²⁹ E. SASTRE SANTOS, *La vita religiosa nella storia della Chiesa e dello società*, 879.

The old religious Orders had a need for radical reform and did not always succeed in reversing their decline. But often they renewed themselves thanks to the new movements that had emerged in the Church. These movements, associations, “new institutes” and forms of apostolate had almost invariably been born in contexts hostile to the Church or in outposts on the missionary frontiers. They became a place of encounter, in which anyone could find an occasion to facilitate his/her meeting with Christ. They often entered into fruitful dialectic with the old forms of religious life. But it was not until the codification of 1917 that at least a part of these movements were granted any juridical status in the life of the Church. This same Code, however, did not totally recognize the innovations, so that a certain problem has continued to be posed right down to our own day.

In these founders, and in the movements and associations they founded, we find some facets of the Christian experience that are especially characteristic of the spirituality and *devotio* of the contemporary Church. One central theme they emphasized was the mystery of the pierced Heart of Christ on the Cross, from which springs the new life of the Spirit for a redeemed humanity. Christ the King was exalted. Principles of ecclesial and social action were generated by this grace of participation in the mystery of Christ. Constant reference was made to the action of the Holy Spirit. In response to the optimism of a man conceived without sin, Christian anthropology was reaffirmed through the mystery of the Immaculate Virgin.

What predominated in everyone was the mystery of the visible Church: the Church humiliated, suffering, exiled, imprisoned, persecuted, attacked, stripped of its freedom and prestige; a Church that was losing a large part of its support in the emerging proletariat and that was abandoned by intellectuals and politicians. In a century in which emotion and the senses played a fundamental role, it may be understood why the mystery of the visible Church had a central place in the heart of Christians.

This experience of grace determined a fruitful apostolate of charity in all the spheres of the life of the Church and of the world. And to it

can be traced the origins of the fruitful missionary movement of the modern period. The Enlightenment period had reduced the missionary spirit to virtually zero. After the suppression of the Jesuits (1773), the compulsory abandonment of their missions had represented a real catastrophe for missionary activity. The great historian of the missions Schmidlin notes, in this regard, that at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were no more than three hundred missionaries in the whole of the non-Catholic world (including those posted in the protestant countries). Yet, in the moment of gravest decline, God aroused a fruitful missionary movement in his Church. If we consider through what vicissitudes these initiatives were born, one cannot but agree with Joseph de Maistre when he affirms that if Providence had permitted a *tabula rasa*, it had done so to permit a fresh start.

This movement also contributed to renew the old religious Orders and to foster their missionary dimension. It spawned a whole series of missionary institutes: in France, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate founded by the bishop of Marseilles Msgr. de Mazenod (later canonized), the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit (founded in the eighteenth century by a very young French priest, Claude Poullart des Palces) and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, refounded and reunited by the converted rabbi Francis Jacob Libermann, the Institute of the African Missions of Lyons and the Institute of the White Fathers of Algiers, founded by Cardinal Charles Marcial Lavigerie (1868); in Belgium, the Scheut Missionaries founded by Theophile Verbist; in Germany, the missionaries of the Divine Word founded by the Blessed Arnold Janssen; in England, the Missionaries of Mill Hill, founded by Cardinal Vaughan; in Italy, the Institute of the Combonian Missionaries founded by the Blessed Daniele Comboni (1867), the Foreign Missions of Milan founded by Msgr. Ramazzotti and Msgr. Marinoni, the Saverian Missionaries of the Blessed Guido Maria Conforti and the Institute of the Consolata of the Blessed Allamano.

The same experience of grace from which the missionary movement derived its origin also aroused concrete responses of Christians to the social problems of the time. Many Christians devoted themselves to

charitable works. Their charismatic experience determined a precise mode of life and was expressed in works of mercy and Christian charity. In many of them this devotion was not limited merely to alleviating the ills of liberal society, but was a concrete response to the dramatic social problems of the time.

Another “movement” that should be pointed out is the Catholic ecumenical movement, founded by converts from protestanism. In England we thus find the “Oxford Movement” of Newman, which derived its origin from Anglicanism; the movement of Faber, who like Newman became an Oratorian; that of Manning and many more.

Nor can we forget the thriving movement of new foundations of consecrated life. The irruption of “new institutes” of consecrated life into the Church helped to diffuse the Church’s presence everywhere. These “new institutes” devoted themselves to the service of the Church and of society. Often their model of life was determined by the concrete needs of the society in which they lived.

The Ecclesial Movements in the Twentieth Century

The period in the life of the Church that opened after the First World War was characterized by the birth of numerous movements of Christian renewal and a plurality of forms of consecrated life and of Christian presence in an ever more pagan world. To understand this phenomenon, we would have to study the current situation: “the end of the modern epoch”, of which Romano Guardini spoke in 1925, and the birth of so-called “post-modernity”.³⁰ This period was extremely complex from the viewpoint both of the history of civil society and that of the Church. In the history of canon law it was marked by the birth of so-called “secular institutes” and of other ecclesial groups that had difficulty in gaining acceptance in the juridical system of the Church. This was the

³⁰ Cf. F. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ, “Annunciare Cristo all’Europa”, in *Europa tra dimenticanza e memoria* (Milan: ISTRÀ, 1991), 11-66.

period in which the “ecclesial movements” in the sense now given to the term took their first steps.³¹

An awareness of the significance of the Christian mission among the laity and its missionary dimension has always been present in the history of the Church ever since her origins. This awareness has been expressed in different forms in the course of the centuries and was gradually deepened following the collapse of the society of the *ancien régime* as a result of the French Revolution, especially from the pontificate of Leo XIII on: relegated to the fringes of civil society, the Church had to recognize that it was useless to claim her former role as a protagonist in political and social life. Leo XIII repeatedly invited the laity to organize itself in such a way as to play an active role in the life of society and of the Church. The popes of the twentieth century encouraged the initiative of Catholics who joined together and gave rise to various movements of Christian life, apostolate and catechetical and liturgical renewal.

Following Vatican Council II, the dignity and responsibility of Christians by virtue of their own baptism were recognized with renewed force. An idea that had been familiar to the theology and the Christian experiences in the early centuries of the Church was thus revived. St. Leo the Great expressed it in his well-known words: “Christians, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God’s own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member [...]. Thanks to the sacrament of baptism you have been converted in the temple of the Holy Spirit”.³²

The factor that has distinguished all the ecclesial movements and the new communities in the course of the history of the Church has been their ecclesial aspect, which might be summed up in the words of

³¹ Cf. M. CAMISASCA and M. VITALI (eds.), *I movimenti nella Chiesa negli anni '80* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1982); *I movimenti nella Chiesa. Atti del II Colloquio internazionale su “Vocazione e Missione dei Laici nella Chiesa oggi”*, Rocca di Papa, 28 February – 4 March 1987 (Milan: Nuovo Mondo, 1987).

³² LEO THE GREAT, *Sermo de Nativitate Domini* 1-3 (Pl 54), 190-193.

St. Augustine: "Love this Church, abide in this Church, be this Church".³³ The lay character itself, that generally characterizes the movements, powerfully expresses the essential character of the baptism that renders Christians effective in their inalienable vocation to bear witness to Christ in the world,³⁴ given that the Church, by her very nature, is missionary in all her members.³⁵ This missionary ecclesiality, as the main characteristic of the ecclesial movements and the new communities, is expressed in a total dedication to the glory of Christ and hence to mission conceived as communication of an experience within the situation and the circumstances in which each person is placed, as the *Letter to Diognetus* already recalled in the second century.

Drawn by the presence of Christians strongly marked by specific charisms, numerous *christifideles* are "congregated around an evangelical idea, to the benefit not only of their own Christian life, but of the whole ecclesial community. Many periods in the history of the Church have witnessed the birth of such movements".³⁶ Every age in the history of the Church is familiar with genuine ecclesial movements, that are revealed as a providential response to the needs of the time and that flourish in various forms. In many cases, too, they give rise to religious orders, to institutes, fraternities and societies of priests and laity, of men and women consecrated to a life of celibacy or not. The forms of such communion are never identical and just for this reason often experience difficulty in finding a specific collocation in the canon law of the time. In spite of this, all these movements reveal a powerful impact on the life and activity of the Church.

What is most striking is the plurality of movements and forms of ecclesial life, lay or consecrated, throughout the whole history of the Church, and especially in periods of greatest bewilderment and loss. Such movements are historically the instruments through which Provi-

³³ AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Sermo* 138, 10 (PL 38), 769.

³⁴ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 15.

³⁵ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, no. 35.

³⁶ I. MOREIRA NEVES, "I movimenti nella Chiesa oggi", in M. CAMISASCA and M. VITALI (eds.), *I movimenti nella Chiesa negli anni '80* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1982), 166.

dence acts in the life of the Church, and hence in the life of the world: through them the event of Christ is perpetuated and rendered present with greatest evidence.

In conclusion, we can sum up some characteristics of the ecclesial movements as they emerge in the history of the Church.

1) A charism, generating an ecclesial movement, immediately makes itself present in the reality of the local and universal Church.

2) A new charism helps other charisms and ecclesial forms that suffer from age or exhaustion to return to their origins, thus gaining renewed consciousness of the gift and the mission entrusted to them.

3) Charisms are by their very nature "catholic": they transcend the local frontiers of the area in which they were born (parish, diocese, national Church).

4) The ecclesial movements spontaneously tend to manifest the catholic nature of the Church. From a particular charism is unleashed an immense ecclesial fertility: a *Catholic people* is thus born. In it finds expression the various states of Christian life, without forgetting any vocation. With the underlining of the ontological and missionary sense of baptism, the lay life especially flourishes, but various forms of consecrated virginity and religious life, vocations to the priesthood and fraternities of priests of various kind, also emerge.

5) Pastors, bishops and parish priests see in the movements a source of ecclesial renewal; by welcoming them, they show respect both for their distinguishing features and for the harmony of the Church.

6) These springs of renewal in the history of the Church have always had a profound *Marian* and *Petrine* sense. To be able to spread in catholicity they have always looked to Rome, to Peter, who in various ways has always supported them.

II

The Movements in the Life of the Local Churches

Introduction

LUCAS Card. MOREIRA NEVES

I believe—and I use the verb not in the weak, but in the strong sense, meaning: I am convinced—that the mystery of the Church presents two very important aspects. The first is the Church as communion. The second is the salutary and peaceful tension between universal Church and particular Church.

These two terms and the notions they contain should not be understood merely in the accidental sense of the organization, of the structures, of the canonical provisions. All that is important of course, but it is only a consequence. The Church is universal and particular in its *being*, in its essential nature, in its deepest identity. The mystery consists precisely in the co-existence of and fusion between the two prerogatives. How are we to interpret these two dimensions of the one Church?

We need in the first place to consider the *intention* of Christ. He wanted the universal Church: not reduced to a people, a race, a culture, but comprising all the peoples, all the races, all the cultures. This is the perspective that we find in the Gospel (cf. *Mk* 26:15) and that was reaffirmed many times and in many different ways in the writings of the apostles, especially in the Letters of St. Paul, and then by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, by the Pontiffs and, in a special way, by Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. We may say that, in the intention of Christ, the universal Church comes first and foremost. The Church can only be conceived as universal, right from its definition.

But this universal Church is essentially realized, and takes on concrete form, in the particular Churches. The apostles—including the apostle Paul—, their successors, and the great missionaries founded the universal Church in particular places of the world: Rome, Corinth, Thessalonika, Galacia, Spain, Gallia, etc. They nourished these communities with the word and with the sacraments. They formed Christ-

ian communities, each with the character of the local human community. In this sense—i.e. from the viewpoint of the concrete realization—the particular Church comes first: the Church is universal but *exists* as particular Church; but the Church in question is the same.

At this point, two errors are possible: it is mistaken either to see the particular Churches as fragments of the universal Church, or to conceive the universal Church as a federation (juxtaposition) of particular Churches. There exists only one truth: the Church, which has a universal vocation, exists in the particular Churches and is a communion, a symbiosis (not a mosaic) of these Churches. An authentic theology of *universality* and *particularity* of the Church and of the Churches is an aspect of the greatest significance of ecclesiology in general and of the ecclesiology of Vatican Council II in particular. No less important is the need constantly to preserve the reciprocity between the Church's dimensions: the Church is not by turns universal and particular. It is always and simultaneously the two things in different form and from different points of view. Both dimensions must therefore be left to exist together, each with its own connotations and characteristics. This is an art that requires wisdom, equilibrium, patience and spiritual perception. Without this attention we would end up by amputating an essential dimension of the Church.

What has been said so far will help us to understand the relation between the ecclesial movements and the particular Churches.

As conceived by Paul VI and by John Paul II, and as promoted and encouraged by these two Popes, the ecclesial movements are an expression of the universal Church. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are born in a particular spot but addressed to all men and intended to respond to the Church's needs and requirements throughout the world and not in a single or in several dioceses. Their missionary impulse, their programme and projects, their aims, their apostolic formation, their spirituality are universal. This fact constitutes their richness, but is very often the cause of much perplexity: how will the movements conduct themselves in the particular Churches? Will they not try to impose schemes ill-adapted to the various local realities?

Introduction

Many bishops, in the name of the particular Church—and due to an instinctive rejection of universality—have difficulty in accepting the movements. They have the impression that, since these movements did not spring from the soil of their own particular Church, they cannot form an active part of it.

Here a delicate balancing act comes into play. The particular Churches contain a significant—indeed predominant—part of local realities, of activities and institutions peculiar to them alone: parishes, basic communities, charities, welfare organizations, volunteer services, forms of human promotion, cultural programmes. All these facets form the typical face of the dioceses. But these must not be exclusive: they must also welcome into their midst realities that are an expression of the universal dimension, such as the ecclesial movements. The fact that the movements are universal does not mean they are any less important for the particular Churches.

From these movements, however, an effort of adjustment is also requested: that they become, so to say, realities of the particular Church—that they “particularize” themselves. They are asked, in other words, to assume the face of the particular Church in which they have put down roots. They are asked to love it, to understand its problems, to respect its pastoral plans, and to contribute to their realization. The movements have universal features which need to be fostered, but they also have the obligation and the need to translate them into “particular” and local expressions. If both these requirements fail to be satisfied, there will always be difficulties.

The interventions that follow will discuss in more detail this mature and frank reciprocity between the two dimensions: universality and particularity, movements and local Churches.

Pastoral Experiences of the Bishops

The Movements: "Salt of the Church"

I was asked to describe to you what the ecclesial movements have represented for me personally and for the archdiocese of Utrecht (Holland). My talk therefore will not be a theological treatise on the movements. Rather, I will try to answer the question: what existential impact have the ecclesial movements had on my personal life of faith and on that of the diocese I represent?

Round about 1975 I had my first contact, as bishop, with the charismatic movement. In the charismatic groups, which at the time did not yet have a structure, I could observe a growth in the life of prayer and of devotion. At the time, however, and perhaps still today, this movement was seen as somewhat "out of this world". I have to say, on the contrary, that the charismatic movement, and especially the Emanuel Community, knows how to form, also among the young, persons with truly apostolic spirit. In 1980 an invitation enabled me to meet members of the Focolare Movement. I heard many testimonies, but one in particular struck me: that of a young couple who told how they had been converted thanks to the Movement. It was truly a moving testimony. So I began to get to know the charism of unity and of love, discovering the meaning that unity and love have for the day-to-day life of the Christian. Subsequently contacts were stepped up through the annual meetings of bishops organized by the Focolare Movement under the guidance of the late Msgr. Hemmerle.

Round about 1990 I also got to know Communion and Liberation. Cardinal Danneels had addressed the CL meeting in Rimini and strongly advised me to accept the invitation made to me. So the world of a new movement was opened up to me. The charism that lies at its origin consists in living consciously on the basis of the incarnation of God in Christ, in the conviction that that this must have an effect on

our way of being men and women in society, in the world of politics and culture. In the meantime I had frequent contacts with Jean Vannier's *Communauté de l'Arche* and with the Neocatechumenal Way. The latter movement is represented in our archdiocese by some Italian and Spanish families who have chosen to be sent to the Netherlands to bear witness as missionaries of Christ.

What do these movements mean for my life of faith? Living as I do in a land that is increasingly pervaded by a climate of secularization, in which only 10% of Catholics are practising and consist in large part of elderly people, the movements I have named are like oases in which the Catholic faith is truly lived, even by the young.

Many similarities, but also differences, may be noted between these movements. What they have in common is the fact that most of them have a family character. Round a particular charism the faithful gather together as in a large family, in which they feel themselves protected, in which they are inspired by the same ideal, in which they are challenged to be Christians, and in which the predominant culture of selfishness is demolished. Since none of the movements is very extensive in terms of number of members (only the Focolare Movement and the charismatic movement can claim several thousand sympathizers), people know each other and call each other by their Christian name, in contrast to the parish communities where anonymity often prevails. These latter call themselves communities, but often are so only in name. The force of attraction of the movements, on the other hand, consists precisely in their ability to bring people together on the basis of an ideal lived as a community.

The movements I have mentioned bring new life, because they have as their objective the deepening not only of spiritual and religious but also ecclesial and sacramental life.

The problem is that generally in the parish people look at them with a certain diffidence. Firstly, because in many parishes the general spiritual climate has a horizontal dimension: it has, so to say, been flattened. And secondly, because the movements are sometimes regarded as potential competitors, in the sense that a risk is perceived of the "bet-

ter” parishioners being sucked into the movements and consequently becoming parishioners with a critical spirit.

It is incorrect to say, as is often claimed, that the movements are more aimed at personal sanctity and far less at apostolate and social action. The first “accusation” is true, the second is not.

Among the charisms lived in the various movements there are differences that are legitimate, and indeed it is fortunate they exist. The various charisms endow each movement with its own colour and content. On the basis of my own experience and personal contacts, I have the strong impression that the various movements attract different temperaments. One person feels himself more attracted by the Focolarini, another by CL or by the Neocatchumenals. It is also clear to me that the whole atmosphere that reigns in a “focolare” and round about it is more feminine in character, whereas the atmosphere that reigns in CL is rather more robust and masculine. Both movements accept both men and women as members, but personally I find that the men of the Focolare Movement are rather more gentle in character, whereas the women of CL are more intellectual.

All the above-mentioned movements active in my country, with the exception of the charismatics, have in common the fact that they originated elsewhere and therefore have to come to terms with cultural and linguistic barriers. For example, even if almost all the books of Chiara Lubich have been translated and are written in a clear and accessible style, the difference that exists from a cultural point of view is clear.

Of no movement present in our diocese or in our country can it be said that it is “a church within the Church”. Rather, they are the “salt of the Church”.

The members of the Focolare Movement show the greatest openness towards the parishes and the diocese. As bishop I believe that the movements I have mentioned represent a real hope for the future. Due to the exemplary life of faith of many of their members, I feel edified as a believer. And I have a good relation with a certain number of members of the movements.

Although the movements in our country can count only on a small

number of members and hence of sympathizers, and do not grow in any spectacular fashion in quantitative terms, they do have a certain power of irradiation in my diocese and in the country as a whole.

It only remains for me to say that, as bishop, I avoid identifying myself with this or that movement. The bishop, in my judgement, ought to have good relations with all the movements. It is understandable, however, that one may feel more at home in some of them.

ADRIANUS JOHANNES Card. SIMONIS
Archbishop of Utrecht (Holland)

The Spirit Crosses the Frontiers

Twenty-six movements are present in my country (the Czech Republic). Five of them arrived here already in the period of the Communist regime. In describing the situation of the movements in my country, however, I want to begin at the other end. We are now completing the preparations for a meeting of the movements to be held on 4 July at Velehrad, in Moravia, the cradle of our Christianity (it is there that the Pope in 1990 announced the first extraordinary Synod for Europe). Fourteen movements will be present at this meeting. Open to everyone, it will be preceded by a congress in which the delegates of the various movements will participate. They will examine the theological significance of the phenomenon of the movements and reflect on their place in the Church. Preparations for this meeting have lasted almost a year. Hitherto no forum has existed where the movements could meet together to get to know each other and to work together. So these preparations have also provided a chance for closer co-operation between them.

The very first preparatory meeting was characterized by great love and, I would say, by great openness on the part of all the representatives of the various movements and communities, by love for the Church and

the desire to serve her. We wish, at the Velehrad meeting, to respond to the Holy Father's invitation to repeat, in some way, what took place in St. Peter's Square on the vigil of Pentecost in 1998. On that occasion, only the Focolarini came to Rome from our country. During that first preparatory meeting, to enable the others to grasp what kind of event this had been, they showed the video of Pentecost '98. The images and the words of the Pope filled everyone with enthusiasm. And everyone took at heart John Paul II's invitation to repeat the experience of that day to bear common witness.

Originally the idea was that during the meeting each movement would present itself to the bishops and to all the others. Gradually, however, the desire to testify to the unity among the movements, as already experienced during the preparatory meetings, was pushed into the forefront. That seems to me very important, for if the movements are led to seek unity among each other, that is a sign of the fact that they are really aroused and inspired by the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit always leads to the unity of the Church. The bishop responsible for the movements within the Czech Episcopal Conference, Msgr. František Radkovský, has always been present at these preparatory meetings. This is a fine testimonial to the unity between the institutional dimension of the Church and the charismatic dimension.

While the preparations for the Velehrad meeting were proceeding, meetings between the representatives of the movements and the bishops were also taking place in the individual dioceses. A more personal and concrete dialogue, centred on the life of the diocese, was thus opened. There is a growing desire everywhere for the movements to periodically meet with the bishop to hear what his intentions are and to present their own way of life to him. But the relations between the movements themselves and their knowledge of each other are also developed in this way. What emerges in these diocesan meetings is, on the one hand, the unity or closeness of relations between the movements and, on the other, the unity between the movements and the bishop or bishops. And this is something that consoles us a great deal, even if difficulties are not lacking.

In the parishes, at times, there have been interpretations of the charisms perhaps not entirely correct, or certain ways of living them that have provoked tensions or misunderstandings between the parish priest and members of the movements, but efforts have always been made to restore harmony by clarifying the situation and trying to determine the rights and wrongs of the case. Prejudices resulting from ignorance and lack of personal experience of these new forms of spirituality have not been lacking among some parishioners, and have also given rise to difficulties in relations between the members of the various movements themselves.

Once the preparations for the Velehrad meeting had been completed, we had the impression that something was lacking and everyone was a bit sad because it had been a wonderful experience to meet together. The bishop who had participated in those meetings then proposed that we should continue our get-togethers after the July meeting to evaluate its results together and to try to discern what it is that the Holy Spirit wants of the movements in our country.

I have tried, in this brief account, to give you some idea of what, after Pentecost '98, is the current relation between the movements themselves and between the movements and the bishops in our small Republic.

But, as I said at the beginning, some movements arrived in our country already during the years of Communism. In that period our countries [in Eastern Europe] were isolated from the rest of the world in a very rigid way. The frontiers were then barred to everyone. But not to the Holy Spirit. That is very clear to me. In fact some movements arrived here already in the Sixties, especially in the early Sixties, and then later in the Seventies. For me it was striking to see how the Communist regime, in its persecution of the Church, wanted above all to destroy the communion of the Church by preventing the nomination of bishops and dividing priests and laity. Ecclesial activity could only be conducted inside the churches, where it was kept under close police surveillance, but outside the churches no type of religious activity at all was permitted. Sometimes the partnership between priests and laity

was prohibited even in the churches. Only the clergy had permission to publicly exercise their ministry, and so the laity became ever more passive spectators in the Church. The Communist regime persecuted the forms, the structures, the institution. But when the movements arrived in our country, they had no structure or had no big structures. They arrived in our midst as *life* and it was then we were able to observe that the Communist regime was unable to persecute life, the Holy Spirit, but only the structures. At the time of the so-called normalization, after the uprising of 1968, after the entry of the tanks of the Soviet Union and its allies, the members of certain religious orders or other Christians went into virtual hiding. But it was just in this period of harsh persecution that the movements enjoyed their greatest development. It is clear to me that the two facts are not unconnected. In the time of persecution, when the Church was deprived of so many things and reduced to the bare essential, we felt that the movements were just what we needed.

Right from the start I participated in the spirituality of the Focolari, who were then very strong here. We met outside the churches, in the woods and in the mountains. I remember in particular one occasion—I think it was in 1970 or 1971—when we met in a wood: a “Mariapolis” under umbrellas. It was raining torrentially and we were out in the open. So the meeting was held under umbrellas: someone read a theme for meditation and the others around him listened. All this made a strong impression on me: it was an expression of the desire to be together. Precisely because the Communist regime prohibited us from holding assemblies, from gathering together in communion, in communities, the desire to do so was strong in us.

My own personal experience is probably already familiar to you: for ten years I was deprived by the State of authorization to publicly exercise my ministry as a priest. I became an exile from the Church, an exile from society, an outcast. As a simple manual worker I wandered through the streets of Prague, washing car windows in all weather. What saved me in that difficult situation was just the spirituality of the Movement. Because I had been left on my own, isolated, as the regime wished, I went into the

underground and lived in secret with a small group, in communion, in a community. What mattered wasn't only the psychological strength we gained from being together in secret in an adventurous way. The strength of this communion that the movements bring is not the result of a new method, but of a rediscovery of the reality of the Church, the reality of the risen Jesus present in our midst. We discovered the strength of this reality in those little clandestine groups. We discovered that we were not abandoned (even if the frontiers were closed, even if others in the West could do little to help us, even if we were isolated). Just this experience—the risen Jesus in our midst, the closeness of God—saved us. Living as a priest for ten years, outcast and abandoned, was not always easy... So rediscovering this reality of the closeness of God, of the God in our midst, proved my salvation. And then the movements also brought with them a stronger understanding of the Cross. In this situation, thanks to the spirituality of the Movement, I rediscovered my priesthood with greater strength, because I felt myself close to Jesus on the Cross, he who was High Priest. Close to the Cross, deprived of everything, as a priest I rediscovered in *that* moment I was a true priest and to this realization I was led by the spirituality of the Movement.

Our Church was deprived of everything; in certain moments all that was left to us was the Gospel, Scripture. In this situation we lived the Word of God every day and I realized that even the laity, living the Word of God, have a very important role, which is that of which *Dei Verbum* speaks when it explains how knowledge of divine Revelation is deepened: "The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts [and this happens thanks to the movements] (cf. *Lk* 2:19 and 51). And [what follows is very important and I want to emphasize it:] it comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience [...]" (no. 8). The experience of the Word of God is a powerful thing, it helps us to deepen out knowledge of divine Revelation.

We are now approaching the second extraordinary Synod for Europe, which has as its theme: “Jesus Christ alive in his Church, hope for the Third Millennium”. It is just this we have experienced. And it seems to me that to understand this reality better, it is not enough just to study it: we need to experience it for ourselves. This is what the Holy Spirit says in *Dei Verbum*.

I wish to conclude with a recommendation that comes from my personal experience. To understand the movements better, I don't think it's necessary to belong to a movement, even though in the Czech Republic there are many priests who do form part of a movement; there are thousands of them. But the bishop, too, ought to know the movements not just from books, but from his own experience. I don't say he ought to be a member of a movement himself, but he ought to share their spirituality in order to understand them better.

MILOSLAV Card. VLK
Archbishop of Prague (Czech Republic)

The Gift of God and the Task of the Bishop

The question we are discussing is of the greatest importance for the present and for the future. In this regard, I would like to share with you some convictions developed in the exercise of my episcopal ministry, not only with the more widespread movements, but also with a large number of more modest groups that have not enjoyed the same expansion or in some cases the same duration.

It seems to me important to fully understand the spiritual situation of this century and the ecclesiological developments that have led to it.

1) Apart from the role of the founder and of his charism, it is a group of faithful, a congregation of faithful, that gives substance to the foundation.

This, necessarily, is not localized, but initially originates in a par-

ticular Church. In this respect, the movements differ from the sociological model to which the political parties or the most diverse kinds of association may be likened: for the majority of these what takes first place is the acceptance of an ideology or a programme of action.

But, in the case of the movements, we are dealing with the establishment of a group of lay faithful to whom has been given, as a grace, the chance to participate in the life of the Church and her mission. They can only realize this gift by entering into the constitution that exists in this Church, in other words, into the sacramental mystery presided over by the bishop, and by participating in the missionary mandate given by Christ to his apostles.

2) We know that God, as St. Paul recalls, spreads his gifts "for the common good" (*1 Cor 12:7*). The mission of the bishop, successor of the apostles, is not only to authenticate the gift of God for the good of those who receive it, but also to help it to place itself at the service of the good of everyone, and of the peace and unity of the Church.

It is the bishop who must see to it that the fertility of the gift received yields the fruits that God expects and from which the presence of the Spirit can be recognized. If he fails to do so, the gift may be lost or go bad.

Experience clearly shows that, far from being antithetical, charisms and institution are linked together by a close reciprocal bond: the one depends on the other. Charisms and institution proceed from the same act of God who sends his Spirit. But we must guard against taking these words in a generic sense: charisms are gifts of grace, fruits of the Spirit; institution means the Church instituted by Christ, it is his Body, the Temple of the Spirit.

3) When St. Paul reminds us that the supreme gift, the greatest and most desirable charism of all, is charity, he also reveals their form and logic: the mystery of the cross of Christ, supreme wisdom and folly in the eyes of man (cf. *1 Cor 1:18-30*).

It is by the charity of Christ that the bishop may help the movements, received as a gift from God, to develop according to Christ, to

purify themselves, in other words, to resist the temptations of any human enterprise.

Spiritual growth is dependent on this obedience to the mystery of the love donated to the Church.

In the same way, only the divine charity may give to the bishop the wisdom that enables him to ensure that these movements, according to their diversity and under his guidance, may proclaim the mystery of Christ and devote themselves to the new evangelization.

JEAN-MARIE Card. LUSTIGER
Archbishop of Paris (France)

The Breath of the Spirit

The presence of the ecclesial movements and the new communities in the diocese of Conakry is far weaker than in other African dioceses.

In Guinea the following movements are present: Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the St. Rita Group, the Association of the Holy Face, the Marian Group, the Emmanuel Community, the St. Egidio Community and the Testes Association.

These various associations do not attract large crowds. They also pose problems, some more, some less. They conceal dangers, and sometimes arouse perplexity and mistrust in many Christians. But the grace of their presence, the grace of their discovery of God and the serene certainty of the power of the breath of the Spirit in their life, is comparable to that of the prophet Elijah before the "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12), on "Horeb the mount of God" (*ibid.*, 19:8).

In all the parishes where these new movements have established themselves, the Christian community has been enriched with the gift of a particular breath of the Spirit that has been transformed into a great attachment to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Guinea, into a fer-

vent devotion to the Eucharist, into a determination to get to know Christ better, and into a willingness to seek constant nourishment from the Word of God. Of course, this fidelity to Christ, this hunger to listen to the Word of God, and this love for the Virgin have always been present, and actively expressed, especially during the period of persecution that the Church in Guinea has experienced. But the ecclesial movements and the new communities have aroused new zeal, a greater intensity of the life of prayer, a contagious joy of faith, and the profound desire for a sound formation in the Christian life; because, as God says in the book of the prophet Hosea: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6).

Even though the ripening of the fruits of the Spirit requires time, even though it is difficult to evaluate with precision and objectivity the spiritual renewal that the Catholic Church of Guinea has enjoyed thanks to the ecclesial movements and the new communities, it can be affirmed that the work of the Spirit is the same as on the day of Pentecost. It enables the faith of each Christian to be renewed in the Church's service. It enables Jesus Christ to be proclaimed as Saviour and Lord of everyone and to turn each Christian into an apostle and a true witness to the Gospel, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks to the new charismatic movements, thousands of Christians are deepening their faith and their commitment in the *sequela Christi*, discovering a deep love for Holy Scripture, opening themselves to the Holy Spirit, and rediscovering the place of Mary in the Church and in their life and the place of the Church in the world. They are acquiring a better understanding of the Eucharist and a brotherly charity that they are faithfully putting into practice, an active charity, especially on behalf of the poor, the sick, the handicapped, the prison inmates, the elderly, those most in need and most sorely tried. This brotherly attention to the poor and deprived is the result of a personal meeting with Christ. For it is only once a person has been touched in the depths of his being by Christ that he can address himself to his neighbour with the love of God that was bestowed on him by the Holy Spirit. It is Christ who liberates us from our blindness and fills us with the light of

the Holy Spirit, to enable us to see our fellow man with the eyes of God, as a brother, a friend, a being created in the image and likeness of God and hence worthy of our love, attention and respect.

In a society plagued with activism, that seeks only efficiency and profit, a society that believes only in the action that produces concrete and tangible results, the new movements remind us of the importance and centrality of prayer in the life of man. They make us advance towards the discovery of the joy and the richness of prayer and worship.

Man, as a creature of God, is made to worship; and the more human he is, the more deeply does he feel the need to worship. If he is blind before God, he will worship the world or worship himself or myths or, in any case, something that is not God. That is the root cause of all our catastrophes. The new movements are therefore a gift of God to our time: a gift that needs to be accepted with faith, gratitude and discernment for the better balance of our modern hyperactive societies, suffering a profound crisis of fundamental values. Prayer and worship are the only genuine path towards the pacification of the homicidal conflicts that are tearing apart the African continent.

What was it necessary to destroy in ourselves to receive the grace of the outpouring of the Spirit that is given to us by the movements and by the new communities?

On the personal level and at the ecclesial level, it was necessary in the first place to combat our fear, throw open the doors of our heart to the Spirit and overcome our deafness to hear, not the noise and confusion of the world, but the still small voice that is the murmuring of the Spirit. For "the wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit (*Jn* 3:8). It was therefore necessary to put ourselves in a position to listen more attentively to the voice of the Spirit through the trustful welcome of all the charisms generously granted to the Church for her growth in holiness and her evangelizing mission. It was necessary to open ourselves up to the Spirit and his manifestations.

Apart from the due discernment, recognition and understanding of

the signs of the time, what we need is a profound sense of humility and an act of love and obedience to God's will that is manifested in a surprising and unpredictable way, totally different from any we can imagine. In this "new Advent of the Church", which prepares us for the Pentecost of love and the outpouring of the Spirit of Mercy, we need humility, faith, meekness and trust in the promises of the Old Covenant; for only they can make us believe in the presence of God in our world and in the history of our humanity, to see him and to hear him say: "I shall pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my Spirit" (*Joel 2:28-29*). Yes, God is now fulfilling his promises. And it is wonderful to see, once again, how the Spirit shows himself stronger than our plans and reveals himself in our Christian communities in a quite different way than as we would have imagined.

It is here that we would need to reflect on the exhortation of St. Paul: "Do not quench the spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil" (*1 Thes 5:19-22*).

I have personally had brotherly contacts with the Catholic groups of Renewal. I have participated in several of their prayer meetings and assemblies. I have conducted a hard-fought battle against sectarian tendencies and the resistance of some to submit to authority, because every charismatic movement must more than ever "feel with the Church", act in everything in full communion with the bishop to avoid damage. I have given them detailed guidance, albeit respectful of their sensibility, with the aim of safeguarding harmony, curbing an exaggerated infatuation for the spectacular, for miracles, the gift of tongues, the often rowdy atmosphere of their prayer assemblies. I have insisted, lastly, on the welcome of the "fruits of the Spirit: charity, joy, peace, good will, goodness, gentleness, trust in others". But, having said this, the positive side of these movements and new communities, undoubtedly marked by sin and human weaknesses, has to be recognized: above

all, the wonderful virtues and the good works that flourish in their members and in the Christian communities as a whole, as also a real aspiration to holiness, a strong desire for conversion and a personal renewal, a genuine brotherly life, sign that characterizes the true disciples of Christ (cf. *Jn* 13:35).

This new experience of the Holy Spirit, this “new Pentecost” is a God-given opportunity, a grace for the Church. It is a Pentecost of love that rejuvenates the world and the Church through the apostolate of the laity. According to John Paul II, “charismatic Renewal represents a grace, a kind of leaven to reinvigorate all our parishes and all our Churches”. So Renewal ceases to be a movement and integrates itself in a structural way in the concrete life of the Church. It is just this I urged in a letter of June 1991 to the St. Egidio Community, who were anxious to begin a presence in Conakry. Though expressing my joy, my encouragement and my support, I clearly expressed not only to the St. Egidio Community, but to all the movements, my hope to see them in perfect harmony with our basic Christian communities and our parishes, to help them in a spirit of brotherhood, humility and modesty to open themselves more to the Spirit, to the meeting with Jesus, to the listening to his Word, to the joy of prayer, praise and adoration, and, above all, to a willingness to let themselves be led by the breath of the Spirit. For the new movements are like the shut doors of the room where the disciples were gathered that were opened under the breath of the spirit (cf. *Jn* 20:19). They invite us to open ourselves and to let ourselves be constantly guided by the Holy Spirit. The ecclesial authorities and the parishes, after having rooted out the misunderstandings, the exaggerations and the risks of possible deviations, therefore ought to give them a place in the Church and permit them to assume and to enact to the full the great missionary drive that animates them. This, after all, is the great and most fervent hope of the new movements. It is a hope that Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Guinea, in the course of my last meeting with the movement, clearly expressed to me in the form of three questions: What steps do you recommend to us for a better fulfilment of the mission of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Guinea? In your

view, how ought we to evangelize? How do you intend to help us so that the Christian faithful, our brothers, may accept us as members of the body of Christ?

These are the same apprehensions as those of St. Paul, faced by the manifestations of the Spirit in the midst of the Church of Corinth and concerned by the equilibrium and harmony of the Body of Christ (cf. *1 Cor 12:1-31*). It is a grace to be gathered together here at this seminar, bishops and pastors of the local Churches, to share, consult, examine together, and accept, in faith, in prayer and in fidelity to the Truth, the transfiguring power that the Holy Spirit exercises over the Church and over the world.

The Most Rev. ROBERT SARAH
Archbishop of Conakry (Guinea)

Accompanying the Movements

I cannot begin without thanking you for the privilege of being asked to talk on a subject that is of great importance to me and the Church I serve. I am conscious of a deep pastoral responsibility to present my hopes, my fears, my concerns and my awe as I seek to discern what God is doing in my own local Church.

I truly believe that the Holy Spirit is talking to us at the dawn of this new millennium through the movements and the new communities. Not *only* through them, of course, for his voice comes in many ways and in many forms, but *indeed* through them as well, as through the many other wonderful forms of his conversation with his Church and with those of us who have very special roles to play within it. Therefore, I believe that God is speaking through these realities, and that we will not read the signs of the times unless we listen with respect, with prudence and with love.

In twenty-two years as a Bishop, eighteen years as an Ordinary, my

experience with the movements and new expressions of the Holy Spirit has been varied. I have had negative experiences, one very grave with a covenanted community of charismatic people which proved to be a great cause of concern to me and indeed to the local Church I serve.

But it is mostly about the Neocatechumenal Way that I would like to talk this morning. Although the Way is presented to the Church as a form of Christian initiation, it is appropriate to discuss it in the context of the new manifestation of the Holy Spirit in our times. The specific focus of the Neocatechumenal Way differs from the movements in the fact of its insertion into the life of the parishes, and therefore into the life of the diocese itself. Our Holy Father has described it as “*an itinerary of Christian formation, valid for our society and for our times*”. The strength of the Way—and indeed the source of much of the criticism levelled against it—arises perhaps most clearly because its communities are an intrinsic part of the parishes in which they are located and only have life through that relationship.

The Neocatechumenate existed in a small number of communities in the archdiocese of Newark when I arrived. It has had great growth in the area which I serve, mostly because of the presence of a *Redemptoris Mater* seminary which was founded there more than ten years ago.

May I begin with a short story? When the leaders of the Neocatechumenal Way in my country came to talk to me about the possibility of opening a seminary in the archdiocese of Newark, my first question was: “How many other dioceses have already turned you down?” They, of course, assured me that, although indeed several others had indicated that they would not be willing to sponsor this project, they felt that Newark would be a good place and that they had been encouraged by the Holy See itself to approach me on this matter. The story of the founding of the seminary has its miraculous elements, too. I had no money to purchase property in order to begin this new initiative. I told the leaders that if the Lord would make the resources available, then I would say “yes”. I set a term of one hundred days so that it would be a true indication of God’s providence. Within thirty days, a woman—unknown to me, to the members of the communities of the Neocate-

chumenal Way, or to any of my pastors—came forward and with extraordinary generosity offered me four million dollars to purchase a property and begin a seminary. I saw in this the mind of the Lord expressed very clearly and I agreed to establish such a seminary in the archdiocese of Newark.

I am very inspired and indeed enthusiastic about the work of the Neocatechumenal Way in our archdiocese. The changes in the lives of the people, especially in the lives of those who have been far from the Church for a long time, have been truly grace-filled and impressive. Hundreds of people who had left the Church or had lost any relationship with the Church, including some who had been both hostile and apathetic, found in the challenges of the Neocatechumenate a new willingness to approach their obligations and responsibilities as Christians. This alone has been an enormous blessing and a great gift to the local Church of Newark. I also find that in the vast majority of cases, the change is long lasting, and not just an emotional reaction to a moment of grace.

In a special way, the promotion of vocations both to the priesthood and to the religious life by the leaders of the Way has been a grace not just to my own diocese, but through the missionary vocation which it has fostered, to dioceses in many parts of the world, which we are now privileged to serve. The archdiocese of Newark now has two parishes in Estonia, a parish in Puerto Rico, priests working in the Holy Land and in Berlin, as well as in two dioceses of the United States. And thanks to our priests from our *Redemptoris Mater* seminary, we have been able to accede to the request of the Holy See to take pastoral responsibility for the *missio sui iuris* of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The young men who come to the *Redemptoris Mater* seminary are almost universally filled with a zeal for the missions and a deep love for the Church. They have accepted the challenge of the Neocatechumenate and it has prepared them fundamentally for the new evangelization. Many of them now come not only from communities where they have had a conversion in their own lives, but more and more frequently from families of the communities, where their generosity in offering

their lives in priestly and religious vocations has been fostered from their childhood and seems well founded and well prepared. These vocations are tested by several years of pastoral work among the communities as seminarians, where they are challenged profoundly by a spirit of total dependence on God and on the charity of others. This has given them a depth of spiritual generosity, which is of great grace to behold.

The priests themselves—and I have had the privilege to ordain more than thirty—are men filled with love for the Church, with great zeal for the missions, both at home and abroad, with a prudence in accomplishing their mission and with an obedience to the local bishop which is truly admirable and—in today's world—reminiscent of the spirit of obedience that motivated the lives of the great missionaries of old.

Are there any concerns that I see as I approach the question of the Neocatechumenal Way? Perhaps rather than concerns, they are challenges to the local bishop because of the relationship of the communities to the parishes and to the diocese itself. Firstly, as the growth of the communities continues and because of the importance of the catechist in each community, it is vital for the local Church to make sure that there is an adequate distinction between the lay catechists, who may be responsible for a community, and the local priest. It is essential that the priest, especially if he is not formed in the Way—as is the case with most of the pastors of the communities that exist in my diocese—not be relegated to the position of a “sacramental functionary” and that this formation for Christian initiation not be left totally in the hands of others who would not have the theological training, nor the lengthy spiritual experience of the priests. The pastor, in collaboration with the catechists, must be involved.

Secondly, it is possible to see, as in many charismatic movements, a tendency toward an overly simplistic view of the world and society. This again underlines the need for the corrective and participating presence of someone whose theological training can guide and help to foster formation in the proper channels and toward a proper understanding of the role of good and evil in our world.

With regard to the seminaries themselves, I believe that the question of formation is essential and that therefore no seminary should be established unless it is well founded not just in its theological teaching but also in its formation. It is my personal opinion—as an observer who is favourable to the Way and has great admiration for its leadership—that multiplication of seminaries is a concern and that it would be better for the Church and for the Way if there were a concentration on perhaps fifteen or twenty of these seminaries in different parts of the world rather than establishing them in a multitude of dioceses.

To that end, and with the goal of strengthening the *Redemptoris Mater* seminaries within dioceses, I have long been a proponent of a gathering of those bishops who have established these seminaries, together with the authorities of the Holy See, to discuss and study ways in which we can ensure the strength of each of the seminaries that have been established. In our case, the *Redemptoris Mater* seminary of Newark is properly a house of formation since, to foster the unity of the presbyterate, the students must attend their courses with our other seminarians at the traditional archdiocesan seminary associated with Seton Hall University. Moreover, I asked the Bishops' Conference of the United States to make an official visitation of the seminary to ensure it was fulfilling all the requirements of our programme of priestly formation. Incidentally, I am happy to report that the result of that visit was exceedingly positive and encouraging.

We have sought to make it clear from the very beginning that our *Redemptoris Mater* seminary is a seminary of the archdiocese of Newark and not of the Neocatechumenal Way. I have always insisted with the young men, who are studying in our seminary, that they are to be ordained for the Church and not for the Way. This has at times, I know, tested and challenged some of them because they are obviously so devoted and properly grateful to the Way and its leadership. I totally agree that the Way has been a great instrument of holiness and of purification in their lives. It is however the Church itself they must serve and, since they are to be diocesan priests incardinated in the arch-

diocese of Newark, that service must normally take the form of pastoral and parish responsibility.

After more than ten years of contact with the leaders, the catechists of the communities, the seminarians and the priests who have come to us through the Neocatechumenal Way, I have one fundamental recommendation to share with you. I trust that this recommendation would hold good not only for the Neocatechumenal Way, but for all the apostolic movements that arise within the confines of our dioceses.

My recommendation is made against the background of the powerful words of Cardinal Ratzinger to which we referred yesterday: "Every irruption of the Spirit always upsets human plans [...] renewal hardly ever happens without pain and friction. [...] These movements have had their share of childhood diseases. The power of the Spirit could be felt in them, but the Spirit works through human beings and does not simply free them from their weaknesses". His Eminence Cardinal López Rodríguez said the same thing yesterday, as did Cardinal Vlk this morning.

I, too, believe that they are works of the Spirit, but I also believe that they demand from the bishop a personal involvement and a personal supervision. This would be especially true where we are dealing with both seminarians and priests who have been sent to us through the Holy Spirit either for the service of the people in our local Churches or, through the sponsorship of our local Churches, for the new evangelization. We must not leave them alone, without the support of our prayers, our participation in their lives, and the guidance and direction for which we are responsible by virtue of our own episcopal charism. If the bishop—and, of course, there is a parallel in the role of the local pastor—does not work with them and guide them and be part of their decision making within the diocese, then these great gifts of God can be lost, even as virtues can be lost if they are not practised. The role of the bishop in the communities and the movements is one which truly demands his involvement both personally and through the organs of the local Church. It is through the diocesan structures that potential pastoral problems and tendencies toward extreme positions may be

corrected, and indeed the bishops' personal presence frequently among them is the guarantee of unity so they may find their rightful place within the diocesan family and its apostolic mission.

A few months ago, I was privileged to give a talk in Colombia about the pastoral care of large urban centres. I mentioned the ecclesial movements and communities during that talk and basically gave the same advice to my brother bishops who were attending. When I concluded, one wise prelate, who had the experience of both the Neocatechumenal Way and several other movements in his large diocese, made a comment. He told me: "The most important thing you said was that the bishop must accompany these people on their journey".

The key word is "accompany". I want to repeat that message here. The ecclesial movements and the new communities are with us on the journey. If we accompany them, they may prove to be one of the greatest factors in the evangelization of the new millennium. If we allow them to grow without our love and personal interest, they could end up falling short of the extraordinary role which the Holy Spirit may have in mind for them and be less than God wants them to be in the life of the Church. That should not happen because I truly believe that this is a work of the Lord.

The Most Rev. THEODORE McCARRICK
Archbishop of Newark (USA)

The Movements and the Nihilistic Challenge of the West

I don't think someone who has only been a bishop for a little over three years can give any profound significance to the expression "pastoral experience". In spite of that, I will risk speaking of the movements in the life of the local Church on the basis of my pastoral experience.

The difficulty faced by anyone who reflects on this basis (that of pastoral experience), and the inherent subjectivity of his opinions, is

due to various factors. The criteria the pastor must use to understand the times in which he lives can only be those of the faith; yet the great diversity of the historical conditions in which the various local Churches are called to live may lead to different interpretations.

This fairly obvious observation made me decide to structure my present intervention as follows. First, I will seek to describe what the "challenge" is that the mission of the Church has to face in the Western world today. Second, I will try to show how and why the movements must be "warmly welcomed" and "humbly incorporated" in the life of the local Church: only thus can a genuine response to the challenge be given. Of course, between the first and the second point it would have been necessary to insert a more properly theological reflection on the nature and the place of the movements in the Church. But that has already been done at this seminar.

My interpretation of the spiritual condition of Western man is as follows: a man who has lost *himself*, although he has gained *the world*. By the loss of self I mean the progressive demolition of subjectivity understood in the Christian sense of the term. Subjectivity has been deconstructed. Likening it to a building, we can say that it has been dismantled piece by piece.

I would like to describe this process briefly, beginning by explaining what I mean by "Christian significance of subjectivity". An important theological tradition (Gregory of Nyssa in the East, Thomas Aquinas in the West) identifies in *freedom* the most unmistakable sign of man's likeness to God. The free act is the point in which the two fundamental energies of the spirit, reason and will, converge. But not any kind of reason is able to generate a free act: only a form of reason that does not place limits on its capacity to pose questions. Not any kind of will is able to choose freely: only a will that moves (*voluntas ut ratio*) towards the fullness of good to which it is naturally directed (*voluntas ut natura*). It is in substance the unbridgeable "gap" that exists between the human desire and what the (created) universe places at man's disposal that makes him great in his poverty: it makes him free. Human freedom signifies at once the richness of the person and his poverty. His

richness: it transcends every created reality; it is *more* than any other created reality. His poverty: it is an infinite *in votis*, i.e. an immense void in the search for a good that may satisfy his hunger.

I would like to express this view of human subjectivity—which is a Christian view—in more scholastic or technical terms, believing that in this way it may gain in clarity. What makes man a free subject is his aspiration to the transcendentals of the *verum*, the *bonum* and the *pulchrum*. Only within this link is the person *causa sui*, as Thomas Aquinas constantly reiterates with a theoretically daring formula. Man is “cause of himself” with his freedom and is not caused by anything else.

Augustine, even before he had become a Christian, had clearly seen, due to the death of a friend—and not by chance—that man, due to this precise constitution, is himself *magna quaestio*: this *magna quaestio* means being reconducted by the *verum* and the *bonum* of one’s own being, which is destined to disappear, to the Truth and Goodness that are reflected in and invoked by that being. This, in essence, is the sadness inseparable from the true pagan, which is very different, as we shall see, from the sadness that is devastating the heart of young people today.

Christianity has resolved the *magna quaestio* in Christ, as we shall see later. Now I can explain what I mean when I say that Western man has lost *himself* by progressively demolishing his own subjectivity. It has happened as a kind of “spiritual collapse”, a plummeting of man’s spiritual tension. In brief: the link of freedom to truth has been broken in man’s innermost being, because reason has broken its link with the *verum* and the will has broken its link with the *bonum*.

I have ascertained this cultural event, at the level of studies, in the way that ethical thought has developed. A development, of course, that is neither all-inclusive nor original. Yet a privileged development all the same, because it has to do with the crux of human subjectivity, free will.

Reason has suffered a collapse of tension, since it has been judged incapable of knowing a truth about a good that has value in itself and for itself, of knowing a good that is not that of man’s own individual *utility*. The non-existence of “reasons for acting” that are true and valid

for every person, is a necessary consequence and is the central dogma of every form of ethical utilitarianism: a doctrine that has in effect gained widespread acceptance in our Western societies today.

Will has suffered a collapse of tension, because it is rooted in a reason that is solely utilitarian. It has been stripped of any ability to strive to a Good that is not a good just for me alone: to a Good that deserves to be willed, or rather loved, for its sake alone.

Nothing is able any longer to defend man from the truth constructed by reason and by self-interest: i.e. by the interests considered valid by the will according to the various situations.

Why does such a demolition of subjectivity lead to the loss of man? Simply for the reason that it deprives him of the possibility of being free: free, that is, *causa sui*. He is no longer able to *act*; only to *re-act*. And his reaction may be twofold: either conformity or rebellion: reactions typical of the slave. The free person neither conforms nor rebels.

The signs of this spiritual condition of Western man are manifold. I will limit myself briefly to recalling three, because they seem to me particularly significant for our reflection on the movements.

The *first* consists of the prevalence of the "impersonal" over the "personal": In other words, the progressive reduction of the person to the functional dimension; the progressive and relentless "bureaucratization" of life lived in association with others.

The *second* consists of the reduction of love to *eros* and hence of right, understood as moral faculty, to desire.

The *third* consists of the need to eliminate the unpredictable, the *novum*, subordinating it to the foreseen, the planned, the calculated. To express it in Heideggerian terms: it is no longer the thought that thinks, but the reason that calculates.

But I don't want to go beyond the mere enunciation of these three signs of a grave cultural event, since, in the short time at my disposal, it is of greater interest to me to reflect on the fundamental characteristic of this event itself and so conclude the first part of my reflections.

I spoke above of the sadness typical of paganism, a natural sadness, let us say. In essence, it was nostalgia for a home, a *patria*, which man

did not definitely know whether it existed or which he considered in any case unattainable. So, even when the pagan reduced the measure of his desire ("*spem longam reseces*", as Horace said), he was conscious of renouncing a part of himself.

The spiritual collapse I have mentioned occurs, on the other hand, without any inner struggle or tragedy: it is simply lived. A great Italian Christian thinker spoke of "contemporary gay nihilism". Gay in a dual sense: in the sense that the idealization of homosexuality is not casual: it is the celebration of the covenant with death; and in the sense that one chooses to steer a course in life without any compass, without any goal, with boring tranquillity. "I don't know who has pitched me into life, or what awaits me after death; but it's not even necessary to know", is the formula of Western gay nihilism.

I have spoken of the "challenge" posed by Western man to the Church. It is an utterly unprecedented challenge. It is not a return to paganism, even if a superficial reading of the current situation might make one think so. I have already said in what its fundamental diversity from paganism consists. The Church, therefore, is not faced in the West by the *pagan challenge*.

Nor is it the *atheist challenge*. Atheism, as the most accredited studies have demonstrated, is a "position" towards the "question of God". So atheism does not ignore or repudiate that question: indeed it considers it a central question. The Church, therefore, is not faced in the West by the problem of atheism.

Nor is it even the *Enlightenment challenge*. I mean by Enlightenment the attempt to "accredit" Christianity, to "make it come true", in a de-historicized form (and hence without the Church). It admits, however, an indestructible residue of *humanitas*. Contemporary gay nihilism, on the other hand, considers that the whole *humanum* is conventional and hence negotiable. The Church, therefore is not faced in the West by the problem of the Enlightenment (the problem of Lessing).

The real challenge consists of the fact that man, in the West, wants to demonstrate that Christianity is simply superfluous, since the needs to which it claims to respond can be eliminated, or suppressed, without

life feeling any the worse for it. Neither paganism, nor atheism, nor the Enlightenment, had ever challenged the Gospel message in this way. I have asked myself whether anyone met by Jesus in the Gospel narratives resembles in some way the contemporary gay nihilist. Perhaps the Gerasenes who beg Jesus to go away: they are better off without him (cf. *Mk* 5:17).

Some of the Church's responses to this challenge are clearly inadequate. But I don't think this is the right time to speak of them, because I want without further ado to enter into the theme of the movements.

For the sake of clarity, I would like to spell out my central conviction on the matter: namely, that the ecclesial reality of the movements is the only adequate response to this challenge. I will try to explain the reasons for this conviction.

The *first* concerns the ecclesial nature of the movements. I will be very brief, since this is a question of more properly theological reflection. Ever since 1987 John Paul II has recognized that the movements play an indispensable ecclesial role by virtue of their *charismatic* origin.¹ It is therefore the "charism", as a strictly theological category, that enables us to grasp the ecclesiality of the movements: the "charism" as distinct from (not separated from, nor opposed to) the "institution" (which is not to be identified with, nor reduced to, the ministerial priesthood). The task of the charism is to provoke the institution to conform itself more clearly and unequivocally to Christ who called it into being and determined its essence: both positively and negatively. *Negatively*: by helping it never to transform itself into administrative bureaucracy, to overcome the competitive temptation (in the sense of the predomination of the clergy over the laity, or the laity over the clergy), and never to become an end in itself. *Positively*: by arousing a real communion whose *raison d'être* coincides with the mission itself of the Church.² In this way, the movement, by virtue of the "original

¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, "Messaggio ai movimenti ecclesiali riuniti per il secondo Colloquio internazionale", *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, X, 1 (1987), 477-478.

² Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, nos. 18-19.

charism” that lies at its foundation, and its fidelity to it, endows the institution with the unexpected gift of communion with Christ who is the Church in which man is saved.

The *second reason* I take from a reflection of St. Thomas on the mystery of the Incarnation.³ Wishing to investigate ever more deeply the “*admirabiles rationes huius mysterii*”, he identifies one such reason in the fact that man is exposed to the following danger: “*propter immensam distantiam naturarum [...] circa inquisitionem beatitudinis tepesceret, ipsa desperatione detentus*”. It seems a true description of contemporary man: lukewarm (I spoke above of a “spiritual collapse”) in the search for beatitude. “Unable to have what he desires, he desires only what he can have”: that is the formula for despair.

The event of the Incarnation shows to man that his striving toward the *verum*, the *bonum*, the *pulchrum*, in a word toward beatitude, is not vain. Why? Because the fullness of the *humanum* is a fact; because the fullness of the *humanum* has happened, “*per hoc quod Deus humanum naturam sibi unire voluit in persona*”. And therefore the full realization of the entire measure of man’s own humanity is a concrete possibility given to each person. Such a possibility demands realization in space and time, because it is a realization of man.

The *third reason* is the synthesis of the two previous ones. By virtue of its own charismatic constitution, each movement *concretely* offers each human being the possibility of verifying that Christ does not lie and that our heart does not deceive us: it reveals him in space and time, clothed in the “flesh” of brotherhood in Christ.

It is the one adequate response to the nihilistic challenge of the West: it shows that humanity can realize itself, that it can overcome the vacuousness and aimlessness of contemporary man. Only this response can revive in us the nostalgia for a home, a *patria*, a goal we had forgotten. A Church without movements would no longer be able to perform her mission today.⁴

³ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, chap. 54.

⁴ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 72.

Pastoral Experiences of the Bishops

I do not wish my whole previous argument to be misunderstood. The movements are not just dependent on historical circumstance. They are, in a certain sense, essential to the Church's constitution.

Presupposing this place of the movements in the Church, as the fundamental reason for their "warm welcome" and "humble insertion", my reflection has merely wished to show that the movements, precisely because they are essential to the Church's constitution, are appropriate means to enable the Church to perform her apostolic mission in every age. I have tried to show that this remains true in the West today, in response to the nihilistic challenge of our time.

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Testimonies by the Movements and Communities

Emmanuel Community

The Emmanuel Community is one of the many new forms of lay association that emerged in the Church at the beginning of the twentieth century and that enjoyed a particular growth in the 1970s, especially thanks to Charismatic Renewal. Our founder, Pierre Goursat—who died some ten years ago—devoted his whole life to the Church. After experiencing a renewed outpouring of the Spirit, he succeeded in arousing in many baptized a desire to live in a community and place themselves at the service of the preaching of the Gospel. Fervent in adoration and full of passion for evangelization, he began to gather us together from all states of life in 1972. He proposed to us that we should continue to live in the world, rooted in the daily Eucharist, in adoration and in compassion, and welcome God in our life in order to bring him to our fellowmen by evangelization.

Today the Emmanuel Community comprises 6,000 members who have made a formal pledge. Most of them are lay people, but they also include 135 priests, 100 seminarians and 165 laity consecrated to a life of celibacy. They are scattered in some fifty countries in all continents. From adoration they derive the power and fervour of the Spirit to proclaim God's merciful love to all men.

The Emmanuel Community also consists of over 100,000 sympathizers who come into contact with it each year through prayer groups, pilgrimages, formation meetings, missions, parishes assigned to the Community's priests or other parishes, and gatherings held in Paray-le-Monial, Altötting, Fatima, Beauraing and elsewhere.

One of the fruits experienced in our Community, as indeed in the majority of the new ecclesial movements, is the fascination of brotherly communion, that represents a significant contribution to the life of the Church. If our communities are missionary, it is because they live a life

of communion. Our experience permits to assert that the more we try to live the call to mission, the more our communion is strengthened. It is this communion—which becomes, in turn, missionary—that attracts others: “See how they love one another”.

What gathers us together into communities, what makes our communion, is therefore evangelization, the desire to proclaim Jesus to a world in search of hope. Our primary concern is to address ourselves to those who have lost their faith, or practice it little, to non-believers, and all those who are far from the Church. It is by evangelizing that we grow in brotherly love and in the call to holiness. Each baptized, as John Paul II tells us in *Redemptoris Missio*, is called to holiness and to mission, in communion with the Church of Christ, the Church of the apostles without whose confirmation we would not be certain of proclaiming the true face of Christ.

I wish to speak first of all of some of the fruits produced by our commitment and communion, conscious of the fact that these fruits are not our own work, but the fruits of God and of the Church. Indeed, we are fully aware of the fact that, without this indispensable communion, our action would be barren. Second, I will discuss the practical difficulties we may encounter in the field.

The fruits of our commitment are essentially situated in the field of evangelization, both at the personal and community level.

The Community encourages its members to be evangelizers, first of all at the personal and family level, by rooting their service in intimacy with Jesus in adoration. The compassion of Jesus himself for the poor, for the suffering and especially for those whose poverty consists in not knowing the hope of God and the compassion of his heart, is thus born in us.

The Community encourages its members to be witnesses in daily life—in the workplace, in the family, in the neighbourhood—and supports them in their personal apostolate with a community life in which each may share with others the way in which God speaks to him/her in everyday life and bear witness to the actions of evangelization he/she has performed, reporting their successes and failures. The Community

supports them in their efforts to sanctify ordinary, professional and social life, because, as *Christifideles Laici* reminds us, “the vocation to holiness is intimately connected with mission”. Moreover, the Community gives its members appropriate formation in catechetics, Scripture, theology and apologetics, to enable them to decipher the signs of the times, in a world which is at once individualistic and particularistic, but also strongly interconnected, and which, by losing its sense of God, has lost its sense of man.

The Community’s force of irradiation is strong and its impetus contagious. Even rather passive Christians are gradually involved in the active evangelization. We have repeatedly found that, especially in the parish missions. At the outset, the lay faithful of the parish in which we are called to intervene are willing enough to perform for us all the material services—cooking, secretarial assistance, local district maps, etc.—but they consider themselves incapable of evangelizing. Then, progressively they begin to accompany us in our visits, participate in our evening gatherings and even in the public testimonies at the end of the mission. In this way is realized, I believe, the hope expressed by the Holy Father in the course of the vigil of Pentecost 1998, when he urged the ecclesial movements to bring their experience to the local Churches and parishes.

In the parishes that have been entrusted to us (some fifteen) a reawakening of missionary activities is also being registered, and in the space of a few years the parishioners not only participate in evangelization, but assume responsibility for it.

Conversely, it needs to be pointed out that approximately 60% of the members of the Emmanuel Community, apart from fulfilling their apostolic commitments with the Community, also play an active part in the life of their parish. They thus contribute to the ecclesial renewal in the areas where they live and practice their faith.

Let us now pass to the fruits of community apostolate. The Community responds to the appeal of the Church both with its apostolic initiatives and with its willingness to accept the ever more numerous and diversified requests made to it by their Pastors. I may cite the following examples of its involvement: first, our presence at Paray-le-Monial,

where the bishop of Autun has asked the Community to assume the direction of pilgrimages; second, the ninety young volunteers who, at the request of young Churches, are working in some thirty projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and who have been sent there by the Community through the intermediary of the FIDESCO association; third, the parishes currently entrusted to the priests of the Emmanuel Community in France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Austria; and fourth, the international mission school opened in Rome at the request of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, which annually hosts youngsters sent by bishops throughout the world to prepare them to become the apostles of the third millennium.

But the participation of the Emmanuel Community in the Church's communion and mission goes well beyond the responses that it gives to precise requests made by the institution. One of the bishops with whom we most work told us ten years ago: "If we employ you completely in the institutional network, who will replace you to go and seek the non-practising Christians and the non-believers far from the Church?" So the Emmanuel Community has its own initiatives. But we are profoundly conscious of participating in the Church's apostolic mission when we evangelize on the street, discuss the faith with non-believers over dinner, organize large international gatherings, weekend retreats for couples, youth pilgrimages, evangelization via Internet, telephone help-lines (SOS Prayer) and other initiatives. Among the thousands of people we have met, welcomed, and listened to in the course of these activities, many will get involved in the normal life of the Church and many will ask for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Matrimony. All these people who find or rediscover their faith require catechesis; they go to confession and, as new converts, are rapidly affirmed as protagonists of the new evangelization. Some will express the desire to become members of the Community.

All this does not differ of course from what happens in the other new communities. But it was necessary to underline it because it is a reality. No less a reality is the fact that our life, and that of the other movements, our evangelizing work, our concern to welcome the Holy

Spirit, are to the benefit of the whole People of God, and to the whole Church. That is only right, because the impetus that has moved us is a grace of God and it is from the treasure of the Church that we have drawn the means to evangelize the contemporary world in an appropriate manner. For example, at Paray-le-Monial there are diocesan priests who testify they have confessed more people during a five-day retreat there than during a whole year in their dioceses. But neither confession nor pilgrimage is something we invented!

Communion is not only a reality inscribed in geography and in the territorial network: it traverses the centuries; it derives its origin from the apostles; it is the communion of saints.

The facts I have so far mentioned are like beacons of hope for the whole Church. And we could mention others, such as the growth of vocations both to the priesthood and to the consecrated life; objectively, we cannot but give thanks to God for this fruit which seems to us one of the finest.

But we cannot disguise the fact that there are also dark sides, shadow zones. They must not daunt us: on the one hand they are the consequence of our limitations; on the other, they depend on the tensions from which the Church too suffers in concrete situations. Often they are connected with the difficulty of reconciling the legitimate needs of the local Churches, which call for many hands, with our specific vocation to bring the Good News to places to which the Church does not normally have access. This too is a vocation that demands an important investment in terms of time and personnel.

I would like to underline two points that seem to me of particular relevance in this context: the question of priests and that of the local pastoral ministry.

Right from the beginning we made the choice—a choice of communion—that the priests among our members should be incardinated in the dioceses that accept the Emmanuel Community with its own statutes. This choice of communion has enabled all the states of life to be gathered in a single association of *christifideles*, something that is very important for us.

This inevitably causes tensions. While it is generally recognized that the Community is a “magnet” for vocations, it is not always understood that a young man who has chosen to become a priest in the Emmanuel Community wants to live this belonging to the service of the Church in terms of community life and apostolate shared by his brothers. Given the current shortage of priests and the urgent pastoral needs that need to be tackled, this reaction is undoubtedly understandable. But it has to be recognized that it places these young vocations in a situation of tension that is to the detriment of the fruitfulness of their ministry and risks leading to their exhaustion. In this case, it would be the whole Church that would be the loser.

In fact, our particular charism is to work together—priests, consecrated and laity—in mission. And what would that be worth if it were not lived integrally, seeing that the mission is supported and sustained by community life? The Community rightly gives something to its own priests that is sadly lacking in many isolated priests.

The question is not merely theoretical. It raises very concrete cases that we meet with very often.

A second example is connected with the local pastoral ministry. In this case, the difficulty derives from the well-known problem of the available time.

At the beginning, our Community was formed on the basis of proposals of various kind—meetings, cycles of formation, weekend retreats, etc. —, often new in type or seldom practised in the Church. Today we are glad to observe that these activities have been widely adopted in the Church and often we are requested to participate in them, both to bring our experience and to give a sign of unity. But, at the same time, other fields of evangelization are being opened up to us—such as the apostolate in the slum outskirts of the big cities—which require ever new forces. And so we find ourselves faced by a painful dilemma, difficult to resolve due to the lack of time and the shortage of personnel. Let us not forget, in fact, that the vast majority of the members of the Emmanuel Community consists of lay people with professional and family commitments who dedicate a good proportion of

their spare time to the apostolate, and that time is not extendible *ad infinitum*.

The dilemma is as follows. Either we accept to give a positive response to all the invitations and pleas for involvement made to us, and then we no longer have the necessary time either to live a genuine community life or to accept other requests for evangelization. In this case, the sense of belonging to the Community and its apostolate risk being lost, and it is not impossible to imagine that this might lead to significant tensions even among the Community's own members. Or we privilege the new fields of evangelization and then risk incurring the reproof of failing to practise communion sufficiently in our lives.

The problem is thus posed of the right discernment of the various requests and invitations made to us. This can only be achieved through an open and trusting dialogue with the ecclesial authorities who know us and accompany us. For example, it was thanks to just such a dialogue that the Community has not only been able to organize its own itineraries on the occasion of World Youth Day 2000, but to combine its efforts with those of the numerous dioceses that have requested it to do so.

In this context, we also ask for the encouragement of the Church to maintain our own activities, to continue to grow and to serve her.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm our support for the Emmanuel Community's decision to work in collaboration with the local Churches, in fidelity to the call that God has made to us ever since our foundation. It is in this communion with the pastors of the local Churches, through a deep and fruitful dialogue, that our presence in the heart of the world, our close solidarity with people in need, shall bear the fruit that the Lord desires. The difficulties I have mentioned are of little account in comparison with the fruits of communion and commitment that we can see all around us and that we will not fail to further develop, for the greater good of the Church. As John Paul II urged us to do on the vigil of Pentecost 1998, we will open our hearts to the gifts of the Spirit in trusting obedience with the bishops, successors of the apostles.

GÉRALD ARBOLA

Focolare Movement

I have been asked to provide a brief presentation of the Focolare Movement, also called the Work of Mary, which is now 56 years old.

As early as 10 July 1968, more than thirty years ago, the movement, in spite of its smallness, was called by Paul VI “a tree already very rich and fruitful”.

Like any tree, it was a tree born from a seed. John Paul II identified this seed when, on 19 August 1984, he declared that our Movement’s first “spark of inspiration” consisted in love.

Yes, in love, just in the way one understands it from the Gospel. A distinguished Anglican divine, Canon Bernard Pawley, called our movement “a spring of living water welling up from the Gospel”.

And our spirituality, at once personal and community-based, is composed of the words of the Gospel, the one linked to the other, as lines of conduct—that is how Paul VI saw them. It may be represented as a medal: on one face is inscribed the word “Unity” (recalling the Testament of Jesus) and on the other is represented the crucified and abandoned Jesus (price, cause and key of unity). The thickness of this medal consists of the sum of the other words or evangelical realities, cornerstones of our spirituality. They are: God as Love, God’s will, the Word, charity, reciprocal love, Jesus present in the midst of those gathered together in his name, the Church, the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit, Mary.

The specific aim of the Focolare Movement is to contribute, in the Church and with the Church, to realizing the Testament of Jesus: “That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (*Jn* 17:21). And it does so through the total dedication of its members to the Abandoned, the crucified by disunity, who by entering into the wound of every division, has become “the new and living way” (cf. *Heb* 10:20) of the full communion with God and among our fellowmen.

To achieve unity, the Movement puts into practice the *dialogues* mentioned by Vatican Council II. The first of these dialogues is between the individuals present in our Church (of the more than five

million members of the Movement, the vast majority consist of Catholics) and the dialogue between ecclesial groups (movements, associations, parishes, etc.). This dialogue is practised by reviving as far as possible the charity instilled into hearts by the Holy Spirit. Its aim is to achieve a fuller unity.

Another dialogue is opened with the faithful and the pastors of the various Churches or Christian communities with a view to contributing to the achievement of full communion. Here too an attempt is made to develop Christian charity, present in all Christians by virtue of their Baptism. We constantly strive to testify to the truth and guide everyone in the search for it. The non-Catholic Christian members affiliated with the Movement now belong to 300 different communities.

A dialogue with the faithful of several other religions, especially the more important, is also actively pursued in the Movement and is very fruitful. In this dialogue, by always bearing witness to Christ, the faithful of each religion are helped to put into practice the love of benevolence familiar to them from the so-called "golden rule" present in almost all religions ("As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them", cf. *Lk* 6:31), so that they too may contribute with us to universal brotherhood.

Lastly, we conduct dialogue with men of good will, but without any precise religious affiliation. They too often accept the love of benevolence for the same purpose. We work together with them to safeguard many values (peace, solidarity, freedom, human rights, etc.).

The aim of our activities in the interreligious field and among non-believers is gradually to bring everyone to Christ.

The various dialogues are conducted both by word, by communicating to each other our spiritual experiences, always very useful and effective, and by good works, as the necessary witness of our love, and often performed in co-operation with our partners in dialogue.

In fact, a thousand or so projects in the charitable and welfare fields have so far been realized. Some of them are on a large scale (for example, the construction of towns, such as that for a tribe that lived in the forests of Cameroon, with an infant mortality rate of 98%). One of our

projects that is gaining in significance is the so-called “economy of communion in freedom”, which originated in Brazil. It consists in establishing, with skilled personnel, businesses—there are now some 654 of them and not only in Brazil—whose profits, once the companies’ own internal needs have been deducted, can be allocated to the relief of the unemployed and to the formation of persons in the evangelical culture of *giving* in opposition to that of *having* emphasized by capitalism.

This form of economy has aroused the interest of many economists, experts, researchers and politicians who have debated its merits at congresses, as recently at a high-level congress held by the Council of Europe at Strasbourg, where it was seen as a promising prospect for the future and where the idea was even advanced that the economy of communion might one day become an alternative to the existing one.

To help develop the various dialogues the Movement also counts on some twenty “Citadels” of evangelical witness which we have scattered all over the world, genuine beacons of light.

Also important to this end are the Movement’s twenty-five publishing houses, they too scattered all over the world.

Given the delicacy of this task, a permanent spiritual, catechetical and theological formation is always provided for the Movement’s members, with schools of specialization.

But now, given the purpose of the present meeting, I think it is of interest to explain how our Movement, as an expression of the charismatic aspect of the Church, has experienced and is experiencing its relation with the hierarchy.

Fundamental for us, right from the start, has been a profound conviction, instilled in our hearts, we believe, by the Holy Spirit, that the Church is our Mother. This conviction has aroused in our hearts a great love for her and a total trust in her ever since the beginning of our Christian adventure. So it was not difficult for us to accept, with gratitude, her judgement on us by the grace of discernment that she possesses.

Nor is that all. In the course of time, the following experiences have also been made.

In the heart of the various Popes we have known, we can say we have always encountered, with the deepest joy, that “greater” love that Jesus asked of the first Pope, St. Peter, especially so in Paul VI and in John Paul II.

Among the words of the Gospel that have marked our life from the start, the phrase “he who hears you, hears me” (*Lk* 10:16) has been one of the most important. So we have always seen a particular presence of Jesus in our bishops. Hence our filial obedience. Hence, too, the discovery in their heart of something we have failed to find in anyone else.

It is the general experience of the Movement’s members that when a bishop speaks, his words have something different from those of others, even if they be theologians. It is a kind of anointing transmitted, I think, by their charism. And that arouses in us admiration, filial love. It creates reverent communion and unity.

Our gratitude is boundless for what the hierarchical Church offers, also through her priests, to the faithful and hence also to us, especially with the sacraments that accompany the whole life of the Christian.

Called to serve the universal Church as an ecclesial reality of pontifical right, we follow the following norms contained in our statutes to regulate the Movement’s relations with the hierarchy, with the Holy Father and with the bishops in the dioceses:

- The Work of Mary, in all the initiatives it undertakes, places itself under the supreme direction of the Holy See.
- It conforms to the magisterium of the Pope and the bishops.
- It reports on the activities it performs to the Holy See as regards activities involving the whole movement and particularly those relating to its specific aim, and to the Ordinaries of the dioceses as regards activities involving the work of the Movement at the diocesan level.
- It informs the bishops on the presence of the Work of Mary in the dioceses and on the constitution of groups of members of the various branches.
- It requests the permission of the local Ordinaries for the opening of centres of the Work of Mary assigned to the life of permanent communities of members or to important apostolic activities.

- As concerns the apostolic activity that it carries out in conformity with its spirituality and according to the forms and means prescribed in its statutes, it accepts the directives and instructions that the Ordinaries provide for the pastoral co-ordination in the dioceses.

We are always ready to accept suggestions, advice, corrections from the bishops, just as we are ready in every part of the world to work in the structures of the local Church, both at the diocesan and parish level.

Knowing, moreover, that the Holy Father is expecting mature fruits from our movements, I would like to mention just some, to the greater glory of God alone, and in the hope that they be truly considered such also by the bishops and cardinals attending this seminar:

- unity, above all—our primary concern—in charity and in thought, as wished by St. Paul, lived to the full as far as is possible here on earth, constantly maintained and constantly revived throughout the Movement, although it consists of 18 branches with the most varied vocations;
 - the innumerable conversions we have achieved throughout the world;
 - the many consecrated persons (at present over 7,000 men, women and priests);
 - the many *focolari* (761), modern communities of consecrated persons scattered throughout the world;
 - the many new vocations to the *focolare* (some 2,500 at the present time);
 - the many new vocations to the priesthood at the service of the dioceses and to the consecrated life in the various religious families;
 - the life of communion, reinforced by the spirituality of unity, of the Movement's diocesan priests with their own bishop and with the diocesan presbytery with a view to a better service to the local Church;
 - the rediscovery of their own charism by consecrated persons of both sexes and the renewal of their Orders and Congregations;
 - the presence of the Movement in 182 nations;
 - its huge membership of approximately five million persons,

though it is difficult to quantify it exactly, not least because a part of our members live in nations still subject to a Communist regime;

- a statute approved by the Holy See and perfectly attuned to the current reality of the Work of Mary;

- the holiness achieved by hundreds of persons and more, which we have been able to ascertain, and which (together with that undoubtedly present in other ecclesial realities) enables us to glimpse the “holiness of people” that theologians like Rahner and popes like Paul VI foresaw; in the Movement no thought has ever been given to presenting these various individuals to the Church so that she may examine them; but now it is the bishops themselves in the dioceses who are beginning to realize this reality and who have begun various causes of beatification: at the present time we have five Servants of God (three young men, a married *focolarino*, and a bishop, Msgr. Valdes of Chile) and sixteen seminarians considered martyrs;

- the possibility of proclaiming, through our Christian experience, the Holy Trinity, Jesus, his Church and Mary in many mosques, as for instance in the USA and in the Philippines, or in Buddhist temples, as in Thailand and Japan, and in Jewish community centres;

- the formulation by a bishop, the late Msgr. Klaus Hemmerle, and some thirty professors of the theological doctrine, based on the Revelation and rooted in the tradition of the Church, that emerges from our charism; a doctrine that has reverberations in interdisciplinary dialogue also on philosophy and on the other human and natural sciences;

- the more than fifty of our priests who have become bishops, especially in the last few years;

- the acceptance of the Movement’s charism by several hundred bishops throughout the world and a number of cardinals, whose regulation of life, inspired by our spirituality, was directly approved by the Holy Father on 21 May 1996.

In conclusion, I wish to cite here article 2 of our Statutes, which explains the nature of our Movement: “The Work of Mary bears this name because its typical spirituality, its ecclesial character, the variety of its

composition, its universal diffusion, its relations of collaboration and friendship with Christians of various Churches and ecclesial communities, persons of various faiths and of good will, and its lay and female presidency, demonstrate the particular bond it has with the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of Christ and of all mankind, of whom it wishes to be—as far as possible—a presence on earth and almost a continuation”.

This, in brief, is the Focolare Movement, which wishes always to live for the greater glory of God and for the joy and consolation of the Church.

CHIARA LUBICH

Communion and Liberation

For someone who is a Christian and who loves the Church with his whole heart and soul, just as she is and just as his mother taught him to love her, the sense of scandal is inevitable when he notes the sudden and continuous fall in the rate of people who go to church, as reported insistently by the mass media today.

How can we fail not to be tempted to think that something is wrong? And this cannot be attributed moralistically merely to the individual's freedom; it may arouse in the heart the impression that the infidelity to the Spirit even reaches some expressions of those who teach the catechism: the trust they place in certain values and opinions of our secularized society may be evaluated more as a sign of the time that be read in the mystery of Christ. In short, this “something” that is lacking cannot regard the nature of the gift of Christ. It is not a built-in defect!

Rather, it is a reduction of what Christ wished to achieve among men, all of them weakened by original sin: that is why Christ came down to earth.

So the decision to follow Christ may be taken even by those who consider their own devotion to the Church in the light of earthly power, that maintains the origin and the dynamic of everyone, even of non

Christians. The result is a lack of the sense of the Mystery. And this vitiates the event itself of Christ.

In fact, it has been possible to be faithful to the letter of the Tradition without having been educated in a Christian mentality familiar with the foundations of everything in the Church.

Thinking of the beginnings of my life in the Church, I would like to point out that the stimulus to newness was, by contrast, aroused in me from within my fidelity to the Tradition, to the teaching and practice of the Church. I entered seminary at a very early age, persuaded of the need for Communion and Confession as a consequence of Baptism. I was a young seminarian, an obedient and exemplary youth, until one day something happened that radically changed my life. It was when one of my teachers at the seminary explained to me the first page of the Gospel of John: "The Word of God [i.e. the response to the needs of the human heart, the ultimate object of everyone's desires, happiness] became flesh". My life was literally transformed by this: both as memory that persistently revived my thoughts, and as stimulus for a reevaluation of the banality of daily life. The passing moment, since then, was no longer banal to me. Everything that was, therefore everything beautiful, true, attractive, fascinating, even just as a possibility, found its *raison d'être* in that message, as certainty of presence in which there was hope to embrace everything.

What made me different from those around me was the wish and the desire to understand. This is the terrain on which our devotion to reason is born.

I began to take an interest in students, because the relations I had, right from the very beginnings of my career as lecturer in seminary, were all with students. It was not a choice of a particular environment in which to say certain things; I just happened to be there. Just as I was that day on the train, when I came across those three young men, travelling to Rimini. I didn't know them and I found them terribly ignorant and full of prejudice about Christianity. That was what prompted me to ask my superiors to abandon the teaching of theology in seminary and dedicate myself to an apostolate among schoolchildren in Milan.

The things I said to them arose not from an analysis of the student world, but from what I had been told by my mother and what I had been taught in seminary. What this meant, in brief, was to speak to others with words dictated, indeed, by the Tradition, but with visible consciousness of what they meant and what they implied.

What I did, I would have done wherever I happened to be in the Church! What I heard and saw was like a new world, one I had not intuited before, unless in the texts of the Fathers and in the documents of the Popes. This realization in me was born from an experience. The very words of the Gospel and of the Tradition I now read in a new way.

The difference between the fundamentalists and the traditionalists and us was that whereas they, to save the ancient form, wanted to recall others' attention to the original condition (and mechanically imitate it), we believed that, to save the Tradition, it was first necessary to understand in what its content consisted, to make sense of it and to set an example to others. I "understood", as also did others like me, that Christ was there, that he was present.

I have tried to clarify to myself, to explain to myself this grace of knowledge and reflection I had. So often I felt myself unaccepted by the parishes and by the official associations, but for me the image formed in me gave me a joy and an incomparable certitude about the Christian faith that filled my whole heart in the opening to the totality of the reality of the Church in the world. And this certainty, this hope, this opening were transferred to the children that had initiated to follow me. It was the emergence of a way of feeling the presence of Jesus in the Church as the total response to the questions posed by the world.

Only many years later did I realize, in the constant and loving submission to the authority of the Church, that my desire, and the passion of the heart I felt for this newness of life, were a particular grace of the Spirit, that is called charism. It then became clear to me that "charism" is the way that the Spirit generates in the heart of man an appropriate understanding of and affection for Christ in a particular historical context. And the person who receives it "must" participate in Christ's

mandate: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel" (*Mk* 16:15). From the gift given to a person begins an experience of faith that may turn out to be useful in some way for the Church.

I understand that one person may feel one means of expression to be more interesting than another, but that may be a way in which the charism translates, communicates with clear conscience what St. Paul affirms of the man who becomes a new creature in Christ; not just a new mind or a new heart of charity, but a new creature in all his integrity! And that through an emphasis of what is the Christian method. Just as God made himself present to man in Jesus of Nazareth, so our formula for making the Protagonist of this history felt is to verify him as an integrally human presence and, hence, the origin of something that in its totality becomes the source of a new man, a different man, just as it becomes the source of a different society.

The dynamic of recognizing and verifying the presence of Christ makes anyone become creative, and a protagonist himself, and enables him to discover that the Christian's activity is by its very nature missionary, i.e. an urge to share the method of Christ himself, who created the Church, to make him known throughout the world. The aim of the Christian existence is therefore to live for the human glory of Christ in history.

We therefore love all the forms that the Church recognizes and are ready without our limits to collaborate in any kind of initiative. Whatever we do, we cannot fail to conceive it as mission, ultimate destiny of all our actions.

Our certainty, the source of our joy, is our belonging to the Church, on whose authority, as it is translated at all levels, we depend. We ask to be recognized by the Church, and are ready to sacrifice ourselves, even our life, but above all ready at all times to convert hearts and minds from a worldly mentality.

By recognizing man's subjection to original sin, our moral conception thus desires to transcend the appearance of everything in a profound attachment to Christ, present in our midst, and to affirm its ultimate

reality, so that our relation with all things be lived as sign and invitation to Destiny.

The Christian is thus a person who perceives eternity in hiding within every appearance.

Msgr. LUIGI GIUSSANI

Neocatechumenal Way

I am Spanish, a painter, and I should explain straight away that I don't feel myself to be a founder of anything. I am sorry Carmen Hernández isn't here, because she has more importance than I in the formation of the Neocatechumenal Way. Rather, I feel myself to be an initiator, together with Carmen Hernández, with some priests and other persons.

What is the Neocatechumenal Way? The Holy See asked us to prepare statutes and at the present time we are trying to conduct a reflection to understand what is the Way in the Church today. We may say that we are what the Lord has done through us up to the present day: we are what Christ wished us to be. I know myself in proportion as I am known by God (cf. *Gal* 4:9).

We are therefore studying what Christ has done and is doing with us throughout the world. We are amazed by the reality that presents itself to our eyes. To cope with the difficulties we face, we ask for the help of the bishops.

Our Lord Jesus Christ called the twelve apostles and sent them with the power to cast out devils and to heal every disease and every infirmity: "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And preach as you go, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons" (*Mt* 10:1-8). After his resurrection Jesus said to them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (cf. *Mt* 28:18 and *Jn* 22-23). And he sent them out into the whole world

with the authority to forgive sins and to transmit the Holy Spirit, that same Spirit that he had bestowed on them from the Father. This authority that Christ gives to the apostles to save the world, is present in the bishops today.

I say this because there was no prior intention on our part to initiate anything. It was the bishops who were “guilty”, so to say, of what we are doing.

I don't want to digress by recounting the whole story of my life. I will limit myself to telling you that I came from the experience of the *Cursillos de Cristiandad* and that at a certain moment—I had also thought of becoming a monk—the Lord led me to live among the poor. I went to live among them, trying to follow the example of Charles de Foucauld, because in the most deprived and impoverished people on earth I saw the presence of the crucified Christ. A deep impression was made on me by the mystery of the suffering of the innocents, of the people who are destroyed, who live a life as if they were carrying on themselves the burden of sin, the mystery of iniquity, the evil of the world. I saw there a presence of Christ. Just as Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist, so there is also a presence of Christ in them, especially in the suffering of the innocents. I wanted to place myself there, kneeling at the feet of Christ crucified in these people. I went to live in a wretched shantytown: shacks of cardboard and corrugated iron built onto caves in the rock, inhabited by gypsies, beggars, vagrants, almost all illiterate. Carmen lived in another shack in a neighbouring quarter.

While we were living there, the police decided to demolish those shacks. We had to call to our aid the then Archbishop of Madrid, Msgr. Casimiro Morcillo, whom I had known since my days in the *Cursillos*, to defend us from the police. It was the period of Franco. When the archbishop came into contact with the small community that has been formed there with the gypsies, he was deeply impressed and it was he who told us to go into the parishes. It was he, the Archbishop of Madrid, who told us not to begin the Way, and not to pursue it, in the parishes without the parish priest at the centre. When we came to Italy, it was he who gave us a letter of recommendation for Cardinal Del-

l'Acqua, Vicar of the Pope for the diocese of Rome, and another for Cardinal Florit, Archbishop of Florence, with whom he was a close friend, because they had served together as secretaries during Vatican Council II. It was Archbishop Morcillo himself who came to Rome when the priest of the parish of the Canadian Martyrs had failed to grasp what we were doing and who thought we were a sort of heretics, to tell him not to fear, that we were men of God, and that what we were doing in the Church was something very important. It was he who permitted us to make some adaptations to the liturgy that we considered necessary to pursue a journey of initiation in the faith. In fact, when we were still living in the shantytown, we had realized that it was not enough to preach, and that there was also a need for the sacraments.

In saying all this, I mean to say that we have always felt ourselves part and parcel of the reality of evangelization entrusted by Jesus to the apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations [...] and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (cf. *Mt* 28:19-20).

What is the Neocatechumenal Way? A religious congregation? Certainly not. A movement? In some sense, without doubt: the Pope said that even the Church is a movement. But if we wish to sum up more than thirty years in the life of the Way throughout the world, we can say, as indeed the name itself suggests, that it is a *neocatechumenate*, a new catechumenate, a Christian initiation in adult faith.

God led us to help the parish priests to begin a *post-baptismal journey of Christian initiation in adult faith* in the parishes, so that the parish, in response to an ever more secularized and pagan world, may pass from a pastoral ministry of sacramentalization to one of evangelization.

We are catechists who, together with the parish priest, begin a journey of Christian initiation, of catechumenal type, in the parishes. Why of catechumenal type? I explained that in the note requested of me by journalists when the Pope published the *Letter* recognizing the Way "as a journey of Catholic formation, valid for our present-day society and times": "In the ancient Church, in the midst of paganism, when some-

one wanted to become a Christian, he had to undertake a journey of formation in Christianity, which was called 'catechumenate', from the word *katecheo* which means 'I make heard' and, in the passive, 'I listen'. The current process of secularization has led many people to abandon the faith and the Church. That is why it is necessary to begin anew a journey of formation in Christianity. [Many in fact have abandoned the Church and she must once again proclaim the Gospel to them.] The Neocatechumenal Way does not therefore claim to form a movement *per se*, but to help the parishes [and the dioceses] to open a way of Christian initiation in Baptism, to rediscover what it means to be Christians. It is an instrument at the service of the bishops in the parishes aimed at bringing back to the faith many people who have abandoned it".

Today, in the West many dioceses are trying to provide a catechism for adults. They have realized how essential that is. Whoever has catechesis in his hand, has the Church of the future in his hand. Christian initiation is becoming ever more important, ever more serious for the Church. "The Neocatechumenate is a theological-catechetical synthesis, a catechism, a catechumenate for adults, a journey of Christian formation for contemporary man". In the early Church the catechumenate consisted of a synthesis between word (*kerygma*), liturgy and morality.

The *kerygma* is the proclamation of the *primum christianum*, of what the faith gives. St. Paul says: "It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (that's how the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition, of the Bible translates it) (*1 Cor* 1:21). But the Greek text does not say "through the folly of what we preach", but "through the folly of the *kerygma*". The *kerygma* is not a "sermon", a kind of preaching, but the Good News that changes for good the life of the person who receives it.

The Pope has announced a mission for the evangelization of the city of Rome, and the Cardinal Vicar has called the whole diocese to collaborate in it. The delegate of the Vicariate responsible for this task said that 75% of those who offered themselves for this service were involved in the Neocatechumenal Way. The *kerygma* is being pro-

claimed and catechesis given in various environments in Rome. I have here a list of them. *Courts of law*: State Audit Court, Civil Tribunal, Council of State, State Legal Advisory Office, Court of Arbitration, Appeal Court, etc.; *State enterprises*: State Railways, Alitalia, Fiumicino Airport, Autostrada company, ATAC (urban bus company), Post Office, SIAE (Italian Authors' and Publishers' Association), Telecom, etc.; *Ministers*: Presidency of the Council, Presidency of the Republic, Ministries of the Environment, Treasury, Public Works, Interior, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Labour, Industry, Health, etc.; *Hospitals and clinics*: Umberto I, Forlanini, Santa Lucia, Nuova Regina, etc.; *Private companies*: AGIP Petroleum, Alenia, Compaq Computers, Ericsson, etc.; *Universities*: Tor Vergata; *Banks*, etc.

It is wonderful that the Gospel, the *kerygma*, is being proclaimed in these environments at this time, thanks to the Pope and to Cardinal Ruini, who has sent a letter to the various persons in charge. Many of our brothers who are present in the various environments, for example those who work in the Post Office, at Fiumicino Airport etc., spoke with the managers and they gave permission for the mission to be conducted there. A team formed of catechists of the Neocatechumenal Way and members of the various ecclesial realities has been sent to each environment, on behalf of the diocese, to preach the Gospel. Thanks to the proclamation of the *kerygma* in the various environments some 3000 persons, many of them from outside the Church, are being led back to Jesus Christ.

As I said, the catechumenate of the early Church consisted of a synthesis between word, morality and liturgy. Word: proclamation of the *kerygma*; morality: change of life. In fact what the *kerygma* proclaims is an astonishing piece of good news that changes for good the life of the person who accepts it.

Let me give an example. Imagine that I am a pauper and that an uncle of mine in Brazil dies leaving me a legacy of one billion dollars in a bank in São Paulo. This bank will have to send someone to trace me, to find the heir. When he finds me, what will he tell me? He will break the good news (the "*kerygma*", so to say): "Congratulations! You have

been left one billion dollars!". My reaction on hearing this news may be, first, one of disbelief. The representative will then try to convince me, to make himself credible: "I'm not a madman", he'll say to me, "I have been sent by the X Bank in São Paulo". Then, second thing, if I believe in the news, I will ask: "And what must I do to have all this money?" He'll say to me: "Go to such and such a bank, prove your identity, and you'll receive one billion dollars". If I believe in the news and do what I am told to do, my life will radically alter; if not, I will remain for ever the poor man I am.

Now, we say that Jesus Christ has left us a legacy infinitely greater and more valuable than one billion dollars. What is it? Eternal life. An immortal life: is that true or not true? Is it true that Christ gave men the possibility of having immortal life? Not only in a juridical, but in an essential, real form. Dying he gave the Father his Spirit for me, so that each man might have the possibility of receiving Christ. He died for us all.

Hence the urgent need for evangelization. St. Paul says: "*Caritas Christi urget nos*". The love of Christ inspires us with the conviction that if one has died for all, all have died. "And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 *Cor* 5:14-15). The anthropology of St. Paul presents human beings as condemned to live for themselves, to sacrifice everything, the whole world, to themselves. They are the centre of a cosmogomy, because they have substituted themselves for God, and this is a form of bondage (cf. *Heb* 2:14-15). Man is reduced to a slave who is enslaved to himself: obliged to live for himself alone, to wish everything for himself: sex for himself, women for himself, culture for himself, money for himself... Man fails to give himself fully and this causes him deep suffering, because sin has not completely corrupted his nature: man, even after original sin, knows that to give himself, to love, is the truth. Christ died for all mankind, so that those who live, no longer live for themselves. We proclaim to young people the possibility of loving as Christ loved us, totally, to the point of giving his life for us on the Cross. Christ is total freedom. The crucified Christ is the proclamation of freedom to the modern world, to all mankind. Man can break

his ego like the bread of the Eucharist, love, donate himself even to the point of death, by loving his enemy. Only thus may man truly find happiness.

How is it possible for me to give myself completely to another person? How is it possible if I am afraid of death, if I have not conquered death? How is it possible for me to love another person in the dimension of the Cross. How can I turn my "I" into a "you", crucify my "I" on the cross of "you", if I have not conquered death? This is possible if Christ, who conquered death for me, freely gives me his victory over death, gives me his immortal life which he bequeathed for my sake!

And how shall I receive his victory over death, his resurrection? What must I do to receive the legacy that Christ left for me? How can I receive it? What must I do? Just as the poor man asked the man from the bank: what must I do to receive all those millions? How can I receive all this? You tell me that, if I have the eternal life inside me, the victory over death, I will be able to love as Christ loved us? To the point of crucifying myself?

Yes, because death no longer has any power over you. You will be able to love in a new dimension: "as I have loved you".

Some people say to me: "Alright, Kiko, I am prepared to agree, but first prove to me that it's true. Take my case: I no longer love my wife, I'm separating from her. Prove to me that I can love my wife by accepting her as she is and sacrificing myself to her. Prove to me that your words aren't empty".

I want to make a little digression at this point, a rapid brushstroke (after all, I'm a painter), because it is difficult here to explain what *kerygma* is.

We say that truly we receive the Holy Spirit, that Christ died for the particular person who listens to what I am proclaiming to him, that he rose from the dead for him, ascended into heaven for him and intercedes before the Father for that person to whom I am proclaiming the *kerygma*.

When St. Stephen proclaims the *kerygma*, full of the Holy Spirit, and gazing up to heaven, he sees the glory of God and Jesus standing

at the right hand of God, and he said: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God". (*Acts* 7:55-56). Christ, standing like a witness, is interceding before the Father for those who listen to the *kerygma*.

When the archangel St. Gabriel makes the annunciation to Mary, the power of the Holy Spirit overshadows her (cf. *Lk* 1:26-38).

In other words, what happens when someone proclaims the *kerygma*? St. Paul says: "The Spirit himself [bears] witness with our spirit" (*Rm* 8:16-17). There is an encounter in the spirit of man with this Holy Spirit that is given to him *freely*. And this encounter with a living person who is Christ, through the Spirit, changes that person's life, gives him the chance to abandon sin, and he discovers "new things" within him: he is a creature born anew. St. Paul says: "If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (*2 Cor* 5:17); "Even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer" (*2 Cor* 5:16). Now we regard him in the Holy Spirit; we have him inside us. That's why Jesus says to Mary Magdalen when she meets him risen from the dead: "*Noli me tangere*", "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (*Jn* 20:17). Why must she not touch him? If we once regarded Christ in the flesh, we can do so no longer.

The proclamation of the *kerygma* thus involves a moral change for the person who listens to it and accepts it. In the early Church, when a person was seen to change life, to abandon sin, that was the sign that he had received through faith the grace of the Holy Spirit and then had the power of the Holy Spirit inside him. The Church, on recognizing that he had received the Holy Spirit, admitted him to Baptism. When St. Peter proclaimed the *kerygma* to the pagans, and they received the Holy Spirit, he said: "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (cf. *Acts* 10:47).

This synthesis between the word (proclamation of the *kerygma*), morality (change of life) and liturgy (baptism was given by stages) was the journey of initiation that the early Church reserved for the birth of the new man in the faith, the heavenly man.

The Church now finds herself in the midst of a secularized and pagan world. Her first task therefore is to revive the practice of Christian initiation in the parishes, in such a way that each parish may be capable of the birth of the new man, and of leading contemporary man to the faith.

I wish to conclude by explaining one more thing. We feel ourselves to be assistants of the bishops, of the parish priests. We don't want to turn the Neocatechumenal Way into a movement, a particular association. For Christian initiation is the direct responsibility of the bishop and his subordinates, parish priests and diocesan priests. It cannot be a particular charism, the charism (so to say) of Kiko Argüello. That is the point. For when a parish priest accepts us, we in the Neocatechumenal Way propose the teachings of the Pope, for example his teachings on sexuality and marriage; *Humanae Vitae*, etc. The neocatechumenals obey, they open themselves generously to life and have numerous children. But if it turns out that what we teach is something peculiar to a particular association, an association of followers of Kiko, then everything we do becomes exceptional; it's not something peculiar to the Church, but an exception: those are the neocatechumenals with their particular charism and large families... Everything would then become vain, everything would become the exception to the rule, something that would only confirm the rule of having two children at the most, of going to Mass and nothing more.

That's why, in presenting the Holy Father with the statutes of the Way, we wish to tell him: "Father, we don't want to be a particular association, but a *diocesan post-baptismal catechumenate*". Let us hope that the Pope will accept these statutes and offer them to the bishops so that they, if they wish, may institute the neocatechumenal Way in their own diocese as a journey of Christian formation—not the only journey, it is clear—that God has aroused to help the bishops in their ministry of evangelizing the secularized world in the third millennium.

KIKO ARGÜELLO

St. Egidio Community

The St. Egidio Community was born in Rome, among young students of whom I was one (no longer, unfortunately). That was in the late Sixties, in the difficult climate that then characterized the young generations in Europe, that of the student revolt with its tendency towards Marxist politics. It was in any case a period of the primacy of politics. But in that same climate we, who were young people at the time, discovered the primacy of the Gospel in all its dimensions. It was for us like a silence broken by the Word of God. It was the beginning of a journey, during which we can say that the Word of God has been a lamp showing us the way and leading us to discover our vocation, first in Rome and then in the world.

It was the time of the Second Vatican Council, which we joyfully welcomed as a new spring in the Church. The Council Fathers exhorted the young people as follows: "We exhort you, young people, to widen your heart to the dimensions of the world, to listen to the appeal of your brothers and to ardently put your energies at their service". The spirit of the Council made a deep impression on us. The Council was first of all a climate, the breath of the Spirit: it was the need to convert ourselves to the Gospel, to reform ourselves. We felt at home in the Church. Not a home of which we claimed a piece, but a home to be built together. At the time I was much involved with the world of the poor of Rome and its slum suburbs, and I then realized that the Church was a reality that has to be built in people's hearts, because they felt it as something far removed from them; they did not hear the Word of God in it, because it was often silent in the life of so many men and women. Someone spoke of a winter in the Church. The spring, it seemed to me, meant overcoming that distance. For me it meant beginning to build a community in my own high school, in the poor suburbs, where so many people were far from the Gospel. The people knew the Church, but not the Gospel. It seemed to me that God was saying too little to the life of many or that many did not stop to listen to him.

At the beginning of the Community was this primacy of the Word

of God. So listening to the Word of God constantly accompanies our life: ever since the start we met together to pray every evening, wherever we could. Since then, it has now become the tradition for each of our communities, in every part of the world, to meet together for daily evening prayer. The Word of God grows together with those who read it: so taught Gregory the Great. It grew in us too, in the dimension of prayer, in that of the communion among many communities, and in that of mission.

Our prayer is that of our beginnings, the evening prayer in Rome, in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, or in that of St. Bartholomew: a church that the Pope entrusted to us on the twenty-fifth anniversary of our communities. It is the same prayer that unites us wherever we are, from San Salvador in Central America to our twenty and more communities in Mozambique or in Indonesia. People of the Community, friends of all kinds, meet together each evening to pray: hundreds of them in some places, or small groups elsewhere, but always—I hope—with the fidelity of those who want to follow not themselves, but the Lord.

A great bishop of the twentieth century, Cardinal Duval of Algiers, wrote to me after having participated in the evening prayer of our Community: “You are a sanctuary of the Gospel”. Yes, that is what we want to be, in the humility of the life of lay people who feel themselves to be, first of all, disciples and who want to create a family of disciples around Jesus. Each community thus becomes a sanctuary of the Gospel. In the heart of Rome and in its suburbs, and in other cities, in more than thirty countries, new community centres arise and old abandoned churches are reborn.

Prayer and the liturgy are an ancient but ever new source of love: they remain the heart of the Community, in spite of the increase of our works and experiences. The Word grows together with those who listen to it and wishes to be communicated to everyone. Ever since the beginning, the communities of St. Egidio (the name comes from our little church in Trastevere) have felt themselves to be in mission, i.e. committed with all their strength to communicating the Gospel person to

person, first in Rome, where the ancient city of Christianity was becoming more and more secular, then in many other places in the world. Evangelization is for us the mother of all works, because it is the basis of the daily life, public and private, of each one of us; it is the basis of the action of the Community as a whole.

We feel that the Church that Pope John prefigured before the Second Vatican Council is being realized, at least in part: “a Church for everyone, and especially for the poor”. To be the Church for everyone impels us to communicate the Gospel. This is not in contradiction with being the Church of the poor. The contradiction exists only within an ideological perspective.

The poor have become our brothers over these last thirty years: at St. Egidio they are considered a part of our family, our friends and relatives. This is expressed through the works of the Community and in the personal attention of each of its members. I won't speak of the works of charity towards the poor, that are a foundation of the life and action of the people of St. Egidio. But I will say that, in many ways, the poor are evangelized. Our love for the poor proves the universality of our love: so we think. We have the feeling that the Gospel image of the disciples and Jesus surrounded by the crowds, by so many people in need, by the poor, the lepers, the sick, the suffering of all kinds, is being recreated in our time. Being a sanctuary of the Gospel also means being a sanctuary of charity.

Our people try to practice charity in their lives, especially for the little people and the poor. John Paul II said to us: “Your small community at its origin did not set itself any boundary but that of charity”. The boundaries of our charity have been widened over these last thirty years. They have been extended to our European cities, where an elderly person or an AIDS patient does not die alone, but with a person from the St. Egidio Community holding his hand. They have been extended to our old people's homes, that combat the abandonment of the elderly that represents one of the perversions of our society; to the welcome given to life, from the moment of conception of those who would never have been born, to the life of the terminally ill or the dis-

abled. They have been extended to African prisons, to the camps for refugees from Kosovo, to the hospitals of Guinea Bissau; to the schools where children's right to be given an education is satisfied. Each member and each friend of St. Egidio has at least one poor person as a friend. We don't feel ourselves specialized in a particular apostolate, but we are convinced that without the poor our Christian existence would not be universal: "The Church does not live her mystery to the full if the poor are absent—Father Congar told us many years ago—. There cannot exist a Christian community without *diakonia*, that is, without the service of charity, which in turn cannot exist without the celebration of the Eucharist. These three realities are interconnected: community, Eucharist, *diakonia* to the humble and the poor. Experience shows that either they thrive or they languish together..."

John Paul II told us on 20 July 1980: "The foundation of your Community [...] is a very effective and very profound formula because it is evangelical, simple and human". The Gospel reveals to us what we are, mendicants of forgiveness and love. But we are also rich, indeed continuously enriched by the love of God, and above all able to enrich many others. This is the experience to which I would like to bear witness: the being able to enrich many people. So many men and women rediscover a meaning to their lives by joining our prayer and our Community. So many poor people.

Many priests have come from our communities. Others, religious and secular, have approached us, sharing our prayer and our communion. A few years ago the Superior General of the Jesuits, that of the White Fathers and the Master of the Dominicans wrote to us: "You are a wonderful example of the charisms of the Church in all their diversity and richness". Yes, that is what we would like to be. If there is something the St. Egidio Community is proud of, it is that of not believing in the messianism of a particular group or movement: there is only one Messiah. No one brings a messianic model. We are all mendicants on the way of salvation, even if we have been enriched by grace. The Church shall never live by a single model. There is no Church with only one room; for, as the Lord says, there are many rooms in the house of the Father.

To the priests linked with us, who work in the parishes directly entrusted to St. Egidio, or otherwise connected with the community, we therefore recommend that they should live in the spirit that puts them at the service of everyone and especially of the poor, so that people may place themselves at the school of the Gospel. We thus greet with joy the birth of new movements or the growth of already mature ones. We are also especially linked to over one hundred male and female religious congregations that support us and that work with us. Perhaps during adolescence, we have a strong sense of our own identity, but maturity comes when we rejoice in communion, in the existence of others, and in collaboration. The maturity of a charism is that of being part: messianic pride is infantile. The Church, the visible expression of unity, is not all grey and monochrome; it has all the colours of the rainbow.

Our first experience was in the local Church of Rome, where we got to know John Paul II as Bishop of Rome. It was an experience of the local Church, but also of Petrine service. According to our Statutes (we are in fact a public association of lay people in the Church recognized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in 1986), our communities grow in the local Churches, with the consent of the Ordinary, in a commitment of communion with the local community. Many bishops, who do not have our communities in their diocese, are familiar with us, because they prayed with us here in Rome or elsewhere. Our communities truly grow within the local Churches. They are formed of lay people, local people, who discover the Christian paradox pointed out in the *Letter to Diognetus*: that of being like everyone else, but also living an extraordinary experience. They are married, or celibate, people with a variety of occupations. Their life is divided between the various branches of the St. Egidio Community: communities, movements, spiritual fraternity, volunteers. But all of them live the common spirit in great unity though in different ways.

On 6 February 1988 the Pope told us: "You developed yourselves elsewhere, by involving yourselves in the local Churches, but you have always had a deep consciousness of your Roman origins, because wherever the communities of St. Egidio are, even if not in Rome, they are

always of Rome. The St. Egidio Community has lived the spirit of Rome in the world..." The link with our bishop, the Pope, on which our Roman spirit is based, is an important aspect for us. He encouraged us to cross frontiers, to embrace new horizons of evangelization, to follow him on the adventurous path of dialogue and reconciliation. The special bond with the person who exercises the ministry of Peter is profoundly embedded in our spirituality, as well as being prescribed in our Statutes. This is also concretely expressed in our commitment in the Church of Rome, so that she may increasingly show the face of She who presides over charity.

This link is also expressed in our relations with the Pontifical Council for the Laity which, in my view, has found a suitable pastoral approach to enable it to be present in the life of the movements, by promoting communion, and achieving a form of government for movements and communities that have no clearly defined boundaries, because they are movements, but that have a profound identity and soul. We feel at ease in this pastoral approach, which aims above all to promote communion and spiritual growth, by exercising the ministry of counsel, guidance, support and discernment.

In conclusion, I would like to speak to you about the horizons of our commitment in the world. Our communities have felt a special bond with Africa. We have discovered its great poverty but also its great potential in human and religious resources. Our communities in Africa, with all their needs, testify to us that no one is too poor to be unable to be generous. Above all they show to us that Christians who believe and are well motivated do not wish to abandon their land; they believe in the future of their countries despite all the difficulties they face. That is the great gift made to us by the Churches of Africa. But other gifts are made to us from other countries. I am thinking of our communities in Central and Latin America, which I recently visited; they impressed me by their life lived as lay people, but with great spirituality and commitment to the poor.

Cardinal Martini has said about our life: "I think their sense of personal and friendly contact with people has remained unchanged,

together with their attention to the great social and political problems. Their whole life is imbued with an atmosphere of prayer and listening to the Word of God. It is a difficult balance to maintain, but it is that of a life lived in conformity with the Gospel, lived in daily commitment within a complex society”.

In a complex world, each of us, with our limitations, seeks to practice in our lives God’s love for humankind, that was transformed into friendship for them. Friendship represents for us the walls of the Community: it becomes a method of relating and bearing witness to others. But it has to come to terms with the hostility, the lack of communication, the incomprehension in a world where different people live together, but frequently fail to love or understand each other. The mystery of division prompted us to work for evangelization (which is the decisive commitment of the life of each of us), but also for dialogue, that is not in opposition to evangelization, as the Popes and the Council taught.

St. Egidio pursues the paths of dialogue, especially that of Assisi, opened by John Paul II in 1986. The image of Assisi has a profound and simple theology. By preserving it and repropounding it, we have been able to experience its power of reconciliation. From Assisi to Rome, from Warsaw to Malta, year after year, most recently in Bucharest this summer, Christian leaders and representatives of the great world religions have met together, without confusion, but with great reciprocal deference and esteem. We saw so this year in Bucharest, where—as a cardinal who took part in that meeting wrote to us—“the St. Egidio Community [...] opened the road in many senses. Roads that made possible the Holy Father’s visit”.

The Pope wishes the Churches to enter the Third Millennium more united. Believers wish so too. I have found in John Paul II an expression that was the method of John XXIII: first find what it is that unites and put aside what it is that divides. The ecumenism pursued by our communities in their life is immersed in prayer and in concrete solidarity; it is not only that of the big meetings like that of Bucharest in which many bishops, seven cardinals, nine orthodox primates and patriarchs

participated. We have experienced an ecumenical strength, that is able to bring together people of different Churches, especially from orthodox and ancient Eastern Churches. Ecumenism has become a field of commitment for us.

Lastly, I would like to mention the dialogue aimed at reconciliation between enemies and combatants: it is the true mystery of enmity. On 4 October 1992, when the peace between the Mozambique government and the guerrillas that put an end to the war that had cost the lives of a million people was signed at St. Egidio in Rome, I realized that Christians have a great strength of peace. The Community mediated between both sides in collaboration with others. The Gospel, lived and proclaimed, gives a strength of peace. During those two years of negotiations for Mozambique we worked together a great deal, but all our communities prayed for peace. The apostolate of peace is part of the life of our Community, which has become a point of reference for many peacemakers, especially in Africa.

This, in sum, is the experience of St. Egidio: it helps people in every part of the world to understand how the Word of God grows in the life of those who accept it.

ANDREA RICCARDI

Renewal in the Holy Spirit

Renewal in the Holy Spirit developed in Italy in the early 1970s and is now recognized as an ecclesial movement. In Italy Renewal in the Holy Spirit is an expression of the great spiritual current known as "Catholic Charismatic Renewal", or more simply "Renewal", which suddenly exploded in America after the end of Vatican Council II. Today Renewal has spread to 82 million Catholics in 204 countries in five continents. It assumes different styles, forms of life and juridical status in the various nations, even though it can be traced back to a single common source.

Ever since its origin, Renewal seemed like a providential response, one of many, to the bold prophetic hope formulated by John XXIII in preparation for the Second Vatican Council: “Renew the wonders as of a new Pentecost in our time” and by Paul VI in the general audience of 16 October 1974: “May the Lord pour out, today, a great multitude of charisms to render the Church fruitful, beautiful and marvellous, and capable of capturing the attention and wonder of the profane world, of the secularized world”. Nor can we fail to forget that Pope Leo XIII, as early as 1 January 1901, had dedicated the twentieth century to the Holy Spirit, intoning the *Veni Creator Spiritus* in the name of the whole Church, after the encyclical dedicated to the Holy Spirit. Leo XIII exhorted the faithful to return to the upper room of Pentecost and invoke the Holy Spirit for the unity of Christians. Undoubtedly we must recognize that the voice of Leo XIII pierced the heavens, if we observe the huge growth of charismatic movements and pentecostal Churches that have spread in every part of the world as an authentic response of the one Spirit to the prayers of the Popes for the spiritual renewal of the twentieth century. They did so in two successive waves: the first wave in the aftermath of 1901, the second wave coinciding with Vatican Council II.

The grace of Catholic Renewal is part of an even greater movement of charismatic reawakening aroused by the Spirit. Traversing the three great traditions—Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox—it has involved, according to the most recent estimates of sociologists, some 5000 million Christians who testify to a new life in the Spirit on the basis of the experience of the outpouring of the Spirit or baptism in the Spirit. We can identify in this phenomenon, both at the theological and charismatic level, an “anticipation” of the endeavour that the Holy Spirit has closest to heart: the union of Christians, the unity of the Church. Cardinal Suenens affirmed that “the third millennium sees the appearance on the horizon of “signs”—of which Renewal is in a particular way a source of hope—that herald the approach of visible unity”: it would therefore be no cause for surprise if this wind of renewal were a sign of how the Spirit is urging the Churches to emerge from their own barri-

cedes. John Paul II strongly intuited this in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, in which he spoke of “spiritual ecumenism” and also indicated the Jubilee of the Year 2000 as a decisive moment for the journey towards the unity of all Christians.

The decision to name the Italian experience “Renewal in the Holy Spirit” instead of “Catholic Charismatic Renewal” was made right at the start, as effect of the first theological reflection and the cultural mediation that the movement’s initiators in Italy had to conduct to attest its Catholic identity. The name “Renewal in the Holy Spirit” is taken from St. Paul’s Letter to Titus, in which the apostle affirms that we are saved “by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit” (*Tit* 3:5). The unmistakable characteristic of the name adopted is to focus attention not on the charisms but on the Holy Spirit: in this way it is easier to recall that no one can consider himself authentically “charismatic” unless with reference to the Church, because she is charismatic.

The charismatic experience that distinguishes Renewal does not have a founder, as do many other ecclesial movements, nor a particular charism to be pointed out to the Church and to the world. Rather, it wants to contribute to restoring the physiological structure of the Christian existence, which is by nature an existence “in the Spirit”. That’s why Cardinal Suenens defined Renewal “a current of grace able to give an impetus to the post-conciliar Church”, “a movement of the Spirit that may help the Church to become wholly charismatic according to the hopes and propositions of Vatican Council II”.

Renewal in the Holy Spirit is an ecclesial instrument for a new spiritual communication of the faith, but it does not represent a new form of spirituality in itself. Nor does it have a precise aim: we can do no more than indicate its internal dynamic, aimed at renewing the whole of the Church in all its vital manifestations and in all its activities. John Paul II affirms: “The whole work of the renewal of the Church that Vatican Council II so providentially began can only be realized in the Holy Spirit, i.e. with the help of his power”. The Pope affirms, therefore, that

a renewal at the level of ecclesiastical documents and structures is not sufficient if the heart of man is not touched by the Holy Spirit.

Renewal is open to everyone, to each social or ecclesial category, without distinctions of age or sex, so that everyone may be able to share the wonderful experience of the life in the Spirit which is granted to everyone, according to the promise of Jesus, "without measure" (Jn 3:34). Whoever approaches Renewal does not find himself faced by a specific spiritual proposal, or a predominant theme of spiritual life. Renewal reflects and applies the spirituality of the Church herself, that is animated by the Spirit, according to the proclamation made by Jesus in the Synagogue of Nazareth. In that chapter 61 of the prophet Isaiah, in which the priestly, prophetic and kingly power of the Spirit is enunciated, we re-read our triple baptismal anointing, our nuptial covenant with Christ, according to the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* and *Christifideles Laici*: it is thanks to the Spirit of Christ that we can make ourselves available to testify to his work, in the Church and in the world, by exercising with faith the *tria munera* of Christ.

Renewal expresses the continuity of the event of Pentecost—the moment in which the Church was founded—by embracing all the aspects of the life of the Church and of the Christian experience. It is for this reason that, while accentuating the spiritual dimension, Renewal is, and is increasingly becoming, by its very nature, an ecclesial movement, as I will have occasion to describe when discussing the Italian experience.

The theological basis of Renewal is essentially trinitarian, according to the view of the Church propounded by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*. In particular, Renewal insists on the progressive knowledge of the person of the Holy Spirit, his uninterrupted and irreplaceable action in the Church and in each one of us.

The relation of the baptized with the Trinity that Renewal has rediscovered is a relation of personal faith that, as *Gaudium et Spes* explains, generates "a more acute sense of God". It is manifested in a new experience of the Father's love that enables us to love since we in turn are

loved: in a new experience of the lordship of Jesus the Saviour that enables us to proclaim the Gospel of the salvation of the world without shame, in a new experience of the power of the Spirit that makes the poor rich, the weak strong, the sick healthy, the sinners children of God and reformed brothers, and that reawakens a sense of wonder and awe in so many Christian consciences that are dormant or illuminated by reason alone.

Despite its strongly personal character, this new relation with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit works a profound conversion and a transformation of life that is specifically manifested in a firm and growing will to serve the Church and to bear witness to the world: if the upper room of Pentecost is the privileged place of the experience of the Spirit, the same Spirit makes us "bearers of the Spirit" in a world, says Jesus, that cannot receive him "because it neither sees him nor knows him" (Jn 14:17).

All those involved in Renewal share the experience of the charisms of which *Lumen Gentium* speaks, and in this experience is manifested the ecclesial nature of the charisms. These are related, on the one hand, to the structures of the Church and her mystery and, on the other, to the experience of the presence of God both at the personal and community level. For this reason, I would like to say that Renewal, though certain appearances may perhaps suggest the contrary, has reacted against a false individualism that interprets the evidence of the New Testament in terms of private faith, as private experience of God. It has reacted against an excessive focus on subjectivity and individual spirituality. In sacramental terms it may be said that Renewal is founded on the renewal of what it is that constitutes us as Church, namely, the sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist. The Holy Spirit, received in initiation, is always received in a more profound way, both at the personal and community level, in such a way that the practice of the sacraments, authentically lived, makes the Christian experience a continuous *metanoia*, a "permanent conversion" after the first transforming meeting with Jesus. Renewing oneself, therefore, is not only an idea, but an act and a fact: it is a dying, every

day, in order to be reborn anew; it is a mortifying of the old man with his passions that are opposed to God's will, in order to put on the new man, made new by the Spirit every day.

Renewal is characterized by the "establishment of Christian groups who pray together and ask in prayer, for each of its members, a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, by virtue of which they may add to the grace of Christian initiation a new consciousness of the lordship of Jesus, a new experience of the gifts and charisms of the Spirit and a new willingness to use all the talents and charisms with which God has endowed them to the service of their brothers and the Church".

It is especially in its prayer meetings that Catholics generally get to know Renewal, and it is in the trustful submission to the Spirit that the gifts of God blossom and begin to bear fruit as effect of the journey of new life and permanent conversion that is proposed. Renewal thus invites Christians to a new opening to the irruption of the presence of God, to a return to the pentecostal experience, to the burning bush as place in which God is revealed, speaks, converts and from which he sends us out into the world, just as he sent out Moses. This new spiritual impetus has its heart in the experience of prayer for a new outpouring of the Spirit and baptism in the Spirit that is fostered in Renewal.

In 1980 John Paul II, on meeting the Italian groups and communities of Renewal in the Holy Spirit, declared as follows: "To this outpouring of the Holy Spirit we know we are indebted for an ever deeper experience of the presence of Christ". It is not of course a new Baptism, or a repetition of the sacrament, but it does involve the relation to the sacraments of Christian initiation. The outpouring of the Spirit actualizes and renews our Baptism, and gives a clearer conscience of its continuing effects. As Cardinal Suenens affirms, "baptism in the Spirit recalls the conscious experience, the experiential significance of Baptism". The outpouring of the Spirit is therefore a call to conversion, to inward renewal, a response by God to the shortcomings which have come to characterize Christian life.

Father Cantalamessa has affirmed, with regard to the efficacy of the outpouring of the Spirit in reactivating Baptism: "Man finally plays his part, i.e. makes a choice of responsible and personal faith, prepared by repentance, that enables the work of God to release all its strength. The gift of God is finally 'unleashed', the faith revives and the *opus operatum* is made manifest". The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the cause of spiritual "rebirth", the same that Jesus proposed to Nicodemus, so that he might be able to be astonished by the wonders and newness of the Spirit.

The community that prays and celebrates is the founding event of Renewal. Its model may be identified in the description of the life of the first Christian communities that we find in *Acts* (cf. 2:42-48) and in the teaching of St. Paul on the charisms (cf. *1 Cor* 12 and 14). We might speak, in essence, of a missionary liturgy, a form of evangelization in which the participants, on the basis of the common priesthood of the faithful, are led to an immediate meeting with Jesus, through the personal, spontaneous and joyful witness communicated in the faith.

What may be noted in the participants is an unquenchable desire for God: the people of God has a thirst for prayer, for the Word of God, for the gifts of the Spirit, for the sacraments: it has a thirst for holiness. The People of God hears the echo of Jesus' promise to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God [...]. Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (*Jn* 4:10, 14). How many men and women regenerated by the Spirit have become fountains of living water; new wineskins for new wine! How many dried-up wells have become reservoirs of holiness and salvation for the Holy Spirit to assuage the two great thirsts that are at the heart of man, the two great thirsts of the world: the thirst for salvation and the thirst for holiness!

Renewal in the Holy Spirit is a reality that is widely spread throughout the Italian dioceses. It consists of some 250,000 persons who, by virtue of the same spirituality, meet together in groups and communities, the

number of which had grown to over 1500 by 1998; at the present time a further 300 groups are in phase of formation. The communities aroused by the Holy Spirit in Renewal are of two types: of covenant or of life. In the former case, members assume a commitment to a community life and a mainly missionary objective, both regulated by norms subject to the approval of the ordinary in the diocese in which the community has been formed. In the latter case, the commitment has a further dimension that of the total sharing of property and a life lived together under the same roof.

Groups, covenanted communities and communities of life do not represent three progressive degrees of maturation or three different levels of membership within Renewal in the Holy Spirit. They are different forms of vocation and different forms of membership, in full respect for difference of expressions. Leaders and animators guide the groups and communities, the ministries and activities, the associations and schools of formation of Renewal in the Holy Spirit at the local, diocesan, regional and national level. Statutes approved by the Italian Episcopal Conference recognize Renewal in the Holy Spirit as a private association of faithful.

The statutes we have adopted represent a unique case in the world for a national movement of charismatic Renewal. Their approval by an Episcopal Conference marked a decisive shift towards ecclesial maturity and the movement's social visibility in Italy. This has permitted an ever stronger realization that statutory norms, far from imprisoning the Spirit, ensure each and everyone a different and more mature freedom; they also permit the movement a progressive evolution towards its deepest Catholic and ecclesial identity. Many groups, emerging from protective and often self-gratifying niches, have learned to grasp the differences that exist between them in their ways of expressing the faith no longer as a limit that hampers understanding and acceptance of each other, but as a grace for the Church. Ever growing numbers of groups and communities feel the desire to emerge from their ivory tower and embrace in their praise also terrestrial realities and concrete facts, in daily commitment and to act for the common good, in the interest of

the ecclesial community as a whole and in the true human promotion of each individual. We are conscious that the genuine new life in the Spirit begins when the gulf between faith and life is closed, when the separation between contemplation and action is overcome, and when witness makes visible the authentic fruit of Pentecost that is the evangelizing mission, i.e. the active participation in the Church's apostolic goal.

The approval of the Statutes incorporated Renewal in the Holy Spirit in the heart of the Church, in a new and original collaboration with our pastors, with diocesan and parish priests, and religious (over 2000 in Italy experience the grace of Renewal and increasingly growing is the number of vocations to the priesthood and other forms of consecration), and with the ecclesial movements, in a new stage of reciprocity and exchange of gifts in order to better understand each other and support each other in the specific fields of apostolate. The immediate effect of this openness, this sincere and full ecclesial collaboration *ad extra* was the growth *ad intra* of brotherly charity, reciprocity and subsidiarity between the various components of Renewal in the Holy Spirit at the various levels. In dialogue and in ecclesial collaboration, each identity is reinforced, learns to remain faithful to itself, develops a greater co-responsibility and a greater sense of belonging.

I would like here to glorify the Lord for the works that render manifest the action of the Spirit in the life of Renewal in the Holy Spirit.

John Paul II, on receiving the leaders of Renewal in private audience on the eve of the historic vigil of Pentecost with the movements in 1998, told us: "One of the most urgent tasks of the Church today is that of the formation of the lay faithful. In the secularized world of our time, that proposes models of life empty of spiritual values, this is a more than ever urgent task. The faith needs to be cultivated both at the personal and at the community level. I know that Renewal in the Holy Spirit strives to respond to this need, by seeking ever new forms and ways, better adapted to the needs of man today. I thank you for what you are doing, and I ask you to persevere in your efforts".

I would like to describe to you now what our efforts are in this direction by mentioning some of our more significant initiatives:

- The *Unitary Formation Project*, spread over a year at the diocesan, regional and national level; involving over three hundred educators, rooted in the experience of Renewal in the Holy Spirit and specialized in a particular sector of ecclesial life, it offers over a hundred study weeks, distributed over the Italian territory and aimed at the formation of some 10,000 catechists.

- The *National Evangelization School*, that provides a permanent formation to the disciples wishing to devote themselves actively to the “new Evangelization”.

- The *Global “Column of Fire” Evangelization Project*: a workshop of ideas for renewing the languages of evangelical communication, inculcating the faith through courses of Christian initiation differentiated according to the social categories to be reached. In this context it seems to me worth pointing out that Renewal in the Holy Spirit contributes without visibility, yet in a massive way, to boosting the various forms of social volunteer service of Catholic inspiration present in Italy.

- The *National Service for Music and Singing*, a rhythmic-symphonic orchestra with polyphonic choir of 130 voices, that is arousing a movement of praise and adoration of strong biblical inspiration at the international level for the renewal of the liturgical and paraliturgical repertoire of our Churches.

- The *Association of Catholic Therapists*, that provides assistance to all those who exercise a profession in the health-care field to spread the love of Jesus that heals the person in his entirety. In the near future a school of permanent post-graduate formation will be opened by the Association; it will aim to help young professionals to recover a true sense of their medical vocation.

- The *School for Formation in Social Service*, that helps all those who have a responsibility in civil society to promote human dignity.

- The *Italian Charismatic Consultation*, a forum of dialogue that brings together authoritative exponents of the Catholic Church and the pentecostal Churches.

- *Prayer by Telephone*, a help-line of listening and prayer, offered to those who feel a sense of discouragement, loneliness and loss of faith and need a word of comfort and support.
- The *Edizioni Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo*, the publishing house that supports the formative journey of members of Renewal in the Holy Spirit and helps to spread pneumatological Catholicism.
- Lastly, the *missions abroad*, which will be stepped up in the near future, from autumn 2001, to support the Italian-language communities in Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Romania, Canada, USA, Australia and Taiwan. To these communities will be offered a formative support and a full sharing of the activities of Renewal in the Holy Spirit in Italy.

In conclusion, twenty-seven years after its timid and by no means serene beginnings, Renewal in the Holy Spirit can only regard with astonishment the journey it has made and blesses the Lord; its dream has become a reality!

To be sure, the “wind” is invisible, and its breath and the direction it will take are unpredictable, but we can observe the effects of this wind of Pentecost, because whoever has been touched by it shows its signs in a quite evident manner. I pray to the Lord that he may preserve us in poverty and simplicity to be a people still capable of being amazed by the wonders of the Spirit, a people capable of invoking the signs of the presence of God, a people tireless in proclaiming that Jesus is alive and in our midst. For then Renewal in the Holy Spirit shall truly be a chance for the Church and a hope for the world, as foreseen by Paul VI and John Paul II.

SALVATORE MARTINEZ

III

Charism and Discernment by the Pastors Juridical Aspects

Freedom of Association in the Church

Archbishop LLUÍS MARTÍNEZ SISTACH

The phenomenon of associations in the Church has been developed thanks to the ecclesiology that emerged from Vatican Council II. John Paul II has pointed out that “alongside the traditional forming of associations, and at times coming from their very roots, movements and new sodalities have sprouted, with a specific feature and purpose, so great is the richness and the versatility of resources that the Holy Spirit nourishes in the ecclesial community”.¹ The Holy Father has also observed that in our time the phenomenon of lay associations in the Church is characterized by “particular variety and vitality”. With good reason we may speak, says the Pope, of a “new era of group endeavours of the lay faithful”.² The originality of these new movements or communities “often consists in the fact that they are composed of mixed groups of men and women, of clerics and lay persons, of married couples and celibates, all of whom pursue a particular style of life. These communities are sometimes inspired by one or other traditional form adapted to the needs of modern society”.³

The canonical provisions that resulted from Vatican Council II adequately guarantees the exercise of the right of association in the Church. Some authors have wondered whether the provisions of the Code of Canon Law of 1983 on the associations of faithful offer an adequate juridical framework for the variety of new forms of ecclesial

¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Angelus Talk* (23 August 1987), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, X, 3 (1987), 240.

² JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 29.

³ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, no. 62; cf. also G. GHIRLANDA, “I movimenti nella comunione ecclesiale e la loro giusta autonomia”, in *Laici oggi*, 32-33 (1989-1990), 41-42.

movements and communities of the faithful that are flourishing inside the Church at the present time.⁴

In my view, the provisions of the Code, in harmony with the clear conciliar proclamation of the right of association of the faithful, show themselves able to embrace and regulate this associative richness that the Holy Spirit is arousing in the people of God. These provisions are inspired by the principle of subsidiarity and the convenience of establishing flexible margins able to respond more effectively to the diversity of situations. That does not mean that, in the application of the existing canonical provisions to the new ecclesial movements, difficulties do not arise, due to the variety of the members that compose them and due to other characteristics peculiar to these associative phenomena. Nonetheless I believe that the new movements can be subsumed under the associations of faithful as regulated by the Code of Canon Law. A canonical framework regulating them all thus exists.

In the first place, I believe it is important to consider what attitude the promoters of collective initiatives and the hierarchy itself ought to have. The institutionalization of the associations of the faithful that arise in the Church, or that already exist in the Church, needs to be encouraged and helped. There are various reasons for this: first, because the right of association is a fundamental right of the faithful, recognized in the Code of Canon Law; second, because the movements act in the Church as *de facto* lay associations and their institutionalization is a guarantee for their members and for the goals they pursue; third, because the fact that they have an adequate juridical configuration is convenient for the necessary overall pastoral planning; and fourth, because their institutionalization permits them to become part of the electoral body of pastoral organisms such as diocesan, presbyterial and pastoral councils.

The charism that is at the root of an ecclesial movement demands

⁴ Cf. E. CORECCO, "Istituzione e carisma in riferimento alle strutture associative", in *L'elemento associativo nella Chiesa* (Otilien 1989), 79; M. DORTEL-CLAUDOT, "Les communautés nouvelles", in *Via religieuse, érémitisme, consécration des vierges, communautés nouvelles* (Paris 1993), 225-226.

an institutional expression that permits it to realize itself properly in the life of the Church. And the charismatic reality is converted into canonical institution with the approval of the Pastors of the Church.

Foundation and Importance of the Right of Association

The conciliar decree on the apostolate of lay people *Apostolicam Actuositatem* presents us with the authentic foundation of the right of association in the Church, in the following terms: “[The faithful] must remember that man is social by nature and that it has been God’s pleasure to assemble those who believe in Christ and make of them the People of God (cf. *1 Pet* 2:5-10), a single body (cf. *1 Cor* 12:12). The group apostolate is in happy harmony therefore with a fundamental need in the faithful, a need that is both human and Christian. At the same time it offers a sign of the communion and unity of the Church in Christ”.⁵ In this regard *Christifideles Laici* affirms that the formation of lay groups “expresses the social nature of the person”, adding that “the profound reason that justifies and demands the lay faithful’s forming of lay groups comes from a theology based on ecclesiology, as the Second Vatican Council clearly acknowledged in referring to the group apostolate as a ‘sign of communion and of unity of the Church of Christ’”.⁶ And the Pope, in his address on the vigil of Pentecost 1998, said that “by their nature, charisms are communicative and give rise to that ‘spiritual affinity among persons’ and to that friendship in Christ which is the origin of ‘movements’”.⁷ Corecco, for his part, has stressed the need to free ourselves from the temptation to consider—in harmony with the doctrine of *ius publicum ecclesiasticum*—the right of association of the

⁵ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 18.

⁶ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 29.

⁷ JOHN PAUL II, “Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities”, in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 222.

faithful as a *ius nativum* exclusively founded on natural right.⁸ The foundation of this right is twofold: anthropological and ecclesiological.

The fact that man is social by nature retains its value and its needs in those who have received the sacrament of Baptism. For the relations between the order of creation and the order of redemption are close: they find their due harmony in the dynamic reality of the whole story of salvation. The order of creation was not abolished in favour of the order of redemption. Rather, it was assumed and perfected by it.⁹ The Christian community of the faithful is a constitutive element of the baptized. God wished to save men and women not individually and in isolation the one from the other, but by grouping them together as a community that might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness.¹⁰ The history of salvation has a markedly social and community-based character.¹¹

The Council presents two reasons, closely linked to the contemporary reality, that justify the creation of new associations in the Church. The first is that the associations established for common apostolic activities support their own members and form them for the task in question; they also organize and regulate their own ecclesial activities in such a way that they can be expected to bear far more abundant fruit than would be the case if Christians worked separately.¹² The second reason is that, given the actual circumstances of society today, it is indispensable that the group apostolate be reinforced.¹³

The Council itself, in noting the dynamism of the organized apostolate, places the emphasis on the importance of the various forms of association not only at the diocesan and national, but also at the inter-

⁸ Cf. E. CORECCO, *Istituzione e carisma in riferimento alle strutture associative*, cit., 80.

⁹ Cf. L. MARTÍNEZ SISTACH, *El derecho de asociación en la Iglesia* (Barcelona 1973), 89-94; and idem, *Las asociaciones de fieles*, 3rd edn, 1994, 18-20.

¹⁰ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 9.

¹¹ Cf. L. MARTÍNEZ SISTACH, *Las asociaciones de fieles*, cit., 20-24.

¹² Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 19; as regards the international Catholic associations, cf. the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Contemporary World *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 90.

¹³ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 19.

national level.¹⁴ It thus repeatedly praises the associations of the lay apostolate¹⁵ and the associations of priests.¹⁶ It recommends these associations of the apostolate strongly.¹⁷ At the same time, it asks bishops, priests, religious and laity to hold them in high esteem and to contribute to their development.¹⁸

Following the general line traced by the Council, the Code of Canon Law expresses esteem for the phenomenon of associations in the Church. It recommends them strongly to everyone (cf. can. 278 § 2 and 327) and exhorts the Pastors to recognize them and to promote the role incumbent on the laity in the mission of the Church “by fostering their associations which have religious purposes” (can. 529 § 2).

The Right of Association of the Faithful and its Regulation

The Code explicitly upholds the right of association in the list of the rights and duties of the faithful. Canon 215 in fact declares: “Christ’s faithful may freely establish and direct associations which serve charitable or pious purposes or which foster the Christian vocation in the world”.

This provision is not found in the old Code. It was Vatican Council II that upheld the right of association in the Church, expressing itself in the following terms: “While preserving intact the necessary link with ecclesiastical authority, the laity have the right to establish and direct associations [...]”.¹⁹

John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., nos. 18; 19; 20; 21; 23.

¹⁶ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 8.

¹⁷ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, nos. 20; 21; 24.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 20; 21; 24; 25; cf. also VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 8.

¹⁹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, nos. 19.

affirms that “first of all, the freedom for lay people in the Church to form such groups is to be acknowledged. Such liberty is a true and proper right that is not derived from any kind of ‘concession’ by authority, but flows from the Sacrament of Baptism, which calls the lay faithful to participate actively in the Church’s communion and mission”.²⁰ This right is founded, in an immediate way, on the social nature of man and of the community of the children of God and, indirectly, on the inadequacy of individual forces to achieve the aims that belong to the baptized. For these reasons it may be considered an original or fundamental right of the members of the people of God.²¹

The great principle of communion in the Church is fully reflected in the canonical regulation of the right of association of the faithful, given the ecclesial nature of this right. Ecclesial communion also comprises the relation between the exercise of the right of association and the proper role of the ecclesiastical authority. Already the Council had affirmed this right with the following proviso: “While preserving intact the necessary link with ecclesiastical authority”.²²

²⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no 29.

²¹ Can one say that the right of association of the faithful is a fundamental right? It would have been denominated as such if the planned “Fundamental Law” had been promulgated. The rights and duties contained in canons 208-222 of the existing Code were defined as fundamental by the work groups that dealt with this matter in the draft for the “Fundamental Law” and also by canonical doctrine. As regards the work groups, cf. L. NAVARRO, *Diritto di associazione e associazione di fedeli* (Milan 1991), 29. As regards canonical doctrine, cf. L. MARTÍNEZ SISTACH, *El derecho de asociación*, cit., 119-169; A. DÍAZ, *Derecho fundamental de asociación en la Iglesia*, (Pamplona 1972), 19; 37-45; J. HERVADA and P. LOMBARDÍA, *El derecho del pueblo de Dios*, vol. I (Pamplona 1970), 278ff.; A. VALLINI, *Diritto di associazione e vita consacrata* (Rome 1975), 72 and 76; A.M. PUNZ NICOLO, *Gli enti nell'ordinamento canonico* (Padua 1983), 88ff.; R. PAGÉ, “Associations of the faithful in the Church”, *The Jurist*, 47 (1987), 165; J. HERRANZ, *Studi sulla nuova legislazione della Chiesa* (Milan 1990), 209ff.; J. HERVADA, *Diritto costituzionale canonico* (Milan 1989), 92-103; T. BERTONE, “Fedeli, laici, chierici e costituzione gerarchica”, in *La normativa del nuovo Codice* (Brescia 1985), 68-71; W. SCHULZ, “Le associazioni nel diritto canonico”, *Il diritto ecclesiastico*, 99 (1988), 356, 362ff.

²² VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, nos. 19. For a more exhaustive study of the principles that regulate the right of association, cf. L. MARTÍNEZ SISTACH, “Asociaciones públicas y privadas de laicos”, *Ius Canonicum*, 26 (1986), 149-172.

The Council specified what was required by hierarchical communion. It did so at the beginning of no. 24 of the decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, as follows: "The hierarchy's duty is to favour the lay apostolate, furnish it with principles and spiritual assistance, direct the exercise of the apostolate to the common good of the Church, and see to it that doctrine and order are safeguarded".²³

This relation with the ecclesiastical authority, as it is presented to us by the Council, is based on two great social and also ecclesial principles: the principle of subsidiarity and that of the common good. On the one hand, there is the static and dynamic personality of each baptized, protected in this ecclesial and hierarchical communion by the principle of subsidiarity. Not by chance does the above-cited conciliar text begin by reminding the hierarchy of its duty to promote the apostolate of the laity and to furnish it with spiritual assistance and the doctrinal principles which the faithful need for the realization of their ecclesial vocation. On the other hand, all the ecclesial initiatives and works promoted thanks to the impulse of the Holy Spirit with the aid of the hierarchy must be aimed at the fulfilment of the one mission of the people of God.²⁴

These two great principles, that are included in the ecclesial coordinates of communion and mission, must be borne constantly in mind in the necessary regulation of the right of association of the faithful and also in every activity of the ecclesial associations.

On the basis of these principles, the Code begins its list of the rights and duties of the faithful with the proclamation of the principle that must preside over every individual and group activity in the Church: "Christ's faithful are bound to preserve their communion with the

²³ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, nos. 24.

²⁴ Echeberría affirms that the movement's autonomy of life and regime implies, on the one hand, a respect for and communion with the hierarchical authority; and, on the other, that this authority must maintain and safeguard the original charism of the movements that have an universal character (cf. *Asunción de los consejos evangélicos en las asociaciones de fieles y movimientos eclesiales*, Rome 1988, 191-192).

Church at all times, even in their external actions” (can. 209 § 1). The list is concluded with canon 223 on the general regulations of the rights of the faithful. It is established, in the first place, that these rights are not absolute and unlimited, since in their exercise the faithful “must take account of the common good of the Church, as well as the rights of others and their own duties to others” (can. 223 § 1), and, in the second place, it is observed that “ecclesiastical authority is entitled to regulate, in view of the common good, the exercise of rights which are proper to Christ’s faithful” (can. 223 § 2).

The Church’s Pastors must regulate the right of association of the faithful in conformity with the provisions of the Code of Canon Law, irrespective of their own tastes and preferences. The intervention of the Pastors in the approval of an association or a movement gives a seal of ecclesiality and is a guarantee for its members, since the Pastors conduct a juridical and pastoral discernment of its charism and its institutionalization, and the charism is safeguarded by appropriate statutes. Moreover, by their intervention the Pastors commit their own authority and their own moral prestige before the ecclesial community. For all these reasons the relations between the Pastors and the ecclesial movements should always be placed in a context of communion, in which they can only find their rightful value. The right of association, in a life of ecclesial communion, is exercised first and foremost in communion with the hierarchy, as guarantee of liberty and unity.

Speaking of the ecclesial movements, John Paul II poses the question how the authenticity of the charism can be safeguarded and guaranteed. He replies as follows: “It is essential in this regard that every movement submit to the discernment of the competent ecclesiastical authority. For this reason no charism can dispense with reference and submission to the Pastors of the Church”.²⁵

Canon 215 proclaims the right of association for all the faithful, that

²⁵ JOHN PAUL II, “Address at the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities”, no. 8, in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 223.

is, for all the baptized (cf. can. 204 § 1). So this right is enjoyed not only by the laity, but also by clerics and religious. As far as the regulation of its exercise is concerned, it should be borne in mind that both lay people and priests/religious may have to submit to some limitations by reason of their ecclesial state.

As regards *priests*, canon 278 in its three paragraphs establishes as follows: it recognizes, both formally and in general, the right of association of secular clerics; it praises and favours those associations that promote the holiness of their own members, through the ministry and the unity of the clergy with one another and with their own bishop; it maintains that such associations must have statutes recognized by the competent ecclesiastical authority and a suitable and well-trying rule of life; it prohibits priests from establishing or joining associations whose purpose or activity cannot be reconciled with the obligations proper to the clerical state, or which may hinder the diligent fulfilment of the office entrusted to them by the bishop.²⁶

This canonical norm poses some limits to the exercise of the right of association of secular clerics due to their clerical state that presupposes a close relation with the bishop, their condition as members of the diocesan presbytery and the specific task assigned to them by their bishop.

As regards *religious*, canon 307 § 3 establishes as follows: “Members of religious institutes may, with the consent of their Superior, join associations”. John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* of 25 March 1996, in discussing the rights and duties of consecrated persons who have joined ecclesial movements, affirms the need “to take care that membership in these ecclesial movements does not endanger the charism or discipline of the institute of origin, and that all is done with the permission of superiors and with the full intention of accepting their decisions”.²⁷ This norm does not

²⁶ The content of this canon coincides with the text of no. 8 of the conciliar decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*.

²⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, no. 56.

constitute an improper limitation of the right of religious to associate with other faithful. Its aim is rather to safeguard the charism that corresponds to his/her vocation. The consent of the Superior is requested to prevent membership of an association being to the detriment of the primary vocation of religious: the quest of holiness in conformity with the spirit of his/her own religious institute. The need to guarantee the true identity of the religious in his/her institute is reaffirmed; so novices, even those who come from movements and associations of faithful, depend exclusively on their religious superior.²⁸

The just observations made by the document *Fraternal Life in Community* issued by the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes on 2 February 1994 also need to be borne in mind. After emphasizing the need to distinguish between different movements and between different forms of membership of the religious, this document adds: “the fundamental problem, in the relation with the movements, remains the identity of the individual consecrated person; if this is solid, the relation is productive for both. As regards those men and women religious who seem to live more in and for the movement that in and for the religious community, it is as well to recall what is affirmed by the document *Potissimum Institutioni*: ‘An institute has an internal coherence that it receives from its nature, objective, spirit, character and traditions. All this patrimony represents the axis round which the identity and unity of the institute itself and the unity of life of each of its members are held together [...]’”²⁹

The religious “who express that their principal attachment is to the movement with a psychological distancing from their own institute cause a problem, because they live in an interior dimension: they reside in the community, but live according to the pastoral plans and directives of the movement”³⁰.

²⁸ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES, Instruction *Potissimum Institutioni*, 2 February 1990, no. 93.

²⁹ No. 62.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

The Right to Found and Support Associations

Canon 215 explicitly recognizes the fundamental right of the faithful to *found* associations. We refer here to the capacity that the faithful have to establish them not merely at the sociological level, but also at the juridical level, in such a way that they are recognized, protected and safeguarded by canon law.

There is therefore a difference with respect to the previous Code of Canon Law, according to which only those associations recognized or established by the ecclesiastical authority existed in the Church (cf. can. 686 § 1). In this way, what turned an associative phenomenon, or a *de facto* association, into an ecclesiastical association was the constitutive act of the hierarchy, not the will of the faithful by virtue of their exercise of the right of association.

Once the distinction between private and public associations had been introduced into the new Code, canon 299 is able to establish that the faithful have the right to constitute private associations, thanks to a private agreement among each other. So the efficient cause of the associative bond in these private associations, i.e. what constitutes the association, is not the intervention of the ecclesiastical authority, but the common will of the faithful who associate together in it.³¹ So, in spite of the fact that the hierarchy may perform a series of acts (commendation, approval, erection of the association into a juridical person), such acts neither constitute nor create these private associations. The principle of the freedom of association of the faithful is especially evident in the case of private associations.³²

The Code of Canon Law lays down two conditions for the establishment by the faithful of a private association in the Church: first, that

³¹ Cf. L. MARTÍNEZ SISTACH, *Las asociaciones de fieles*, cit., 95; A. DEL PORTILLO, "Ius associationis et associationes fidelium iuxta Concilii Vaticani II doctrinam", *Ius Canonicum*, 8 (1968), 13.

³² Cf. J. HENDRICKS, "Consociationum fidelium approbatio et statuta", *Periodica*, 73 (1984), 177; cf. also R. BACCARI, "Il diritto di associazione dei laici nell'ordinamento canonico", *Monitor Ecclesiasticus*, 107 (1982), 565.

the ends of that association conform to those established by canon 298 § 1 (excluding those specified in can. 301 § 1) for public associations; and second, that its statutes be at least recognized by the ecclesiastical authority (cf. can. 299 § 1 & 3).

The reason why this recognition is required consists in the fact that in this way the Pastors have a knowledge of the association and may pronounce on its Christian authenticity, its ends, its means, and that there is nothing in it that contradicts the doctrine, discipline and ethical principles of the Church.³³ But we maintain that this intervention of the hierarchy should never ignore two other aspects: it is necessary to avoid the dissipation of forces (cf. can. 323 § 2) and to ensure that the association's manner of action is conformable to what is necessary or useful in the circumstances of the time and place (cf. can. 304 § 1). It is therefore a formality required by the dimension of the ecclesial communion inherent to the right of association of the faithful.

When the private associations in question are devoid of juridical personality, the approval of the statutes is required; the granting of canonical personality is not the automatic result of the petition advanced by the leaders of the association, since the hierarchy will evaluate the nature of the association, its pastoral role, its guarantees of continuity etc. (cf. can. 114 § 3).

As regards the public associations of the faithful, it is clear that the right of the faithful to set them up is sensibly conditioned by the necessary intervention of the ecclesiastical authority. Canon 301 § 1 establishes so in the following terms: "It is for the competent ecclesiastical authority alone to establish associations of Christ's faithful", which, according to the third paragraph of the same canon, "are called public associations".

In this case the efficient cause of such associations is the act of the hierarchy that erects them. The right to do so rests solely with it fundamentally due to the inherent and exclusive objectives of such associ-

³³ Cf. L. MARTÍNEZ SISTACH, *Las asociaciones de fieles*, cit., 98-115; idem, "Asociaciones públicas y privadas de laicos", cit., 153-157.

ations, that concern the public good of the Church. That does not mean, however, that the initiative to establish such movements is exclusively that of the hierarchy. The founders may be, and normally are, other faithful, although the organized groups born from their initiative will only acquire the nature of public associations once they have been established by the competent ecclesiastical authority.

It is just the specific goals of the public associations as specified in canon 301 § 1 (the teaching of Christian doctrine in the name of the Church, the promotion of public worship or the pursuit of other aims reserved, by their very nature, to the ecclesiastical authority) that justify some limitations in the exercise of the right of association of the faithful, in contrast to what happens in the case of private associations.

Canon 215 prescribes that the faithful also have the right to freely *direct* associations. In this regard, it suffices to say, in general, that the Code of 1983, in its regulation of this right, adopted an attitude of “subsidiarity”, in such a way that the common right remains reduced to the indispensable minimum, deferring in other respects to the statutes of each individual movement or association.

From the juridical system established by the Code in terms of the government of associations, one very clear conclusion emerges: the freedom of the faithful to govern private associations is very wide, whereas it is somewhat restricted in the public associations. In the former case, the phrase “according to the provision of the statutes” is repeated several times. There are six canons that specifically treat the private associations and the phrase in question, expressing the respect for the freedom of the faithful joined together in the association, is also repeated six times. It is symptomatic that the first of these canons establishes the following principle: “Christ’s faithful direct and moderate private associations according to the provision of the statutes” (can. 321).

As regards the regime of the public associations, the Code establishes a stronger bond with the ecclesiastical authority than that of the private associations. That is in conformity with the ecclesial nature of these associations, that have received the mission in so far as it is required to pursue, “in the name of the Church”, those ends which it

proposes for itself (cf. can. 313). This is translated into the need for the hierarchy to confirm or appoint the moderator of the association (cf. can. 317 § 1), nominate its chaplain or ecclesiastical assistant (cf. *ibid.*), designate a commissioner when serious reasons require it in special circumstances (cf. can. 318 § 1), dissolve such associations (cf. can. 230) and apply the common law to the administration of the ecclesiastical goods owned by the public associations (cf. can. 1257 § 1).

Public and Private Associations, Innovations of the Code

The distinction between public and private associations is inspired by secular law and, according to its proponents, has helped to ensure that the right of association in the Church is now expressed more clearly.³⁴ Many others consider, on the contrary, that this terminology is a “source of grave misunderstandings of substantial character”³⁵ and that it “continues to represent one of the most difficult problems with a view to the classification of the existing associations in the Church”.³⁶

What is the distinction between public and private associations based on? Is it based on their different goals or the intervention of the hierarchy? The answer is that the distinction depends in part on their goals, but is fundamentally determined by the type of relation with the hierarchy and, through it, with the whole ecclesial community. It would seem that the criterion of distinction lies in the ends, since, according to the first paragraph of canon 301, “associations of Christ’s faithful which intend to impart Christian teaching in the name of the Church, or to promote public worship, or which are directed to other ends whose pursuit is of its nature reserved to the [competent] ecclesiastical

³⁴ Cf. J.A. FUENTES, “Comentario ai canoni 321-326”, in *Comentario exegetico al Codice de Derecho Canonico*, (Pamplona 1995), 502ff.

³⁵ E. CORECCO, “La reception de Vatican II dans le Code de Droit Canonique”, in: *La reception de Vatican II* (Paris 1985), 345.

³⁶ W. SCHULZ, “Problemi di applicazione del Diritto Canonico in materia di associazione”, in: *Ius in vita et in missione Ecclesiae* (Rome 1994), 869.

authority", must necessarily be public. But the same canon, in its second paragraph, prescribes that the ecclesiastical hierarchy may also establish public associations that aim to achieve, either directly or indirectly, other spiritual ends "whose attainment is not adequately provided for by private initiatives". It may thus be affirmed that the ends are not always the decisive factor.

The main difficulty that the Pastors have when they must respond to the petitions of the founders of an association or movement therefore derives from the lack of objective criteria valid in all cases of distinction between public associations and private associations.³⁷

The distinction between public and private associations is not discriminatory towards, nor does it devalue the ecclesial nature of, the private associations. This distinction claims to give to both categories of association the configuration most suitable and effective to achieve their own ends and to express various ecclesial values.

In fact, if it is true that the public associations of the faithful better express the unity of intentions between ecclesiastical hierarchy and faithful and accentuate the ecclesial value of the association of faithful, it should not be forgotten that the private associations express the free initiative of the faithful who associate together in the Church, increase their responsibility and testify to the trust that the hierarchy places in their contribution to the building up of the Church.³⁸

We need to ask ourselves: what leeway of discretion does the ecclesiastical authority have in determining whether an association of the faithful ought to be public or private? In conformity with the Code of Canon Law, it seems to me that a distinction needs to be drawn between three cases.

1) The hierarchy has the duty to establish as a public association an association that pursues one of the three goals specified in canon 301

³⁷ Cf. P. GIULIANI, *La distinzione fra associazioni pubbliche e associazioni private dei fedeli nel Nuovo Codice di Diritto Canonico* (Rome 1986), 231; L. MARTÍNEZ SISTACH, *Las asociaciones de fieles*, cit., 135-138.

³⁸ Cf. SPANISH EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, "Instrucción sobre asociaciones canónicas de ámbito nacional", *Boletín Oficial de la CEE*, 3 (1986), 7.

§ 1. The possible preference of the founders to establish it as a private association in this case has no juridical relevance.

2) As a general principle, the hierarchy has the duty to recognize and approve as a private association an association that pursues ends other than those specified in canon 301 § 1. The possible request of the founders that the ecclesiastical authority establishes it as a public association does not oblige the latter to give its consent. It may do so if it considers it appropriate.

3) In this latter eventuality, it is possible that it is the hierarchy that considers it appropriate to establish the association as public, against the will of its founders who wish it to be private. The hierarchy may proceed in this way if it has just cause to do so, but I believe that the right of the founders to appeal against any such decision should be safeguarded, because such a decision may constitute an undue limitation of the legitimate right of the faithful to belong to an association, given that a public association is more subject to the hierarchy's intervention.

In conclusion, it is strongly to be recommended that both the Episcopal Conferences and the diocesan Curias have at their disposal an effective service that is able to help the leaders of associations in the drafting and amendment of their statutes, and that follows with attention the life of the public and private associations of the faithful as far as it concerns the fulfilment of the provisions of the common law and of their respective statutes. This service may help the hierarchy in the exercise of its pastoral responsibility towards the associations as regards their government and supervision. In short, this paternal intervention of the hierarchy is a guarantee for the life and identity of each ecclesial movement and has a beneficial effect for the members of the associations themselves and for the achievements of the goals for which the movement or association was established.

Criteria of Ecclesiality for the Recognition of the Ecclesial Movements by the Diocesan Bishop

GIANFRANCO GHIRLANDA, S.J.

In his message to the participants in the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements on 27 May 1998, John Paul II declared that the term "movement" denotes "a concrete ecclesial reality with predominantly lay membership, a journey of faith and a Christian witness which bases its own pedagogical method on a precise charism given to the person of the founder in specific circumstances and ways".¹ A further clarification was provided by the Holy Father in his address on the occasion of the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities on 30 May 1998. After saying that it is the friendship in Christ which is the origin of the movements, he then affirmed: "The passage from the original charism to the movement happens through the mysterious attraction that the founder holds for all those who become involved in his spiritual experience. In this way movements officially recognized by ecclesiastical authority offer themselves as forms of self-fulfilment and as facets of the one Church".²

On the basis of these papal interventions and other official documents, we can consider as synonyms the terms *ecclesial movements*, *new communities* and *new forms of evangelical life*.³

¹ JOHN PAUL II, "Message to the participants at the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movement", in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 18.

² JOHN PAUL II, "Address on the occasion of the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities", in *ibid.*, 222.

³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* [30 December 1988], b. 2; *idem*, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* [25 March 1996], nos. 12, 62, 56; SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Ninth Ordinary General Assembly, *Instrumentum Laboris*, nos. 37 and 38.

In particular, two passages of *Vita Consecrata*⁴ and of the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the ninth ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops⁵ are the two documents that best describe in general what is meant by “ecclesial movements”, clearly distinguishing them from the new forms of consecrated life.

In brief, we may consider ecclesial movements those forms of group endeavour in the Church that have their root and origin in a specific gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift, or charism, is what it is that gathers together round it various vocations of both sexes, various orders or categories of faithful, characterized both by their diversity of age and by their various socio-cultural affiliations. Moreover, in such movements there is an involvement of the person in his/her totality, since what they prescribe is a lifestyle conforming to the charism, which frequently involves the sharing of property and a brotherly life lived in common. It means in any case submission to an authority, and dedication to the movement’s apostolic works, in many cases with a missionary drive and a marked ecumenical dimension.

The denomination of such movements as “ecclesial” thus seems to be determined not by the mere fact that they are movements that exist in the Church, since the same goes for any kind of legitimate form of group or association, but by the fact that their intention is to present within the Church herself the realization of the communion between various vocations. This seems to me the sense of what was said by the Pope in his above-cited address to the ecclesial movements and new communities in May 1998, namely that they “offer themselves as forms of self-fulfilment and as facets of the one Church”.

Nonetheless, as the Holy Father stressed, this is only achieved once such movements have been officially recognized by the ecclesiastical authority.

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, no. 62.

⁵ SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Ninth Ordinary General Assembly, *Instrumentum Laboris*, no. 37.

Ecclesial Dimension of the Right of Association

It should be recalled that the ecclesial dimension is an integral part of the right of association as such. That right is sanctioned by canons 215 and 299 § 1, and its anthropological and ecclesiological foundations have been clarified both by the conciliar and by the postconciliar magisterium.⁶

The recognition by the ecclesiastical authority is the official seal of approval that the Church gives in the exercise of this right, expressing a different degree of commitment of the Church, through its hierarchical representatives.

The charism, that lies at the origin of associations of the faithful for the achievement of particular spiritual, apostolic and charitable ends (cf. can. 298 § 1), must necessarily find an institutional expression if it is to be preserved and developed with authenticity in the life of the Church. Undoubtedly a first institutionalization of the charism already occurs in the development of the relations between the members of the group who have come together to form it, in the pursuit of specific objectives and in the embryonal form of government of the group itself. However, if this institution, which we may call "charismatic", is to become a canonical institution, it must be officially approved by the Pastors of the Church. Only thus can its existence and action in the Church and for the Church be authenticated.

At this point the responsibility of the bishops comes into play. The Code of Canon Law, in those parts that deal with associations, does not give any specific indications about this point, but by analogy canon 605 can undoubtedly be adopted as a rule, even if this refers to the new forms of consecrated life. From this canon we can deduce two main duties of the bishop: the discernment of the authenticity of the charism, and the assistance given to the founders, to ensure that they may

⁶ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 18; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 8; JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 29.

express in the best possible way the purposes of the gift received and protect it with suitable statutes.

Such assistance must be offered by the bishop to an ecclesial movement at the moment of its foundation. As regards the charisms, the bishop must evaluate their genuineness and their orderly use. In doing so, he must be careful not to quench the Spirit, and to see to it that the gift of the Spirit, if it be genuine, is preserved and developed for the good of the Church.⁷

*Fundamental Criterion for the Bishop's Discernment
of the Ecclesiality of the Charism*

The content of the charism, on which the discernment of the bishop must focus, must first of all be delineated.

The first element is the spirituality that springs from the inspiration and action of the Spirit, i.e. the concrete way in which the members of a movement relate to God, to the Church and to society, hence their method of prayer and of interpreting reality, and their way of involving themselves in it with their own action, in such a way as to re-present one or another aspect of the mystery of Christ and of the Church.⁸ So the discernment in question is focused on the spiritual doctrine proposed and the spiritual practice enacted. This is inseparably bound up with the circumstances in which the movement arose and its history as well as with the life of its founder/foundress.

This discernment must be conducted in relation to the Gospel and to the Tradition of the Church. It must therefore examine whether the movement's spiritual method and praxis are harmonized or not with these two objective elements.

Christifideles Laici, basing itself on an indication of *Apostolicam*

⁷ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 12 and 7.

⁸ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, no. 93.

Actuositatem (which speaks of the group apostolate as a “sign of communion and of unity of the Church of Christ”), and referring in general to the group apostolate, says that it is “a ‘sign’ that must be manifested in relation to ‘communion’ both in the internal and external aspects of the various group forms and in the wider context of the Christian community”.⁹

We may amplify this affirmation and refer it to the ecclesial movements. If the specific role of these latter is to present within the Church herself the communion between the various vocations, this intrinsic nature can only be expressed in their acting in concord with all the other ecclesial components.

As the Pope said in his message of 27 May 1998, which we quoted at the beginning, each ecclesial movement denotes “a journey of faith and a Christian witness which bases its own pedagogical method on a precise charism”.¹⁰

The discernment of the authenticity of an ecclesial movement’s spirituality needs to be conducted, therefore, by considering its pedagogical impact in relation to the practice of the Christian life, on the basis of the experience of the reciprocity and complementarity of the various vocations in the Church. In fact, each category of persons in the movement must find a strong impulse for his faith in a progressive educational context, which must increasingly lead to a global involvement in evangelical life and a concrete insertion in the Church. The validity of the movement’s spiritual and pedagogical method is ascertained on the basis of the fact that the experience of personal faith and communion with all the other members of the movement, in their variety of vocations and conditions, is embodied in the concrete life of the Church, hence in the harmonious insertion with all the other ecclesial components, consider-

⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 29; cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 18.

¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, “Message to the participants at the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movement”, in *Movements in the Church* (Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Laity Today no. 2, 1999), 18.

ing itself *one* of the forms of self-fulfilment and *one* facet of the one Church, not *the* self-fulfilment of the Church or *the* expression of the Church. In this way the movement may become a sign, a reminder in the Church that the organic communion between various orders of persons, as mirror of the Trinitarian love, which the Church is by nature and vocation, must be realized in her,¹¹ and at the same time a pedagogical way of ensuring that this is realized in the Church. It is clear that a movement must place itself, as sign and pedagogical way, above all in the particular Church as the immediately perceptible place of the objective realization of the Church of Christ. For this reason the principal responsibility for the discernment lies with the diocesan bishop.

If a movement in its progress in the life of the particular Church, which is further localized in a specific way in the parish, is not fulfilled in this sense, that means that its spiritual and pedagogical method has no real formative value, hence either needs to be corrected or even, in extreme cases, denied recognition. That does not mean that a movement must necessarily enter into the parish structures in its mode of operation, if its charism does not lead it to do so, but it does mean the opposite, i.e. that it cannot monopolize them.

This should be, in my view, the first and fundamental criterion of the discernment of ecclesiality, on which all the other criteria to be taken into consideration are either based or round which they revolve. For it is the criterion that specifically identifies the authenticity of an ecclesial movement and not merely of any kind of group phenomenon in the Church.

Other Criteria

In this perspective, those criteria of ecclesiality proposed by *Christifideles Laici* for lay groups in general¹² find a specific application in relation to the ecclesial movements.

¹¹ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4.

¹² JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 30.

The primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness. The movements must be instruments of holiness for their members. This can be verified by their fidelity to the Lord and their obedience to the Spirit, hence by the use of means of sanctification compatible with the doctrine, discipline and tradition of the Church. Holiness is something concrete; so each member of the movement must be effectively supported in the pursuit of his/her specific vocation, but as part of ecclesial communion as a whole. Lay people, whether celibate or married, must therefore be helped to find their means of sanctification above all in their involvement in temporal affairs and hence in the ecclesial services within the movement or in the structures of the universal, particular and local Church;¹³ married couples in the fulfilment of their conjugal and parental duties;¹⁴ clerics in fidelity to their ministry performed in full insertion in the diocesan presbytery under the authority of the bishop, unless they have been assigned by the bishop to the service of the movement itself, due to its supra-diocesan and missionary character or due to the specific form of apostolate it performs; and members of religious orders in fidelity to their charism and form of life, in full subordination to their superiors.¹⁵ Moreover, if a movement's spiritual and pedagogical method is suitable for leading its members to holiness, it will find a verification in the growth of vocations to Christian matrimony, to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life.

The responsibility of professing the Catholic faith. From the sincere and warm reception of the Church's magisterium can be discerned the reality of the movement as a place where the faith is proclaimed and taught in its total content. The subjective experience of the faith and the pedagogical method to mature in it can be verified in the objectivity of the teaching of the Church and in proportion as the movement becomes part of the heritage of the Church as a whole and co-operates in the building up of the ecclesial community. At the present time the

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 15-17, 23.

¹⁴ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, no. 62.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, no. 56.

ecclesial movements must also show they are a place for the reception of Vatican Council II for the renewal of the Church.

The witness to a strong and authentic communion with the Roman Pontiff and with the bishops. This witness is given by concrete insertion in the hierarchical communion of the Church, where the plurality of charisms and spiritual experiences find unity. The proof of communion with the Pope and the bishops is given by the sincere love for the Church and by the willingness to actively participate in her life of prayer and her apostolic action for her growth.

Conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals. A movement must visibly manifest its apostolic impulse and missionary zeal in evangelization and in works of charity, or in being a hidden leaven in human society, in humility and in the capacity to cooperate with all the other bodies actively engaged in the Church both at the universal and particular level.

To these criteria of a general character the bishop must add the criterion of utility. To avoid any dissipation of forces, he must gauge, that is, whether a movement serves a useful role, in the absence of some other association or movement with identical goals.¹⁶

On the basis of this first phase of discernment, the bishop must decide what type of recognition to give to the ecclesial movement, within the set of rules provided by the Code of Canon Law concerning associations of the faithful.

Ecumenical Associations

The ecumenical movements pose a particular problem and require separate treatment.

According to *Christifidele Laici*, we can consider as ecumenical ecclesial movements only those that, in conformity with their statutes,

¹⁶ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 19.

admit non-Catholic baptized and request approval in the Catholic Church.¹⁷ We may deduce from this document, first of all, that such ecumenical movements are not those in which non-baptized are admitted as members, since the non-baptized are not members of the Church of Christ and therefore cannot be members of an ecclesial association. Moreover, according to the above-cited passage of *Christifideles Laici*, the non-Catholic baptized admitted to such movements must not constitute the majority. If this were to happen, an ecumenical ecclesial movement would alter its own nature and would be transformed into an interconfessional movement with the related juridical consequences.

The Code of Canon Law does not say anything about the admission of non-Catholic baptized as members of an association, whether private or public.

As may be inferred from the process of drafting the canons and the reasons adopted by the study groups, the silence both of the Latin Code and that for the Eastern Churches on this point may be interpreted in the sense that, in conformity with the statutes approved by the ecclesiastical authority, non-Catholics may be admitted to private or public associations, but not as full members, i.e. without enjoying the same rights as Catholic members. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by *Christifideles Laici* in the above-cited passage, where it is recognized that associations in which non-Catholics too are considered members, but in which Catholics retain the majority, are eligible for official approval.

As regards the fundamental criterion for the discernment of the ecclesiality of the charism, it must find a specific application with regard to those ecclesial movement that define themselves as ecumenical. In other words, they must propose themselves as a sign of the journey that the whole Church undertakes towards the full unity of the baptized in Christ. The discernment will be about the spiritual and pedagogical impact of the charism of such movements, in relation to the enactment of the ecumenical dimension in the Church herself, and in

¹⁷ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 31.

conformity with the norms that regulate it both at the universal and particular level.

As regards the other criteria cited above, they hold good in full also for the ecumenical movements as such, but the criteria of the *responsibility of professing the Catholic faith* and the *witness to a strong and authentic communion with the Roman Pontiff and the bishops* have a specific application to their non Catholic members. In fact, the non Catholics cannot be obliged to profess the Catholic faith, but if they are considered members by the statutes of the ecumenical movement in question, they are bound to respect everything that derives from the natural and revealed divine light. Moreover, in a respectful attitude to the Church's magisterium, they must not jeopardize the integrity of the Catholic faith professed by the movement or adopt critical attitudes towards it.

On the other hand, given that the non Catholics are not obliged to observe the merely ecclesiastical laws (cf. can. 11), the obedience that may be requested of them is only in relation to the observance of the general statutes of the movement, in so far as they do not conflict with their non-Catholic faith, and to the observance of the particular statute that supports them, by virtue of their incorporation in the movement.

However, it should be borne in mind that the non-Catholics cannot run the movement as such. They cannot therefore fill the post of moderators or participate in general assemblies with a casting vote, since, if they were to become very numerous, they could influence the making of substantial changes to the statutes in the general assemblies, thus jeopardizing the nature of the movement itself.

Conclusions

The moment in which a charism is institutionalized in the Church is delicate. Equally delicate is the task both of the movement's moderators and of all its members, and of the bishop who must accompany the movement and help it to find its proper institutional role in the Church.

For in the Church there are not two parallel dimensions, the charismatic and the institutional, because the Church, in her likeness to the mystery of the incarnate Word, is a single complex reality,¹⁸ in which the gifts of the Spirit give life to the ecclesiastical structures.¹⁹

A charism is a gift of the Spirit and hence must be accepted in its irruptive newness in the Church. The Spirit would be quenched if the charism were to be forced into an already existing juridical straight-jacket, not responding to its originality and hence ill-adapted to its expansion. At the same time, however, the newness that irrupts into the Church is never discontinuous with what has gone before; it follows that the new juridical forms that need to be found cannot be at odds with the logic internal to the Code of Canon Law.

The bishop's discernment, therefore, must on the one hand be a listening to the Spirit and on the other a prudent judgement, expression of his pastoral charity.

¹⁸ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8.

¹⁹ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, no. 4.

The Ecclesial Movements and the Tasks of the Diocesan Bishop

GIORGIO FELICIANI

The existing canonical legislation does not provide the specific discipline of the ecclesial movements that some call for, but others consider unnecessary. In this situation, to clarify the juridical problems regarding these new forms of group endeavour in the Church, we need to refer in large measure to the provisions of the Code of Canon Law relating to the associations of the faithful. And to clearly describe the tasks that are incumbent on the diocesan bishop in this field we need, right at the outset, to draw a clear distinction between two different hypotheses. The first regards the birth of a new movement in the portion of the people of God entrusted to his pastoral care. The second concerns the participation of his faithful in a movement that has already been recognized by another ecclesiastical authority.

As regards the first hypothesis, one premise should immediately be made. The faithful who, in conformity with the criteria of ecclesiality described by Father Ghirlanda, spontaneously associate together, legitimately act even before receiving any official recognition or approval of this initiative. For as John Paul II has emphasized, "such liberty [i.e. the freedom of lay people to form such groups] is a true and proper right that is not derived from any kind of 'concession' by authority, but flows from the Sacrament of Baptism, which calls the lay faithful to participate actively in the Church's communion and mission".¹ In the case of the ecclesial movements, it should also be recalled that the right and duty to exercise the charisms received "for the good of men and for the

¹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 29.

development of the Church” is expressly sanctioned by Vatican Council II.²

It is quite clear, indeed, that the movements are born in this way, i.e. as *de facto* realities, devoid of any kind of formal recognition, and formed by the spontaneous gathering of a group of persons around the person of the founder. Often they cannot even be considered associations in the true sense, since they lack statutes, do not prescribe formal procedures for membership or resignation, and their action is determined more by the will of the founder than by the deliberations of their members and executive organs.

The duties of the diocesan bishop towards a movement that finds itself in such a situation—which, as experience shows, may be prolonged for several years—may be summed up as follows: welcome and vigilance. The task of welcome means encouraging new and valid experiences of Christian life and helping to promote their growth. At the same time, vigilance is necessary, to ensure that the needs of communion and ecclesial discipline be always respected.

So a movement, so long as it presents the necessary requisites of substantial character, legitimately exists from its origins, but can obtain a specific status under canon law only following a formal provision. Of course this can only happen at the request of those directly concerned, but nothing prevents the ecclesiastical authority, if it considers it opportune, from inviting them to take this step.³ Moreover, as a rule, if a movement develops and is consolidated, at least a certain number of persons who belong to it will feel the need to devote themselves in a more permanent and organic way to their experience of it, with the consequence that they will set up associations and request their recognition from the ecclesiastical authority.

As regards the granting of such recognition, which may assume various forms, the choice between recognition as a private association and

² VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 3.

³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 31.

establishment as a public association is of fundamental importance. Very briefly, it may be pointed out that the difference of regime between these two types of association is expressed in various ways. It is expressed, firstly, by the way in which they are founded: while private associations are established by the faithful on the basis of a free agreement (cf. can. 299 § 1), the establishment of public associations is the proper and exclusive act of the hierarchy (cf. can. 301 § 1). It is expressed, secondly, by the specific procedures for their subjection to ecclesiastical authority. These are particularly demanding in the case of the public associations, with regard to which the ecclesiastical authority retains the right to approve the statutes; appoint the chaplain or ecclesiastical assistant; confirm or appoint the moderator; control the administration of properties which are to all intents and purposes ecclesiastical goods; proceed, if necessary, to a provisional administration and remove the moderator; and exercise wide-ranging powers regarding dissolution. By contrast, the private associations autonomously determine their own statutes; freely elect their officeholders and, subject to the confirmation by the ordinary, even their spiritual counsellor; enjoy wide independence in the administration of their property; and may be suppressed only for very serious reasons (cf. can. 312-326).

In the light of this legislation, which does not seem destined to undergo any significant changes in the near future, and in view of the effective reality of the ecclesial movements such as it presents itself *hic et nunc*, it may be considered that recognition as private associations, in conformity with the procedure adopted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, is usually preferable for these groups. On the one hand, it is clear that a movement is born not as a result of an act of the hierarchy, but by the free initiative of one or more founders. On the other, establishment as a public association could involve serious inconveniences, such as an excessively onerous responsibility for the hierarchy, a considerable limitation of the new movement's autonomy and, lastly, the attribution to it of an "official" character, which may be unsuitable and not even wished by those most directly concerned. It should not be for-

gotten, in fact, that a public association enjoys a public juridical personality, is subject to the “higher direction” of the hierarchy, and receives from it “in so far as it required, its mission to pursue, in the name of the Church, those ends that it proposes for itself” (can. 313 and 315). It should further be added that the Code permits diocesan bishops to establish public associations for spiritual ends that are not reserved for them—such as the teaching of Christian doctrine in the name of the Church or the promotion of public worship—if the pursuit of such ends is not adequately provided for already by the private initiatives of the faithful (cf. can. 301); an hypothesis that seems difficult to realize in the case of the ecclesial movements.

As regards the recognition as private association, the simplest form—which in practice is reduced to a simple acknowledgement—is that prescribed by canon 299 § 3, where it is laid down that no group is recognized in the Church if its statutes have not obtained the *recognitio*, i.e. authorization or *nihil obstat*, from the competent ecclesiastical authority. In practice, this means that a movement can be taken into consideration by the canonical legislation only if it presents itself to the authority in such a way that the latter can ascertain and certify its Christian authenticity. It follows that this type of recognition does not have a discretionary character, but is an obligatory act in the sense that if the movement satisfies the criteria of ecclesiality and presents the other necessary requisites, its request for recognition cannot be rejected, for otherwise the right of association of the faithful expressly sanctioned by the Code would be denied. It is clear, however, that the ecclesiastical authority—and especially the diocesan bishop whose responsibility it is to give the first recognition—is called to make a particularly delicate and complex evaluation, to be conducted not only in the light of the documentation presented by the movement itself, but especially on the basis of the familiarity he may have of it by direct experience or by reliable witness. Specific attention needs to be paid to the movement’s statutes, since, as already mentioned, recognition takes the form of a provision of *recognitio* of the statutes. It will therefore be necessary to verify not only that these do not present anything contrary to the needs

of communion, but also that they contain all the requirements made by the Code—relating to denomination, headquarters, objectives, conditions requested for membership, manner of action (cf. can. 304)—or otherwise necessary for an orderly conduct of group life, such as, for example, those regarding the administration of any property. It is also recommended that the statutes be drawn up in articles, formulated in a succinct and clear way and limited to defining the movement's essential traits, without entering into questions of detail which can later be suitably disciplined in directives or regulations drafted and issued by the association's executive organs.

The statutes of the ecclesial movements pose further requirements. They must in any case enunciate the charism or spirituality by which they are inspired. Moreover, any statutory provisions relating to individual categories of members, such as clerics, married couples, persons consecrated to God, must in no way conflict with the duties incumbent on their respective states. Considerable attention also needs to be devoted to the regulation of particularly demanding forms of the sharing and communion of goods to ensure that the requirements of prudence and justice be safeguarded, and the dignity and liberty of the person be adequately defended.

It is also possible that a movement, at the time it asks for official recognition, or perhaps at a later stage, may request attribution of juridical personality. With a view to its granting, the ecclesiastical authority enjoys significant leeway of discretion, since it cannot limit itself to ascertaining the ecclesial authenticity of an association, but, in conformity with the provisions of the Code, must evaluate the real utility of the goals it proposes and how far the means it has at its disposal are compatible with their achievement (cf. can. 114 § 3) and, lastly, give its own positive and explicit approval of the statutes (cf. can. 314).

Moreover, juridical personality cannot be denied in an arbitrary manner. Any canonical provision must, in principle, be based on sufficient motives. For an unjustified rejection could lead to an undue limitation of the right of association itself, since juridical personality could be an essential condition for the pursuit of the aims that the movements

sets itself. Its absence, in fact, may prevent an association from being subject to obligations and rights, which, as a consequence, would only be incumbent on its members as individuals (cf. can. 310).

Irrespective of the granting of juridical personality, an association may be praised or commended by the hierarchy (cf. can. 299 § 2). Such praise or commendation may considerably increase its ecclesial credibility in the eyes of its members and other components of the people of God. In this regard, the ecclesiastical authority enjoys a wider margin of discretionary power, since the association cannot claim any right to it or even any legitimate expectation of it. For praise is gratuitous in character and incompatible with any attitude of claim or demand. Commendation, besides, concerns not the members of an association, but the other faithful to whom, in his pastoral wisdom, the authority intends to propose participation in the association as a suitable means of fostering a greater commitment to Christian life.

The granting of the necessary consent for an association to be able to adopt the title "Catholic" in its name (cf. can. 300) is also to be considered largely discretionary. In fact, before giving its consent, the ecclesiastical authority must carefully evaluate what concrete significance will be attributed to this qualification—though no specific juridical consequences derive from it—in the social field in which a particular association intends to live and act.

So far we have recalled only the procedures relating to the recognition of an association. But the questions that are most frequently posed to a bishop concern the presence in his diocese of an association or movement already recognized by another ecclesiastical authority. The membership of it by individual faithful does not give rise to particular problems and cannot in any case be forbidden. But the situation becomes more complex if the association in question asks to open a separate section in the diocese or intends to act in an organic and structured way in its territory. In this regard, the above-mentioned distinction between public associations and private associations first needs to be recalled. The former, in order to validly establish their own section in a particular diocese, need the written consent of the diocesan bishop

(cf. can. 312 § 2), who can only deny such consent on serious grounds to those public associations established by the Holy See or by the Episcopal Conference. Greater discretionary powers are permitted vis-à-vis associations established by another bishop.

On the other hand, the institution of a section of a private association can be regarded as valid even in the absence of explicit permission. So much can be inferred from the silence of the Code of Canon Law on the matter. But in this case not only the principle of freedom of association, but also the general norm enunciated in canon 10, holds good. According to canon 10, in fact, the invalidity of an act can only be determined by an explicit provision declaring it to be such.

The question is undoubtedly delicate, but should not be overestimated. The lack of permission does not necessarily imply a decided opposition on the part of the bishop. But such opposition, assuming it exists, ought in any case to induce those concerned to desist from their attempt, if only for reasons of opportuneness. On the other hand, the statutes of some universal or international private associations call for the bishop to participate actively in the establishment of diocesan sections through the designation or approval of an ecclesiastical assistant. It is clear, too, also in the case of private associations, that any opposition by the bishop is dependent on whether such associations have been granted recognition by the Holy See, by the Episcopal Conference, or by another diocesan bishop.

But, beyond all the possible and necessary distinctions, the bishop has precise duties towards any group, association or movement present in his diocese, even if—to cite the two extreme cases—it be devoid of formal recognition and even if it has been established as a public association by the Holy See.

All associations are in fact subject to the vigilance of the competent authority, aimed at ensuring that it always maintains the integrity of faith and morals and that abuses in ecclesiastical discipline do not take place (cf. can. 305). Consequently, the bishop has the right and the duty to visit the associations and to request from them all the information he considers useful to have about their life and activities. And, for their part, the leaders of

the associations have the duty to introduce themselves to the bishop of the diocese in which they operate to furnish him with all the necessary information for the exercise of his ministry of pastoral guidance.

The tasks of the bishop also comprise the obligation to strive to avoid the dissipation of forces and to direct the exercise of the apostolate to the common good (can. 323 § 2),⁴ with the advice that even in the exercise of these specific functions the autonomy of private associations of the faithful must be respected. The Council itself, while it recommended the setting up of councils “to assist the Church’s apostolic works” and foster the co-ordination of “apostolic associations and undertakings”, emphasizes the need for each association to retain its own “specific nature” and for the laity to retain “their rightful freedom to act on their own initiative”.⁵ The Directory for the pastoral ministry of bishops expresses itself in the same way.⁶ And the Code of Canon Law reaffirms that the exercise of the powers of vigilance and co-ordination does not authorize any interference in the autonomy of the associations established by the initiative of the faithful (cf. can. 323 § 2). To this provision the working group of the Commission responsible for drafting the Code attached particular significance, since, in its session of March 1968, all the consultors present were unanimous in maintaining that co-ordination should always occur in full respect for the “nature” of each group, since the claim to impose a form of planning on the apostolate would be a violation of the pluralism requested by the variety of charisms.⁷

In any case, as John Paul II has pointed out, both Pastors and lay faithful “have the duty to promote and nourish stronger bonds and mutual esteem, cordiality and collaboration among the various forms of

⁴ In the Code this provision is included in the chapter dedicated to the private associations. It is clear however that the same needs are also posed with regard to the public associations, as may also be inferred from can. 394 § 1, which obliges the bishop to coordinate under his direction “all works of the apostolate throughout the entire diocese, or in its particular districts”.

⁵ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 26.

⁶ CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directory *Ecclesiae Imago*, 22 February 1973, no. 97.

⁷ Cf. *Communicationes* 18 (1986), 239-240.

lay associations. Only in this way can the richness of the gifts and charisms that the Lord offers us bear their fruitful contribution in building the common house".⁸ In this regard, too, the hierarchy has its own peculiar and unrelinquishable task which cannot be delegated to a particular association or to spontaneous forms of liaison between various associations and movements. In fact, the ministry of unity is incumbent on the Pope, "the perpetual and visible centre of unity of the universal Church", and on the diocesan Bishop, "the visible principle and foundation of unity".⁹ This is a ministry that, however much it specifically concerns associations and movements, is concretely exercised by the Pope through the activity of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and by the bishops in the pastoral councils, as well as in the special consultative bodies established at the diocesan, regional and national level. Especially in these latter bodies the leaders of the various groups, under the guidance of their respective pastors, may establish real relations, get to know each other, share experiences, enjoy moments of meeting, communication, study, pastoral planning, and thus grow in Christian fraternity and in a commitment of responsible and orderly service.¹⁰

The bishop's tasks towards the associations and movements are therefore extremely wide-ranging, complex and demanding. He must discern, help, co-ordinate, invigilate and, if necessary, correct and even reprove. At the same time, as the International Theological Commission recalled, he must always respect the principle enunciated in the conciliar declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, according to which to man's freedom—and *a fortiori* that of the baptized—"should be given the fullest possible recognition and should not be curtailed except when and in so far as is necessary".¹¹

⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no. 31.

⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 30.

¹⁰ Cf. ITALIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *Le aggregazioni laicali nella Chiesa*. Nota pastorale della Commissione episcopale per il laicato, 29 April 1993, no. 45.

¹¹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Declaration on Religious Liberty *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 7. Cf. *Themata selecta de ecclesiology occasione XX anniversarii conclusionis Concilii Oecumenici II*, 7 October 1985, no. 6.2.3.

IV

The Movements, the Church, the World

Dialogue with Joseph Card. Ratzinger

Bishop STANISŁAW RYŁKO, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

Your Eminence, in reading what you have written about the movements one feels that it is based on your direct experience. You have a knowledge of these groups that is not only theoretical, but practical. Could you tell us something about your personal experience of the ecclesial movements? In what circumstances did you get to know them? What impressed you most about these new expressions of the faith? And in what does their much talked about newness consist?

Card. RATZINGER

First of all I must apologize if, due to my many commitments, I was unable to prepare an address for you. But it is also true—and I say so by experience—that a live dialogue often enables us to understand each other better and even permits the person who ought to be giving a lecture to learn, because in a dialogue there is no one-way relation, in which one person puts the questions and the other replies. It's a two-way process: the person who answers learns, and the person who asks the questions teaches. I would like to thank you, therefore, for this opportunity to dialogue between us.

I am glad that the meeting with the movements last year is now being followed up by a meeting of bishops, because, as I wanted among other things to show in my address last year, it is they who must guarantee the ecclesiality of the movements. The Pastors are not only persons who fill a certain post. For they themselves are charismatics, they are responsible for the opening of the Church to the action of the Holy Spirit. We bishops are anointed by the Holy Spirit in the sacrament, and the sacrament also guarantees us the opening to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

To reply to your question, I think it was around the mid Sixties that I had my first meetings with the movements that had grown up in the Church after the Council. Three, in particular, I was able to get to know then. The first of my meetings with them was perhaps the one I had with the Neocatechumenal Way. I was then a professor at Tübingen, and there I was visited by a group of neocatechumenals, including Toni Spandri, who was later my student for many years and who now works in Munich. Those young people had been moved by the discovery that the Church has a need for a new postbaptismal catechumenate, aimed at realizing anew the personal and community appropriation of Baptism in a common journey of initiation. Reflecting on Baptism, I myself had long come to the conclusion that Baptism was a sacrament almost forgotten in the Church, whereas it is the very foundation of our Christian faith. Having studied the Fathers, in particular, I had learned from them that the sacrament of Baptism is realized in a journey of initiation and so I was delighted that a new beginning should be given to this experience. What the Neocatechumenal Way had grasped, in fact, was that, even if we are baptized as children, we must enter into the reality of our Baptism: we must, throughout our life, in various stages, of course, be initiated into the communion with Christ in the Church. I was delighted, therefore, that a journey of renewal of this fundamental experience of the Church should be opened in this way, and especially so at a time when the family and the school were no longer, as they were in the past, places of initiation in the faith and in the communion with Christ in the Church.

Another meeting with the movements was the one I had with Communion and Liberation. In that period, at the end of the Sixties, we had begun to think—with de Lubac, Balthasar, Le Guillou, Bouyer and others—of a journal, which would later become the journal *Communio*. We therefore tried to find a place where this project could be realized and persons who would support it. And that's how we found don Giusani and his followers in Italy. And here too I saw that, at the time of the great Marxist revolution, there were others—in this case especially young university students—who had grasped the need for a Christian

revolution, and who did not respond to the Marxist revolution against the bourgeois condition in the world with a form of conservatism, but with the new and far more radical revolution of the Christian faith.

I then came into contact with another movement, Charismatic Renewal. In those years I had close contacts with a professor in Paderborn, Heribert Mühlen, who was a great enthusiast of this movement; since he himself has rediscovered the joy of the priesthood in it. I thus had the joy and the grace, I would say, to see young Christians touched by the power of the Holy Spirit, to see that in a time of uphill struggle for the Church, in a period in which people were speaking of a “winter in the Church”, the Holy Spirit was creating a new spring and that the joy of being Christian, the joy of being Catholic, of living in the Church which is the living Body of Christ, the people of God on pilgrimage, was being reawoken in young people.

This was for me really encouraging, because I had two very negative experiences to set against it. On the one hand, I saw an academic world that was increasingly losing its enthusiasm for the faith; anxious to assimilate themselves totally to the other university disciplines, theologians no longer dared frankly to profess the faith as the moving force of their theological work. Instead, they wanted to prove themselves totally scientific, and so theology became permeated with a coldness, a detachment, that seemed to me worrying and whose effects are still visible. The other negative experience was the growing bureaucratization of the Church in my country: the money that the Church in Germany has at its disposal, in abundance I would say, can undoubtedly be of great help (for example, in works of charity), but it is not only a help, it may also become a hindrance, a hindrance in the form of the materialization of the Church and in the way money generates its own bureaucracies that in some way administer only themselves; they become an end in themselves.

Seeing these two dangers for the Church—a theology that was no longer the attainment of reason by faith, but an oppression of faith by a reduced reason, and a bureaucratization that no longer helps to open the doors to the faith, but becomes locked in itself—, at a time when

these two factors were only too evident, I really welcomed the newness of the movements as a gesture of God's benevolence: I saw that the Council was bearing fruit, that the Lord was present in his Church. I saw that, while all our efforts, however well intentioned, both in the theological faculties and in the ecclesiastical bureaucracies, were not bearing fruit, but on the contrary were becoming counter-productive, the Lord was finding the doors and throwing them wide open for his presence in situations where the sole resources were those of faith and grace.

ADRIANUS Card. SIMONIS, Archbishop of Utrecht (Holland)

I would like to ask a question about the relation between the old charisms that exist in the Church and the new movements. In the Church we had in the past three "classes": priests, religious and laity. But I now see that the new movements are being institutionalized, and I wonder therefore whether in future there will be a separate Congregation for the movements. Will the classes in the Church be in future as follows: priests, religious, members of the movements, and laity?

Card. RATZINGER

Thank you, Your Eminence, for posing this important question, and one that is very topical and realistic at the present time. First of all, I venture to say that the great charisms of the past will not disappear. Monasticism, whose most classic form in the Western Church is the Benedictine Order (with its various branches: the Cistercians, etc.) is in fact a fundamental phenomenon of the Church and will never disappear. Indeed I think that also certain experiences matured inside the movements will lead to monasticism and create new monastic vocations. A rather different matter are the congregations founded in the last century as a response to the fundamental needs of those times: the social need of having communities that, in the freedom of the Gospel,

would devote themselves with total dedication to the major social problems of the time; the need to provide an education to children who otherwise could not pay for their schooling, then very costly; and of course the need for universal mission, for which there was a demand for persons ready to bring the good news of the Gospel to the various parts of the world. Congregations of this type were born in response to a particular situation and perhaps not all of them will survive, even though the Church will continue to respond, albeit in different way, to the same challenges. The Church will always have to respond to the challenge of social problems, also with the help of those who renounce marriage and a family of their own, and choose to live a life of poverty to respond to the challenge of poverty. There will always be a need for those who devote themselves to Christian education, even if the situations may change a good deal in this field. So too there will always be a need for persons who, in total self-abnegation, renounce their own life and place themselves at the service of the preaching of the Gospel. These "congregations" may have very different forms. We see even now how groups are being born in the movements that devote themselves to these things. The challenge is always fundamentally the same, but the situation is very different, and others will respond to it, continuing in this way what was once done by these congregations, even though a part of them, with the necessary renewal, will undoubtedly continue to be a vital presence in the Church in the future too. Even if in certain parts of the world we are seeing a shortage of vocations to the religious life, both monasticism and the congregations of apostolate will never be lacking, although the latter in particular are necessarily variable in their forms of expression.

I think that the tripartite division of priests, religious and laity is fundamental: it depends on the very structure of the Church and hence will be decisive in the future too. It seems to me, however, that after Vatican Council II, there has been greater communication between the three states, in the sense that new ways of linking, new forms of cooperation between, the different vocations are being found. In all the great movements we see in fact that the three sectors develop within

each of them. We may think of the Focolare Movement, Communion and Liberation, the Neocatechumenal Way: vocations to the priesthood and new forms of association in priestly life are being born in these movements. But branches of religious life or consecrated life are also being born in them, and the commitment of the laity remains in any case very important.

As regards the future of the Curia, the fact of finding the three states under the same roof may certainly create problems. Cardinal Stafford and Bishop Rylko know that better than I: since the Pontifical Council for the Laity is responsible for these movements, it is also responsible for families of consecrated life or fraternities of priests. The question will have to be determined one day: how can we best respond to this new intercommunication between the three states, which nonetheless remain distinct, since their essence is different? I think that organization must follow life. It is better therefore to see how life evolves, without rushing to tackle the organizational questions. Of course in the Curia too we must do everything possible to facilitate collaboration and perhaps this intercommunication between the three states of life within the movements may also represent a stimulus for closer collaboration among the offices of the Roman Curia. So, first of all this collaboration among the various offices of the Curia must grow. By a process of maturation, the formulae to assign the various fields of responsibility in a more precise way will then be found.

I would also like to say something about what you mentioned about the fact that a certain bureaucratization or at least institutionalization is inevitably beginning in the movements too. In fact this is a development that can be observed throughout the history of the Church, beginning with monasticism, a phenomenon that began as a movement devoid of juridical structures, but that had to find, and did find, its own rules and hence its juridical state in the Church. The same happened with the great movements of the thirteenth century and especially with Franciscanism, which wanted to be simply a reawakening of the people of God and then, almost against the will of St. Francis himself, had to find juridical forms. The same is happening today. I don't think I am

betraying a secret when I say that the Neocatechumenal Way, for example, up till a short time ago, was opposed to the idea of having any structure at all: “No! We are the way *of* initiation in the Church, we are not an association”. Even the charismatics say: “No, this is only the renewal of parish communities”. But they too are beginning to understand that a certain structure is necessary, that a structure obviously limits in some way the initial impetus, but on the other hand also channels their forces and thus permits a more orderly effect and helps their integration in the life of the Church as a whole, in the parish and in the diocese. So a certain institutionalization is inevitable. We must only be extremely careful to prevent the institution becoming a suit of armour that in the end stifles life and to do everything possible to ensure that the institutional element remains so to say simple, that it does not quench the Spirit.

MILOSLAV Card. VLK, Archbishop of Prague (Czech Republic)

Last year the Holy Father spoke of the charismatic dimension and the institutional dimension of the Church, and my question concerns the relation between these two dimensions. Someone said that some movements incorporate themselves better than others in the parish structures, but it is the charismatic dimension that especially characterizes the movements. In the past, to regulate the relation between the religious orders and the institution or the bishops, the faculty of exemption was developed. What I wish to ask is: what is the relation between the movements, this charismatic dimension, and the institution, i.e. us bishops?

Card. RATZINGER

I would reply first of all that the bishops are not just “institution”, as I said before, but are persons who bear in themselves a vocation of the Holy Spirit and without a vocation, which is also charismatic, it seems

to me that there cannot be a good bishop. But it is true of course that the problem exists. We all know that: parish priests are all too familiar with the problems of how the various movements can be positively incorporated in the parish, and the bishops with the problems of how they can be incorporated in the particular Church. We know very well the difficulties that exist and that represent a challenge for us. I think that it is not possible simply to give a recipe. Some rules are necessary, but then a great deal depends on the persons involved. That is my experience. If the persons—the parish priest, the groups and also the bishop—are amenable, solutions will be found.

The bishop, in particular, is the head of the Church in his own diocese, and so it is up to the bishop to make the final judgement about how the movements are to conduct themselves, about how they must insert themselves. The Holy Father, in his famous letter to Archbishop Cordes, says explicitly that the bishop is the final arbiter. But at the same time we assume, and rightly, that the bishop should feel it is his responsibility not to quench the Spirit, the responsibility about which St. Paul speaks: “Do not quench the Spirit, “but test everything” (*1 Thes* 5:19, 21). The bishop has the task of discerning and also helping these movements to purify themselves as much as necessary. For if it is true that the source comes from the Holy Spirit, the later realizations of it also involve the human element, therefore the source has a need to be channelled to serve well and also to be purified. Thus, while the bishop must, on the one hand, feel the responsibility to accept these impulses, that are gifts for the Church and that give her new vitality, he must, on the other, also help the movements to find the right road, and he must do so with the necessary corrections, made with great love, with great understanding, with the consciousness that he must not reject a gift of the Holy Spirit, but also with the responsibility for peaceful harmony within the Church. The bishop must also help the parish priests to open themselves to these movements and to guide them. It seems to me that the two things are necessary. The relation between ecclesiastical institution and movements has thus determined rules that need to be formulated in the statutes. But above all it always demands the spiritual

and human understanding that is able to combine guidance, gratitude, openness and a willingness to learn. I think that it is important to ensure this link between general rules, that already exist or are in the course of being worked out for the various movements, and the personal charism of the bishop and parish priest who recognize the gift and at the same time recognize their duty to see to it that the movements enter into the life of the diocese and the parish. In this way it will be possible to find solutions also in difficult situations. It is necessary both to guide and help the movements, and to help “normal” people, who perhaps find some unusual expressions of the movements a little bit odd: these people need to be helped to be generous, to let themselves be astonished by the various expressions found by the Holy Spirit. With a prudent, firm but at the same time generous guidance, we shall find the necessary responses.

GEORG MAXIMILIAN Card. STERZINSKY, Archbishop of Berlin (Germany)

Your Eminence, my question directly connects up with the one you have just answered and in part even coincides with it. It is the question of the structure of movements and communities. There are in fact groups that want to form a movement but that don't want to become a community. Others, by contrast, want to be a community alongside other communities and don't consider it important that there should be a movement that involves all the sectors of the life of the Church, all the states. Then there are intermediate forms, as for example Schönstatt. These want on the one hand to be a movement: in every monastery of Benedictines or Franciscans, wherever they want to live the spirituality of Schönstatt; in this sense they want to be a movement, a Marian movement. On the other hand, however, they also want to have clearly structured communities of nuns or secular institutes. There are those who say: we only want to be a movement, we don't want to become an order; in any case we don't want closed communities, at most we admit communities in concentric circles. Then there are communities that feel themselves to be a new form of com-

munity life alongside the orders in the traditional sense and who wish to find adequate structures. So long as they are restricted circles, there's no problem. The bigger problems arise when this emerges at the level of parish community. In my diocese there is a rural parish in which there are a series of little groups that steal members from each other. Or in a big city like Berlin the members of one group meet in one place, and the others in another and the parish priests complain these people are no longer a driving force in the parish. At the present time there is a good deal of discussion in Germany about whether we need to conform exclusively to the territorial principle in the organization of the Church, or whether the parish communities organized on a territorial basis ought to be complemented by personal parishes, more or less in the areas with the highest density of population. For us in Berlin this is a very urgent problem. Now diplomats are arriving from Bonn and tell us that they don't want to belong to the parishes in which they live but want to set up a personal parish. Students and university teachers also want to set up a personal parish. But the local communities are clearly impoverished in this way. Of course it's said that with skill, prudence and sensitivity a balance can be found, but for the parishes it's a problem.

Card. RATZINGER

You have touched on many problems. The question of personal parishes—such as might be constituted by a university parish, a military parish, a diplomatic parish, etc.—takes us into another field. But this too demonstrates the variety of the phenomena in the Church today and the difficulty of safeguarding the unity of the faithful who are all members of the flock of Christ, who are *one* Church and not various churches. Clearly it is far easier to speak of this in purely theoretical terms than to discharge in practice the task of the bishop in situations such as those you have described. In any case, what I want to stress above all is the importance of always keeping alive in everyone the consciousness of being part of the one and identical Church, the con-

sciousness that the Lord has only one Church and that we are all members of the one Church. The various movements that are gradually emerging in the Church are at the service of unity and are already on the wrong road if they separate and no longer want to serve the unity of the community of faithful. I would therefore say that, of course, university students for example must be offered special pastoral care, as is already the case in the university chaplaincies, but it seems to me that university students for their part must not isolate themselves in personal parishes. From St. Ignatius of Antioch on, the unity of the episcopate was affirmed. That means that in one particular place there is only one identical Church, in which the most diverse components are found, from the university professor to the simple manual worker or peasant farmer. In the Eucharist we are all equal and each of us gives to and receives from the other. This unity in which everyone is united in the Lord's Supper and each gives to and receives from the other, is therefore very important. Fundamental in this sense is the principle formulated by St. Ignatius of Antioch of the unity of the episcopate, i.e. the unity of the Church in a particular place, where it's not up to me to choose those whom I like, but where I am found by the Lord together with all those who believe in him. We cannot allow an elite Christianity to develop, no matter the criteria by which these elites are selected. All of us must accept the humility of the one faith, in which there must be a give and take between us all, and in which the professor and the diplomat do not belong to a different Church than that of people who are of humbler birth but who are perhaps those who see deeper. In this sense there is undoubtedly a limit to the formation of personal communities: the territorial principle remains fundamental. Territorial unity is the expression of the fact that Christianity is not a group of friends who separate themselves from others, or cut themselves off from others, but is a living community of those found by the Lord who accept the brothers that the Lord gives them. As we know, the difference between friend and brother is precisely this: a friend is someone I have sought, a brother is someone given to me. In this sense, it seems to me that ways can be found—not without difficulty, of course, in real

That's why there exist juridical means such as the possibility of appeal. But all the means that may be found must be directed at the fundamental structure of the Church which is *one* in all places and is realized under the guidance of the bishop and his delegate, the parish priest. The Church is always open to new forms of expression, but it needs to be verified whether they aim to serve unity and also serve others. Therefore, a professor who is no longer willing to give even a help to his parish but wants to frequent the university parish alone, would have misunderstood his own vocation and his own intellectual gift which should enrich also the particular cell of the Church represented by the parish, even though a professor may legitimately expect from the Church a particular attention as regards the specific aspects of the academic life and the presence of the faith in it.

BERNARD FRANCIS Card. LAW, Archbishop of Boston (USA)

Your Eminence, your dialogue and the extremely interesting report you presented last year focus on the ecclesial movements and the pastoral care of the Bishops, on the system of local structures of the Church and the ecclesial novements. My heart as pastor would long to find in the faithful of the parishes the same fervour and the same pentecostal faith that may be found in the small groups of faithful within these movements. Speaking about the prospects in my country, it seems to me that forty years ago, although we were a minority, we had in the Catholic Church certain cultural expressions that encouraged, protected and supported the faith, even where the faith was not strong in the heart of the individual person. But that has now collapsed; we have a very mobile population, and in the USA, and perhaps in Latin America too and in other parts of the world, we have never since the time of Luther and the Reformation had so many conversions to Protestantism and the evangelical churches. It's a very difficult moment. Something you said in May last year made a deep impression on me and it's this I would like to touch on. I would like to quote your words and ask you if you have something to say about the question

that I have raised and that is fundamentally this: how can we nourish in the faithful in general that type of deeper faith, in the absence of the support that in the past was given by the existence of a Catholic culture? You said: "A concept of communion, in which the highest pastoral value is attached to the avoidance of conflict, should be rejected. Faith remains a sword and may demand conflict for the sake of truth and love". And further on you say (and my heart rejoices that the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith should say these words): "What, in the last analysis, needs to be established is not a blasé attitude of intellectual superiority that immediately brands the zeal of those seized by the Holy Spirit and their uninhibited faith with the anathema of fundamentalism, and only authorizes a faith in which the ifs and the buts are more important than the substance of what is believed". I think this is very important today and I would like to ask you whether you have any observations to make on this point.

Card. RATZINGER

You have touched on important and difficult questions. You mentioned first of all the problem posed by the total disappearance of a Catholic culture that in the past represented a support also for those in whom the faith was not particularly deep. You then spoke of the mobility of the population today. You spoke of the fact that today people pass more readily from Catholicism to Protestantism than vice versa, and lastly you recalled the faith of simple people and its greatness.

As regards the first point, I would say this: it's true that after, let's say, 1968 there was an explosion of secularism that radicalized the movement of secularization already underway for two centuries. In the past, a Catholic culture had remained, even if somewhat ghettoized, in many parts of the world. And that culture was an aid to faith and offered a kind of spiritual homeland for the Catholics that could find a support in it. We may think of the great Catholic writers and philosophers in the interwar years, who were an expression of a living Catholic

culture. But we may also think of the more humble popular culture expressed in devotions (Stations of the Cross, Rosary, processions) and also in a certain kind of devotional literature. With this explosion of secularism, there was an erosion of the Christian foundations of our society. Just to give one example, forty years ago it would have been unthinkable to discuss the possibility of homosexual relationships being recognized by the legislator as a legitimate form of marriage. That would have been unthinkable at the time: the Christian culture was then so evident that such things would never even have entered people's heads. I don't refer just to Catholics. In another way the other Christian confessions too are profoundly touched by a process of secularization, as a result of which the classic concept of the family is disappearing. And that is only one example of how the basis of Christian values of Western societies is disintegrating. We find ourselves therefore, culturally, in a minority situation: it becomes far more difficult to reconstruct at least the fundamental components of a Christian culture; it becomes far more difficult to convince others that there are essential aspects of the human being that we have known in the light of the faith but which express the human being as such. So we find ourselves having to tackle a far more difficult debate, in which the faith must reformulate its reasons in order to reach once again the conscience of man today. We must recognize that there is a conflict of values in which we Christians must defend not only the Church, but man as God's creation. It is an arduous task. We all know how the Holy Father, in his great encyclicals *Veritatis splendor*, *Evangelium vitae*, and *Fides et ratio*, makes himself the mouthpiece of the human creature and defends the faith, of course, but in the light of the faith he also defends the foundations of the true human culture, trying to do his utmost to revitalize the Christian culture that must find its own role in a new context.

As regards the word "mobility", I understand it in two senses. In a general sense, there is a great mobility in terms of place of residence: a person no longer remains in the same place for the whole of his life. In this situation, the particular Churches always need to be recognizable as cells or portions of a single Church. Whoever lives in a particular

Church, albeit with all the local peculiarities that rightly exist, must always be able to recognize in the other particular Church the common face of the Church. There are examples that contradict this. I could tell you about certain Catholics who were familiar with a very traditional form of Catholicism in Russia or Poland and who on moving to Germany say: "But this Church is not the same as the one we knew: we don't know whether this too is Catholic!" It seems to me that there is a challenge here: of course we need to be contemporary with man in our time, but without losing contemporaneity with the Church of all times: in all the particular Churches it must be manifest that the Church, albeit with different emphases, is always the same Catholic Church. Also for this reason it seems to me that the Pope's ministry is so important today.

You then went on to say that perhaps never since the time of the Reformation have there been so many who have abandoned the Catholic faith for Protestantism. I remember that perhaps ten or fifteen years ago John Neuhaus wrote a book which maintained that the present time is the "Catholic moment", the moment in which the Catholic Church is becoming visible as *the* Church for today and for tomorrow. But in actual fact we see that quite the opposite is the case today, and this, I would say, in two senses: First, we have a crisis of the "mainstream Churches", the big Protestant Churches which, due to their excessive modernization, have lost what it is that is essential about them, the identity of the faith, and we see today that Churches that assimilate themselves too much to the present-day world do not win over man, but lose him, because in the end their very *raison d'être* of being a Church, which is that of being Christian, is lost. So we see that people are abandoning the big Protestant Churches for the so-called fundamentalist movements or for new pentecostal groups, finding there a character more in tune with their own needs, more family-type groups, so to say, better defined, and more lively in their local communion. As far as I can see, however, the Catholic Church finds itself in a rather different situation. The same was said by the Australian bishops, who pointed out that the "mainstream Churches" are undergoing a

major crisis, whereas the only one still to be saved from this situation is the Catholic Church, because in this secularized world it has been able to maintain, on the one hand, an opening to the present, and, on the other, a clear and precise identity. And it is in this sense that the general trend being witnessed today—the transition from the big Churches to small groups with a precise definition of their own identity—invites us to have a very clear identity of faith: what defines the Church cannot be social service, but faith in God, from which social work derives its *raison d'être*. This identity—in which God has priority in the Church and God is present and concrete in Christ whose body she is—seems to me of the greatest importance. If we lose it, we will decline. Modernization and assimilation do not help if this firm identity, inspired by a joyful experience of the truth of God, is lacking.

And that brings us back to the movements. For they offer just this joyful experience and the spirit of familiarity indispensable in mass society. For, if one reason for the flight to Protestant groups is the lack of a clear identity, the other is just that of creating a “home” in mass society, in which the experience of being brothers in communion with Christ can be shared. The movements, it seems to me, have this specific feature of helping the faithful to recognize in a world-wide Church, that might appear as no more than a large international organization, a home where the faithful can find the atmosphere typical of the family of God and where at the same time they remain in the big universal family of the saints of all times.

But there is another aspect of the question. If I think of my own experience in Germany, I am tempted to say that a certain Protestant spirit, that is better harmonized with contemporary culture, seems to prevail today: it seems more modern to insert oneself in the large current of Protestantism than in that of Catholicism, which still seems too anchored to the past. The danger therefore does exist that a Protestantism understood in a very broad sense, more in a cultural than strictly religious sense, seems better able to respond to the challenges of the present time and that, in a culture directed at the future, people are tempted not so much to share the faith of Luther and the other

reformers, as to feel themselves united with them in a protest against the past. I believe we must take on board this situation and strive all the more to show that Catholicism really does bear in itself the inheritance of all times and hence bears in itself also the seeds of the future, even if at the present moment it seems rather to be swimming against the tide.

The last point, on which we are in full agreement, is the observation that, of course, we need a faith that is meditated, a faith that is illuminated, but above all we must be happy to have a faith that does not always pose conditions, but joyfully places itself in the Lord's hands. The words of Jesus, who praises God for having hidden the truths from the wise and revealed them to babes (cf. *Mt* 11:25; *Lk* 10:21), remain more than ever true: we must always remain a Church of the little ones; we must never lose real simplicity of heart.

Msgr. MARCELO PINTO CARVALHEIRA, Archbishop of Paraíba (Brazil)

The report Your Eminence presented last year, and the various reports presented in the course of this seminar, have illuminated us a great deal on the fundamental theological questions. Speaking for myself, I have a question that is theological, but also, I would say, practical and historical. It concerns the "militancy" in Brazil and practically everywhere in Latin America. Let me explain myself: there was a time when the small basic communities, and the various spheres of the specialized pastoral ministry, especially social in aim, attracted numerous militants, but in the course of time their militancy became rather political; sociological analysis prevailed. Often the members of the communities had relations of collaboration and friendship more with the members of left-wing parties than with their fellow-Christians. Ideology had become more important to them than faith. That is the crux of the question. When the basic communities were born, Paul VI said that they were a hope for the Church especially in Latin America. But perhaps he was longer-sighted; perhaps he saw the reality of the movements on the horizon. The basic communities and the specialized apostolates in fact did not succeed in communicating the faith, the ardent faith, the joyful faith, the union with the

living Jesus, the contemporaneity of Jesus with our history. The movements are doing just that today. I refer to my own diocese. There are many movements. Grasping the importance of the movements is not of course difficult for the Pope: he has a universal ministry. Nor is it difficult for us bishops, because we are the ministers of unity in the diocese but we also have, in union with the college of bishops and the Pope, an opening to the world. But it does seem to be very difficult for the diocesan and parish priests, who struggle to accept the needs of the movements in their pastoral planning and in their celebrations. How are we to conduct ourselves towards these priests? How can we create unity at the basic level? How can we inspire an ardent faith in our beloved Latin America? There is popular devotion, beautiful and simple, but in those who are culturally better prepared.... how can we mature in them the unity of faith and life with the fervour that the movements transmit?

Card. RATZINGER

Thank you for this testimony. What you have said is very important. You have touched on a question which we have still not discussed, i.e. the question of the basic communities. These have, in some sense, a similarity with the movements; nonetheless they are something different and they were formed especially in Latin America due to the shortage of priests, due to the sheer geographical size that parishes have there, as a result of which the parish priest can only rarely be present in many parts of the huge territory entrusted to his pastoral care. That's why it was necessary to create nuclei of Christian life and devolve responsibilities to small portions of large parishes. And it was necessary that the laity themselves take in hand the responsibility for keeping alive the flame of the faith and creating a true parish life, while awaiting the arrival of a priest. Recently the French have changed the wording of the acronym ADAP (*"Assemblée dominicale en absence du prêtre"*: Sunday assembly in the absence of the priest): now it reads: *"Assemblée dominicale en attente du prêtre"* (Sunday assembly while

awaiting the priest). This reading is far better: here it's not a question of mere absence, with the result that in the end the priest could be altogether replaced, because this assembly is always an act of awaiting, of going towards. It seems to me that the idea of the basic community was originally conceived in this light: in certain countries there was a need to give responsibility to the laity for keeping alive the Christian community and opening it up to the greater communion of the parish and, beyond that, of the diocese and of the universal Church.

You explained very well the grave problem that emerged in the years between the Seventies and Eighties: the great poverty justly drew attention especially to the social problems, but in this way, here and there, the faith was impoverished, in the sense that social commitment almost substituted the faith and no longer sprang from the faith. So another mental source was sought, and it was found in the ideologies of the political parties. Pure undiluted activity cannot survive without a doctrinal foundation and if it no longer springs from the faith, other foundations are sought. Commitment thus became political and partisan, losing the fundamental strength of the faith. This development was worrying, also because it was promoted by some theologians who strongly emphasized the political element as redemptive element, as if redemption could come from political action, or who even modified the concept itself of redemption, reducing it to the liberation from poverty, which is undoubtedly one dimension of redemption, but not its totality. I have observed in various discussions a reduction of the concept of reality. If someone said: "Let's speak of reality", what he really meant was: "Let's not speak any more of God and Christ and the sacraments, let's speak instead of political problems". For them reality was this. The rest was considered as a superstructure, but it wasn't reality. But if this point is reached—and not only in Latin America; the same may be observed in Europe too—, if faith in God, the presence of Christ, the sacraments are no longer considered *reality*, human life is reduced, amputated, I would go so far to say, and even social commitment becomes partisan: it no longer unites, it begins to divide into parties, it generates hatred and opposition. Therefore we must above all re-

acquire the sense of reality of the faith. God is not something out there, a high-sounding word over and above reality: if God is not really present, all the rest no longer works. If I push God to one side everything changes. We can observe this reality in history. If we see what has remained in Albania, in Russia or in other countries in which God was pushed to one side, we see that man was amputated. They pushed God to one side in the name of social reform, but in this way they destroyed also real social responsibility. If we rediscover a true faith that is communion with Christ, an experience of the closeness of God, this living centre will inspire everything and will also foster social activities that are not partisan. With the birth of the great apostolic congregations of the nineteenth century we witnessed an explosion of charity and a sense of justice that transformed the industrialized world. The world of the first Industrial Revolution, which was a world of injustice, was also changed by the trades-unions, but above all by this wave of apostolate nourished by the faith. Of course it is far easier to say these things than do them. It seems to me important, however, that we should do everything in our power to ensure that the basic communities be once again inspired by the faith as the fundamental element of their very existence; we must convince them that only in this way can they all do social work.

In the meantime, a further distinction has been drawn: that between ecclesial basic community and basic community without adjectives. All our efforts must be aimed at ensuring that they be really ecclesial basic communities, and of course we must also pray to the Lord and play our part to ensure the birth of vocations to the priesthood, that can make the sacrament present in every community, because without the sacrament the faith withers and what we end up with is a praiseworthy but also reductive commitment, which no longer responds to the great gift of the Gospel.

Msgr. THOMAS MENAMPARAMPIL, Archbishop of Guwahati (India)

Your Eminence, we have spoken of the essential characteristics of the movements and the new communities in the Catholic Church, and we have seen

that they include the Marian aspect and the Petrine aspect. Now, as we know, the Holy Spirit does not act only within the Catholic Church, and outside the Catholic Church there are also movements that closely resemble the ecclesial movements but that decisively reject the Marian aspect and the Petrine aspect. It seems that the Holy Spirit uses two different measures inside and outside the Catholic Church. It might happen therefore that a movement that does not obtain the Petrine approval may decide to abandon the Church, seeing that outside the Church there are also movements aroused by the Spirit, that do not require the Petrine aspect and the Marian aspect.

Card. RATZINGER

You have raised a delicate question: the presence of the Holy Spirit outside the Church, about which the Council speaks and about which in a certain sense the Fathers of the Church also speak. We see that even outside the Church God is not absent. As St. Paul already said in his address to the Areopagus, God has never been absent, even if men have worshipped idols. God has made himself present and in God "we live and move and have our being" (*Acts 17:28*). And, of course, what St. Paul said at the beginning of Christianity remains ever true: in no place and in no culture does God ever forget his creation, man. And God works in the world through his Spirit, but he is always the triune and one God who fosters and creates ever anew the sense of justice and respect for the other person, in every part of the world, albeit in different ways. We must also acknowledge, however, that the devil too is at work, who destroys this sense of justice and causes untold cruelties, as unfortunately we have had occasion to witness throughout the twentieth century. But the opposite is also true: the sense of God is reborn; the sense of responsibility for and love of our fellowmen is reborn. We know that these elements are present in religions. Convinced as we are that Christ is the first born of all the creatures and the centre of history, we are also convinced that it is always the Spirit of Christ, i.e. the Spirit of the one God who is at work and leads man to the centre that is

Christ, even if in ways that are not always explicit. We know that the fullness of the faith is only found in the Church, but the fact that only there do we have the fullness of the faith does not mean that important aspects are not present elsewhere.

You stressed that two elements that are of great importance for us, namely the Petrine element and the Marian element, are absent in some movements [outside the Church]. Of course, explicitly they cannot be present, but I believe one can say that a certain desire for the Mother of God, who is a human being and yet belongs in a particular way to the sphere of God, is manifested in various ways in other religions. There is therefore no explicit presence of the Marian element, but I think there is a great opening of the human heart that, at the moment in which the mystery of Mary is proclaimed, recognizes it and says: "That's what we were seeking!" I think of Latin America: the miracle of Guadalupe, from which began the conversion of the indigenous population to Christianity, demonstrates that. On discovering the Virgin Mary, these peoples immediately understood that this is what they had been waiting for and in the light of the mystery of Mary they also understood the mystery of Christ and lastly the trinitarian mystery and the mystery of the Church. And so I would say that, although lacking an explicit knowledge—something that would be impossible in the non-Christian world—, there is an interior opening of the human heart. Otherwise it would be impossible to understand how humanity has always responded with joy to the revelation that Mary, the humble woman of Nazareth, is the mother of the Son of God, and is called Mother of God. I can't draw up a list here, but we can see that throughout the world, wherever the Gospel arrives, there too arrives the Virgin Mary and indeed often the Gospel arrives precisely through Mary's mediation.

Another element, for example, to which the human heart is open, is the suffering of God in Christ. In Latin America a suffering people perhaps had some difficulty in understanding the Pantocrator but immediately understood the suffering Lord: they understood that this is the true God, the God who does not remain an omnipotent lord of

the universe, but comes down to me and suffers with me. I am reminded here of the moving story of Bakhita, the Sudanese girl who will soon be canonized. In her life in Sudan she had only known very harsh lords and in any case far removed from a humble servant. When she heard the Sisters saying that God is *the Lord* of the world and that he loves each of his creatures, even the humblest, and that he himself made himself humble, at first she could not understand and said: "But the lords are quite different, it is impossible that the supreme Lord should be like this". But once she had understood, she was full of joy. This joy became the centre of her life, so much so that when she was supposed to return to Egypt, she refused. By so doing, she lost everything, because she lost the support of the family in which she was living. But she said: "I will abandon everything, but I will no longer abandon this God". And so we can see that there is a desire in the human heart for this God who became the son of Mary. I merely meant to say: there is a hidden presence in the human heart and if we succeed in proclaiming the Gospel in the right way, those who listen to us will be able to recognize that it is not something alien to them, a foreign culture imposed on them by others, but a divine response to the yearning of their own heart.

It is more difficult to speak of the Petrine element, which is an element of the Church's constitutional structure, but also an element that forms part of her mystery. Perhaps we have too heavily underlined its juridical and structural aspect. The history of the contest between the empire and the papacy in the middle ages, which makes the papacy appear in the character of a secular power, has also obscured the sense of the papacy as the mystery of a man who represents the unity of the Church in the mystery of the cross and of the witness to the Crucified Jesus. The sense of the primacy of Peter as such cannot be understood outside the Catholic Church, but it seems to me that especially in the contemporary world there is a desire for a voice that does not speak for itself but is the voice of believers, of persons and communities who want to live with God. In the Protestant world, however contrary it is to the idea of primacy, there are thus many who, even though they do

not in any way recognize our doctrine of primacy, do admit that it is good that someone exists, namely the Pope, who can speak in the name of the faith in God and become the mouthpiece of the faith, even on behalf of those who do not completely share the faith in the way he professes it. So I think there is a certain convergence even for this reality of a person obedient to the word of God who does not live for himself, but for the presence of God in the world. In the Petrine ministry is continued the humility of the Lord who deigns to be present as a living voice even in persons who, in certain moments of history, were not worthy of his grace, but through whom he made himself and makes himself present in the world. In short, in this second case it is undoubtedly more difficult, but we must in any case strive to show not only the juridical and constitutional aspect of the Church, but also the aspect by which the mystery itself of God is expressed.

Msgr. HENRY TEISSIER, Archbishop of Algiers (Algeria)

Your Eminence, recurring to the theme of the relation with the new movements, I would like to situate it in the context of a Church whose mission it is to bear witness to a non-Christian society. In this situation the pastoral problem is no longer that of allocating the fields of action, but that of a certain unity in the conception of how we bear witness to a majority of the population who are Moslem. Let me give an example. It is not our theme, but I think it may help to understand the situation. We have very good relations with our Protestant friends, the mainstream Churches, because we have more or less the same ideas about witness. On the other hand we have difficulties with the small evangelical groups, with the fundamentalist groups that have a conception of witness that is aggressive towards the Moslem majority and which often seem to us to show little respect for persons. Now, with certain movements we have similar difficulties in having a common conception of witness. As you see, it's not a question of giving each its own role, but of finding together a form of Christian witness that may not arouse a new religious war.

Card. RATZINGER

I can to some extent imagine the situation you mention even if I have no first-hand familiarity with it. We all agree that we cannot accept forms of preaching the Gospel that could foment wars of religion or hatred. That seems to me self-evident, because the Gospel never comes under the banner of hatred or violence or war. It is always the presence of the meek and gentle Lord, the Good Shepherd, and hence the presence of the strength of suffering that overcomes violence. So violence does not form part of the Gospel. The Gospel is disseminated not by violence, but by the voluntary appeal to human liberty. In the various circumstances, moreover, we need to find the best way of respecting human freedom and bearing witness to the Lord who is the redeemer of all humankind. What may be the best way must be found in the specific circumstances. As Origen says, the Lord conquers only with conviction, not with violence. So we need to bear in mind that the door by which the Lord enters people's hearts is conviction and this is created by a responsible witness sustained by the charity of Christ. We therefore need to bear witness in a way that responds to the truth of the Gospel and the true humanism of the Gospel.

Msgr. ANGELO SCOLA, Rector of the Pontifical Lateran University

Your Eminence, before putting my question I would like to make a preliminary observation. Considering the title of our meeting today and thinking of the history of the movements over the last thirty years, it seems to me that they have reached a second phase in their development. A first phase, which was perhaps concluded with the explicit words of the Holy Father in St. Peter's Square last year (Vigil of Pentecost, 30 May 1998), had been aimed at making space separate from what we may call the institutional ecclesial reality for these new phenomena that the Spirit had produced in the Church since the end of Vatican Council II. The second phase, as is shown also by our interventions today, reveals, by con-

trast, the need to recognize the substantial unity between these new charismatic realities and the great reality that you, in your report last year, called the apostolic succession or at any rate the institution. The Pope clearly said last year that this is the task for the future. And that is not easy. In your report last year you said, for example, that we must avoid a dialectical interpretation of the relation between charism and institution. But I have the feeling that we tend, involuntarily, to fall into this dialectic: involuntarily, we start from two and then seek laboriously a way of recomposing them into one.

So when the Pope affirmed, way back in 1981, after the first Meeting of the movements, after the attempt on his life, that the Church herself is a movement, I wonder what he meant. He certainly did not mean to say that the local Church, the bishop, the clergy, must copy extrinsic forms from the experience of the movements. This might even be in some respects a good thing. For example, I recall that up till twenty-five years ago the idea of big meetings (of the kind later adopted by World Youth Day) was especially propagated by the movements, whereas it was regarded as a negative thing, as a hangover from the big fascist rallies of the past, as something impersonal, by many bishops, by many priests. Today, on the other hand, I see that many dioceses are doing something similar. That seems to me positive, but it's still a question of exterior elements. Now, perhaps the Holy Father's invitation is for us to assume the ecclesiology that lies behind what the Spirit has aroused through the movements in the Church, and you, in your perceptive report last year, tried to identify this ecclesiology. So—and this is my question—how can we assume the Holy Father's appeal for a new ecclesiological method in the normal way of understanding the Church, respecting her nature? How can we change in a particular way the episcopal ministry (which is the question to be addressed by the Synod of Bishops next year)? It is undeniable that the Council has given us a solid doctrine on the episcopate, but it seems to me that as regards the exercise of the episcopal ministry we are still too closely attached to the Tridentine image. The Church has changed between our hands, but perhaps we, at least I think of us in Italy and

a higher throne because we must teach, but in fact we are all disciples at the school of Christ". So we must also conduct ourselves in a way that reflects this reality of a common apprenticeship, so to say, at the school of Christ, to discover our vocation and to realize the mission of the Church or the mission of being the presence of the Gospel in our time. So this, for me, would be a first aspect: the bishop, though remaining representative of the sacrament and hence representative of the voice of the Lord, responsible for the presence of the faith, shall be less a monarch, more a brother in a school in which there is only one Master and one Father. I think that the term "monarchic episcopate" was for a long time misunderstood. This reality of *one* bishop in *one* place, in a particular Church, has a twofold sense (as I said in reply to Card. Sterzinsky). On the one hand he guarantees that the Church is the same for everyone; there are no elitist Churches, there are no Churches that one can pick and choose for oneself: the Church is not a kind of market where everyone goes round looking for a little group congenial to him, but is one family in which I have brothers I did not choose myself, but who were given me by the Lord. The monarchic episcopate means this: each bishop has his own family and represents the communion of the Church. By speaking of monarchic episcopate, on the other hand, we also express the responsibility that each bishop has of representing the universal Church in the local Church, identifying the two in such a way that the particular Church is the universal Church and the universal Church is real in the particular Church. So, if we speak of "monarchic episcopate", this should not be understood in the sense that the bishop may act like a monarch who is himself the source of law and who regulates everything himself: the bishop acts in the great family of the Church, in other words in the great context of collegiality, in the great diachronic and synchronic context of the faith and in the context of the school of God in which we are all disciples and in which there is only one Master. It seems to me that this is important. We must avoid, it seems to me, the danger of an excessive institutionalization. The great idea of the Council was

NICOLÁS DE JESÚS Card. LÓPEZ RODRÍGUEZ,
Archbishop of Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic)

Your Eminence, a lot is being spoken and written today about the future of religion. Sometimes in a contradictory way. I suppose that Your Eminence knows the book on the ten megatrends that appeared a few years ago. According to its authors, one of these megatrends will consist in the revival of religion, of all the religions, because man rebels against the proposition of suffocating his spiritual dimension. As more specifically regards the Catholic Church, however, while recognizing the relative growth of its prestige—we may think for example of the Pope's leadership at this time—, others affirm that it is heading towards a minority situation. If this prediction be correct, I believe that the ecclesial movements and the new communities will have a very important role to play in this Catholic minority, because they give us a sign of hope by living their faith with great simplicity and also, I would say, in unity.

Card. RATZINGER

Yes, as regards the first point, it does seem that the history of the last fifty years has shown that religion shows no sign of disappearing. It must perhaps find new forms, but is so fundamental for man that it always revives. Even the Communist regimes, in the last phase of their existence, were obliged to relativize the prophesy of the founding fathers, especially Marx and Engels, that religion would inevitably disappear once social conditions had improved. The ideologues of the Communist countries argued, on the other hand, that religion would survive for some considerable time and perhaps would never disappear altogether. Indeed, man's transcendental dimension, his yearning for transcendence are so profoundly rooted in his being that religion can never disappear. It is our responsibility to see to it that this yearning be guided in the right way and not lead to abuses. For, if it is true that religion will exist for ever, it is also true that it may be a sick religion, and

indeed many phenomena of our time reveal forms of religious pathology that truly become a threat for the person. We, who are illuminated by the faith in Christ, have the responsibility to offer the responses that come from the living God: we must help man to grow in his religious dimension and so avoid the religious pathologies that necessarily emerge when true responses are lacking. We therefore have a need for a proclamation of the truths of the faith that are, on the one hand, simple, comprehensible and accessible to people today but, on the other hand, profound, in which the immediacy of the bond between the created being and his Creator and the presence of his voice be really communicated. I believe this is an historic responsibility of the Church, in a moment in which religion is reviving in many forms. For religion may really become a sickness if it does not offer the true face of God, but surrogate elements that cannot cure the ills of human existence, precisely because they are surrogates.

As regards the possibility that the Church is in a minority situation, in the book based on an interview I gave, *Il sale della terra* [The Salt of the Earth], I too admitted such a trend. I must add, however, that the situation is very variable, depending on continent. In Asia the Church is already a minority. We hope that it may grow to become a majority one day, but above all we hope that it may at least be, in its proclamation of the faith, an appropriate and ever-present response for that continent and for its great cultures. In fact, I think that Christianity, even if numerically very limited, is already a message that touches the heart of Asia, and of Asian cultures, and that its influence extends far beyond the limits of formal membership of the Church. We must therefore strive to ensure that, even if the Church is numerically reduced, the Gospel she brings always remains public and ever present for everyone. To return to an examination of the present situation, I think that in Latin America the Church will long remain a Church of the people. Let's hope so. Christianity has really penetrated the heart of Latin America and therefore it seems to me that the hope that there the Church will remain a popular Church in the future too is well-founded. In a large part of Africa too we hope that the Church may really become

a popular Church capable of responding to the religious needs of those peoples. In the Western world, with the explosion of secularism of which we have spoken, there is no doubt that there is a progressive reduction of the number of believers. I recently read—I don't know whether the statistic is reliable, but some core of truth it will have—that in Germany as a whole 50% of the population no longer believes in God, whereas in former-Communist east Germany the percentage of those who don't believe in God is as high as 86%. Perhaps the figures are exaggerated, but it is true that we are witnessing a kind of mass apostasy: the number of baptized is being drastically reduced. The same, albeit in different ways, is happening for example in France too. And an undeniable progress of secularism, as we have already pointed out, is also ascertainable, with different characteristics, in the United States. In short, the almost total identity that once existed between European and American culture and Christian culture is being dissolved in the Western world. All this is true. And the number of people in the West who feel themselves really members of the Church will decline further in the near future. We don't know what may happen in fifty years' time—such futurology remains impossible—, but for the near future we see the process of secularization continuing, we see the decline of the faith, we see a growing separation between commonly accepted culture and Christian faith and culture.

All the more so in this situation, we have the responsibility to see to it that the faith does not withdraw into closed, self-satisfied groups, but is a faith that illuminates everyone and speaks to everyone. We must always think of the Church in the first three or four centuries. The Church in the Roman Empire was a tiny minority: even in the time of Constantine, the Christians were perhaps no more than 7-8% of the whole population, but already in the time of the apostles this minority drew the attention of the world. Despite the fact that the Christians from a numerical point of view might have appeared negligible, the Roman emperors persecuted them: they had understood that a new power was being born within this minority which touched everything and which concerned everyone; that this was not a closed group that

could exist peacefully in the general toleration of religions, but that it was a challenge for everyone and in sum a voice that touched the heart of the human being. This, it seems to me, is important. Though recognizing the trend towards a minority Christianity, we must always be conscious of having a universal mission, because what is at issue is always God the Creator, the God of everyone, and if we have been granted, through grace, to hear his voice, his Revelation, we have the responsibility to make this message reverberate through the world. Even if this message does not immediately result in formal conversion to Christianity, we must in any case make this voice present and proclaim the true response and the fundamental needs of a life worthy of the Creator. It seems to me necessary therefore to reconcile these two aspects of the present time: first, recognize that this is a time of difficulty, in the sense that we are heading towards a more minority Christianity, that no longer identifies itself with the common culture, but, second, be conscious, with all the greater reason, that the Gospel regards everyone. As you said, just in this double challenge the movements may be of great help thanks to their missionary drive. They are small, but they know that it is small minorities who change the world. The Marxists said that two percent of really active persons were enough to cause a revolution in any country: when it boils down to it, humanity always depends on active minorities. The essential thing is that there is an active minority in the positive sense. That seems to me the real challenge and these groups—that have a missionary drive despite their smallness of numbers—may encourage all of us to be a ferment of the life of the Gospel in the world.

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