



# Laity Today

*A Series of Studies*

*Edited by the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS

# THE BEAUTY OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

*Movements in the Church*

Proceedings of the Second World Congress  
of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities

Rocca di Papa, 31 May – 2 June 2006

Meeting with the Holy Father Benedict XVI  
Vespers of the Vigil of Pentecost

St. Peter's Square, 3 June 2006



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## PREFACE

This volume contains the texts of the various interventions and meditations that accompanied the celebration of Vespers on the vigil of Pentecost, presided over by the Supreme Pontiff in St. Peter's Square on 3 June 2006 in the presence of over a hundred ecclesial movements and new communities. It also contains the proceedings of the second World Congress of ecclesial movements and new communities, held at Rocca di Papa (near Rome) on the initiative of the Pontifical Council for the Laity in the immediately preceding days.

The decision to hold a meeting of movements in the Church can be very significantly placed among the more immediate priorities of Benedict XVI on ascending the throne of St. Peter. He expressed the wish for such a meeting during the first audience granted to me as President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. That was on 14 May 2005: by a happy coincidence, it was also the vigil of Pentecost! This priority of Benedict XVI also represented an important sign of continuity with the teaching of John Paul II, who saw in the new lay groups in the Church precious gifts of the Spirit and a great sign of hope for humanity in our time. It is a conviction that the Servant of God eloquently expressed on that memorable 30 May 1998, when he exclaimed to the members of the movements who had thronged St. Peter's Square, replying to his invitation to bear common witness together: "In our world, 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 [...] There is 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 ecclesial movements and the new 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!”<sup>1</sup> That day marked a decisive turning point for the life and mission of movements and communities. And now, eight years later, the new Successor of Peter wished to begin again just from there to resume the dialogue with them, and to invite them to meet together in the same place and on the same day.

Pope Benedict XVI’s relations with the movements are long-standing. His theological contribution, moreover, remains of fundamental importance for the definition of their ecclesial identity. He has himself spoken of his relations with them on several occasions. He has identified in them the fruits of the recurrent irruptions of the Holy Spirit which, over centuries and millennia, constantly renew and revivify the structure of the Church.<sup>2</sup> Even more recently he told a group of German bishops: “After the Council, the Holy Spirit endowed us with the gift of the ‘movements’ [...], places of faith where young people and adults try out a model of life in faith as an opportunity for life today. I therefore ask you to approach movements with a great deal of love. Here and there, they must be corrected or integrated within the structures of the parish or diocese. Yet, we must respect the specific character of their charism and rejoice in the birth of communitarian forms of faith in which the Word of God becomes life”.<sup>3</sup>

To the festive throng who invaded St. Peter’s Square and surrounding areas right down to the Castel Sant’Angelo on 3 June to relive with the Successor of Peter the mystery of Pentecost, proclaim the

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the ecclesial movements and new communities (Rome, 30 May 1998), in: *Movements in the Church*, edited by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1999, 222-223.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, “The ecclesial movements: a theological reflection on their place in the Church”, in: *Movements in the Church*, cit., 25. Cf. also “I movimenti ecclesiali e la loro collocazione teologica”, in: *Nuove irruzioni dello Spirito. I movimenti nella Chiesa*, Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2006, 15.

<sup>3</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Address to the Bishops of the German Bishops’ Conference on their *ad limina* visit in the Consistory Hall, 18 November 2006; cf. IDEM, Address to the Bishops of the German Bishops’ Conference, 21 August 2005.

joy of believing in Jesus Christ and renew the commitment to walk in his footsteps, Benedict XVI spoke of life, freedom and unity. “Pentecost – he said to that immense throng who had come from every corner of the Earth – is this: Jesus, and through him God himself, comes to us and draws us to himself. [...] The Holy Spirit, through whom God comes to us, brings us life and freedom [...] The movements were born precisely of the thirst for true life [and] want to and must be schools of freedom [...], the freedom of the children of God”. Their multiplicity is the expression of the revivifying and always astonishing action of the Holy Spirit to enrich the Church to which they belong. But, added the Pope, “in Him multiplicity and unity go hand in hand. He breathes where he wills. He does so in unexpected ways, in unexpected places and in hitherto unimaginable forms”. Therefore, his presence is also demonstrated in the missionary impetus that leads to proclaiming the Lord in all the spheres of human life, without fear, without presumption and without discouragement, always operating “in union with the enduring orders – the joints – of the Church, with the successors of the apostles and with the successor of Peter”. At the end of the meeting the Holy Father confirmed once again the confidence he has in the movements and communities, appealing to them to “be, even more, far more, collaborators of the universal apostolic ministry of the Pope, by opening the doors to Christ [...], the best service that the Church can perform to man”.

The meeting with Benedict XVI in St. Peter’s Square was preceded by the Second World Congress of the ecclesial movements and new communities held in Rocca di Papa from 31 May to 2 June 2006 on the theme “The beauty of being Christians and the joy of communicating it”. The congress was attended by some 300 delegates of these groups and various invited guests, including cardinals, bishops, men and women religious, and an ecumenical delegation. Taking its cue from the affirmation of Benedict XVI in his homily at the start of his Petrine ministry: “There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, [and] by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know him and to speak to others of

our friendship with him”,<sup>4</sup> the Congress wished to focus the reflection of the participants on the essence of the Christian event: the convincing proclamation of Christ, “the fairest of the sons of men” (Ps 45[44]: 2), to the world today. Christians are in fact called to this: to proclaim that the Gospel is not a utopia, but a pilgrimage towards life in all its fullness; that faith is not a burden, a yoke that weighs heavily on humankind, but a fascinating adventure that restores to each one of us, with our humanity, all the dignity and freedom of children of God; that Christ is the only response to the yearning for happiness we nurture in our heart.

In our time the experience of the beauty of being Christians finds a really fertile terrain in the ecclesial movements and new communities. The charisms from which they were born have in fact generated educational itineraries that continue to form throngs of witnesses of the beauty of Christ, Christians for whom faith has become a radical choice of life that leads them to be faithful disciples of the Lord, capable of giving a reason for the hope they have found and joyfully proclaiming the living God to all mankind. At a time like our own when humankind’s very capacity to perceive the divine seems to have dried up, they bear witness to the “taste for God”, the centrality of God that alone can fill with meaning a life that is otherwise destined to be exhausted within the narrow limits of what is feasible and comprehensible, and the consciousness that we are being watched by God... The Pope says: “There are so many problems that could be listed and that need to be solved, but none of them can be solved unless God is put at the centre, if God does not become once again visible to the world, and if he does not become the determining factor in our lives and also enters into the world in a decisive way through us. [...] In this [...] the future of the world in this dramatic situation is decided today: whether God – the God of Jesus Christ – exists and is recognized as such, or whether he dis-

<sup>4</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Homily during the solemn eucharistic concelebration for the assumption of the Petrine ministry, St. Peter’s Square, 24 April 2005.

appears”.<sup>5</sup> In their mission to manifest the presence and action of the Lord in the eyes of our generation, the ecclesial movements and new communities find their *raison d’être*. And so, in a grey world beleaguered by the insidious inroads of mediocrity, they transmute into lights of hope, into places of irresistible irradiation of the Beauty that saves the world (F. Dostoevsky) because, as the Holy Father has written in the autograph message he sent to the Congress, “there is no valid beauty if there is not a truth to recognize and follow”.

In publishing the present volume, we hope to perpetuate the memory of these two great events. We hope they will be an encouragement to the ecclesial movements and new communities that participated in them and bear fruit in the existence of all those who, in reading these pages, may see – to use the Pope’s words – how the Lord makes life beautiful and causes the desert in which we often find ourselves living to blossom anew.

✠ STANISŁAW RYŁKO

*President*

*of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

<sup>5</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Homily during the Holy Mass with the Bishops of Switzerland, Redemptoris Mater Chapel in the Vatican, 8 November 2006.



# **PART I**

## **Second World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities**

Rocca di Papa, 31 May - 2 June 2006





## **I.1. Messages**



## Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

While we look forward to the Meeting with the members of more than a hundred Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, scheduled for Saturday, 3 June, in St. Peter's Square, I am pleased to offer you, the representatives of all these ecclesial associations gathered at Rocca di Papa for your World Congress, a warm greeting with the Apostle's words: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (*Rm* 15: 13).

The memory of the previous World Congress of Ecclesial Movements, held in Rome from 26 to 29 May 1998, is still vivid in my mind and in my heart. In my capacity as the then-Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith I was asked to speak at it with a lecture on the theological place of the movements in the Church. That Congress culminated in the memorable meeting with our beloved Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square on 30 May 1998, during which my predecessor expressed his approval of the ecclesial movements and new communities; he described them as "signs of hope" for the good of the Church and humanity.

Today, aware of the ground covered since then on the path marked out by the pastoral concern, affection and teachings of John Paul II, I would like to congratulate the Pontifical Council for the Laity in the persons of its President, Archbishop Stanisław Ryłko, its Secretary, Bishop Josef Clemens and their co-workers, for the important and worthwhile initiative of this World Congress. Its theme – "*The beauty of being Christian and the joy of communicating it*" – is inspired by something I said in the Homily inaugurating my Petrine Ministry. This theme is an invitation to reflect on what the essential features of the Christian event are: in fact, we encounter in it the One

who in flesh and blood visibly and historically brought to earth the splendour of God's glory. The words of Psalm 45 [44]: 2 apply to him: "You are the fairest of the sons of men". And, paradoxically, the Prophet's words also refer to him: "He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (*Is* 53: 2). In Christ the beauty of truth and the beauty of love converge; but love, as people know, also calls for the willingness to suffer, a willingness which for those who love one another can even extend to the sacrifice of life (cf. *Jn* 15: 13)! Christ, who is "the beauty of every beauty", as St. Bonaventura used to say (*Sermones dominicales* 1,7), is made present in the hearts of men and women and attracts them to their vocation which is love. It is thanks to this extraordinary magnetic force that reason is drawn from its torpor and opened to the Mystery. Thus, the supreme beauty of God's merciful love is revealed and at the same time, the beauty of the human being who, created in the image of God, is regenerated by grace and destined to eternal glory.

Down the ages Christianity has been communicated and disseminated thanks to the newness of life of persons and communities capable of bearing an incisive witness of love, unity and joy. This force itself has set a vast number of people in "motion", from generation to generation. Was it not perhaps the beauty born from faith in the saints' faces that spurred so many men and women to follow in his footsteps? Basically, this also applies to you: through the founders and initiators of your movements and communities you have glimpsed the face of Christ shining with special brightness and set out on your way. Christ still continues today to make resound in the hearts of so many that "come, follow me" which can decide their destiny. This normally happens through the witness of those who have had a personal experience of Christ's presence. On the faces and in the words of these "new creatures" his light becomes visible and his invitation audible.

I therefore say to you, dear friends of the movements: act so as to ensure that they are always schools of communion, groups journeying on in which one learns to live in the truth and love that Christ revealed and communicated to us through the witness of the Apostles, in the heart of

the great family of his disciples. May Jesus' exhortation ceaselessly echo in your hearts: 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father, who is in heaven' (Mt 5: 16). Bring Christ's light to all the social and cultural milieus in which you live. Missionary zeal is proof of a radical experience of ever-renewed fidelity to one's charism that surpasses any kind of weary or selfish withdrawal. Dispel the darkness of a world overwhelmed by the contradictory messages of ideologies! There is no valid beauty if there is not a truth to recognize and follow, if love gives way to transitory sentiment, if happiness becomes an elusive mirage or if freedom degenerates into instinct. How much evil the mania for power, possession and pleasure can spawn in the lives of people and nations! Take the witness of the freedom with which Christ has set us free (cf. Gal 5: 1) to this troubled world. The extraordinary fusion between love of God and love of neighbour makes life beautiful and causes the desert in which we often find ourselves living to blossom anew. Where love is expressed as a passion for the life and destiny of others, where love shines forth in affection and in work and becomes a force for the construction of a more just social order, there the civilization is built that can withstand the advance of barbarity. Become builders of a better world according to the *ordo amoris* in which the beauty of human life is expressed.

Today, the ecclesial movements and new communities are a luminous sign of the beauty of Christ and of the Church, his Bride. You belong to the living structure of the Church. She thanks you for your missionary commitment, for the formative action on behalf of Christian families that you are increasingly developing and for the promotion of vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to consecrated life which you nurture among your members. She is also grateful to you for your readiness not only to accept the active directives of the successor of Peter, but also of the bishops of the various local Churches who, with the Pope, are the custodians of truth and charity in unity. I trust in your prompt obedience.

Over and above the affirmation of the right to life itself, the edification of the Body of Christ among others must always prevail with

indisputable authority. Movements must approach each problem with sentiments of deep communion, in a spirit of loyalty to their legitimate Pastors.

May you be sustained by participating in the prayer of the Church whose liturgy is the most exalted expression of the beauty of God's glory, and in a certain way a glimpse of Heaven upon the earth! I entrust you to the intercession of the One whom we invoke as the *Tota pulchra*, the "All Fair", an ideal of beauty that artists have always sought to reproduce in their works, the "Woman clothed with the sun" (*Rev 12: 1*) in whom human beauty encounters the beauty of God.

With these sentiments, I extend a special Apostolic Blessing to you all as a pledge of my constant affection.

From the Vatican, 22 May 2006

Benedictus PP. in

## Letter of the Congress to the Holy Father

Your Holiness,

On behalf of over a hundred ecclesial movements and new communities we have participated in the Second World Congress in Rocca di Papa from 31 May to 2 June, in preparation for the great Vigil of Pentecost. We would like to thank you for the message you have sent us, sign of a fatherly solicitude that confirms the faith and sustains the hope of us who have been attracted by the beauty of Christ through the encounter with a charism, which has made the Christian proposal more persuasive as a convincing response to the heart of each one of us.

During this Congress we have asked ourselves what it means to give a reason for the beauty of Christ, and what it means to be Christians in a world marked by nihilism, by various forms of poverty and by the reduction of faith to a vague religiosity that distances us from the real world.

The first words of your Encyclical were cited several times in our reports and dialogues: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction”.<sup>1</sup>

We feel the direct link with Your Holiness as the foundation of our freedom to explore the charism that makes Christ contemporary with our life and, at the same time, as the chance to devote it to the building of the Body of Christ, as you authoritatively urge us to do.

The fact that Your Holiness recognizes that we belong to “the living structure of the Church” becomes for us a renewed responsibility to manifest the charity of Christ as “a passion for the life and destiny

<sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 1.

of others [...], in affection and in work”, until it becomes “a force for the construction of a more just social order”.<sup>2</sup>

Conscious of the challenge that relativism poses to us, from within the very fragility of our lives, we feel comforted in the adventure of our daily journey by the constant verification of the truth of what Your Holiness entrusted to us at the start of your pontificate: Christ “takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life”.<sup>3</sup>

That is why we re-place our life and that of the friends of all our movements and communities in your fatherly hands, so that our faith, founded on the rock of Peter, may bear fruit as witness of hope and work of charity for our fellowmen.

Rocca di Papa, 2 June 2006

<sup>2</sup> IDEM, Message to the participants of the Second World Congress on Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 22 May 2006, see supra, page 7.

<sup>3</sup> IDEM, Homily during the solemn eucharistic concelebration for the assumption of the Petrine ministry, St. Peter’s Square, 24 April 2005.



## **I.2. Papers**



**The beauty of Christ  
and the mission of the Church**



## New fruits of ecclesial maturity

Archbishop STANISŁAW RYŁKO\*

With my heart full of gratitude for the communion we have shared round the altar of the Lord, I welcome you warmly to the Second World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the office of the Roman Curia that I have the honour to head. You represent here the great people of the movements who with generosity, joy and passion now serve the mission of the Church in all continents. And you come from a hundred or so different ecclesial movements and new communities (almost double the number present at the First Congress), which are the expression of the extraordinary “charismatic” richness of the Church in our time and a message full of hope for the future. I wish to welcome our guests: the Cardinals, Bishops, priests, men and women religious, and laity. I am grateful for their participation, which lends great lustre to our Congress. I also extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the various offices of the Roman Curia attending our Congress. I welcome our brothers, the delegates of other Churches and Christian Communions, whose presence here we particularly appreciate. We already breathe the atmosphere of Pentecost, and when the Spirit blows, so the desire for unity grows and is strengthened in us. And I welcome all those who assumed the task of presenting the papers or taking part in the panel discussions; I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to them. To all of you I say with the words of St. Paul: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!” (2 Cor 1: 2).

We open this Congress in deep communion with the Successor of Peter, Pope Benedict XVI, to whom we express filial affection and deep

\* Titular Archbishop of Novica, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

gratitude for the message so charged with meaning with which he has shown his ideal presence among us, and given sound guidance to our reflection. This gesture is a further sign of his paternal affection for these new ecclesial groups in which he sees strong ways of living the faith,<sup>1</sup> the fruit of “ever new irruptions of the Holy Spirit”<sup>2</sup> to respond to the challenges that the world poses to the mission of the Church. The Successor of Peter recalls us right at the start of this Congress to the need to open ourselves to the horizon of the universal Church. He invests us not only with the joys and hopes, but also with the difficult problems that the Church must face today. So our *sentire cum Ecclesia* during this Congress must be particularly strong and find concrete expressions.

In the wonderful manifestation of the many-sided variety of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church in our time, we shall once again share the experience of their profound unity in the communion of the Church, that mysterious dynamic of which St. Paul writes: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Cor 12: 4-7). In this “school” of communion projected at mission, we shall render thanks to the Lord for the fruits of holiness and missionary fervour that these charisms – signs of a springtime of the faith – generate in the life of individual baptized and Christian communities scattered all over the world. In particular – and this sums up the essential reason of this Second World Congress of the ecclesial movements and new communities – we will lend an ear to what the Lord asks of us here and now (cf. *Rev* 2: 7). As the solemnity of Pentecost approaches, our memory recurs to the cenacle where two thousand years ago the apos-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Il sale della terra. Cristianesimo e Chiesa cattolica nella svolta del millennio*, Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 1997, 18.

<sup>2</sup> IDEM, “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*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1999, 25.

gles gathered in prayer together with Mary. May our Congress be a pentecostal gathering in which our prayer is raised to God, so that the Spirit may descend and renew the face of the Earth!

To grasp the full significance of this Second Congress, we need to recur in memory to its predecessor in May 1998. It was an event that left a profound mark on the life of the movements: it gave solid theological foundations to their identity and opened new and fascinating horizons to their mission in the Church. It is worth re-reading some of the more significant passages of the Message that the Servant of God John Paul II sent to the participants in that First Congress. He wrote: “[The movements] represent one of the most significant fruits of that springtime in the Church which was foretold by the Second Vatican Council, but which unfortunately has often been hampered by the spread of secularism. Their presence is encouraging because it shows that this springtime is advancing and revealing the freshness of the Christian experience based on personal encounter with Christ”. And again: “Your very existence is a hymn to the unity in diversity desired by the Spirit and gives witness to it. Indeed, in the mystery of communion of the Body of Christ, unity is never dull homogeneity or a denial of diversity, just as plurality must never become particularism or dispersion. That is why each of your groups deserves to be appreciated for the particular contribution it makes to the life of the Church”. And lastly let me cite the sentence that touches the essential point of the ecclesial identity of the movements: “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”.<sup>3</sup> These are exciting and challenging words that have, over the years, lost nothing of their power to inspire and guide the life of the movements and communities.

<sup>3</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Message of His Holiness John Paul II to the participants at the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, in: *Movements in the Church*, cit., 16-19.

Another voice, at that First Congress, left an indelible trace in the life of these new groups: the voice of the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Benedict XVI has for many years followed, with the passion both of the theologian and of the pastor, the ecclesial movements and new communities of which he has always been an attentive interlocutor and with which he has established over the years a rapport of real friendship. Cardinal Ratzinger opened the First Congress with an address on the theological place of the movements in the Church showing extraordinary theological penetration and deep pastoral concern that was received by the participants with warm expressions of gratitude. In his magisterial words they saw reflected and confirmed their experience of faith, and their profound ecclesial identity. In the difficult years after the Second Vatican Council – said the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – when many were speaking of a “winter” in the Church, “then suddenly something happened which no one had planned. The Holy Spirit had [...] once again made his voice heard. The faith was reawakened, especially in young people, who eagerly embraced it without any ifs or buts, without subterfuges and reservations, and experienced it in its totality as a precious life-giving gift”.<sup>4</sup> To correctly approach the theological discourse on the ecclesial movements, argued Cardinal Ratzinger, the dialectic of principles was not enough: i.e. the dialectic between institution and charism, christology and pneumatology, hierarchy and prophecy, because the Church is built not dialectically, but organically. So the right way of approaching the problem, argued Cardinal Ratzinger, is the historical approach, by tracing the apostolic ministry in the Church. For it is the apostolic mission that forms the theological basis of the movements in the Church: a mission that transcends the confines of the local Churches to reach “the end of the earth” and that forms the

<sup>4</sup> J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesial Movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church”, in: *Movements in the Church*, cit., 24.



bond that unites them with the ministry of the Successor of Peter. Cardinal Ratzinger said: “The papacy did not create the movements, but it did become their most important backer [...], their main source of ecclesial support. [...] The Pope has to rely on these ministries, they on him; and in the harmonious interaction between the two kinds of mission the symphony of ecclesial life is realised”.<sup>5</sup> The phenomenon of the movements is a constant in the history of the Church. And Cardinal Ratzinger’s fascinating review of them shows how they give form to the prompt interventions of the Holy Spirit in “answer to the ever-changing situations in which the Church lives”.<sup>6</sup> The Cardinal’s stimulating lecture ended with some considerations of a pastoral character, practical criteria of discernment to warn these new movements of the risks that derive from being at a stage that is in some respects still “infantile”, such as excessive exuberance, one-sidedness of various kinds, and mistaken forms of absolutism. But he also appealed to Pastors to “avoid any uniformity of pastoral organization and programmes [because] – he said – what is needed is less organization and more spirit”.<sup>7</sup> To both sides, therefore, he made a pressing appeal to let themselves be educated and purified by the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> To re-read these words today is to find them charged with all the authority of Peter. Now that he has been elected Pope as Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger continues to regard the ecclesial movements and new communities with great pastoral concern. Speaking in Cologne last year, he said of them: “The Church must make the most of these realities, and at the same time guide them with pastoral wisdom, so that with the variety of their pastoral gifts they may contribute in the best possible way to building up the community [...]. The local Churches and movements are not in opposition to one another, but constitute the living structure

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 39 and 46.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 49.

of the Church”.<sup>9</sup> The doctrinal and pastoral legacy of the First World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities – at which the voices of two Popes could be heard – is a real treasure on which abundantly to draw during our discussions at this Second Congress.

To the ecclesial movements gathered in St. Peter’s Square on 30 May 1998 John Paul II gave a challenging task: the pursuit of ecclesial maturity. “Today – he said – a new stage is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity. This does not mean that all problems have been solved. Rather, it is a challenge. A road to take. The Church expects from you the ‘mature’ fruits of communion and commitment”.<sup>10</sup> So the time is ripe to review the progress we have made in the eight years since then: a review that, in the course of our Congress will form the *leitmotif* of the workgroups.

The sure compass to guide our journey to this goal, which remains to be pursued, continues to be, for the movements and new communities, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. On 8 December last year, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the closing of that providential assembly that was a renewed Pentecost for the Church. This Congress is therefore a propitious occasion to join together in rendering thanks to God for the gift of the Council, of which the movements and the new communities represent one of the most precious fruits: for the theology of the laity developed by Vatican II; for the revaluation of Baptism and the common priesthood of the faithful that derived from it; for the pneumatological ecclesiology that emphasizes the importance of charisms in the life of the Church and of individual Christians; for the Council’s renewed appeal to the universal vocation to holiness in the Church; and for making accessible to everyone the fascinating mystery of the

<sup>9</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Address to the Bishops of the German Bishops’ Conference, 21 August 2005.

<sup>10</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address of His Holiness Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, in: *Movements in the Church*, cit., 222.

Church as missionary communion.<sup>11</sup> For all this, the people of God is indebted to the Council. And the only way of repaying this debt is the effort to assimilate its teaching as best we can, a task that is re-proposed to every new generation of Catholics.

The first eloquent sign of the ecclesial maturity of the movements, as John Paul II said, is the sense of communion: an ever-closer communion with the Pope and with the Pastors, within which to share their charismatic riches,<sup>12</sup> and a communion in brotherhood between the various movements, called to get to know each other ever-more deeply and to work together in joint projects. It is heartening to ascertain that a very promising phase is being experienced in the life of the movements as far as communion is concerned. And this also goes for the paternal affection that growing numbers of Pastors are devoting to the movements in their respective local Churches; they now see in them a gift of the Holy Spirit and no longer an irritating intrusion as has sometimes been the case in the past. I am certain that our Congress will make a valuable contribution to the reinforcement of these trends, and will also indicate ways of avoiding the risk of conflicts that harm the cause of the Gospel.

The second sign of the ecclesial maturity of the movements and new communities is their missionary commitment. Indeed, they render in practice a great service to the evangelising mission of the Church. Their power to arouse missionary courage and fervour in people is astonishing. Equally astonishing is their “missionary imagination”, their capacity to find ever-new ways of bringing Christ’s gospel to the heart of man in our time. The charisms from which these groups were born generate a learning process, itineraries of Christian initiation of extraordinary persuasive force and courses of Christian education that lead those who undergo them to live their

<sup>11</sup> Cf. A. CATTANEO, *Unità e varietà nella comunione della Chiesa locale*, Marcianum Press 2006, 215-219.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Message of His Holiness John Paul II to the participants in the seminar, in: *The Ecclesial Movements in the Pastoral Concern of the Bishops*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2000, 15-19.

faith with evangelical zeal and missionary commitment fuelled by a solid and profound spirituality. This dimension needs to be cultivated so that the work of evangelization be not sullied by the temptation of superficial activism. And our Congress should devote to this task all the attention it deserves.

There is another aspect worth underlining in describing the essential features of the real maturity of the ecclesial movements and new communities: namely, the right connotation to be given to this term. Maturity – which is the goal we need constantly to pursue – though dependent on the passage of time, has nothing to do with the greyness of a spirit that has aged and that is no longer capable of passion. It represents, on the contrary, the consummation of *joie de vivre*, enthusiasm, drive, courage, and the ability to stake everything on the Gospel... This youthfulness of spirit – a God-given gift of the movements and new communities – is the result of their daily fidelity, both at the individual and community level, to the charism that gave rise to them in the first place. And it is also an appeal to constant *metánoia*, to conversion of heart. Fidelity to the charism needs to be especially safeguarded in the phase of generational turnover that many movements are now going through, also in terms of the renewal of their leadership. A new generation of Christians is emerging; they have behind them quite different existential, cultural and ecclesial experiences than those of the previous generation. How can the movement's charism be handed down to them in all its freshness and all its spiritual power? How can staleness and routine be avoided? In the Book of Revelation, St John gives us valuable advice on this point, when he writes to the angel of the Church of Ephesus: "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance [...] I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first" (*Rev 2: 2-4*). *The love you had at first*: for the movements and new communities, ecclesial maturity means also this; it means not letting your first love, the passion you originally had for the charism, be weakened, in spite of the

toil, the difficulties and the inevitable trials and tribulations that life always holds in store for you.

Let us now pass to the theme of our Congress: “The beauty of being Christians and the joy of communicating it”, inspired by the words pronounced by Benedict XVI on the day he began his Petrine ministry. The Pope said: “There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him”.<sup>13</sup> Emphasizing the centrality of the person of Christ in Christian life: these words reveal at the same time the most profound secret of Christ’s power of attraction over the human heart: beauty. Today, the theme of beauty is under threat. The world that surrounds us is a world dominated by the cult of the ugly, enslaved by the aggressive force of false forms of beauty that deceive many, that turn them into slaves and prisoners of falsehood. In our time it was especially Hans Urs von Balthasar, with his great work on “theological aesthetics”, who helped Christian thought to rediscover in the beautiful a decisive category for the life of the baptized. The Swiss theologian wrote: “In a world without beauty – even if people cannot dispense with this word and constantly have it on their lips in order to abuse it –, in a world which is perhaps not wholly without beauty, but which can no longer see it or reckon with it; in such a world the good also loses its power of attraction, the self-evidence of why it must be carried out [...]. In a world that no longer has enough confidence in itself to affirm the beautiful, the proofs of the truth have lost their cogency [...]. But the logic of these conclusions is itself a mechanism which no longer captivates anyone. The very conclusions are no longer conclusive”.<sup>14</sup> The question of beauty is therefore a serious one; beauty does not regard merely the exterior aspect, nor can it be reduced to it.

<sup>13</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Homily during the solemn eucharistic concelebration for the assumption of the Petrine ministry, St. Peter’s Square, 24 April 2005.

<sup>14</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol. I: *Seeing the Form*, translated by E. Leiva-Merikakis, Ignatius Press, San Francisco/Crossroads Publications, New York, 1982, 19.

The dimension of beauty is fundamental for our being Christian, as anyone who has met Christ in his personal life knows very well. According to von Balthasar, indeed, in the experience of the encounter with the mystery of Christ it is the being “transported” by his beauty that marks the start of following in the footsteps of the Master: “To be transported, moreover, belongs to the very origin of Christianity. The Apostles were transported by what they saw, heard and touched – by everything manifested in the form. John especially, but also the others, never tires of describing in ever new ways how Jesus’ figure stands out [how it gains in emphasis] in his encounters and conversations [with him]; how, as the contours of his uniqueness emerge, suddenly and in an indescribable manner the ray of Unconditional breaks through, casting a person down in adoration and transforming him into a believer and a follower [of Christ]”.<sup>15</sup> And here the words of the Prophet Jeremiah spring to mind: “You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me; you were the stronger” (*Jer* 20: 7).

In the days before us at this Congress we are therefore called to enter into dialogue with the beauty of Christ, personally and as movements. We are called to place Christ at the centre of our reflections and not turn him into a pretext to speak of other things. And we are called to revive in us the wonder, that motion of the soul that alone permits us to recognize his mystery. But in what consists this singular beauty that has through the centuries attracted countless people, radically transforming their existence? Cardinal Ratzinger magisterially described this, by comparing two biblical texts that refer to the person of Jesus: the royal wedding song – “You are the fairest of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips” (*Ps* 45 [44], 3) – and the prophecy of Isaiah: “He has no form or comeliness that we should look upon him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (*Is* 53: 2-3). Joseph Ratzinger finds the explanation of this para-

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

dox in the heart of the paschal mystery. He writes that in it the experience of the beautiful received new profundity, a new realism. Jesus, who is beauty personified, let himself be struck in the face, spat on, and crowned with thorns. But it is precisely in this disfigured face that genuine and consummate beauty appears: the beauty of love that reaches even to the end.<sup>16</sup> That is why, he adds, being overpowered and seduced by the beauty of Christ is a more real and more profound truth than mere rational deduction.<sup>17</sup> In this regard it is worth recalling also the words that the young Karol Wojtyła put into the mouth of Fra Alberto – a painter who became a friar to serve the poor – who prayed as follows in front of the image of the *Ecce Homo*: “Still You are terribly unlike Him, whom You are. You have toiled in every one of them. You are deadly tired. They have exhausted You. This is called Charity. But with all this You have remained beautiful. The most beautiful of the sons of men. Such beauty was never repeated again. Oh what a difficult beauty, how hard. Such beauty is called Charity”.<sup>18</sup>

How can this beauty be transmitted to the world today? For this is the challenge we need to address. John Paul II wrote: “[...] the men and women of our own day – often perhaps unconsciously – ask believers not only to ‘speak’ of Christ, but in a certain sense to ‘show’ him to them”.<sup>19</sup> We Christians have the enormous responsibility not to deform, not to falsify, not to obscure, not to conceal, but – on the contrary – to make the beauty of Christ, the beauty of the faith, the beauty of the Church, the beauty of our communities, the beauty of our families, shine forth anew by the way we live... To the question what was the most important thing he wanted to transmit to the youth gathered in Cologne for the 20<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day, Pope Benedict XVI unhesi-

<sup>16</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *La Bellezza. La Chiesa*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana and ITACA, Roma 2005, 23.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> K. WOJTYŁA, *Our God's Brother*, in: IDEM, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, Trans. with introduction by Bolesław Taborski, University of California Press, Berkeley CA 1987, 227.

<sup>19</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 16.

tatingly replied: “I would like to make them understand that being Christian is beautiful!”,<sup>20</sup> a sentence that has almost become a motto of his pontificate. And the way of this beauty, as he explained to us in *Deus caritas est*, his first Encyclical Letter, is the way of love that becomes the unconditional gift of self to others.

The experience of the beauty of being Christians has found, and still finds in our day, a particularly fertile terrain in the ecclesial movements and new communities. It is certainly not by human merits, but by the divine gifts of grace represented by these movements’ charisms that they succeed in germinating real flowers of beauty in the life of Christian men and women, who by their witness challenge and provoke the indifference, humdrumness and mediocrity of the existence of so many, inspiring them with the desire for something different, something more beautiful, more true. The vocation of the movements and communities is just this: being a sign of contradiction, salt of the earth, light of the world (cf. *Mt 5: 13-16*). Their vocation is to proclaim to our contemporaries that the Gospel is not a utopia, but a spiritual journey towards the full life, and that being Christians is beautiful, a fascinating adventure that gives joy and happiness. It is just here that we find the real key to the question of how we should understand the ecclesial maturity of the movements. For the ultimate criterion of our being Christians, and the model against which we must constantly compare ourselves, is none other than the person of Christ, “the fairest of the sons of men”. Putting words into Christ’s mouth, Pascal writes with words charged with mysticism: “Do not compare yourself to others, but to me. If you do not find me in those to whom you compare yourself, you are comparing yourself with someone loathsome. If you do find me, compare yourself to them. But whom will you be comparing? Yourself, or me in you? If it is yourself, it is someone loathsome; if it is I, you are comparing me to myself. Now I am God in all things”.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Interview with Vatican Radio*, 16 August 2005.

<sup>21</sup> B. PASCAL, *Pensées*. Translated with an Introduction by A.J. Krailsheimer, Penguin Books, Revised edition, London 1995, 296: no. 929.



Our Congress, as you know, will culminate in the meeting of the ecclesial movements and new communities with Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square on 3 June, in the liturgical setting of the First Vespers of the solemnity of Pentecost. It's an important sign of continuity that the Pope has chosen to give, by convening the movements and communities on the same day in the Church calendar as their unforgettable meeting with John Paul II on 30 May 1998. The Holy Father expressed this desire during the first official audience he granted me as President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. It was the 14 May 2005: by a strange coincidence, the vigil of Pentecost! The Pope's invitation was accepted with great joy, enthusiasm and gratitude by all the movements, who took part with zeal and generosity in the itinerary of preparation for the event, immediately launched by the Council. One of the key stages in this preparatory process was the first Congress of the movements and new communities in Latin America, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in collaboration with CELAM and held at Bogotá, in Colombia, on 9-12 March this year on the theme: "Disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ today". It was a really important event in the life of the Church, especially in preparation for the Fifth Conference of the Latin-American episcopate planned for next year.

Ecclesial movements and new communities await with great joy the meeting with the Successor of Peter, who is for them in some sense their essential point of reference, from an ecclesial point of view. We are certain that this new meeting will mark an important milestone in the life of the movements and in the life of the Church in our time.

I wish to conclude by expressing the joy of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, which on occasions such as this realizes in practice the mission entrusted to it by the Pope of being a "common home" for all the ecclesial movements and new communities, as well as being the expression of his paternal affection for them.



## Christ, the fairest of the sons of Adam

Cardinal CHRISTOPH SCHÖNBORN, O.P.\*

I wish to open our meditation by looking at the feast of the Ascension we celebrated six days ago. To the “men of Galilee” who cannot remove their gaze from the cloud that conceals Jesus and that takes him out of their sight, the angels say: “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (*Acts* 1: 11).

Over thirty years ago – how quickly time flies, and how short is life! – I pointed out in my book on the icon of Christ, with regard to this annunciation of the angels, that the promise that Jesus would return “in the same way” in which the disciples had just seen him disappear from them, implies a task for the disciples left behind, in other words, for the Church: namely, the task of keeping alive the memory of his face, of the face of the One who, ever since then, has interceded for us with his and our Father, and impels her to profess her own faith in the second coming of the Lord. The icon is that profession: a constant reminder of the promised return of Christ. It is, so to say, the intermediate term between Incarnation and Eschatology, because it affirms the truth of both. Proclaiming at the same time the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Word, and that of the Lord who shall return to judge the living and the dead, the icon assumes a role of its own at the very heart of the profession of faith of the Church. It is almost its synthesis.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. C. SCHÖNBORN, O.P., *God's Human Face: The Christ Icon*. Translated by Lothar Krauth, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1994, 137 (first published as *L'Icone du Christ. Fondements théologiques élaborés entre le I<sup>er</sup> et le II<sup>e</sup> Concile de Nicée [325-787 AD]*, Editions Universitaires, Fribourg, 1976).

The icon of Christ: for many Christians the oriental tradition of the icon, of its painting, of its spirituality, has become almost a point of contact, a point of encounter for all the faithful and is almost omnipresent in the Church of the East and of the West. Its figurative language, its symbolism, its appeal seem truly to touch the heart of many of our contemporaries. It is often asked, especially in our own time, why the art of the icon has won this status as a privileged expression of the Christian faith. This could be an aspect of “fashion” (for which some Orthodox reprove the Christians of the West, having the sensation that their oriental tradition is being “abused” by Westerners); but I think it’s something more profound. The *sensus fidei* recognizes in the iconic tradition of the East a kind of “canonical” expression of our faith, an expression that transcends the cultural fashions and fluctuations in form and style of Christian art. The icon is not immutable, not something transcending space and time, but subject to stylistic variations: it presents various schools, “cultural nuances”; it is not static and immobile, as it is often accused of being. So what is the secret of its appeal, the key to understanding its mystery, and the reason for its great “stability” of expression?

I think the ultimate reason is the Mystery of Christ himself, the Word that became flesh, the God who became man, and who thus became “circumscribable”, as the saints who defended sacred images, Theodore the Studite and Nicephorus of Constantinople, liked to put it. Apart from the various cultural influences, references to particular iconographic traditions and changes in artistic language, there is a common background, a single source of the art of the icon: the mystery of the Holy Face of Jesus Christ.

The source is that single face, the face of the Jesus whom the apostles had known, with whom they had eaten and drunk, whom they had then seen transfigured and then mocked, the Christ resplendent in the divine glory of Tabor, then scourged and crowned with thorns. It is this single face of Jesus, son of Mary, Son of God, that impressed itself in the memory of Peter; the gaze of the Lord whom Peter had just denied and who looked at him in a way that nothing thenceforth was able to wipe it out from his memory and from his heart.

The essence of the icon, its fidelity to the archetype – which some even accuse of immobility – and its immutable appeal is precisely this Jesus. The icon attracts us because it is the icon *of Christ*; it speaks to us because we want to *see* Christ. The very fact that believers (and often non-believers too), when they look at an icon of Christ, can say: “It’s Jesus!”, shows that the image speaks to them. In iconographic art what really matters is not its artistic quality, its intrinsic greatness as a work of art – however important that is and a far from negligible quality, given that it is a real *mediation* for the meeting with Christ –, but the power of the presence of Christ himself.

It is not my intention here to discuss the aesthetics of the icon, the more properly artistic aspect. There are excellent specialist studies on this question. I wish, rather, to draw your attention to a surprising fact that struck me when I was studying the texts of the eighth and ninth century on the iconoclastic dispute, the great struggle for or against the role of sacred images within Christianity. In all this literature I found no trace of an aesthetic debate. The problem of the beauty of holy icons seems to have played no role. At least, I found no trace of it.<sup>2</sup> How can we explain this fact? I gave a first explanation in my book on *God’s Human Face. The Christ-Icon*. I suggested that the lack of aesthetic considerations is explained by the fact that, both on the one side and the other, it was never a question of placing in doubt the legitimacy of art as such. The dispute regarded solely the extension of art beyond the profane sphere, its intrusion into the sacred sphere.<sup>3</sup> The iconoclasts, as also Islam, did not reject art, but wanted to limit it to the profane sphere. Iconoclasm was, in some sense, a radical secularization of art, a de-sacralization of artistic activity reduced to pure decoration, to the ornament of profane life. But what explains the rejection of any sacred character of art? It is not just the secularisation of artistic activity, but, at a deeper level, a precise conception of what is “Christian” and hence of what is the Mystery of Christ. From this

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 237.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

point of view, it is significant, indeed, that the whole debate to justify Christian art, the sacred images of Christ and of his saints, revolves round the Mystery of Christ.

Studying the controversy on images, I was also struck by the clarity with which the defenders of icons saw in this debate not an aesthetic, but primarily a christological question. The Fathers at the Second Council of Nicea (787) were fully conscious of this. For them the affirmation of the legitimacy of the icon of Christ was like the seal on the recognition of His divinity (Nicea I) and of His divine humanity (Chalcedon). In 843 the Orthodox Church celebrated the final victory of the defenders of images as “the triumph of Orthodoxy”, a triumph also celebrated liturgically each year on the first Sunday of Lent.

The icon of Christ as synthesis of the Christian faith! It may seem an exaggeration but, looked at more closely, that is far from being so. Let me explain briefly why it is not.

#### A NEW VIEW

At the end of my research on the theological foundations of the icon of Christ, I came to the conclusion that there is a close link between the view of the divine and human mystery of Christ and the conception of art. The Incarnation, in fact, did not simply transform our knowledge of God: it also changed man’s view of the world, man’s view of himself and his own actions in the world. Consequently, the creative activity of artists was inevitably touched, transformed by the mystery of the Incarnation. If Christ came to renew the whole man, re-create him according to the image of which He himself is the model, was there not also a need for the vision, the sensibility and the creativity of artists to be in turn re-created in the image of the One “through whom all things were created” (*Col* 1: 16; cf. also *Jn* 1: 3)? Seen in this light, the attempt to relegate art to the “profane” is revealed as the sign of a profound crisis of the theocentric view of the world and of man.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 238.

There is a way of testing this thesis that is of such great actuality in our time: the relation of Islam with sacred art. I am far from competent in this field, but I defer to the studies of experts. The fact that Islam rejects, in general, the anthropomorphic image and leaves scope only for ornament and, especially, for writing, does not derive from an artistic and aesthetic theory, but is the direct consequence of Islam's view of the one God who has no image or likeness, no kinship, in this world, and whom nothing can represent, portray, or even, in some sense, symbolise. During a journey to Iran in 2001, I was struck by the insistence with which people explained to me that I ought not to speak of man made in the image of God. Islam firmly rejects what for the Judaeo-Christian faith is a truth confirmed by the power of the mystery of the Incarnation, namely, that man truly is made *ad imaginem et similitudinem* – in the image and likeness – of his Creator. God is one and without equal: the Sura al-Tawhíd (*Cor. \*CXII*), which every devout Muslim recites each day, says: “He is God, the One, he is God, the Only, he does not beget and was not begotten. He has no equal” (more precisely “nothing akin”).

So it follows that, in the Islamic conception, there can be no image of God in the world. The *aniconism* of Islam is not primarily an aesthetic theory, but the consequence of faith in a God that nothing in our world can represent. Only the light, in the mosque, the *mibrâb*, is, according to some experts, a metaphoric evocation of the divine; and light, as we know, has neither form nor figure.<sup>5</sup>

How different is the Christian view! Since the Creator speaks through his creature, the traces of the divine are really “legible”, albeit with some difficulty. And in the creation it is especially man who is made in the image of God: the human person is a true deputy of God. The whole work of the Creator, *in primis* humankind, speaks of Him. The prohibition of the image in the Old Covenant has more a peda-

<sup>5</sup> Cf. ASSADHULLAH SOUREN MELIKIEN CHIRANI, “L’Islam, le Verbe et l’image”, in: F. BOESPFLUG – N. LOSSKY [eds.], *Nicée II. 787-1987. Douze siècles d’images religieuses*, Paris, 1987, 89-117.

gological than ontological significance: given that the heart of man is a breeding-ground of idols, every temptation of idolatry had to be eliminated. But God is essentially known through his works. And this opens the door to sacred art.

The Mystery of the combined divinity and humanity of Christ digs deep into the order of creation revealing its definitive greatness: there really does exist a human face that is “the image of the invisible God” (cf. *Col 1: 15*). Since the Word became flesh and Christ, in spite of his divinity, assumed the condition and humanity of the slave, human realities, the things of this world, have become the place of his presence: they are able to be the expression of Him, a trace of his presence, his language.

The paintings of Caravaggio are for me a manifestation of extraordinary intensity of the combined human and divine foundation of art that developed in Christendom. The *Madonna dei pellegrini* in the church of Sant’Agostino in Rome is, in my view, an astonishing example of this. The kneeling pilgrims, bare-footed (the soles of their feet grimy with dust) before this matron with a child now too large for the mother to comfortably hold in her arms: the whole painting emanates a “carnal” realism (as Charles Péguy would put it) that could scandalize (and has scandalized) some as devoid of the sense and dimension of the sacred. But it is just the realism of the Incarnation that enables us to draw close to, and identify with the saints, Christ and his Mother in so down-to-earth a way.

Christian faith in the Incarnation is the source of an art that bows down with humility but with great attention to the things of the earth. I would go further and suggest that the great development of art, both sacred and profane, in the Christian world is the result (without denying other sources) primarily of that unprecedented ‘yes’ to the earth that is the Incarnation of the Son of God. This ‘yes’ to reality, to matter, to the visible world is at the root of the explosion of creativity in Western art. I willingly admit that this thesis has a need to be examined in greater depth: a task to which our workgroups could dedicate themselves.



CHRIST IS BEAUTY

I dare to go even further: we are familiar with the classic teaching on the “trascendentals”, truth, goodness and beauty. All are attributes that are not external to God, but are God himself. He is truth. He is goodness. He is love. He is beauty. Truth and goodness, love and beauty are, as the scholastics said, convertible and coincide with God’s very being.

Each created beauty participates in the infinite beauty of God’s being. If that is so, we need to take a further step and say that the Word, by becoming flesh, has so to say “incarnated” the goodness and love, the truth and the infinite beauty of God. Christ is “the fairest of the sons of men” (*Ps* 45 [44]: 3) not due to particular aesthetic peculiarities, but because he is the incarnate beauty of God. His whole being is love and truth, goodness and beauty.

So, if it is true that Christ can say of himself: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (*Jn* 14: 6), he can with equal certainty affirm: I am beauty. He can say of himself what God alone can say: I am. Being, truth and goodness are, according to the scholastic terminology, “convertible”. If Christ is truth and goodness, he is also their splendour: the beauty of God. *Splendor Veritatis, Splendor Boni!*

To sum up this second stage in our brief reflection, and modifying a sentence of St. Irenaeus who says: Christ, by coming among us, brought with him everything that is new,<sup>6</sup> I would say: Christ, by being incarnated, brought with him everything that is beautiful. He is the measure of beauty. It is Christ, by his coming, who brought a new vision of beauty; in some sense he is “the canon of beauty”. He did not simply restore to the creation the original beauty that had been lost and profaned by sin and by evil, but he brought, in his very person, the source of all beauty. From him the living waters of beauty are poured down on the world, and all the beauties of the world, be they of nature, virtue or art, are reflections of his beauty.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. IRENAEUS OF LYON, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 34, 1.

“You are the fairest of the sons of men”. This statement of Psalm 45, the royal wedding song, if read as a prophecy of Christ, does not mean that Jesus is, according to some criteria borrowed from a human aesthetic, the most perfect model of beauty. It means, instead: You are the source of every human beauty. In you is revealed what beauty is, and from you we receive the eyes to see it, the criteria to recognize it and the strength to imitate and irradiate it.

#### CHRIST LEADS US ON THE WAY OF HIS BEAUTY

So we must look at, contemplate Christ, source of divine beauty that has become accessible to us thanks to his Incarnation. I would go further and propose to you a conviction, an intuition, that I think can be verified in a thousand ways: where Christ is, there is beauty. Wherever hearts, spirits and lives are opened to Christ, the banks of beauty are broken and a floodtide of life-giving water is poured over a world polluted by sin, disfigured by the ugliness of evil.

That has been so for two thousand years, and I think that the whole of our Congress in preparation for the meeting of Pentecost has this meaning: to see how the seeds of beauty scattered by Christ grow and bear fruit.

We need in the first place to focus our attention on the most extraordinary fruit of the beauty of Christ: holiness. Nothing shows more clearly the combined human and divine truth and goodness of Christ than this belt of light, this Milky Way, this luminous cloud formed of the innumerable saints whom he inspired to follow in his footsteps. There is nothing in the world more beautiful than holiness. It may be said of the saints what the Letter to the Hebrews says of Christ: they are “the reflection of God’s glory” (*Heb 1: 3*). I think it’s enough to say so to yield to the evidence.

On various occasions Cardinal Ratzinger, great admirer and connoisseur of the Franciscan tradition, has emphasized this striking fact: the *Poverello* of Assisi, who sought only to follow Christ in poverty

and humiliation, caused not only a great spiritual movement in the Church, but also aroused a luminous trail of artistic beauty. Giotto and Cimabue, to limit ourselves to them, appear as a real explosion of artistic creativity that still represents today the greatest heritage of art in Europe and, I would dare to say, in the world. Christ, who, with his Spirit, arouses this river of holiness, is also the living source of so much artistic beauty. How can we close our eyes to this evidence?

In his play *Our God's Brother* on the holy friar Albert, Karol Wojtyła, the Servant of God John Paul II, spoke of another beauty, that of charity.<sup>7</sup> How, he asked, can we fail to realize this evidence, of Christ who gave to the world another beauty, that of charity? What would our world be without the reality of charity? Precisely because, whether consciously or not, we all experience it in our lives, we risk no longer seeing how much the beauty of charity, which springs from the unquenchable fire of love that is the heart of Jesus, shines forth in our cruel, harsh and inhumane world.

At this point, it's enough that we have indicated these three luminous ways of the beauty of Christ for the continuation of our work: holiness, the art inspired by it and the charity that is its echo.

In conclusion, I wish to propose to you a passage of St. Augustine, a comment on the third verse of *Psalms* 44 (45): "You are the fairest of the sons of men". We could cite other passages, in particular the one of extraordinary intensity, Augustine's comment on the First Letter of St. John, in which he speaks of two apparently contradictory biblical texts, the one I have just cited from *Psalms* 45 (44), and that of the Prophet Isaiah's fourth song of the servant, who "has no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows [...]" (*Is* 53: 2-3). The Holy Father admirably commented on these verses in 2002, in a Message to the Meeting for friendship among peo-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Our God's Brother*, in: IDEM, *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, Trans. with introduction by Bolesław Taborski, University of California Press, Berkeley CA 1987, 227.

ples at Rimini.<sup>8</sup> Many other patristic texts could be cited on the contrast between these two prophetic passages; we will limit ourselves to citing that of St. Augustine's *Enarrationes in Ps 44*: "The time has come to cite this prophetic oracle in this regard: Here is how the bridegroom in person presents himself to us: let us love him, on the contrary, let us not love him if we find in him something ugly. How much ugliness has he found in us! Despite that he loved us! If we find ugliness in him, we deny him our love. In fact, even when he clothed himself in our flesh so much so that one could say of him: 'he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him' (*Is 53: 2*), even that is beautiful, if we consider the compassion that moved him to incarnate himself. But the prophet spoke on behalf of the Jews when he said: 'he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him'. Why? Because they failed to understand anything of him. But those who have understood the meaning of these words: 'And the Word became flesh' (*Jn 1: 14*), discover in them a great beauty: 'As for me, says St. Paul, may God guard me against glorifying anything other than the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Not blushing for it would be too little: we also need to glorify it! Why did he have neither comeliness nor beauty? 'For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men!' (*1 Cor 1: 23-25*). To those of us who believe, the bridegroom must appear beautiful in every circumstance. Beautiful since he is God, because he is 'the Word in God'; beautiful in the lap of the Virgin where, without losing divinity, he assumed humanity; beautiful, the Word born as a child, because when he was an infant, when he sucked the breast of his mother, when he was carried in her arms, the heavens spoke, the angels sang his praise, and a star led the Magi to him; he was adored in the stable, in a manger for animals! Therefore, he was beautiful in heaven and on earth; beautiful in his miracles and under the lash; beautiful when he

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *La Bellezza. La Chiesa*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana and Itaca, Roma 2005.

invited men to life and in the disdain he showed for death; beautiful when he gave up his own spirit and when he regained it; beautiful on the wood of the cross; beautiful in the tomb, beautiful in heaven. You will therefore understand the meaning of the song you hear, and the weakness of the flesh shall not blind your eyes to the splendour of his beauty. The supreme, true beauty is justice; beauty cannot be discovered wherever there is injustice. The being absolutely just is absolutely beautiful. May he therefore show himself to the eyes of your soul".<sup>9</sup>

Whatever comes from Christ is beautiful: that's how we could sum up this passage of St. Augustine. It is beautiful because it comes from Christ. For in him everything irradiates justice, charity and love.

How can this affirmation be better explained? Was Padre Pio beautiful? Certainly not, according to the criteria of the world; certainly yes, according to the beauty of Christ. Sorin Dimitescu, an accomplished artist (and courageous editor), painter of contemporary icons, has published a calendar with twelve close-up portraits of Orthodox Romanian *starezi*. The beauty of these old wrinkled faces with their deep furrows is a clear proof of what is the beauty of Christ.

I could multiply examples, as you too could do. But I will limit myself here to posing two questions that disturb me. Why is so much sacred art in our time so ugly? The Vatican Museum of Modern Art leaves me perplexed and even disconcerted. Why has sacred art strayed so far from its great expressions of the past? Is it the fault of the general crisis of art and culture in our time? Do we need to learn anew how to express the mystery of Christ from artists who are not even Christians? Are there signs of any genuine revival of art inspired by this mystery?

Another question: why has the liturgy lost so much of its sense of beauty? Why is there so much bad taste in everything that surrounds the celebration of the mystery of the faith? Ought it not to give rise to the most consummate of beauties? Whence comes this impoverishment in so many of our liturgical expressions? Have we lost the sense

<sup>9</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Enarrationes in Ps 44*, no. 3.

for the sacred? And, if so, is it not, at a deeper level, a weakening of the presence, of the perception of the mystery of Christ? Have we lost our rooting in Christ, source of beauty, beauty itself?

These are two questions that leave us troubled; we cannot avoid them, but nor can we allow ourselves to be trapped by them. It is possible, indeed, that the beauty of Christ is hidden in the poverty of our cultural expressions; perhaps we need to dig deeper to rediscover the source of beauty. It has not ceased to flow, but it may be more hidden from our eyes, more obscure in these times of darkness. I would like to end these reflections with a memory that is of fundamental value for me. It was during a meeting on sacred art held near Le Mans some twenty years ago. We were a group of young Catholic intellectuals who were taking part in this session. Sunday arrived. Where should we go to Mass? We found ourselves in a suburban area of the town and a modern church was pointed out to us. It was in fact a multi-purpose hall, without any visible sign of being a place of worship on the outside. All around it were high-rise buildings, a kind of council housing estate. Sunday liturgy: the music, uninspiring choruses; the style, post-1968; the organ, a tape-recording. In short, everything that could be found distasteful in the midst of a session of sacred art was present here. Listening to some of our rather sarcastic comments on this liturgy, Dominique Ponneau, then director of the *École du Louvre*, interrupted us and said in a firm but not sad voice: "It was the Mass". I will never forget that moment. Yes, in that aesthetic poverty, in that cultural wasteland, it was the Mass. Thanks, my friend, for having restored us, with a single word, to the essence, to the Mystery present in the midst of our poverty.

Yes. Christ, all his beauty, is hidden below the veil of the poor signs of his sacraments; hidden under the rubble of us sinners, but really present. It is up to us to seek it, to excavate through the dross to find the living source, the wellspring of life, in the wilderness of our days. The beauty of Christ is there. I dare to paraphrase a precept of the Lord: "Don't go around saying 'here it is, or there it is'. My beauty is in the midst of you!" (cf. *Lk* 17: 21).

## The beauty of being Christians

Cardinal MARC OUELLET, P.S.S.\*

The idea of beauty brings to mind landscapes, works of art, exceptional exploits, gestures of love or more generally images that attract and move the heart and quicken the energies of human beings. The beautiful is whatever pleases and attracts, wrote Plato. Beauty evokes harmony, singularity, even uniqueness. At the same time it implies diversity, since the uniqueness of a gesture or a work can only be appreciated in relation to a wider context in which that gesture or that work is distinguished and stands out as something extraordinary and wonderful, in short a miracle. We may think of Michelangelo's *Pietà* or Mozart's *Jupiter* symphony.

The beauty of the love between mother and child stands out as something unique against the background of countless other human relationships, none of which has the intimacy, continuity and intensity of the relation between mother and child. The same goes for weddings, which remain, in spite of the growing difficulties that marriage is encountering in our time, one of the most beautiful symbols of human existence, due both to the relationship of love that weddings imply and the meaning of life they celebrate. Weddings are the privileged image that God uses to express the mystery of his covenant with the work of his hands, with the being he has created.

On the theological level, the perception of the beautiful (glory) depends on the divine revelation and on the conditions it imposes and presupposes if it is to be grasped by the human spirit. Hans Urs von Balthasar thought that it was just from the viewpoint of beauty that the manifestation of God in history appears in all its specificity. He writes:

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“What God wishes to say to man in Christ [...] is a deed on his behalf [...] credible only as love – specifically, as God’s own love, the manifestation of which is the glory of God. Christian self-understanding [...] can be interpreted [...] solely in terms of the self-glorification of divine love”.<sup>1</sup>

To be able to perceive this love there needs to be, according to St. Thomas, a certain connaturality between subject and object. To grasp the divine love in its peculiar glory, more is needed than the natural capacity to admire the beauty of things, works of art or human relationships. A gift of the Holy Spirit is needed: a gift that arouses faith in man, the faith of the Church, a divine and catholic faith. What is needed is a faith that is not only the spirit’s assent to abstract truths or an emotional impulse of pure abandonment to the Mystery; what is needed is a christological faith that shares the perspective of Jesus, his innate attitude of accepting the will of the Father and of loving obedience to the end. Such a faith is acquired not by imitation but by gratuitous communication of the Holy Spirit. It is a gift that springs from the beauty of Christ, his resurrection from the dead. For the resurrection of Christ is the radiance of the trinitarian glory. It is the witness of the plenitude of love at the heart of the Trinity that makes its irruption into history. In response to the gift of the Father – who begets and gives his Son out of love – and its reciprocity in the gift of the Son, the Holy Spirit effects the glory of God to spring forth and radiate in the flesh of Christ, the glory of God as absolute love. The radiance of this glory on the Lord’s face announces at the same time the fulfilment of the covenant between God and man, the birth of the Church as Bride and Body of Christ, and her evangelising mission that embraces the whole world.

With regard to the theme that was entrusted to me – “The beauty of being Christians” – two observations immediately occur to me. The first regards the plural “Christians”, as if to say that the identity of the baptized is never merely individual, but always implies others, because

<sup>1</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Love Alone is Credible*, translated by D.C. Schindler, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2005, 10.



we are created and re-created in Jesus Christ, in the image and likeness of the trinitarian God. The second is that this theme, however fascinating, is also formidable and largely ignored. Usually, in fact, we prefer to present Christianity from the viewpoint of truth and goodness rather than from the viewpoint of beauty. So I could not tackle it without introducing it in the way I have done, at least by evoking the glory of God that is manifested in the resurrection of Christ.

But is aesthetics really a fruitful way for the Church today? Kierkegaard warned against the superficiality of the “aesthetic” stage of existence, that of the dilettante who does not thoroughly or enduringly commit his own person. Would not certain aspects of Christianity, uprooted from their vital sources, risk in this way being crystallized as cultural residues of a bygone age? Does beauty have sufficient strength to vigorously revive evangelization in a world that yearns for values but that is withdrawn from a God it thinks it knows but whose Word and face it is ignorant of? I pose these questions as a provocation with which all of us have to come to terms and which challenges not only the social commitment to a cause but the dramatic response of the whole person and the whole Church to the absolute love manifested in Jesus Christ.

I hazard the hypothesis, however, that the way of beauty understood in this radical sense is precisely that of the ecclesial movements and new communities. At the dawn of the third millennium are we not perhaps called to begin afresh from the beauty of Christ? Do we not owe our drive and our power of attraction to a new perception of the beauty of Christ? Just like St. Francis who, in the Middle Ages, set about restoring the beauty of the Church after his encounter with the Crucifix of San Damiano.

#### THE BEAUTY OF THE CHURCH, A PROGRAMME?

I would begin by saying that the theme of beauty which forms the common denominator for the reflection of this assembly has a sum-

mary and programmatic value, all the more so as it is inspired by the first homily of our beloved Holy Father Benedict XVI. It has a summary value because it presupposes the findings presented by the then Cardinal Ratzinger in his magisterial address to the Congress in 1998. His lecture on charisms in the Tradition was aimed at better defining the theological place of the ecclesial movements and new communities in the Church and fostering a universal recognition of their nature and original contribution. His analysis remains of capital importance to complete the reform and current renewal of the Church in the conciliar line of a “hermeneutic [...] of renewal in the continuity”.<sup>2</sup>

In his first encyclical Benedict XVI chose to focus on beauty by examining the harmony between divine love and human love. The extremely positive response to the encyclical shows the relevance of his choice aimed at “calling forth in the world renewed energy and commitment in the human response to God’s love”.<sup>3</sup> He therefore encourages us to let our lives be inspired by the beauty of love and to communicate our joy in believing. But this is something we would not define as a programme, because it is a grace, the grace of the holiness that the Holy Spirit grants to those who wish it and does not refuse to those who make it the object of their own humble daily prayer.

#### BEHOLDING AND BEING ENRAPTURED BY THE FORM OF JESUS CHRIST

Hans Urs von Balthasar meditates at length on the Christian revelation from the viewpoint of beauty. *Gloria*, his “theological aesthetics” in seven volumes, was written when the Fathers of Vatican Council II were living the great Pentecost that he called “the Council of the Holy Spirit”. Von Balthasar chose to consider the Christian revelation from this viewpoint in the firm conviction that the perspective of glory (the theological

<sup>2</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Christmas greetings to the Roman Curia and Prelature, 22 December 2005.

<sup>3</sup> IDEM, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 1.

name of beauty) is the most all-inclusive and permits the originality and power of attraction of the Christian experience to be placed in relief. He writes: “We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if She were the ornament of a bourgeois past – whether he admits it or not – can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love”.<sup>4</sup>

Von Balthasar’s central intuition is summed up in the little book *Love Alone is Credible*, where he shows that the way of the beautiful not only responds to the deepest aspirations of the human heart, but goes beyond the satisfaction of his emotional and rational needs, and touches the deepest dimension of being, where the person responds to the call of gratuitous love manifested in Jesus Christ. Let us follow him along this way, starting out from two other preliminary considerations, one of a methodological and the other of an historical order, with the aim of situating our analysis in the current context of secularised cultures. Von Balthasar introduces his aesthetic method as follows: “If all beauty is objectively located at the intersection of two moments that Thomas [Aquinas] calls *species* and *lumen* (‘form’ and ‘splendour’), then the encounter of these is characterized by these two moments of beholding and being enraptured”.<sup>5</sup>

Beholding the form of glory of God on Christ’s face and being enraptured by his splendour to the point of being lifted out of oneself, of being stripped of self, and placed at the service of the triune love in the Church: that in short is the Christian experience of the beautiful. It’s a perception and a being enraptured that may only come from a real personal encounter. “Being Christian – writes Benedict XVI in his first encyclical – is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction”.<sup>6</sup> This fundamental affirmation, made in the very first page of the encyclical, gives it a decidedly aesthetic character, in the

<sup>4</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol. I: *Seeing the Form*, translated by E. Leiva-Merikakis, Ignatius Press, San Francisco/Crossroads Publications, New York, 1982, 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 1.

strongest theological sense of the term: it especially invites adoration, but also implies total self-giving in following in the footsteps of Christ, and the practice of *diakonia*, taken if need be to the point of *martyria*.<sup>7</sup>

Exploring this perception of beauty is an urgent task today because contemporary man, possessed as he is by scepticism and relativism, is far less receptive to truth and goodness. He thinks, whether rightly or wrongly, that the affirmation of Truth has historically generated intolerance and that the imposition of a universal moral good is incompatible with his freedom. The harmony between truth, goodness and freedom has been shattered and the task of Christians consists in restoring it on the basis of their personal encounter with the living person of Christ, who re-awakens the heart of man and gives meaning to his life by opening it to the totality of the real.<sup>8</sup>

The gravest problem that afflicts our secularised cultures, however, is a narcissistic self-regard, a turning in on ourselves, that corrupts human relations and pollutes the general climate of society.<sup>9</sup> It's enough to ascertain its repercussions on the customs, traditions and laws of the family – all of them under threat – to gauge the social and cultural consequences of the breaking of the living relation with the God of Jesus Christ.

And this brings us to the other consideration, that of an historical order, that we need to touch on in tackling the theme of the beauty of being Christians from the perspective of their condition in the world: a dramatic condition that implies an endless struggle against the spirit of the world. The *Letter to Diognetus* describes this in a way that has lost none of its relevance. Outwardly, the condition of Christians is apparently identical to that of their contemporaries, but in their intimate

<sup>7</sup> “The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leiturgia*), and exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*) [...] For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being” (*ibid.*, no. 25).

<sup>8</sup> This was the subject for analysis in John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis splendor*.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. T. ANATRELLA, *Le règne de Narcisse*, Gallimard, Paris 2005.

being they often experience situations of tension and conflict with the surrounding environment: “Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonour, but that is their glory”. Christians “live in the flesh, but are not governed by the desires of the flesh”. “The Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body”. “Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body’s hatred”. And the author ends with a maxim that sums up his whole argument: “God has placed them in so noble a situation that it is not permitted to them to abandon it”.<sup>10</sup>

Now that we have prepared the ground, we come to the crux of our theme, the crux of the beauty of being Christians, conscious as we are that this plural is not in any way in contradiction to the uniqueness of the individual, since the divine love that shines forth in the face of Christ and of the Christians who are his disciples makes every man and woman unique and unrepeatable. God’s love revives the uniqueness of each person, and enhances what is most personal and free in each. Indeed we may go further: the uniqueness of Christianity, what makes it different from any other religion, consists in the paradox that it in some sense *absolutizes* the uniqueness of each person, at the same time that it *relativizes* him by making him fully relational. Let me explain better what I mean. The triune image of God in man, already perceivable in natural family relationships, recalls us to an ever-greater mutual self-giving. And this mutual love tends to maximise the coincidence between person and love, between gift of self and self-realization.<sup>11</sup> It is by losing himself in others that the person is found. It is by relating to others that the person discovers himself and recognizes himself to be more substantial, more real, than in his isolation.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Letter to Diognetus*, 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. M. OUELLET, *Divine ressemblance. Le mariage et la famille dans la mission de l'Église*, Ed. Anne Sigier, Québec 2006.

FULL OF GRACE

Mary, full of grace, is the perfect expression of the yearning for beauty innate in every person. “From generation to generation – says Benedict XVI – the wonder evoked by this ineffable mystery [of the Incarnation] never ceases. St. Augustine imagines a dialogue between himself and the Angel of the Annunciation, in which he asks: ‘Tell me, O Angel, why did this happen to Mary?’. The answer, says the Messenger, is contained in the very words of the greeting: ‘Hail, full of grace’ (cf. *Sermo* 291, 6). In fact, the Angel, ‘in coming to her’, does not call her by her earthly name, Mary, but by her divine name, just in the way that God always sees her and qualifies her: ‘Full of grace – *gratia plena*’, which in the original Greek is *kecharitoméne*, ‘full of grace’, and grace is none other than the love of God; thus, in the end, we can translate this word: ‘beloved’ of God (cf. *Lk* 1: 28). Origen observes that no such title had ever been given to a human being, and that it is unparalleled in all of Sacred Scripture (cf. *In Lucam* 6, 7). It is a title expressed in passive form, but this ‘passivity’ of Mary, who has always been and is for ever ‘loved’ by the Lord, implies her free consent, her personal and original response: in *being loved*, in receiving the gift of God, Mary is fully *active*, because she accepts with personal generosity the wave of God’s love poured out upon her. In this too, she is the perfect disciple of her Son, who realizes the fullness of his freedom and thus exercises his freedom through obedience to the Father”.<sup>12</sup> Citing the Letter to the Hebrews in the same homily, the Pope underlines the beauty of the nuptial structure of the new covenant: “When Christ came into the world, he said: ‘... Here I am, I have come to do your will, O God’ (*Heb* 10: 5-7). Before the mystery of these two ‘Here I am’ statements, the ‘Here I am’ of the Son and the ‘Here I am’ of the Mother, each of which is reflected in the other, forming a single *Amen* to God’s loving will, we are filled with wonder and thanksgiving, and we bow down in adoration”.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Homily on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of Our Lord, St. Peter’s Square, 25 March 2006.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

*Kecharitoméne* in Greek, *Gratia plena* in Latin. Full of grace. Why place this title at the centre of our analysis? Because in her we find the beauty of the *whole in the fragment*, to put it in the words of the title of another book by the great Swiss theologian. The whole, that is, of God, the Church, humanity, the family, in a woman preserved from all original sin, a woman perfectly transparent for divine love to shine through, crowned by stars in the midst of the labour of giving birth to life eternal among us. A woman, Mary of Nazareth, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, who lives in us, her children, and pours into us her incomparable beauty.

Beauty of Mary, the beauty of being Christians under her protection, for what she possesses as a unique privilege she lavishes totally on us through her perfect correspondence with the triune Spirit dwelling within her. The Holy Spirit is in God the glory of love (St. Gregory of Nyssa). He gives himself and effaces himself between the Father and the Son to glorify their mutual love. So Mary, Daughter of Zion, lives in the unity of the Church, in perichoresis with the people of God, ever since she was raised to the status of Spouse of the Lamb by her station at the foot of the cross. Then, on Golgotha, on the dark night of the faith, Mary became one with her Son in abandonment to God and, associated with that abandonment, became fruitful in him; by means of him she became the vessel through which were channelled all the graces that were poured down on souls from the cross.

So the beauty of being Christians is transmitted from her to us by osmosis, less by imitation than by generation, since we are reproductions of her Christian beauty due to her effective mediation that is the work of the Holy Spirit. This unique experience of Mary is the archetypal experience.<sup>14</sup> It is the living response of her immaculate heart to

<sup>14</sup> The notion of archetypal experience, developed amply by von Balthasar in: *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol. I: *Seeing the Form*, cit., 301 ff., implies the idea of model but also that of mediation: “The archetype, by its very nature, has a maternal form and under its ‘protective mantle’ it embraces the progeny that will imitate it” (*ibid.*, 313).

the grace of God's love, "the response of the 'Bride', who in grace calls out, 'Come' (*Rev* 22: 17) and, 'Let it be to me according to your word' (*Lk* 1: 38), who 'carries within the seed of God' and therefore 'does not sin' (*1 Jn* 3: 9), but 'kept all of these things, pondering them in her heart' (*Lk* 2: 19, 51). She, the pure one, is 'placed, blameless and glorious' (*Eph* 5: 26-27; *2 Cor* 11: 2), before him, by the blood of God's love, as the 'handmaid' (*Lk* 1: 38), as the 'lowly servant' (*Lk* 1: 48) [...] and 'looks to him in reverent modesty, submissive before him (*Eph* 5: 24, 33; *Col* 3: 18)".<sup>15</sup>

The immaculate and boundless *fiat* of Mary accepts the incarnation of the Son of God in the totality of his mysteries, from conception to birth, passion and death, down to the resurrection, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Eucharist that gives birth to his body the Church. The "full of grace", immaculate and fruitful Virgin, is made available and offered by the providential action of the Holy Spirit, who enables the divine fruitfulness to pass from Christ to her and from her to us. In all these mysteries that she embraces and meditates in her heart, "Mary's whole experience [...] is an experience for others – for all. It is an expropriated experience for the benefit of all, [...] as if the Mother must increasingly renounce everything vitally personal to her for the sake of the Church. [...] Progressively every shade of personal intimacy is taken from her, to be increasingly applied to the good of the Church and of Christians: 'Behold your son!'"<sup>16</sup>

## BEAUTY OF THE CHURCH AS COMMUNION, FULLNESS OF HUMANITY

Through the centuries the Christian experience of beauty has found expression in innumerable works of art, in painting, architecture and music, but it is primarily expressed in prayer and in action,

<sup>15</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Love Alone is Credible*, cit., 77-78.

<sup>16</sup> IDEM, *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol. I: *Seeing the Form*, cit., 340-341.



through gestures, forms of life, personal and community vocations, in short in the Church as communion, whose mission it is to bear witness to the hope that dwells in her. The martyrs and saints give this witness by their fidelity to the original archetypal form of the witness of the Church.<sup>17</sup> This original form is triune, christological and Marian: “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love” (Jn 15: 8-9).

Three complementary moments in Mary’s existence show this form in action and the nuptial paradigm that characterises the relations between God and his people: 1) the fact of being loved and accepting God’s will; 2) the experience of conception in the Holy Spirit; 3) the active accompaniment of the incarnate Word during the whole of her earthly and heavenly life. The saints reproduce in some way this model that illuminates the whole life of the people of God and that shows the impact of faith on the meaning and beauty of human existence.

Communion with the mysteries of the incarnate Word in fact throws a decisive light on the beauty and joy of human existence: on God at the centre of human life, the light of love that confirms and fulfils the humanity of man and woman, following the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth. What good news for our world in the process of de-humanization! How beautiful it is to respond to the call of love in every state of life and thus be fully human! How beautiful it is to love in the Christian way without self-withdrawal, to study, to work, to marry, to give oneself to God in the priesthood and in consecrated life, to sacrifice oneself for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted! Just before her ultimate sacrifice, St. Gianna Beretta Molla, browsing

<sup>17</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Love Alone is Credible*, cit., 75-82. The author specifies as follows “the conditions for man’s perception of divine love: 1) the Church as the spotless Bride in her core, 2) Mary, the Mother-Bride, as the locus, at the heart of the Church, where the fiat of the response and reception is real, 3) the Bible, which as spirit (-witness) can be nothing other than the Word of God bound together in an indissoluble unity with the response of faith” (p. 78-79).

through a fashion magazine, confided to her husband that if she ever got over that trial, she would like a beautiful dress. The saints are close to the little things of life. The mystery of the Incarnation protects them from esoteric spiritualities. For all the realities of human life are illuminated, charged and transformed by the presence of Jesus in our midst and by the wonder of the eucharistic mystery: God with us, the Bridegroom who comes to consecrate every human reality and to congregate everything in the unity of a single Body and a single Spirit.

One of the tasks that the ecclesial movements and new communities are called to perform in the world and in the Church today is to educate people to lead a genuinely human life, to teach them about the fullness of humanity that begins with the family, and that implies respect for the whole person and solidarity with the whole of humanity redeemed in Jesus Christ. How many lay saints, how many married saints, how many holy families are needed for this great mission!

#### BEAUTY TO BE RESTORED: CHRISTIAN UNITY

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord”, writes the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians, “beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (*Eph* 4: 1-6).

It is for this growth in unity that the ecclesial movements and new communities exist, as the Holy Father John Paul II recalled at Pentecost 1998. Working in unity to bear witness to God as Love who turned himself into Word and Sacrament in the Church; working for unity through the expression of the mutual love by which the disciples of Christ recognize each other: this love that unites and reconciles is an ecumenical task and responsibility.

In this regard I would like to share with you a memory of the visit made by a delegation of the Greek Orthodox Church to Rome in March 2002 – the first official visit to Rome in a thousand years – which I had the honour to welcome and to accompany in the Vatican for a whole week. We could not pray together, because prayer with heretics is out of the question from the strict Orthodox point of view. But, after the audience with the Holy Father John Paul II, we went to visit the magnificent *Redemptoris Mater* chapel in the Vatican, the chapel of unity. When the six members of the delegation saw and recognized the saints of the Eastern Church, their saints, together with the Saints of the West who surround the Mother of God at the centre of the mosaic, they were spellbound and began to sing with us a Marian hymn that I will never forget. That was the culminating moment of the visit! Was it not an invitation to seek unity through the beauty of the ecumenical movement that derives its strength from the school of the saints and especially from the school of Mary, the Mother of unity?<sup>18</sup>

#### A PEDAGOGY OF BEAUTY: THE EXAMPLE OF THE “FLOCK OF JESUS”

Before concluding, I would like to recapitulate by giving an example of the pedagogy of beauty by speaking of the “Flock of Jesus” (*Brebis de Jésus*), a children’s movement founded in Quebec, in Canada, by a Franciscan nun twenty years ago and now present in some twenty countries.

*“Come, you are important for me, you have value in my eyes and I love you”*

*Come!* At the beginning, there is a call, the call of Love. During each of their meetings, the members of the flock hear themselves being

<sup>18</sup> It is a striking fact that among the most remarkable ecumenical texts of recent years, two – one drafted by the Dombes Group in 1997 and the other for the official Anglican-Catholic dialogue in 2005 – focus on the Virgin Mary and reach the conclusion that the veneration of Mary cannot be considered an obstacle to unity.

called in this way by their shepherd (*berger*). It all originates in God's heart. It is God who takes the initiative. *Come!* It's an invitation, and the response to this invitation is to enter into the beauty of the love that inspires it.

*You are important for me.* Each child is personally called by name with affection. Each child is known to God. And the accompanier is invited to call each child in Christ's name. Each time he pronounces a child's name he implores a grace from the Lord, asking him to arouse the best in that child and lead to the birth of what is unique in that child, his/her profound identity as creature and child of God. Each child is original and unrepeatable. The beauty of love is translated into uniqueness.

*You have value in my eyes,* a very great value, the value of redemption that clothes the child in glory, in wonderful beauty. The child is encouraged to look at himself/herself with the same regard as the Good Shepherd who gave his life for him/her. It's a long journey. And it ought not to cause surprise that one of the fruits of the meetings is the conversion of that child's own self-esteem. The child says: "I like myself more, I have more confidence in myself".

*I love you.* Leading children to open themselves to the love by which they are loved is the primary objective of the movement's educational method. This declaration of love runs through the whole Bible and runs through the life of each individual.

*"Whoever turns his gaze on Him will shine with joy. There will no longer be any shame on his face"*

All the meetings of the movement rest on the Word of God, listened to, accepted, shared, and experienced. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the accompanier becomes the servant of the Word. He effaces himself before the Word, so that it may reach the child and produce in him/her the fruits of the Kingdom. It's a school in which to learn how to look, how to transcend oneself and allow the light of the Almighty to illuminate the depth of one's being. The iconography is always

aimed at reproducing this light, like the light of the Resurrection. The baptized, the member of the flock, is thus called to become an icon of Christ. It's the greatness and the beauty of his/her divine vocation.

Illuminated by the light of love, how beautiful is the flock of Jesus! But it is also its responsibility to reflect this light. There is a stage in the initiation process called "being received as a lamb of light", which is at the same time a struggle very difficult to manage. For there is a personal fidelity that the "lamb of light" has to experience to keep the lamp lit. Many obstacles are placed in his/her way to extinguish that light. "You train my hands for war, and my fingers for battle" (*Ps* 144 [143]: 1). There is a beauty in this struggle. It is that of fidelity or of infidelity forgiven, of abandonment, of constant entrustment to God.

There is also the effort to irradiate this light, to share it, in spite of the trials of the journey. The Christian is in the world but not of the world. There are children who accept with serenity being laughed at for their fidelity to the meetings of the movement. They say: "They laugh at me because they don't know Jesus. If they knew the love of Jesus, they would come to the meetings and, who knows, perhaps they would be more fervent than I am". There is a beauty in this regard for others, full of forgiveness, understanding and hope. Many children thus precociously experience the mystery of persecution. Christ scourged and crowned with thorns is divinely beautiful. Only love can contemplate this beauty.

A connecting thread guides the children who persevere as they grow. They can hear the beating of the heart of the Lamb who invites them to follow him. This intimacy places them in close communion with the Church, our Mother. They shelter in her breast to be fed, forgiven and filled with life. They do not judge the Church; they love her and with her make a gift of themselves. They number among the little children to whom the mysteries of the Kingdom are revealed. They make no commotion, but their daily offering united with that of Christ raises the world and hastens the return of Jesus. They experience the beauty of the eucharistic life made possible by the sacrifice of the Lamb.

The witness of the *Brebis de Jésus* – cited just as one of many possi-

ble examples – confirms, no doubt modestly, the educational experience of many ecclesial movements and new communities. Any evangelization process, if it is to be fruitful, involves a personal and ecclesial appropriation of the incarnate Word that transforms the believer's regard for God, for others and for himself. This real transformation always begins with a real encounter with Jesus and with prayer, personal prayer, liturgical prayer, lay and monastic prayer, whose proven and ever renewed beauty bears abundant fruits of peace, conversion and hope. It's a transformation that is nourished especially by the Eucharist, source and summit of the evangelization and life of the Church.

Prayer opens our eyes to the poor and those scarred by life: more than beneficiaries of our charity, they become our benefactors, and even our masters, as testified by Jean Vanier. Ever since the Church's origins, the poor have been her richest treasure (St. Lawrence). Don't they silently reveal to us the face of the Crucified, his appeal to compassion and the way of the first beatitude?

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: abide in my love” (Jn 15: 8-9). Being loved by God in Jesus, abiding in his love and bearing fruit for the joy of God: that's the beauty of being Christians. The love of Jesus is given in abundance and in very varied ways to the ecclesial movements and new communities, in the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that they may bear witness together to the beauty of Christ and of the Church.

## CONCLUSION

The beauty of being Christians is a grace that is born from the beauty of Christ and of Mary by the gift of the Holy Spirit. St. Francis summed up the grace of his life in two words: Jesus and Mary! This grace is also a responsibility, a mission: the mission to evangelise that is becoming the priority of priorities in today's world. To evangelise means to irradiate the light of love with prayer, action, passion and also with reason and art, as the late-lamented don Luigi Giussani knew how to do so well. It means evangelising with the witness of faith and

the example of a fully human life; evangelising even in persecution and in the trials and tribulations of life, because our Christian maturity is also measured by our willingness to suffer in the name of Jesus. Love is not only a feeling. Love is a person. Love is a vision. Love is self-dedication in the mystery of God's covenant. That's why the beauty of being Christians always has its source and always culminates in the eucharistic mystery of the Church.

“We are constantly involved in trying to transform and reform this Church according to the needs of the time, the criticisms of our detractors and our own models”, writes von Balthasar, “but in doing so are we not losing sight of the one perfect model, the archetype? In our reforms ought we not to keep our gaze constantly fixed on Mary, not of course to multiply Marian festivities and devotions in our Church, *a fortiori* the definitions, but simply to learn ourselves what the Church really is, the ecclesial spirit, the ecclesial conduct?”<sup>19</sup>

The place that God has given to Christians is so beautiful that they cannot desert it, even if for them that means participating in the Passion of Our Lord to enter into his glory. Let us therefore stay where we are, let us work together in charity and unity, and in order to grow in eucharistic splendour, let us open ourselves yet more deeply to the Holy Spirit so that his grace, given in abundance, be lavished through the Church, sacrament of salvation, on the whole of humanity. As St. Basil wonderfully says in his treatise on the Holy Spirit: “From the Spirit come anticipation of the future, insight into the mysteries, understanding of hidden things, the distribution of spiritual gifts, familiarity with the things of heaven, the dance with the angels. From him come joy without end, abiding in God, the likeness to God, and the crown of all one can desire: becoming one with God”.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, “Ô Vierge, Mère et fille de ton fils”, in: J. RATZINGER and H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Marie première Église*, Médiaspaul, Paris 1998, 74 (our translation).

<sup>20</sup> BASIL THE GREAT, *Treatise “On the Holy Spirit”*, 9, 23.





## Ecclesial movements and new communities in the mission of the Church. Priorities and perspectives

Cardinal ANGELO SCOLA\*

SENT BY THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST

“As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions (*dógmata*) which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and they increased in numbers daily. And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas” (*Acts* 16: 4-8). With rapid but firm brush-strokes St. Luke sketches the essential lines of the apostolic mission of Paul, accompanied in this phase by Silas and Timothy.

The first Christian communities were generated by the missionary impetus that formed the essence of the apostle’s life, his *sending forth*. They are dynamically presented in this passage of chapter 16 and their life is described by the famous initial summaries of the Acts of the Apostles: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching (*didakè*) and fellowship (*koinônía*), to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day-by-day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of

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food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (*Acts* 2: 42-48; cf. also *Acts* 4: 32-35).

Each realization of ecclesial life – as the bi-millennial history of the people of God shows – is characterized by the repeated re-proposal of the personal and community event of the encounter with Jesus Christ. That’s why it would be wholly illusory to reflect together, even summarily, on the priorities and perspectives of the ecclesial movements and new communities in the mission of the Church without recurring once again to the essential features of the Christian communities at work in history.

### *The protagonist: the Spirit of Jesus Christ*

The unchallenged protagonist of the birth and mission of the Church – as St. Luke’s narrative repeatedly underlines – is the Holy Spirit, who is always the Spirit of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> Vatican Council II, recalling a potent analogy coined by the Fathers of the Church, powerfully resumed and developed this teaching: “In order that we might be unceasingly renewed in him (cf. *Eph* 4: 23), he has shared with us his Spirit who, being one and the same in head and members, gives life to, unifies and moves the whole body. Consequently, the Church Fathers could compare his work to the function that the principle of life, the soul, fulfils in the human body”.<sup>2</sup>

In fact the Lord Jesus builds his Church, his Bride, by work of the Holy Spirit. Beginning with Mary, icon of the whole Church, it is the Spirit that makes possible the preaching of the Gospel, the grace of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *La comunione nella Chiesa*, Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 2004, 61-62: “If [...] we want to delineate some characteristics of the conception of Church implicit in *Acts*, we could say: we are faced here above all by a pneumatological ecclesiology. It is the Spirit that creates the Church. We are faced by a dynamic ecclesiology of the history of salvation, to which the dimension of catholicity belongs in an essential way: the assembly receives the gift of the Spirit when gathered in prayer” (our translation).

<sup>2</sup> VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 7.

faith and the sacramental birth of the new creature. The Spirit of Jesus is the gift *par excellence* which, by introducing us to the communion of love between Father and Son, makes us participants in the life itself of God.<sup>3</sup> The Church, writes St. Cyprian, is “a people brought into unity by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”.<sup>4</sup>

In practice this life given to Christians by the Spirit is manifested through personal and community witness. The faithful can invite the men and women of any period to the encounter with the Risen Lord in the ecclesial community: “Come and see” (*Jn* 1: 39). In this way each individual, always situated in history, is given the chance, by work of the Spirit, freely to encounter the Risen Lord, and accept the grace of faith and the gift of salvation.

It is significant that, in St. Luke’s narrative, the teaching of the Apostles – the Greek text of *Acts* 16: 4 uses the term *dógmata* (decisions), which refers to the dogmatic truth of this teaching – is inseparably linked with their call to go from city to city, throughout the world. The dual dimension of apostolicity, i.e. of mission, is here underlined.<sup>5</sup> It is always and inextricably apostolicity of doctrine and mission. The then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger referred to this at the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements of 27-29 May 1998 when he affirmed that the existence of the movements has favoured a deepening of the *apostolicity* of the Church.<sup>6</sup> It is no accident that the papacy, ultimate guarantor of apostolicity, has always shown particular care for these new movements

<sup>3</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 10: “It can be said that in the Holy Spirit the intimate life of the Triune God becomes totally gift, an exchange of mutual love between the divine Persons, and that through the Holy Spirit God exists in the mode of gift. It is the Holy Spirit who is *the personal expression* of this self-giving, of this being-love. He is Person-Love. He is Person-Gift.”

<sup>4</sup> CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE, *De oratione dominica* 23, significantly cited by *Lumen gentium*, no. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. L. BOUYER, *La Chiesa di Dio*, Cittadella, Assisi 1971, 361-468.

<sup>6</sup> 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*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1999, 44-46.

in the course of history, with the aim of keeping the local Churches “after the model of the universal Church”.<sup>7</sup>

An attentive pneumatological christology enables us to understand how the so-called *age* of the movements has offered to the whole Church a better understanding of her own apostolicity. A central plank of the teaching of John Paul II on the movements documents the truth of this affirmation: “I have often had occasion to stress – he declared – 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”.<sup>8</sup>

*The co-essentiality of the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension*

The genesis of the Church, as the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles clearly show, consisted in the free and personal encounter with Jesus Christ that fascinated humanity to the point of deciding to follow in his footsteps. An experience both of love of Christ and of our fellow human beings is born from this experience. It is charged with a beauty that impels us to mission, which, in the last analysis, always leads to the invitation to “come and see”. This makes us understand why we should speak of the Church in the first, and not in the third, person. The ecclesiological question, posed in the right way, is: “Who is the Church?” and not “What is the Church?”.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 23.

<sup>8</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the participants in the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, in: *Movements in the Church*, cit., 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. H. U. VON BALTHASAR, “Chi è la Chiesa?”, in: IDEM, *Sponsa Verbi. Saggi teologici* 2, Morcelliana, Brescia 1972, 139-187.

For the Spirit of Christ appeals to the freedom of the individual and asks for his personal witness.<sup>10</sup> We can imagine the Church as an ellipse,<sup>11</sup> whose two points are: a) the Spirit of Jesus who comes to meet man and to call him; b) the freedom of man to give his assent. The famous words of St. Irenaeus clearly identify this pneumatological impetus of the Church: “It is to the Church herself that the ‘Gift of God’ has been entrusted [...] For where the Church is, there too is God’s Spirit; and where God’s Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace”.<sup>12</sup>

Returning to the two passages from *Acts* (16: 4-8 and 2: 42-47) which give a precise account of the nascent Church and *who* she is, what do we find? Apart from the teaching of the apostles, they also refer to the *koinônia* that springs from the Eucharist (the breaking of bread) and from constant prayer.

The account of the institution of the Eucharist given in the Synoptic Gospels (cf. *Mt* 26: 26-29; *Mk* 14: 22-25; *Lk* 22: 14-20), and that magisterially proposed by Paul, show how the encounter, in the Spirit, between Jesus Christ and the freedom of the person is realized in practice. “For I received from the Lord – writes Paul – what I also delivered to you” (*1 Cor* 11: 23). In the Eucharist the apostles authoritatively – as direct witnesses – transmit the teaching they have received from Jesus, inviting men and women to the *koinônia* which entails the free and joyful sharing of their own existence, beginning with prayer and ending with the by no means negligible aspects of the placing in common of their own material life.

<sup>10</sup> On the active role of the Spirit cf. X. PIKAZA – N. SILANES (eds.), *Los carismas en la Iglesia. Presencia del Espíritu Santo en la historia*, Segretariado Trinitario, Salamanca 1998, with contributions by C.A. Keller, H. Heinrich Schmid, M. Andrés, A. Bittlinger, H. Schlier, G.M. Salvati, X. Pikaza, B. de Margerie, A. Ródenas, J.D.G. Dunn, O. Knoch, J.M. Rovira Belloso, G. Wagner and J.L. Leuba.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. A. SCOLA, *Chi è la Chiesa? Una chiave antropologica e sacramentale per l'ecclesologia*, Queriniana, Brescia 2005, 53-54.

<sup>12</sup> IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Adversus haereses* III, 24, 1; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 797.

The dynamic process summarily described is the essential core of what is called the *Traditio*.<sup>13</sup> In his catechesis on Apostolic Succession at the general audience of 10 May 2006, Benedict XVI recalled that this *Traditio* is “the permanence of the Apostolic Tradition, word and life, entrusted to us by the Lord”.<sup>14</sup> In the light of *Acts* and the accounts of the institution of the Eucharist, the *Traditio* is thus revealed as the organic unity of a permanent dynamic of ultimately sacramental nature (hence objective and institutional) and of a personal dimension (hence not merely individual, but always, in some way, communal), it, too, permanent in itself, but varying in form (charismatic dimension linked to the subject). The Spirit with his grace promotes both: the Spirit’s sacramental dimension guarantees the *objectivity* of the Tradition, his personal dimension the Tradition’s *ability to persuade* the person who encounters and participates in it.<sup>15</sup> On the one hand, with his sacramental and institutional gifts, the Spirit permanently ensures the lasting presence of the person of Jesus Christ; on the other, by never lacking the charismatic dimension, the Spirit shows that Jesus persuasively moves the freedom of man in the variety of his aspirations and in the plurality of the historical and cultural conditions in which he lives.<sup>16</sup> Through the sacrament, the Word and the

<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. SCOLA, “The Reality of the Movements in the Universal Church and in the Local Church”, in: *Movements in the Church*, cit., 105-129.

<sup>14</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Catechesis on Apostolic Succession, General Audience, *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English*, N. 20 – 17 May 2006, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. L. GIUSSANI, “Commento. Appunti di una conversazione”, in: *L'idea di movimento*, Quaderni 10, supplement to *Litterae Communionis*, no. 3, 1987.

<sup>16</sup> By making reference to individual charisms – because of the fact that they have been given for the edification of the others – it is possible, at least in a certain sense, to refer to the Thomistic distinction between *gratia gratum faciens* (the so-called sanctifying grace) and *gratia gratis data*, grace freely given, to illuminate the specific character of the charismatic gifts and their relation to the sacramental gifts. Saint Thomas states in this regard: “*Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut apostolus dicit, ad Rom. XIII, quae a Deo sunt, ordinata sunt. In hoc autem ordo rerum consistit, quod quaedam per alia in Deum reducuntur; ut Dionysius dicit, in Cael. Hier. Cum igitur gratia ad hoc ordinetur ut homo reducatur in Deum, ordine quodam hoc agitur, ut scilicet quidam per alios in Deum reducantur. Secundum hoc igitur duplex est gratia. Una quidem per quam ipse homo Deo coniungitur, quae vocatur gratia gra-*

*regimen communionis*<sup>17</sup> the one and only *Traditio* ensures that Jesus Christ himself is proclaimed in Calcutta, in Rome or in Douala; through the plurality of charismatic gifts – for example the charism of Francis rather than that of Dominic – it persuades men and women of the most different sensibilities.

Benedict XVI's teaching well expresses how the Spirit of the Risen Christ works and ensures the permanence of the presence of the Word and life of Jesus (sacramental-institutional dimension) in favour of the life of the people of God guided and sustained by the Spirit itself (charismatic dimension). John Paul II's teaching on the co-essentiality of the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension represents a precious enrichment of the doctrine of Vatican Council II – contained in the Constitution *Dei Verbum* – on the “growth” of the apostolic Tradition with the help of the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

In this regard it is important to note that when we speak of the co-essentiality of the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension, we should in no way think of “two components” or assume that it is from their dialectical synthesis that the reality of the Church springs. The word *co-essentiality* denotes just the opposite: it means the *dual unity* that is peculiar to the event of the Church: the Church is always and insuperably the elliptical event (two fires, but one sole ellipse!) of the meeting between the grace of Christ and the freedom of man that the Spirit of the Risen Christ ensures in history. This means that the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension

*tum faciens. Alia vero per quam unus homo cooperatur alteri ad hoc quod ad Deum reducatur. Huiusmodi autem donum vocatur gratia gratis data, quia supra facultatem naturae, et supra meritum personae, homini conceditur, sed quia non datur ad hoc ut homo ipse per eam iustificetur, sed potius ut ad iustificationem alterius cooperetur, ideo non vocatur gratum faciens. Et de hac dicit apostolus, I ad Cor. XII, unicuique datur manifestatio spiritus ad utilitatem, scilicet aliorum”, THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae Ia-IIae, q. 111, a. 1, co.*

<sup>17</sup> Cf. H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Teologia 3. Lo Spirito della verità*, Jaca Book, Milano 1992, 257-263.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, no. 8: “The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit”.

both inseparably belong to each and every realization of the Church: from the universal Church to the local Church, from the diocese to the parishes and from the traditional lay associations to the ecclesial movements and new communities. Each of these realities, depending on its specific nature, experiences both dimensions. So it is specious, and in the end mistaken, to reduce the movements to the purely charismatic dimension and relegate dioceses, parishes and traditional associations to the institutional dimension. Both dimensions, with different gradations, are constitutive of all these realities.<sup>19</sup>

Recognizing, at least in principle,<sup>20</sup> the *co-essentiality* of the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension in the life and self-understanding of the Church means more clearly recognizing the particular identity of the ecclesial reality. It enables us better to discern the link between anthropology and ecclesiology. Time does not permit me here to contemplate the mystery of Mary in this regard. It is from this Marian perspective that von Balthasar defines the Church as “the unity of those who, gathered round the immaculacy of Mary and formed in it, are ready and willing to act in such a way that God’s will of salvation over them and over all their fellowmen may come to pass”.<sup>21</sup>

Now that we have overcome the temptation deriving from the false opposition, or the mere juxtaposition, between institutional dimension and charismatic dimension, it would now be necessary to analyse in

<sup>19</sup> Cf. IDEM, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 7: “There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives his different gifts for the welfare of the Church (cf. 1 Cor 12: 1-11). Among these gifts the primacy belongs to the grace of the apostles to whose authority the Spirit himself subjects even those who are endowed with charisms (cf. 1 Cor 14)”.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. “I movimenti e le nuove comunità ecclesiali. Editoriale”, in: *La Civiltà Cattolica* 152 (2001) 441-451; A. MASTANTUONO, “Comunità cristiana e movimenti ecclesiali. Una lettura pastorale”, in: *Rassegna di Teologia* 42 (2001) 543-565; L. GEROSA, “Movimenti ecclesiali e Chiesa istituzionale: concorrenza o co-essenzialità?”, in: *Nuova Umanità* 22 (2002/2) 128, 215-246. An updated bibliography on the question can be found in: I. NYIRINDEKWE, *Charisme et coopération dans l’Eglise*, Parole et Silence – Faculté de Théologie de Lugano, Lugano 2004, 379-410.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *La mia opera ed Epilogo*, Jaca Book, Milano 1994, 57.



greater depth their *co-essentiality* in sacramental terms. This would permit us to show how the Christian event remains in history and continues to challenge the freedom of humankind.<sup>22</sup> John Paul opened this front by speaking of the *ratio sacramentalis* of the Revelation<sup>23</sup> and the *forma eucaristica* of Christian existence.<sup>24</sup>

### *Two corollaries of pastoral nature*

Before passing to the second part of our reflection I would like to make some remarks of a pastoral character.

We have already said that the life of the movements and new communities has fostered an understanding of the nature of the Church as an event given to the freedom of everyone. Born because a charism personally given to a believer becomes the inspiration for the association and education of other Christian faithful (movement), they continue to reveal the persuasiveness of the Christian event. They testify to the endurance of the original character of the encounter with Christ, inexhaustible source of beauty for human freedom. We belong to the Church not out of mere duty or social inertia, but because we recognize the Lord as he who has the capacity to mobilise the person from within and move that person to decide on total self-giving, in other words, love. The *sequela* of the charism permits the faithful to rediscover the objectivity of their own Baptism, by which they are formed into one body in Christ and become members one of another (cf. *1 Cor* 12: 12ff.; *Rom* 12: 4-5). Our humanity, our nature as human beings, is fulfilled, by grace of the Spirit, by accepting the gratuitous gift of the encounter with the crucified and risen Jesus who invites us to follow him in the Christian eucharistic community. At the same time the reality of the movement or new community reveals that the institu-

<sup>22</sup> I developed this aspect in: A. SCOLA, *Chi è la Chiesa?*, cit., 17-51.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, no. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. IDEM, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 20; IDEM, *Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2005*, no. 1.

tional dimension is equally co-essential and intrinsic to the movement itself. For, by virtue of the institutional dimension, ultimately safeguarded and upheld by the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, it is possible to recognize whether this or that movement represents a genuine experience of Christ: that's why the particular charism of each must not be extinguished, but also why they must be subjected to proper discernment.

In this way troublesome forms of one-sidedness can be avoided.

In the first place I would like to refer to a schematic interpretation of the famous affirmation of John Paul II: "the Church itself is a movement".<sup>25</sup> It has sometimes led to considering in practice the specific forms of one's own experience of a movement as the touchstone against which to measure all other groups of faithful, including parishes and dioceses. If the charismatic dimension is co-essential and not derivative, it follows that anyone who comes into contact with a genuinely ecclesial movement is able to share an integral experience of the Church in it. However, the always contingent nature of the founding charism, and even more so the movement that derives from it, entails a risk from which we must guard ourselves: the risk, even indirect, of imposing it as a model for the whole life of the Church. A damaging expression of this risk may derive from the attempt, apparently generous, to create, in fact or in law, a general body of coordination between new movements, as if the problem of ecclesial maturity, of which John Paul II spoke,<sup>26</sup> could be solved by organizing a single body of coordination and operational plans that would permit the movements to dialogue "in unison" (i.e. as a single people), with the dioceses, parishes and the traditional lay associations.

<sup>25</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Homily during Mass for the participants in the Meeting "Movements in the Church", in: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IV, 2 (1981), 305.

<sup>26</sup> IDEM, Address of His Holiness Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities, in: *Movements in the Church*, cit., 222: "Today a new stage is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity. This does not mean that all the problems have been solved. Rather, it is a challenge. A road to take. The Church expects from you the 'mature' fruits of communion and commitment".

A second consideration is related to the reductive and partial ways, still very widespread, of proposing formation, spirituality, and the ethical consequences of the Christian experience. As evinced by the encyclical *Deus caritas est*, these decisive elements objectively are a consequence of the event of the encounter with the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> And this event, by virtue of the grace of faith, calls the freedom of the Christian, moved by the splendour of the risen Christ, to follow in his footsteps. These are the necessary consequences that cannot under any circumstances be dispensed with; but they are consequences. No one can deceive himself into supposing they are able directly to “produce” the Christian experience. For Christianity, like any other genuine event, is only communicated through another event that is never reducible to its consequences. In this sense no “pastoral strategy” can of its own accord generate the holy people of God.

In particular, pastors must resist the temptation, understandably induced by grave pastoral problems, to conceive the movements as mere “manpower”. Those who have been given the task of governing the people of God, and on whom is incumbent the exacting mission of discernment, are called to recognize the freedom of action of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Acts* 10: 1-11, 18 ff.), without wishing to impose pastoral plans or programmes so rigid as to mortify the various charisms.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, it must be the movements’ concern to adopt the bishop’s pastoral plan and adjust it to their own specific charism.

These warnings, at first sight over-specific, are in actual fact a significant way of implementing the methodological principle of *communio*, authoritatively proposed by the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closing of Vatican Council II: the variety and plurality of unity.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 1: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction”.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *The Ecclesial Movements in the Pastoral Concern of the Bishops*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2000.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. SYNODUS EPISCOPORUM, *Relatio Finalis Ecclesiae sub verbo Dei mysteria Christi celebrans pro salute mundi*, 7 decembris 1985, II, C, 2.

THE MISSION IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

With powerful farsightedness John Paul II reminded the whole Church that “it is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new programme’. The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition; it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who needs to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until it reaches its final fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a programme that does not change with shifts of time and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This perennial programme is our programme for the Third Millennium”.<sup>30</sup>

In this perspective, which is intended to respect the nature of event that is inherent in Revelation, speaking of *perspectives* and *priorities* means indicating the essential conditions to which movements and new communities must remain faithful if they want the gratuitous origin of their experience to become the permanent source of the free decision of each of its members to participate in the encounter with the Lord and to engage in the mission to our fellow human beings.

*An ecclesial subject both as person and community*

The first of these conditions, and by far the most important, is the attitude of the “ecclesial subject”, both as a person and as a community, place of the “come and see” (*Jn* 1: 39), in other words, the living proposal of the appeal of Jesus Christ for any person. This poses anew the question of the pneumatological, ecclesiological and anthropological magnitude of all we have said about the co-essentiality of the charismatic dimension and the institutional dimension, which permits the persuasive encounter between the beauty of Christ and the individual person. What are needed first and foremost are persons and

<sup>30</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 29.

communities aimed at testifying to the significance of the encounter with Christ – in the gift of the Spirit – for the elementary experience of each person. It is enough to think of the meetings of Jesus described in the Gospels (e.g. the meeting with Zacchaeus [*Lk* 19: 1-10], and with the Woman of Samaria [*Jn* 4: 1-42]), which later find their prolongation in those of the apostles narrated in *Acts* (3: 1-10; 8: 26-40; 9: 10-19). The charisms, especially those of foundation that are shared by thousands of men and women in the various movements and new communities, thus show how fertile they are in proportion to how effectively they concur to make the encounter with Jesus Christ possible today.

It is illuminating in this regard to trace our way back from the description of the primitive Christian community, recalled on several occasions (cf. *Acts* 2 and 4), to the genesis of the personal and community subject described by the holy Gospels. In the Gospels we encounter Jesus who, after thirty years silent residence in Nazareth, for two years – as precisely documented by the synoptic gospels – limited himself to proclaiming the Kingdom of God in the area between Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida (cf. *Mt* 11: 20-23) – a territory of just a few square kilometres – where he called as his disciples Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John... (cf. *Lk* 5: 1-11). Each Saturday, as a good Jew, he went to the synagogue as unequivocal sign of the primacy of God in his life. He read the Word of God, prayed with the Psalms (cf. *Lk* 4: 16-27). He gradually introduced the gospel of the Kingdom for which the Father had called him. Jesus would probably have spent the afternoon of the same Saturday, according to Jewish custom, in the homes of his disciples and conversed with them (cf. *Mk* 4, 10 ff.). Again it is the Gospels, with their *logia*, that testify to this. Then, as interest in his message gradually grew, he spoke, especially in parables (cf. *Mt* 13: 1-51), to the people who flocked to hear him in ever-larger numbers. That was how his mission began. In what did it consist? It involved caring for a network of friends, who had freely and consciously answered his call: men and women who found the centre of their emotional and spiritual life in him. Two years later Jesus was in

practice forced into exile, on the other side of the Sea of Galilee; and from there, with a more restricted group of his disciples, he journeyed on as far as Tyre and Sidon (cf. *Mt* 15: 21). For six months the community inspired by the encounter with the Master deepened its relationship with him. They spent the whole day together: so their *koinônia* grew and was consolidated. Lastly, six months later, Jesus “set his face to Jerusalem” (cf. *Lk* 9: 51: *ipse faciem suam firmavit*), whither he took his disciples with him (cf. *Mk* 10: 1; *Mt* 19: 1; *Lk* 9: 51). And it was in Jerusalem that his mission was tragically completed, and where eucharistically the ecclesial community took on the definitive form that has come down to us, just by virtue of those events (passion, death and resurrection). So, on the basis of those events, by the grace of God, men and women continue to meet together to this day, transformed by the Spirit of Christ.

The experience that “Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling” thus “truly becomes clear” to the faithful.<sup>31</sup> Establishing the subject both at the personal and community level is the priority: it is fundamental for the whole Church. This is something that all the movements and new communities have persuasively indicated. This must be their absolute priority. It is the same priority as for the first apostles: the practical way of coming to terms with the dimensions of the world (evangelization and inculturation).

This “care” of the subject, which springs from the co-essentiality of the charismatic dimension and the institutional dimension, permits a recovery of an elementary fact, so often lost sight of today, namely, that life itself is *vocation*. Each circumstance, each relationship, is the quasi-sacrament through which the Spirit of Jesus calls the Christian to participate in the Father’s plan which leads the history of each person and the human family as a whole. Life as vocation takes prece-

<sup>31</sup> VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, no. 22.

dence over the vocation to a specific state of life. Each genuine charism, in fact, is persuasive not because it “adds something” to the normal contents of existence, but because it makes us conscious of how the mystery of God that bowed down to the human condition in Jesus Christ is made present through the normality of existence as such and reveals its character as vocation. In every instant the *Deus Trinitas* is offered to us and calls us to turn our whole life into a *logiké latreía* (Rom 12: 1), a reasonable (spiritual) worship that is pleasing to God. The value of Baptism (cf. *1 Pt* 3: 21) and the eucharistic form of Christian life shine out in fullness here. The Christian is called (*vocation*) through all the circumstances of life to assume the task (*mission*) of spreading, through the gift of self, the Kingdom of God, the ultimate meaning of each life and each history, *already* realized in the unique history of Christ and *not yet* manifested fully in the life of each, but present as a pledge in the mystery of the Church.

At this point, we need to underline a fact that is seriously neglected today. The consciousness that life is vocation requires that the faithful should be continually instructed in the thought of Christ (cf. *1 Cor* 2: 16). For, if it does not want to take the subject of missionary action “for granted”, each Christian community is called to promote permanent education in the faith, conceived as a vital criterion for tackling the whole of reality. In the life of the Christian the Pauline precept “test everything, hold fast to what is good” (*1 Thess* 5: 21) because “all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (*1 Cor* 3: 22-23) cannot be an automatic process, but requires a systematic work of education (cf. *Jn* 6: 45). The first Christian communities once again document this: the preaching of the Gospel, shared in the Eucharist and witnessed in life, requires both the thorough identification with the faith understood as submission to Christ (*fides qua*) and the profession of his truth (*fides quae*): “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (*Acts* 2: 42).

Given that Jesus Christ is the living and personal Truth – Revelation has above all the form not of a discourse, but of a person – it is

impossible to separate, in Christian education, “what” Jesus teaches from “how” he teaches. *Christ’s thought* is indistinguishably experience and *logos*. The genesis of the apostolic community, briefly recalled above, shows that to be able to assimilate the truth he proposes, we need to involve ourselves in a stable relationship both with him and with our fellow human beings. Following Jesus is the way of entering into the living and ever-present content of the Revelation. So the various ecclesial movements and communities, animated by the Spirit, will be places of ecclesial *sequela* in proportion as they facilitate and perform permanent instruction in Christ’s thought (1 Cor 2: 16) that springs from the *idem sapite*, from the *tò autò phroneite* (2 Cor 13: 11) of which Paul speaks.

*A subject called to self-exposition: Christian witness*

The second condition that is a priority and perspective for the ecclesial mission of the movements and new communities is intrinsic to the nature and existence of the ecclesial subject both as person and community. The Christian person is called to bear witness to the event he/she has encountered, in other words to express his/her faith, and testify to it, in the *sequela Christi*, following the traces of the charism that he/she shares and that is objectively guaranteed by the authority [of the Church]. This is the approach suggested by the vocation-mission dualism that marked the conclusion of the post-conciliar development of the so-called theology of the laity.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Four phases in reflection on the “theology of the laity” can be distinguished. The first phase, dominated by the contributions of Congar, Philips and Spiazzi, led to a greater recognition of the dignity and role of the laity in the Church by virtue of the baptism that enables them to share in the *tria munera* of Christ. A second phase pursued a positive definition of “lay”, especially by elucidating the so-called “secular nature” of the laity. The third phase is more complex and variegated. The issues debated can perhaps be reduced to four fundamental themes: the theology of ministries, the so-called “theology of the Christian”, a renewed “theology of the laity” and a more developed form of the “theology of the secular nature”. The reflection culminated in the 7<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on *Vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world twenty years*



Where in practice did the primitive communities to which we have referred originate? From the apostles conquered by the power of the Spirit of the risen Lord who, in full communion with his Mother and among themselves, were transformed, by grace, from frightened Christians into witnesses ready to lay down their life for the truths to which they bore witness. This awesome metamorphosis had been promised by Jesus: “You are witnesses of these things” (cf. *Lk* 24: 48; *Acts* 1: 8), “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” (*Mt* 28: 19). The Gospel of John describes the profound grace of this extraordinary newness experienced by the fishermen of Galilee that documents the pneumatological genesis of the Church: “But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts [...] It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world [...]” (*Jn* 16: 6-8). The apostle does not become such until the Holy Spirit has sent him and has made him his witness. The most probable etymology of *testis*, witness, derives it from *ter-stis*, the *third* who *stands* between the two. All his disciples (from his first down to us) are the third who stands between him and our fellow human being who – perhaps even without knowing it, perhaps even by cursing it – yearns for salvation through Christ.

Witness is, in the end, the joyful testimony of a good life transformed by the fascination of Jesus. It moves the person and the community to obey what Providence asks of it *here* and *now*. For it is part

*after Vatican Council II* and led to the publication of the post-synodal exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988). A summary of all these developments can be found in: A. SCOLA, *Questioni di antropologia teologica*, Ares, Milano 1996, 69-81; J.L. ILLANES, “La discusión teológica sobre la noción de laico”, in: *Scripta Theologica* 22 (1990) 771-789; and G. COLOMBO, “La ‘teologia dei laici’: bilancio di una vicenda storica”, in: *I laici nella Chiesa*, Elle Di Ci Leumann, Torino 1986, 9-27. See also A. SCOLA, “The mission of the Church at the dawn of the third millennium: disciples and witnesses of the Lord”, in: *Congress of the Catholic Laity. Rome 2000*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2002, 77-114.

of the nature of each movement, as realization of the Church, to be a constant “pro-vocation” to the person with a view to his personal and ecclesial maturity. A community never substitutes the person, but urges that person to achieve maturity, and full adulthood. It urges the person to assume the gift of faith that he/she has met and that was brought to life in a personal encounter by a persuasive charism.

What form does this call as a person and a community to self-exposition (*auto-esporsi*) take?

At the personal level we could describe it, in its interior dynamic, at least with two features. On the one hand, self-exposition means permanent submission to what the Spirit works in the life of the Church and in the world. On the other, it means the assumption of a stable style of witness of life starting out from the person’s own Christian community and extending to every sphere of human existence. They are two dimensions that mutually interact and can never be separated: there is no possibility of witness unless it be born from submission to the work of the Spirit that bears witness in us, so that we too can bear witness to the world (cf. *Jn* 15: 26-27).

This need for personal self-exposition will inevitably be based on a person’s specific state of life. The way that married laypersons, by participating in the charism they have encountered, express themselves in the life of the Church and society will not be identical to that of those who follow Jesus in a life of consecrated virginity. That of a priest belonging to a society of apostolic life or similar forms born from the experience of a movement will not be the same as that of a diocesan priest who also participates in the same charism. Different again will be the *sequela* of a charism for those who belong to monastic families, religious congregations and orders or secular institutes. These are not secondary aspects on which many movements and new communities need to reflect and with regard to which the witness they give also requires the courage of the *de iure condendo*.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Cf. CH. HEGGE, “I movimenti e la ricezione del Concilio Vaticano II”, in: *Periodica de re canonica* 88 (1999) 501-531; G. GHIRLANDA, “Carisma e statuto giuridico dei movimenti

Witness as intrinsic need of the authenticity of every charism is demanded in a radical way by the inevitable passage of the founders of movements and new communities. In this case, to ensure fidelity to the charism itself, the self-exposition of those who have encountered it is especially decisive. This goes in a quite particular way for those who have received the mission of continuing the leadership of communities as the successors of their founders. Personal witness involves a risk, and those who take this risk increasingly become children of, and hence faithful to, the grace received: children and not just imitators.

If we now consider the self-exposition of the community as such, two fundamental criteria should be pointed out. Speaking of priorities and perspectives, the grave risk of undue standardization needs to be avoided. There does not exist a single road to follow for the mission of the ecclesial movements and new communities. Otherwise we would succumb to the temptation of wanting to tame movements and new communities by reducing them to the pattern of the “already known”, depriving them of the providential and provocative *diversity* to which the Spirit calls them. As a matter of principle the Spirit must not be precluded from the greatest possible variety of forms of witness, so long as the movement in question remains within the objective structure of the *regimen communionis* of the Church.<sup>34</sup> This implies, among other things, that the time has come to recognize that action and reflection on the mission of the new movements in the Church can no

ecclesiali”, in: *Rassegna di Teologia* 41 (2000) 67-79; A. FAVALE, “Presbiteri, movimenti e nuove comunità nella Chiesa”, in: *Salesianum* 62 (2000) 525-564; S. RECCHI, “I movimenti ecclesiali e l’incardinazione dei sacerdoti membri”, in: *Quaderni di diritto ecclesiastico* 15 (2002) 168-176; F. CIARDI, “Gli istituti di vita consacrata e i movimenti ecclesiali insieme per la causa del Regno”, in: *Vita Consacrata* 38 (2002) 140-152; J.J. ECHEBERRIA, “Los movimientos eclesiales: fenomenología cuestiones abiertas”, in: *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 76 (2001) 5-33.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 14: “Fully incorporated into the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who – by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion – are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops”.

longer be considered a closed chapter, a thing unto itself: it must necessarily take place, within the universal Church and the particular Churches, in the common symphony of all the groups of faithful, including the traditional ones.

This – and this is the second criterion – requires the courage and the patience to find new forms. In this regard, too, the canonical status of each movement, the form it takes in canon law, must be earned step by step in the history of self-exposition of every reality in the life of the Church.

If the actual situation of the various movements and communities is examined, it seems to me – though this is a wholly personal interpretation – that two tendencies emerge, though these are not alternative, even if they express different points of view.<sup>35</sup>

On the one hand, there is a consciousness in some of these movements that the *sequela* of the charism intends merely to express a persuasive form of the normal belonging to the Church. Movements of this kind wish to educate Christian life as such in “sacramental logic”, which consists in tackling conditions of life common to all the faithful without emphasizing specific forms or organizations of mission, witness and organization. Such an outlook favours a conception and practice of the movement as a place of Christian brotherhood and friendship capable of reacting speedily to the circumstances of time and place and assuming appropriate forms to meet them. Careful vigilance, especially in ensuring close communion and generous mission, will help to maintain fidelity to the charism and its destination to the mission of the Church. This attitude of strong self-exposition may find support in canonically appropriate forms, either already existing or yet to be found.

It seems to me, however, that another tendency can be found in the practice of the movements: that of conceiving membership of a

<sup>35</sup> Descriptions of the charisms and life of the various ecclesial movements and new communities can be found in: A. FAVALE, *Comunità nuove nella Chiesa*, Messaggero, Padova 2003; M.M. BRU ALONSO, *Testimoni dello Spirito*, Grafite, Napoli 1999; *Directory of International Associations of the Lay Faithful*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2004.

movement or community, persuasive places of Christian life, as akin to monastic forms of religious congregations and orders, in the shadow of which many new communities were in fact born. This outlook may favour a precision of proposal and a careful *sequela* in the life of the individual member. Precisely against the background of the immemorial experience of monastic and religious forms, these communities should seek appropriate juridical forms for mutual relations with the ordinary realizations of ecclesial life.

*The Christian subject as witness in the world*

As Benedict XVI has reminded us, there is an objective correspondence between the beauty of the encounter with Christ, by virtue of the gift of the Spirit, and the joy of communicating it.<sup>36</sup> Mission is not in the first place a specific activity, an extra or addendum to daily life. On the contrary, by virtue of the “sacramental logic” of the Revelation, each circumstance and each relation is a quasi-sacrament of the meeting with Christ. The person him/herself, astonished by the beauty of the encounter with Christ, by virtue of a persuasive charism, is seized by joy and by the wish to communicate this beauty in the circumstances of his daily life – affections, work and leisure – where the dialogue of salvation with the Lord takes place. Here is the root of the essentiality and universality of the Christian mission.<sup>37</sup> The ecclesial mission does not have, as we know, confines other than those of the world: “the field is the world” (*Mt* 13: 38). Mission is the task of all those who are called, i.e. potentially all men and women.

Once again we could describe the features of this living on behalf of the world (*propter nos et propter nostram salutem*) by referring to the *Acts of the Apostles*. It is enough to recall the freedom with which

<sup>36</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Homily during the solemn eucharistic concelebration for the assumption of the Petrine Ministry, St. Peter’s Square, 24 April 2005.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. E. BUENO DE LA FUENTE, “La autoconciencia misionera de los nuevos movimientos”, in: *Misiones Extranjeras* 172 (1999), 279-289.

the apostles placed in common their material and spiritual goods (cf. *Acts* 4: 32-37), practising *koinônia* as the principle for the organization of their daily existence. We could also refer to Paul who during his visit to Corinth worked as a tentmaker (cf. *Acts* 18: 1-4), or to Paul's life in Rome, where he was delivered a prisoner, kept under house arrest, but received friends at home, thus living his period of forced "rest" in an unusual way (cf. *Acts* 28, 16-22). Or again we could mention the jailor in the prison at Phillipi who, once the civic unrest was over, was baptized, with all his family, and who brought Paul and Silas "up into his house, set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God" (cf. *Acts* 16: 27-34). Truly every circumstance of life and every human relationship in it – for circumstances and relationships form the web of reality – are suitable for a person or a community to bear witness to Jesus Christ.

Speaking of mission today, we must have the courage to recognize that, due to the great suffering of post-modern man, it is decisive to show how the event of Jesus Christ intercepts the yearning for freedom and happiness that is innate in every human being but that is singularly acute in our contemporaries. This must go so far as to show the anthropological and social implications of the newness generated by Baptism and made fascinating by following the charism shared in the life of the Church.<sup>38</sup> We are called to show that the terrible accusation of the poet T.S. Eliot is not true: "human kind / Cannot bear very much reality".<sup>39</sup>

When I speak of anthropological needs, I refer to the specific ways in which the movements educate in the life of the affections and tackle the inspiring experience of conjugal and virginal love, which is always fruitful. Rendering visible in the world the possibility of loving for always and in an exclusive way in marriage, and of giving birth and bringing up chil-

<sup>38</sup> Cf. G. COLZANI, "Nuova evangelizzazione, sfida comune. Sulla relazione fra Chiesa e movimenti", in: *La Rivista del Clero Italiano*, 81 (2000), 646-665.

<sup>39</sup> T.S. ELIOT, "Burnt Norton" in: IDEM, *Four Quartets*, Faber and Faber, London 1944, 14.

dren, is a decisive way of restoring hope to our fellow human beings: the hope of which those who have been called to follow Jesus Christ through the profession of the evangelical counsels or through the sacrament of Holy Orders are a privileged eschatological sign.

At the social level, what is needed is to propose a new civilization with a human face, a civilization rich in affection, work and recreation, conceived as generators of a “good life” at the personal and civil level.

Desire and freedom find a sure path to fulfilment by loving and working in Christ and for Christ without fearing sacrifice or duty. In this way we become men and women led by the logic of the Incarnation to share the most elementary forms of desire, starting out from material needs (cf. *Acts* 4: 32-35; *Rm* 15: 25-27; *1 Cor* 16; *2 Cor* 8). And it is quite natural that the greater the need, the more it encourages the Christian freely to share. In this way a social culture based on the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, constantly promoted by the social teaching of the Church, will take shape. It will be able to encounter and collaborate with men and women in all latitudes and longitudes in the development of substantial forms of democracy and good government.

It is no accident that the Holy Father, in his encyclical *Deus caritas est*, urged the laity to pursue the path of the purification of love: a path that simultaneously passes from *eros* to *agape*, and from justice to charity.<sup>40</sup> Christians – says the Pope – as “citizens of the state, are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation ‘in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good*’”.<sup>41</sup> The importance of this witness in public life, able to distinguish the various spheres of service in the vital unity of the subject, is characterized by a clear con-

<sup>40</sup> Cf. A. SCOLA, *Introduzione e commento a Deus caritas est*, Cantagalli, Siena 2006, 108-112.

<sup>41</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 29, quoting John Paul II's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, no. 42.

sciousness of the relation between rights, duties and laws. The debate on what is meant by “religion” and “secularism”, at least in Europe and the USA, has played a significant role in this in recent times.

On the one hand, there are those who absolutise the relation between citizen and state, relegating to the private sphere every creed or identity (cultural and religious). This leads to a hypertrophy of rights, decoupled from duties and from laws, and the separation between public and private. It inevitably brings with it a formalist conception of democracy. By censoring the religious dimension of humankind, the constitutional order of the state tends to usurp the place of God.

On the other hand, we are witnessing an enhancement, even a glorification of cultural, religious and ethnic “differences” to the point of precluding communication between them. Under such circumstances it becomes impossible to think of common belonging to the human family. It becomes impossible to establish universality, and hence to establish a term of comparison between diversities on the basis of the elementary experience of each person and mankind as a whole.

The anthropology that is born from the encounter with the Lord, precisely because it is respectful of the specific nature of the elementary experience, permits such positions to be avoided. The human person, who is religious by constitution, is able to take on board the whole of reality which in turn is comprehensible in its essential lineaments. Society is always correlated with the person. So any separation between public and private is arbitrary. Christians propound a view of humanity and society in the measure of everyone. They do not fear the plural nature of modern civil realities because they esteem the intermediate bodies in which the individual is always incorporated. Helped in this way not to interpret or practise right in an individualistic way, Christians thus cherish the gift of life, recognize the objective nature of affective, familial and social relations, and are convinced that justice and charity can and must be combined.

The ecclesial movements and new communities are thus called to give an integral witness that meets these implications. Only thus will they be faithful to the essentially missionary nature of Christianity.



“WOE TO ME IF I DO NOT PREACH THE GOSPEL!”

The passage from the *Acts of the Apostles* with which we opened this reflection continues with a very significant episode: “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us’. And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach (the Greek text says “evangelize”, *euangelisasthai*) the gospel to them” (*Acts* 16: 9-10).

Is not the man of Macedon in the account of *Acts* the archetype of our fellowman who, perhaps in the form of rebellion or even hostility, never ceases to appeal to us? And should not we, who by pure grace have known the risen Lord and by the gift of his Spirit have become a living part of the Christian people, immediately set out, like Paul and his companions, recognizing in this sign God’s call to us to evangelise? “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (*1 Cor* 9: 16).



### **I.3. Panel discussions**



**Encounter with the beauty of Christ.  
Educational itineraries**



## Introduction

MATTEO CALISI

An extraordinary gift that the Holy Spirit has lavished on the Church in recent years is the emergence of new communities and ecclesial movements that have generated many precious spiritual fruits in the life of the Church and of so many people. They are an eloquent testimony of the living presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the faithful, as the Servant of God Pope John Paul II had affirmed on various occasions.

Thanks to them so many lay Christians – men and women, youth, adults and the elderly – have been able to experience the encounter with the astonishing beauty of Christ! So many people have been able to rediscover their faith, the ability and wish to pray, the sacraments and the power of the Word of God, and have translated all this into generous service to the new evangelization of the Church.

To the modern world, which declares the death of God and has entered a process of spiritual necrosis called “secularism”, the new communities joyfully proclaim that God is alive, that those who believe in him are alive in him, and that he dwells in them and works powerfully within them by means of the Holy Spirit.

This panel discussion does not consist of yet another presentation of the movements and new communities which, as a whole, are by now widespread and well known in the Church. Our aim, rather, is to share the living sense of ecclesial communion that characterises this diversified flowering of charisms, its methods, its diversified forms of community life and its innumerable fields of apostolate.

The presence on this panel of six representatives of these new movements/communities is a valuable opportunity to grasp the richness of the various gifts of the Spirit, to point out their educational value and to renew their missionary impulse.

So I would like to thank the following for their participation: Alba Sgariglia, of the Focolare Movement; Kiko Argüello, founder of the Neocatechumenal Way; Giancarlo Cesana of the Communion and Liberation Movement; Patti Gallagher Mansfield, one of the initiators of the experience of Catholic Charismatic Renewal; Father Laurent Fabre, founder of the Chemin Neuf Community; and Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche Community.



## At the origin of everything, the discovery that “God is love”

ALBA SGARIGLIA\*

The encyclical that opened the pontificate of Benedict XVI starts out from the affirmation of the *First Letter of John*, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn 4: 16) and places it at the centre of the Christian faith: love is the essence of the Christian God, his name, his true nature. But it is also the truest sense of human existence, our only destiny.

This fundamental discovery, that “God is love”, is at the origin of our encounter with the beauty of Christ. For us, this encounter takes place through a charism: the charism of unity given by the Holy Spirit in our time to our founder, Chiara Lubich.

Our life was as if illuminated: it was like encountering a bright light that attracted us and involved us in heart and mind. As a result our whole life was transformed, it took on – as Benedict XVI would put it – “a decisive direction”.<sup>1</sup>

Discovering that God loves us so much was for us, ever since the start of our movement, something utterly new, a new horizon that worked a kind of conversion in us. From that moment we discovered that God is present everywhere with his love: in our daily life, in our thoughts and aspirations, in both joyful and sad events.<sup>2</sup> The God we

\* Focolare Movement.

<sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 1.

<sup>2</sup> He is omnipresent and reveals to us that everything is love: what we are and everything that concerns us; that we are his children and that he is our Father; that nothing escapes his love, not even the errors we make, the sins we commit; that his love envelops Christians like us, the Church, the world, the universe. Cf. C. LUBICH, *Una via nuova*, Roma 2003, 33-34.

gradually discovered was no longer a distant, inaccessible God, a God alien to our life. We discovered instead his paternal face and, consequently, the relation between heaven and earth that unites us as children of the same Father and as brothers and sisters. He, God of Love, God the Father, has renewed and regenerated us, accompanying us along the rich itinerary of personal and communitarian formation. In particular, he has taught us to abandon ourselves totally to him; to marvel at his providential interventions on our behalf; to be detached from things; and to live our earthly life immersed in the supernatural dimension, immersed in the Kingdom of God that is already present on earth.

In short, we can say that he has taught us to discover love everywhere and at all times, in us and around us.

“So we know and believe the love God has for us” (1 Jn 4: 16): that was and is the immediate response to the discovery of so much love, and consequently is the principle that – we feel – must inspire our conduct and, more widely, shape our whole being and determine our personality.

To realize this, the members of the movement look to the One who turned love into the one and only purpose of his life: Jesus. We are called to be like him.<sup>3</sup> The end of our educational itinerary can be summed up precisely in this: being love, “being Jesus”, to bring into the world his way of acting, his way of thinking, his way of willing. To do so, we feel the need to know and translate everything he said and did into our life, in other words, to enact his Word in our life – according to a practice tried and tested since the origin of the movement –, to be nourished by it, and to assimilate it in the depths of our soul, until we are almost consubstantial with it, a new *forma mentis* of the new man in us.<sup>4</sup> We then feel the need to communicate the experi-

<sup>3</sup> Jesus “is life, the complete life. He is man, the perfect man, who epitomises in himself all men and all truths and every impulse they may feel to elevate themselves to him” (cf. C. LUBICH, *La dottrina spirituale*, Milano 2001, 220).

<sup>4</sup> We have ascertained that in “enacting the Word in our life” we become living Word. And being living Word means being another person, taking the side of the Other who lives in us, and finding our real freedom in self-liberation (cf. *ibid.*, 171).

ences of this living Word to others, to re-evangelize ourselves as individuals and as a community. Only thus are we able to form ourselves in the image of Jesus and to discover our truest identity as persons who find their fulfilment in love.

This new life, which the charism was gradually arousing, revealed to us the essential characteristic of the love that Jesus brought to the earth: love of the Trinity. It's a love that is the unconditional mutual gift of self, and hence total communion; a love that, by reflecting the dynamic of inter-trinitarian life, transforms our way of relating ourselves to others.<sup>5</sup> Our mutual love must therefore be the expression of this triune reality so that the life of heaven may in some way be transferred to earth or, rather, that the earth may become in some way an anticipation of heaven. And when this happens, we experience that new interpersonal relations are born, rooted in a firm foundation that is profoundly human and at the same time profoundly divine, relations that are therefore destined to be eternal. Now, in proportion as we recognize in every neighbour, every fellowman with whom we come into contact a gift of God's love for us, we are enabled to recognize in that person Jesus himself who lives in us by grace, and therefore recognize ourselves in each of our fellowmen, of seeing and discovering our own light in others, the truth of ourselves in other people.<sup>6</sup> So our brother becomes for us the way – the privileged way – to find our truest identity. But loving our brother with this measure requires some conditions: it requires that we accept the whole of him, enter into his needs, share his sorrows, understand his difficulties, experience them as if they were ours. It means becoming one with him: it means becoming "all things" towards him (cf. *1 Cor* 9: 22), which implies that we should empty ourselves, that we should become nothing.

<sup>5</sup> Chiara wrote: "I was created as gift to those near me, and those near me were created as gift to me, as the Father of the Trinity is everything for the Son and the Son is everything for the Father. This is why the relation between us is the Holy Spirit, the relation that exists between the Persons of the Trinity" (C. LUBICH, *Spiritualità dell'unità e vita trinitaria*, in: "Nuova Umanità" 1, 2004, 15-16; also in: ID., *L'arte di amare*, Roma 2005, 128-129 [our translation]).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. IDEM, *La dottrina spirituale*, Milano 2001, 219.

Right from the start the charism indicated to us what should be for us the model of the deepest self-abnegation for love: Jesus who cries out to the Father “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (*Mk* 15, 34): a void of infinite love that is the supreme act of love, in which he manifests himself as wholly love and therefore as the source of that love that unites us to the Father and each other.<sup>7</sup> It is by contemplating this divine model, Jesus abandoned, that the Focolarini learn to tackle every negative situation, whether personal or that of others, and to transform it into an opportunity for new growth in our relation with God and with our brothers.

So, loving, loving each other, having as our measure the cry of abandonment of Jesus: that is the core of the process that the members of the movement undertake, always having before them as the direction and goal of their path the cry of Jesus to the Father: “That they may all be one [...], so that the world may believe” (*Jn* 17: 21). Feeling every lack of unity they encounter as their own, they try to fully establish unity between each other, so that it may increasingly irradiate and shine forth also in the world around them. This unity, once realized, has as its effect the presence of Jesus (cf. *Mt* 18: 20) promised to those united in his name.<sup>8</sup> And the presence of Jesus makes us one in Christ (cf. *Gal* 3: 28), “not just one thing, but one only, one single new subject”, as affirmed by Benedict XVI who concludes: “If we live in this way, we transform the world”.<sup>9</sup> For us who pursue the way of unity, “Jesus in our midst” is therefore essential; he is – it may be said – the nature of our life, the norm of norms.<sup>10</sup> So it is not only a point of

<sup>7</sup> Jesus in his abandonment in fact filled every void, illuminated every darkness, accompanied every solitude, eliminated every pain, and cancelled every sin (cf. C. LUBICH, *Scritti Spirituali*/1, Roma 1997, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 44).

<sup>8</sup> United, that is, in his love, as the Fathers of the Church attest. Cf. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilia in Mattheum* 63: PG 58,587; THEODORE THE STUDITE, *Epistula* II: PG 99,1350.

<sup>9</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Homily during the Mass of Easter Vigil, St. Peter’s Basilica, 15 April 2006, in: *L’Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English*, N. 16 – 19 April 2006, 8.

<sup>10</sup> It is significant that the *Statutes* of the Focolare Movement begin with this premise: “Mutual and continual charity, which makes unity possible and brings the presence of

arrival but a point of departure. For this we are constantly urged to "generate" his presence in our midst.<sup>11</sup> And it is thanks to his presence in our midst that everything takes on significance and value: in prayer, in study, in work... We could go further and say that it is just his presence among us that forms the "privileged" place of our formation. It has in fact become the movement's proven experience that, by learning to live with him in our midst, the spiritual and cultural maturation of the person and his conscience is strengthened. And this enables us to grasp that this formative process is undergone by each in his/her uniqueness and yet in profound communion of life and thought with all those who undertake it.

To this end, spaces and structures – temporary or permanent<sup>12</sup> – have been established over time. They are reserved for the holding of periodic courses of integral, spiritual and cultural formation, with the aim of educating our members to pursue the "way of love" through which, day after day, together with our brothers, we progress toward God, and enable them to enter into dialogue with the various religious and cultural worlds of our time. To put into practice this formative process, some specific tools have been developed. Apart from the communication of the experiences of the Word of life already recalled, some meetings are devoted to talks between the movement's leaders and its initiates to share possible problems, remove difficulties that may arise during the formative process, illuminate and help. These typical discussions were indeed the first form of structure developed by the movement in its origins.

Another useful, indeed indispensable tool is the practice of the

Jesus into the community, is for the members of the Work of Mary the basis of their life in every aspect: it is the norm of norms, the premise of every other rule" (Work of Mary, *General Statutes*, 5).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. PAUL VI in: *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, VI, 2 (1964), 1072-1173.

<sup>12</sup> These structures comprise the Citadels of witness, Mariapolis Centres, annual meetings lasting several days, schools of specialization, and study courses aimed at our young members, university students, at which the contents of doctrine in process of elaboration by the charism are in particular offered to their reflection.

“hour of truth”, recalling the brotherly correction practised in the first Christian community (cf. *Col* 3:16; *2 Cor* 13:11; *Heb* 10: 24-25). It helps us not only to remove our defects but also to increase our virtues.

We also practice the communication of those significant moments – whether of sorrow or of grace – that we encounter along the way. And this communication, prompted only by love – since what is done for love is not lost but remains and is multiplied –, mutually encourages us.

In this journey, which we undertake together, we therefore seek the holiness of others as our own, with the aim of realizing God’s design for each person and for the movement itself.

At the same time the Focolarini also try to irradiate the style of evangelical life that belongs to them in the environments in which they perform their activities. They therefore strive, in the first place, to perform their professional tasks in the best possible way and to exploit their own talents to improve and perfect them also through studies connected with their own profession. Convinced that the Gospel can really penetrate every sphere of life – from the economy to politics, from law to healthcare, from education to the mass media –, they are eager to collaborate with the whole Church to promote a culture founded on the Gospel and on the values contained in it, and thus offer solutions to the numerous problems of contemporary society.

So the Focolarini strive to counter consumerism by promoting a culture of giving; to counter immorality by the culture of purity; and to counter non-belief by the “culture of resurrection”, to use a term recently coined by Chiara Lubich: in other words, a culture of the risen Jesus who is present in our midst and who guides us in the building of the civilization of love that is yearned for today as never before.<sup>13</sup>

Through the successive stages of their journey, the members of the movement look to a person, fully realized. They look to Mary.

<sup>13</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, no. 30.

*At the origin of everything, the discovery that “God is love”*

Who more than she has believed in God’s love!

Who more than she, “favourite daughter of the Father”, has fully lived the Word!

Who more than she, inhabited by the Trinity, made herself a gift of love, nothing but love for us all!

Who more than she has continued and continues to generate the presence of her Son in the whole Church, thus spreading the culture of his resurrection!

It is for this that Mary, “flower of humanity”, “wholly beautiful”, sublime icon of the beauty of Christ, offers herself to all who join the movement – which significantly bears the name of Work of Mary –, as a model to be imitated and even more so to be revived, in order to be, as far as possible, a presence and almost a continuation of her on earth.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Work of Mary, *General Statutes*, art. 2.





## Small Christian communities for the new evangelization

KIKO ARGÜELLO\*

What can I say of beauty and its relation with the itinerary of the Neocatechumenal Way? I have just arrived, exhausted, from a meeting for the preparation of the mission *ad gentes*. The Way is preparing to preach the Gospel to the non-baptized. We depart for this mission not only with a priest, but with a whole community that has already completed the neocatechumenal itinerary, hence with an experience covering twenty or even thirty years: an adult community, composed of families, young and old, that has already renewed its baptismal vows.

For example, some families who have lived in Germany for eighteen years have expressed their willingness to go to former East Germany. Just think that in the city of Karl Marx, Chemnitz, 87% of the population have not been baptized. In this area, which was largely Protestant, Communism systematically destroyed religious belief. If 87% of the inhabitants are not baptized, 90% have no relation at all with the Church. We have ascertained with surprise, however, that the Bishop, who is close to the Focolare Movement, is very happy about our proposal. The fact is we enjoy the support of many ecclesial groups and associations also in the South of France, in particular that of the Emmanuel Community. For me that's something new and surprising, because we still don't know each other very well. Indeed the new ecclesial realities – I don't like the word "movement", I prefer the term "new ecclesial realities" – really know very little about each other; nonetheless I have the impression that each of us in his/her own sphere is doing what he/she is called to do. My surprise derives from

\* Initiator of the Neocatechumenal Way.

the fact that we encounter numerous difficulties with many bishops, whereas the bishops who come from Emmanuel, from the Focolarini, or from other groups such as Communion and Liberation or Opus Dei, help us. What a surprise! We help each other.

In this regard I am reminded of one particular episode: when I was in Florence and was being attacked by left-wing priests, who detested me, Cardinal Benelli said to me: “Kiko, there is only one Spirit, there aren’t two of them, so don’t lose heart!”. A very profound observation: there is only one Holy Spirit. When I was in Beijing, we had a meeting with a representative of the “underground” church. I was surprised by the fact that at the end of this secret meeting – you must know that Catholics in China are subjected to harsh persecution – this priest permitted us to catechise throughout China. Whence comes this generosity? What did he find in us? He has no direct knowledge of the Neocatechumenal Way! We act “in the same Spirit” (2 Cor 12: 18). Today we have communities both in the underground Church and in the nationalist Church in China.

Dostoevsky said, “Beauty will save the world”. To what beauty was he referring? To the beauty of Christ. The rabbis said that when God, almost like a matchmaker, led Eve to Adam, Adam was enchanted with the beauty of Eve. And they add that when Moses, the new matchmaker, led Israel out of the bondage of Egypt to lead it to Mount Sinai, God appeared like a bridegroom; the people were like the bride to whom God spoke with the words of the Shemà: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Dt 6: 5). The rabbis say that beauty consists in this: everyone could see the glory of God on Mount Sinai, everyone could hear. Yet they came from Egypt and many of them were lame, blind and deaf, because idolatry blinds. The man who places all his hope in an ideology, in an idol, cannot see the love of God, because he sees only his idol. Idolatry makes us deaf to the Word of God. God cannot act on such a man, because his hope is merely an idol. Whatever be his idol: political or artistic... All saw, all listened, and the lame walked. God on Mount Sinai performed the miracle of eliminating the ugliness of idolatry that the people of Israel

brought with them from Egypt, and all of them became beautiful: the lame, the deaf and the blind no longer existed.

Once John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus: “Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?” (*Mt* 11: 3). At the time John the Baptist was in prison, and clearly was going through an extremely dark night of the soul, not knowing what was to become of him; so he began to doubt whether Jesus really was the Messiah. Christ replied to his disciples: “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear” (*Mt* 11: 4-5).

What do I mean by this? We would like to present the beauty of Christ to the world, among non-Christians. Christ made mankind beautiful. Why beautiful? What did he make beautiful? The Christian community, the body of the risen Christ. We are thinking of inserting Christian communities in these new quarters full of skyscrapers, in huge housing estates on the outskirts of cities where there is no presence of the Church, no baptized; for example, in a completely secularised city of Germany, the Bishop is thinking of a kind of personal parish with a mission for the non-baptized, formed of families that are already able to speak the language properly: Christian families that have already completed the Neocatechumenal Way, often with more than ten children: all of them grown-up children, adolescents aged between 15 and 18. It's impressive, I assure you. To these children these families have been able to transmit the faith. What did they have to say about their schools? One 15-year-old girl said that one of her classmates had already had five abortions, that drug consumption is widespread... and it's a situation by now common throughout Europe.

In these secularised societies where can Christ be encountered? Whoever encounters him is saved! Where can he be encountered? On German television? In the newspapers? In culture? What culture? Today culture is monopolized by the left. In the theatre? In the *Da Vinci Code*? Ordinary people, those who lead a “normal” life, who go to work... where can they can encounter Christ? How?

So, that's why we are making this proposal: in these totally de-

christianized zones we implant a Christian community, which is the body of the risen Christ, and so each of our brothers forms one of the members of the body of Christ. So an 18-year-old youth who goes to school is a member of Christ, in other words, he has eternal life within him, immortal life, and every school companion who comes into contact with him has an occasion to encounter Christ through him. Similarly, a woman of the community, who merely goes into town to do the shopping, becomes for each woman who comes into contact with her a chance to encounter Christ. That's how Christ may be found through a Christian! For the Christian adolescent it's not just a question of speaking with his school friends in difficulty, perhaps because they come from broken homes or are on drugs. No, because he's a Catholic youngster, and no doubt he's the only one in his school; normally there aren't any others. Therefore he doesn't agree with abortion and everyone looks at him as if he were an alien, someone who had landed from another planet. He doesn't participate in the parties his schoolmates organize on Friday and Saturday to drink and fornicate. He doesn't go there. But just for this reason he will become a point of reference. He will be able to bring his friends to church, which will teach them the beauty of the liturgy, and true love.

What most surprises non-Christians are our interpersonal relations, the beauty of our way of relating to each other. Members of a club relate to each other through a shared interest, golf, hunting or whatever. The relation that exists between Christians and the Holy Spirit is something entirely new. Non-believers are astonished: "You relate to each other in a surprising way!" a non-Christian lady said to me. Is it friendship? It's not just a human friendship, however beautiful that is, as St. Augustine observed. In the Christian friendship there is something that transcends the human input, and it's the Holy Spirit: "love one another, even as I have loved you" (*Jn* 13: 34). How can we show this love? Christ loved us when we were enemies, his enemies, in the dimension of the cross (cf. *Rom* 5: 10). We would like the community, by re-living its own baptism, to achieve this stature of faith: the stature of Christ: loving each other to the point of laying down our life for each other.

But how can we make visible this love? Can a Christian community really become, as Vatican Council II says, a sacrament of salvation? A sacrament is something that one can touch, one can see. Someone who sees the tricolour flag will immediately think of Italy. Sacrament! In a Christian community, is it possible to make our faith visible? How? Perhaps by going to pray in church? Muslims go to the mosque: what is it that distinguishes us? What's new about us? Have we something to say to our completely nihilistic, atheist and Marxist society? What we have to say is that Christ has vanquished death and given us eternal life, that he has profoundly healed our being, that the Holy Spirit has given witness to our spirit that God exists, that he loves us and loves us like a Father, that we are children of God (cf. *Rom 8: 16*). In other words, that God has healed us and given us immortal life.

If – for example – I were to marry this woman, and she were in time to become insupportable for me because of certain of her attitudes, if I have been healed, all her defects could not destroy me. But if I did not have life eternal within me, these defects could reach the point of destroying me, and I would be forced to separate. Why? Because I have not vanquished death, and therefore must attempt in every possible way to survive in the face of these attitudes that spell death for me. That's why our principal objective is profoundly to heal man, heal his very being at its deepest level. Christ achieves this healing through preaching, through faith. Faith! What is faith? "It is the Spirit himself bearing witness to our spirit that we are children of God..." (*Rom 8: 16*): if, let us say, I accompany a young pagan to listen to a catechesis, the encounter between the spirit of this youth and the Spirit of Christ may take place, or not. If it takes place, a light will be lit up in him, and a new creation will begin; otherwise, he will only hear words and concepts. If he was truly able to hear the *kerygma*, from which faith is born, it was because he saw the signs that helped him to open his ear. That's why the first Christian community never announced the *kerygma* without having first performed a miracle, such as the gift of tongues, the resurrection of the dead, the healed para-

lytic... When faith appears, no other miracles are needed, because a new miracle, the “moral miracle”, has been performed: the miracle of love. Love each other! Who? You, the community, so that everyone may see this love in the dimension of the cross. If they see you are perfectly one, they shall believe (cf. *Jn* 17: 21).

But how can we attain this love? Through an itinerary of Christian formation experienced in small communities, in which the community itself becomes a mirror. If I live in a community, for example in a community of brethren, I may eventually have the experience of finding myself sitting beside this brother who is too neurotic and therefore I find him insupportable. And even if I am a practising Christian and regularly pray, I will realize that my faith is very poor. I will have to recognize that I am incapable of loving him. Love isn't a word. Love is an existence, an experience. Therefore the community acts as my mirror, it helps me to descend, to discover the stature of my faith. But what must I do to be able to love him – seeing that I'm in a Christian community and I ought to love him? Faith comes from listening, through what is heard (cf. *Rom* 10: 17). Faith comes from listening to the Word of God. So I must learn to be humble. I must ask God: give me faith so that I be able to love my enemy, so that I may love my brothers. If I don't love them, what Christian am I? That's why the beauty of the body of Christ, says St. Paul, is manifested by “always carrying in the body the death of Christ, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies”. (*2 Cor* 4: 10). So in our body people can see that Christ is alive. This means being adult Christians: if this brother is a Christian, today he has lived by carrying the death of Christ in his flesh. This also goes for priests: before they become priests, they are Christians who form part of the community. What does it mean to say “carrying the death of Christ”? Christ died by submitting to crucifixion: each Christian must let himself be crucified every day, in the real situations in which he has to live. The resurrection of Christ appears in this sign.

I have tried to sketch out in a few brief remarks the need to achieve a serious, sacramental, adult faith, so that the world may see.

Muslims too will see. When the Christian community appears, Muslims also come. That's why we were subjected to persecution in Istanbul: over twelve Muslims received baptism in our communities, but we were unable to continue; we ended up in all the newspapers, publicly denounced; they even tried to put us in prison. All peoples will come to the Church, Muslims too, when they see the Christian community, when they see love at work in the Christian community.





## The response to a human need

GIANCARLO CESANA\*

In tackling the theme of beauty – more especially the educational task relating to the way in which we get to know Christ through the encounter with beauty – I wish to start out from an aspect that has characterized our movement since its origins. The Student Youth movement was founded in high schools and originally was, as far I am aware, the one mixed group of its kind in the Church, i.e. the only one in which boys and girls came together; for at the time there was a certain fear of sex and that's why there was a tendency to keep the two sexes segregated. Father Giussani, our founder, was warned of the danger of this feature of his educational programme, but he dismissed the objection more or less like this: “If you keep men and women separate in church – as was the custom at one time: the men on the benches to the right, the women on those to the left – you'll notice after a time that many, especially the young, will start looking in the opposite direction. Unless, that is, a stronger, more compelling and more convincing proposal is made from the pulpit: then everyone will look straight ahead”. The problem of Christianity posed by father Giussani in this description is that being Christians is not being like everyone else, doing what everyone else does, but something more essential: being Christians is being more; living more. Father Giussani invested everything in the beauty of Christ, in beauty as the manifestation of truth and goodness. He forced us to look ahead, and not to the side. Beauty is the challenge of the Christian proposal, because emphasizing the importance of beauty means accepting the challenge of desire, since beauty inspires desire, and this is the most “dangerous”,

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i.e. the least controllable, aspect of the human experience. In man's desire, in all his desires, there's ultimately a striving for the infinite, for God. We look to Christ because we follow this ultimate striving for God. Father Giussani always stressed, also as a criticism of a particular kind of spiritual direction that is too preoccupied with the niceties of conduct, that the problem of God is not a moral problem, but the response to an urgent human need like hunger, thirst, sex; the problem of God is a fundamental need. So it follows that man cannot live without beauty. I'll explain this better with an episode recounted by father Giussani himself: when he was a child, he used to go to early morning Mass with his mother and one morning, looking at the one star shining brightly in the crystal-clear dawn sky, his mother said: "How beautiful is the world and how great is God!" How beautiful is the world: beauty, the aesthetic principle. How great is God: the world was given to me. That means that desire can only be fulfilled with sacrifice. It means that the desire that remains unfulfilled is not a sacrifice, it's a misfortune. The problem is when desire is fulfilled: when the woman you love, loves you, there must be a sacrifice, i.e. virginity: i.e. the recognition of the presence of another person who has been given to you, but who is not yours, and to whom you cannot do what you want. Father Giussani put our desires to the test. He was willing to accept the challenge of a problem that is so profoundly human and modern because, in general, in tackling the problem of aesthetics, no account is taken of the relation between beauty and desire. Beauty is what permits knowing someone to be transformed into love for someone, into forming an attachment. To formulate his educational programme in this way, don Giussani had to accept a very strong affective compromise, in other words he had to reconstruct and build anew the experience of friendship. Man encounters God when he understands that God loves him. The Pope's encyclical says that "God loves man"<sup>1</sup> and that God's love for man is an elective love, not a generic love. God, that is, does not love man in general, man in the abstract: he

<sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 9.

loves me, and the way in which I can grasp this is a friendship that testifies it to me. It is the Pope again who says so: men and women are needed who make God credible, but credible not to others, but to me. I was really struck by a quotation from von Balthasar cited by Cardinal Schönborn: “The only theologians who interest me are the saints”. The saints are the real human beings, those who are fulfilled; human beings who demonstrate this correspondence, this friendship with God and with me; between God and me. This is a characteristic of our movement from an educational point of view. I would like to describe it in the words of Prof. Nikolaus Lobkowitz – Director of the Central Institute of Studies on Eastern Europe at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt in Germany – , cited in the preface of father Giussani’s book *The Risk of Education*: “It’s no accident that friendship is one of the virtues that the movement founded by father Giussani practises most joyfully; a friendship that involves anyone met on the way and that remains undiminished even if the friend takes a direction in life that cannot be approved”.<sup>2</sup> The friendship remains, even if the friend is no longer the person we wanted. It remains, even if our wife is no longer the one we wanted, because also when we marry, the first problem is how to be friends with our wife, i.e. by sharing our destiny; not only convenience, not only fondness, not only attraction: but destiny, the purpose of life. In such a relationship we become interested in everything and begin to understand – as I am increasingly coming to understand – what St. Paul said (father Giussani said this was the finest definition of culture he had ever heard): “Test everything: hold fast what is good” (1 *Thess* 5: 21). If you go to the Guggenheim Museum of Modern Art in New York, as you gradually ascend the spiral ramp, what strikes you is not that there is no longer God in art – in modern art that’s perhaps a foregone conclusion – but that there’s no longer man. So to what does St. Paul invite us? To be constructive, to be able to appreciate beauty, which is the real value of criticism, for it

<sup>2</sup> L. GIUSSANI, *The Risk of Education*, Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001, 10-11 (our translation).

is true criticism that makes the gold emerge from the dross. If we experience friendship like this, we will take an interest in everything. I often take this example: a boy falls in love with a girl and tells her so; even if his job is drab, even if it is difficult, for instance on an assembly line, the day after the girl tells him “I love you”, for him the world is transformed; it becomes something different; his job becomes something different. And it’s not a subjective, but an objective fact, because he is wanted; it’s not just a figment of his mind, an opinion he holds. When that happens, a person will take an interest in everything. I wish to reiterate the point with the words of Father Divo Barsotti, who recently died: “I need the whole world. The whole world must be integrated in me; I need to draw close to everything, to feed on everything, so that everything may become Christian in me”.<sup>3</sup>

We thus understand that we have a need for everything, that the dimension of man is this need for everything, and that everything is precisely the dimension of infinity. Not many things together, but everything. It’s the opposite of an intellectual aesthetic, in which what a person likes is only what he thinks.

<sup>3</sup> D. BARSOTTI, *Ritiro della Comunità dei Figli di Dio*, Viareggio, *pro manuscripto* 1960, 5 (our translation).

## A prayer lavishly answered

PATTI GALLAGHER MANSFIELD\*

People frequently ask me if I ever get tired of telling the story of the Duquesne Weekend. I never do, because it's a love story – the story of God's gracious and extraordinary response to the prayer of some very ordinary people.

In Luke 11 Jesus says, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. If you who are evil know how to give your children good things how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (*Lk* 11: 9, 13). Here is an unfailing principle: from the first Pentecost on, the Holy Spirit has always come in response to fervent prayer, to prayer that is hungry and thirsty for more of God, to prayer that asks, seeks, and knocks. I describe in my book, *As By A New Pentecost*, how the entire twentieth century was dedicated to the Holy Spirit in a special way.<sup>1</sup> Blessed Elena Guerra, at the turn of the twentieth century, urged Pope Leo XIII to call the entire Church to pray more fervently to the Holy Spirit, to be, as it were, a permanent cenacle of prayer. And of course you remember John XXIII's prayer to the Spirit in view of the Second Vatican Council: "Divine Spirit, renew Your wonders in this our day as by a new Pentecost".<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of 1966, two Duquesne University professors were asking, seeking, and knocking. They had pledged themselves to pray daily for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their lives using the

\* Witness of the origins of Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

<sup>1</sup> P. GALLAGHER MANSFIELD, *As By A New Pentecost*, Franciscan University Press, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> JOHN XXIII, Apostolic Constitution *Humanae salutis*, no. 23.

beautiful Sequence Hymn of Pentecost. In the midst of this time of prayer, some friends gave them two books: *The Cross and the Switchblade*<sup>3</sup> and *They Speak With Other Tongues*.<sup>4</sup> Both books describe the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The men from Duquesne realized that this Baptism in the Spirit was precisely what they were searching for.

In January 1967, four Catholics from Duquesne attended their first interdenominational charismatic prayer meeting – the Chapel Hill meeting – in the home of Flo Dodge, a Spirit-filled Presbyterian. Interestingly enough, a few months before these Catholics came, the Lord led Flo to read Isaiah 48 where the prophet announces that he is about to do “a new thing” (cf. *Is* 43: 19).

Indeed, God was about to do a new thing among Catholics as a result of the prayer meeting. The people from Duquesne were impressed with what they witnessed there. On January 20, two of the men returned. They received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and began to manifest charismatic gifts. They returned home to pray with the other two who had not attended that night.

At this time I was a member of the *Chi Rho* Scripture Study group that met on the Duquesne campus. Two of these professors served as moderators of *Chi Rho*, and although they did not tell us outright about their charismatic experience, those who knew them well noticed that they radiated a new joy. We were planning for our retreat in February and the professors suggested a new theme: “The Holy Spirit”. In preparation for the retreat, they told us to pray expectantly, to read *The Cross and the Switchblade*, and to read the first four chapters of the *Acts of the Apostles*.

A few days before the retreat, I knelt in my room and prayed, “Lord, I believe I’ve already received your Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation. But if it’s possible for your Spirit to be more at work in my

<sup>3</sup> D. WILKERSON, with E. and J. SHERRILL, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, Geis, New York, 1965.

<sup>4</sup> J. SHERRILL, *They Speak With Other Tongues*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964.

life than he's been up until now, I want it!" The dramatic answer to my prayer was soon to come.

On February 17 about 25 of us left for "The Ark and The Dove" Retreat House on the outskirts of the city. As we gathered for each session, our professors told us to sing as a prayer the ancient hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, "Come Creator Spirit". On Friday night there was a meditation on Mary. Then we had a Penance Service. In John's Gospel we read that when the Holy Spirit comes he will convict the world of sin. That's what happened among us as we repented in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

On Saturday a member of the Chapel Hill Prayer Group came to speak on *Acts*, chapter 2. All we were told was that she was a Protestant friend of our professors. Although her presentation was very simple, it was filled with spiritual power. She spoke about surrendering to Jesus as Lord and Master. She described the Holy Spirit as a Person who empowered her daily. Here was someone who really seemed to know Jesus intimately and personally! She knew the power of the Holy Spirit like the Apostles did. I knew I wanted what she had and I wrote in my notes, "Jesus, be real for me".

In the discussion following her talk, David Mangan proposed that we close our retreat by renewing our Confirmation, that we, as young adults, say our personal "yes" to the Holy Spirit. I linked my arm through his and said, "Even if no one else wants to do this, I do".

On Saturday night a birthday party was planned for a few of our members, but there was a listlessness in the group. I wandered into the upstairs chapel, not to pray but to tell any students there to come down to the party. Yet, when I entered and knelt in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I literally trembled with a sense of awe before his majesty. I knew in an overwhelming way that he is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. But overriding my fear was a much greater desire to surrender myself unconditionally to God. I prayed, "Father, I give my life to you. Whatever you ask of me, I accept. And if it means suffering, I accept that too. Just teach me to follow Jesus and to love as He loves." In the next moment, I found myself pros-

trate, flat on my face, and flooded with an experience of the merciful love of God, a love that is totally undeserved, yet lavishly given. Yes, it's true what St. Paul writes, "The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (*Rom 5: 5*). My shoes came off in the process: I was indeed on holy ground. I felt as if I wanted to die and be with God. The prayer of St. Augustine captures my experience: "O Lord, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in You".<sup>5</sup> As much as I wanted to bask in his presence, I knew that if I, who am no one special, could experience the love of God in this way, that anyone across the face of the earth could do so.

I ran down to tell our chaplain what had happened and he said that David Mangan had been in the chapel before me and had encountered God's presence in the same way. Two girls told me my face was glowing and wanted to know what had happened. I wasn't familiar enough with the Scripture to know that passage in II Corinthians where it describes Moses whose face shone when he returned from the mountain. St. Paul writes: "All of us, with unveiled faces, beholding the beauty of the Lord are being transformed from one degree of glory to another" (*2 Cor 3: 18*). I led these two students into the chapel and began to pray, "Lord, whatever you just did for me, do it for them!" That was probably the shortest Life in the Spirit seminar on record!

Within the next hour God sovereignly drew many of the students into the chapel. Some were laughing, others crying. Some prayed in tongues, others (like me) felt a burning sensation coursing through their hands. One of the professors walked in and exclaimed, "What is the Bishop going to say when he hears that all these kids have been baptized in the Holy Spirit!" Yes, there was a birthday party that night; God had planned it in the Upper Room Chapel. It was the birth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal!

When we returned to campus, we created quite a stir. One friend told me, "Patti, if I didn't know you better, I would say you were drunk!" Like the Apostles after Pentecost, we couldn't help but speak

<sup>5</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Confessions*, I, 1.



of the things we had seen and heard. We literally stumbled into charismatic gifts like prophecy, discernment of spirits, and healing. One of our professors witnessed to his friends at Notre Dame and Michigan State University in these words: "I no longer have to believe in Pentecost; I have seen it!"

In the past 40 years the grace of this new Pentecost has spread from a handful of students on the Duquesne Weekend to millions of Catholics around the world. Why? Because God is determined to send forth His Spirit to renew the face of the earth!

One final word: In his foreword to my book, *As By a New Pentecost*, Cardinal Suenens wrote that "Jesus Christ continues to be born mystically of the Holy Spirit and of Mary", and that we should never separate what God has joined together.<sup>6</sup> If we in the Renewal want to proclaim Jesus to the world, we need the Holy Spirit and we need Mary, the Mother. Just as Mary was in the Upper Room at Pentecost, she is with us whenever we return to the Upper Room. If only we would welcome her as Mother as did the beloved disciple John, she will teach us: how to surrender to the Father's will, how to be faithful to Jesus unto the Cross, how to pray with a humble, pure and docile heart for more of the Holy Spirit, how to be one family. She is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and she knows better than anyone else how to yield to Him. And so, echoing Mary's *Magnificat*, I want to proclaim that, "God who is mighty has done great things for us, and holy is His name!" (cf. *Lk* 1: 49). Amen.

<sup>6</sup> P. GALLAGHER MANSFIELD, *As By A New Pentecost*, cit., IX.



## A grace destined for all Christians

LAURENT FABRE, S.I.\*

Over the last thirty years our charismatic communities have grown, have suffered setbacks of various kinds, but have gone forward and have found increasing acceptance by the Church. So there are good grounds for speaking, as did Archbishop Rylko in his address to our Congress, of the “ecclesial maturity” of our communities. The Church has indeed shown great support for these groups. The bishops, for their part, have been good to us, shown their concern for us, and supported us, especially in moments of crisis and difficulty in which we have felt their benevolent fatherly presence. But there is a question that is perhaps worth asking, because while it’s true that Catholic Charismatic Renewal has been, as a whole well-received, at a deeper level, in its essence, is that really so? If in fact, in an initial phase, we can rejoice that Renewal entered the Church, it seems to me that in a subsequent phase it has to be admitted that the welcome reserved, in particular, for the communities, is not yet complete. The communities of Charismatic Renewal are welcomed with benevolence and patience by the bishops in general, and by a certain number of priests in particular. They are beginning increasingly to take their place in the pastoral ministry of the Church. They participate together with others in a profound renewal of sacramental life. They give proof of great liveliness in all the mass media. But perhaps they cannot yet have their say in what it is that specifically characterises them. They have difficulty in being themselves and in sharing with the Church as a whole what it is that is best in them.

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It is difficult to tackle this basic problem with frankness, but we can try to do so in the context of this Congress, and that's why I would like to cite the most authoritative exponent of Catholic Charismatic Renewal: Cardinal Leo Josef Suenens, who was one of the four moderators of the Council; and we are children of the Council: my community is the most recent among those represented on this panel; my neighbours were born some sixty years ago, our community only thirty. The first meeting of a Pope with Charismatic Renewal, in St. Peter's, goes back to this period: the year was 1975 and the Pope was Paul VI. That day there were almost two thousand of us in St. Peter's, all of us anxiously awaiting for the moment in which Renewal would be officially recognized by the voice of the Pope. When I saw him arrive in his gestatorial chair, as was still the custom at that time, looking tired, I was filled with compassion. He then began speaking and stood up, forcefully saying – and it was then I truly heard Peter speaking in him –: “Renewal is a blessing for the Church”,<sup>1</sup> a “blessing” for the Church! A long burst of applause greeted these words.

The finest moment of that day was when, shortly after, a layman, Ralph Martin, stood up before the Pope, the cardinals and some 300-400 priests. I will never forget that moment; I felt that finally we, laypeople, fathers and mothers of families, could speak out in the Catholic Church. And the words he spoke were effective. If I remember rightly, he said roughly that whole parts of the Church had fallen, whole walls of the Church had collapsed – and it was true, from 1975 one could say so – but that we ought not to be afraid: Jesus, the Good Shepherd, had gathered his flock: “I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me” (cf. *Jn* 10: 14-16). Some years later, a new pope, John Paul II, took to heart the mission of gathering his flock. He did so not only through sacred texts, encyclicals, but also

<sup>1</sup> “How then could this ‘spiritual renewal’ be other than a blessing for the Church and for the world?”: PAUL VI, Address to the participants at the Third International Congress of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, 19 May 1975, in *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English*, N. 22 – 29 May 1975, 9.

physically, by congregating enormous crowds. No man had ever seen so many people gathered before him. And one has the impression that his successor, Benedict XVI, is following suit: there were roughly a million people in Krakow in the days of his last apostolic visit. So the mission of congregating the faithful seems to be continuing.

Cardinal Suenens, invited by Paul VI, and then by John Paul I and John Paul II, to accompany and guide Renewal, later becoming its episcopal assistant, wrote a kind of spiritual testament in 1990. He sent it to the some 4000-5000 priests of Charismatic Renewal gathered in Rome for an international retreat, at which he had been unable to speak for reasons of age. He writes in it: "With the passage of time, what Paul VI said about Renewal as a blessing for the Church remains a hope that is only in part realized. Interpreting Renewal as just one movement among many is to ignore its nature.<sup>2</sup> At the Congress of the Movements in 1998 it was Cardinal Ratzinger who reminded us, in a splendid lecture that briefly reviewed the history of the movements in the Church, that it was not a question of "movements in the Church", but of the "Church in movement".<sup>3</sup> That is wonderfully expressed! Cardinal Suenens continues: "Interpreting Renewal as just one movement among many is to ignore its nature. It is a motion of the Spirit offered to the whole Church and destined to rejuvenate all aspects of the life of the Church. The soul of Renewal, baptism in the Spirit, is a grace of pentecostal renovation destined for all Christians".<sup>4</sup> Baptism in the Holy Spirit – Cardinal Suenens meant to say – is reserved not for the members of Renewal, but for everyone. And perhaps we in Renewal ought to ask for forgiveness if we gave the impression it was

<sup>2</sup> Cf. L.J. SUENENS, *Mon itineraire spirituel*, Association FIAT, Oppen-Meise 2000, 5 (our translation).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, "The Ecclesial Movements: a Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church", in: *Movements in the Church*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1999, 23-51; cf. also JOHN PAUL II, Homily during Mass for the participants in the Convention "Movements in the Church", 27 September 1981, in: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II IV*, 2 (1981), 305.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. L.J. SUENENS, *Mon itineraire spirituel*, cit.

reserved solely for us. Fortunately the theologians teach us quite the opposite. But at the venerable age of 86, the cardinal asked himself: “Have I perhaps erred? Have I, who was the interlocutor of Renewal, succeeded in ensuring that what’s essential about Renewal is known by the whole Church?”. Perhaps, before very long, we shall no longer speak of Charismatic Renewal. But if instead we can enable the young and not so young to make a personal encounter with Christ, experience the fullness of Christian initiation, in other words really experience the meeting with the Holy Spirit, encounter Jesus and share the trinitarian experience, that is something worth achieving: that is something for everyone, it’s really for everyone. And we are far from reaching our goal. Is pastoral care in our parishes formulated in this way? Is this really the purpose we are pursuing? In other words, favouring the personal encounter with Christ and experiencing baptism in the Holy Spirit?

Cardinal Suenens concluded his message as follows: Renewal “isn’t a kind of Gulf Current that heats the coasts here and there, but a strong current that is destined to penetrate right to the interior of the country”.<sup>5</sup> In other words, if it is true that the Church accepts these new communities, it’s also true that the new communities have not yet succeeded in sharing what constitutes the heart of their experience, their originality, perhaps their very *raison d’être*. That’s what we wish to achieve with this Congress.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

## Experiencing God's blessing in a life of sharing

JEAN VANIER\*

L'Arche, like the Faith and Light Community, was born in a quite unexpected and unplanned way. When I left the British Royal Navy in 1950 to "follow Jesus", I went to France, where I lived in a community of students of various nationalities and where I met the Dominican Father Thomas Philippe, a holy man. A deep bond was created between us and he became my spiritual father. Then, when he became the chaplain of a centre for thirty men with mental disabilities, he invited me to go to meet his "new friends". I was very touched by that visit, by the suffering and longing for human relationships of those men. And that prompted me to visit other institutions for the mentally impaired. That was in the 1960s. You can't imagine the cruelty and inhumane situations I discovered. Later, encouraged by Father Philippe and helped by friends, I bought a little house in a small town a hundred kilometres from Paris, where I was able to provide a home for Raphaël and Philippe, two men from a harsh and violent institution. So we began to live together: it was I who did the cooking, which meant that we ate very badly! Apart from the suffering, I also began to discover the gifts of handicapped persons and the call they make to us. Gradually I discovered what L'Arche is.

I would like to cite here a passage from the Gospel that is fundamental for our communities. It is Jesus, the Word of God, who tells us: "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return, and you will be repaid. But when you give a feast,

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invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed" (*Lk* 14: 12-14). Eating with the poor is a blessing.

In L'Arche communities we experience God's blessing by sharing our life with vulnerable men and women, those suffering from sometimes serious mental and physical handicaps. In the language of the Bible, eating at the same table means becoming friends; it means establishing a person-to-person, heart-to-heart relationship. So it's not just a question of doing something *for* others, of being generous. Generosity consists in giving to others, who have less than you, the "surplus" of time and capacity you have, and that in itself is commendable! But generosity does not end there: it must always lead to an encounter and the encounter to friendship. And friendship must lead to fidelity.

Becoming the friend of a vulnerable and disadvantaged person means becoming the friend of Jesus. The Gospel is punctuated with passages concerning the handicapped. In Luke's Gospel, for example, Jesus tells the parable of the rich man who gives a great banquet and invites many guests well established in society (*Lk* 14: 15-21), but they all make their excuses and turn down the invitation: they are too busy, too taken up with short-term plans and commitments. So the master then sends his servant out onto the streets and lanes, into the highways and hedges, to bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame to the banquet. They hasten to the feast and fill the house.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians (*1 Cor* 1: 27-29), St. Paul says that God chose what is weak, foolish, low and despised in the world to shame the strong, the wise and the great. In chapter 12 Paul then compares the Church to the human body. The weakest and less presentable parts of the body, he says, are necessary and indispensable to the body that is the Church: indeed it is to them that the greatest honour is due. That does not mean, of course, that intellectuals are not loved by God, but they are often sated by possessions and power, whereas the handicapped are hungry for relationships. And God is love.

The people with whom we live in our communities have no great intellectual gifts, but they have a heart. They often have very strong fears and sometimes great anger, because they have been despised and



rejected. They belong to the category of the poor. The poor must never be idealized. They enable us to perceive our weaknesses, and to realize that we are all poor. Our communities are very weak because they were founded on suffering. When we accept a disabled person, we don't ask him if he's a Christian or a believer; we accept him because he is in a situation of need and cannot cope by himself. But the poor are always hidden in God's heart.

To share our life in our homes, we share our meals, our work and our prayer day after day. We need your prayer, your help. We are very conscious of how much we need Jesus and his Holy Spirit to be able to go forward.

To conclude, I would like to read to you a passage from a message that John Paul II sent to the participants in the international congress on the dignity and rights of the mentally handicapped: "There is no doubt that in revealing the fundamental frailty of the human condition, the disabled person becomes an expression of the tragedy of pain. In this world of ours that is eager for hedonism and seduced by ephemeral and deceptive beauty, the difficulties of the disabled person are often perceived as a shame or a provocation and their problems as burdens to be removed and brushed under the carpet as quickly as possible. Disabled persons are, instead, living icons of the crucified Son. They reveal the mysterious beauty of the One who emptied himself for our sake and made himself obedient unto death. They show us, over and above all appearances, that the ultimate foundation of human existence is Jesus Christ. It is said, justifiably so, that disabled people are humanity's privileged witnesses. They can teach everything about the love that saves us; they can become heralds of a new world, no longer dominated by force, violence and aggression, but by love, solidarity and acceptance, a new world transfigured by the light of Christ, the Son of God who became incarnate, who was crucified and rose for us".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Message to the participants in the International Symposium on the Dignity and Rights of the Mentally Disabled Person, 5 January 2004, in: *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English*, N. 3 – 21 January 2004, 6.

It is true that the handicapped who arrive in our communities are often transformed. But the most astonishing thing is that they transform us. They enable us to discover the mystery of the human being, the injured human being. They enable us to discover our wounds and our frailties and how much we need Jesus. They are a path that leads us to Jesus.

**Giving a reason for the beauty of Christ  
in the world of today**



# Introduction

ALBERTO SAVORANA

In these brief prefatory remarks I will limit myself merely to offering my personal experience, as an introduction to the dialogue in which our five guests will engage. In particular I wish to offer them my testimony of how the beauty of Christ can be revealed in the contemporary world. I think the question can be reduced to the painful problem: "Can a cultivated man, a European man of our time believe in the divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ?"<sup>1</sup> The dramatic question posed by Dostoevsky seems to me to echo in all its actuality today. Cardinal Marc Ouellet has already alluded to it, though in other words, in his address, when he asked whether some aspects of Christianity in our current situation "are crystallized as cultural residues of a bygone era".<sup>2</sup> Here, then, is the question: why should it be beautiful, why should it be reasonable, to be followers of Christ today, when the whole world seems to be heading in a different direction? Why is it beautiful for us to be Christians today? If a passer-by, any person, quickened by curiosity by the sign of our Congress, were to enter and to start listening to our speeches, what would he ask himself? What would he think of us? I think none of us can escape this decisive challenge that is posed to the world, and that personally concerns us, as Christians touched by the beauty of Christ. Several times, during this year of his pontificate, Benedict XVI has referred to the situation of the contemporary world, characterized by scepticism, relativism and nihilism, by ideologies that claim to reduce faith to the private sphere and the Christian experience to something that is of no concern to our

<sup>1</sup> Cf. F.M. DOSTOEVSKY, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated with an introduction by David Magarshack, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 2 vols. 1958.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 43 in this volume.

daily life. The Pope recalled this on the eve of World Youth Day in Cologne in 2005 when he remarked, in reply to a question put to him by *Vatican Radio*, that the idea is universally diffused today that “Christianity is something arduous and oppressive” that imposes on Christians the observance of “an infinity of commandments, prohibitions and principles”, and that people are undoubtedly “more free without all these burdens”.<sup>3</sup> As if Christianity were a residue of the past that has no relevance for the present age.

It seems to me clear that the reason for the beauty of being Christians should not be sought in a philosophical discourse or argument, but in the experience that each one of us has of Christ, corresponding to what the Pope – speaking with youth in Poland last Saturday – called the “great longing for a proper home” or the “desire for a full, happy and successful life” to which Christ offers the beauty of his response.<sup>4</sup> Here Benedict XVI’s first encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, also comes to our rescue. It was already cited by Cardinal Ouellet, in its first lines that are so significant for the the question we are discussing: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction”.<sup>5</sup> And as a result of that encounter life is a hundred times more beautiful, infinitely more fascinating, and more consonant with what the heart yearns for. Unfortunately, today, it seems that the whole world is heading in the opposite direction by a kind of atrophy, or forgetfulness. In this regard, the Pope spoke of a kind of torpor of reason, as a result of which it seems that reality as a whole is no longer of interest, no longer able to attract, or to re-inspire the individual with a sense of beauty. That explains why the question of the “beauty of Christianity” is so important. For the aesthetic experience of the beauty of Christ, as Cardinal Ouellet already said, in

<sup>3</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Interview with Vatican Radio*, 16 August 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Greeting at the Meeting with the Young People, Krakow-Blonie*, 27 May 2006.

<sup>5</sup> IDEM, *Encyclical Letter Deus caritas est*, no. 1.

some sense precedes any consequence of ethical, moral or intellectual type. It's the experience of astonishment, of wonder, at something that happens and that is beautiful, in other words true, for in Christianity beauty is always the manifestation of what is true.

At a certain point of my life I met a man called Don Giussani, of whom Benedict XVI recently said that he loved man because he loved Christ. Thanks to him I found Christianity as a coincidence between human experience and Christ, between the Christian being and the human being. If it had not been for this meeting, I would probably have been left disappointed by the experience of Christianity already during the years of my youth, like so many of my school friends and colleagues at university, for whom Christianity was no longer found interesting, because it was identified with burdens, with "things to do" and "things not to do", with the conviction that being Christian signified sacrificing desires to obligations. Thanks to Don Giussani, I encountered Christianity as something beautiful, as something that had to do with my life and that offered me a path to follow. Reflecting on this, the dialogue proposed yesterday on the educational and pedagogical themes inherent in the Christian experience seems to me valuable: it showed how this beauty may once again arouse the curiosity and interest of our fellowmen, and of all those we meet. And with these prefatory remarks, let us now listen to the testimony of our guests, beginning with Father Bernard Peyrous, of the Emmanuel Community, who will be followed by the coadjutor archbishop of Jerusalem, the Right Rev. Fouad Twal, Luis Fernando Figari, founder of the Christian Life Movement, Dr. Dino Boffo, editor-in-chief of the Italian daily *Avvenire* and Prof. Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant'Egidio Community.





## **Giving a reason for the beauty of Christ in the world of today among the sects and new age**

BERNARD PEYROUS\*

Speaking of the joy of Christ as a remedy for the negative repercussions of the sects and new age presupposes a preliminary reflection on the way of addressing the problem which could, in effect, be tackled from a theological point of view. In this case we would first have to show what happiness means for the human being (anthropology of happiness), and then examine what kind of happiness is promised by the sects and new age and how they procure, or promise, a spurious happiness; lastly, we would have to explain that only the faith and life of Christ respond in a genuine way to this question: only they can really fill the heart (christology of happiness). All these things ought to be done and could be the subject of graduate theses or doctoral dissertations. But in my view three fundamental questions are especially posed at the outset: how is the question of happiness actually posed in our world? How should the sects be placed in the context of the current historical situation? And how is Christian faith incorporated in our world? So I will deliberately tackle the problem not from a theological but from an historical point of view. It is clear therefore that my exposition will be risky, but it seems to me indispensable to approach the problem in this way in order to open the road to theology.

### SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION

First, I will try to evaluate the current situation of the phenomenon of the sects in its various components.

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*The success of the sects*

When we speak of sects, we need first of all to define the term. In the Catholic world the definition is as follows: a sect is a closed group, directed by one or more “guru”, which causes the loss of the freedom of its members and is characterized by an esoteric and exclusivist ideology. However, this definition is not universally accepted. Americans and Asians, for example, have a completely different view of things, which explains the fact that Jehovah’s Witnesses that are generally considered a sect in Europe are not so regarded in many other countries. However, I intend to use this classic definition, which in my view remains the best.

First of all we need to establish whether the sects really have gained a planetary success. The answer is undeniable: the sects are expanding throughout the world. In France, where the terrain is not particularly favourable, only a few scores of sects with a few thousand adepts could be counted in the 1950s: at the present time there are between 300 and 600, with a total membership of perhaps between 200,000 and 300,000. In the USA there are several thousand sects, while Brazil is literally inundated with them. Some of them manage to pack large stadiums with tens of thousands of members. But the phenomenon of sects does not only involve the Christian world: in Japan, the number of sects exceeds any description and the same goes for China. The phenomenon is expanding and has a planetary dimension.

The number of sects and their adepts is only one aspect of the question. The other aspect regards the influence they have on governments, institutions, public opinion, especially thanks to their financial power, which is undoubtedly considerable. Some sects are the owners of television or radio networks: a lot could be said about this aspect, which undoubtedly represents a real danger for democracy and public life.

*The success of the “second circle”*

But the question of the sects in the strict sense currently forms only one aspect of the problem. Equally important is the question of

the “new religiosity” of “new age” type. Let us draw a comparison: fifty years ago, at least in the European world, people belonged to a well-defined religion and, if they changed their faith, it was only to adopt another equally well-defined one, even if it were a sect. At the present time we find ourselves faced by a kind of supermarket, a self-service of beliefs: each person goes into the supermarket, browses the shelves and picks this or that commodity and so assembles a pick ‘n choose religion of his own. The question of the sects is thus in part superseded.

We may think of the development of the occult, of the paranormal, of clairvoyance and divination, of spiritualism or spiritism, of superstitions of every kind, a development underlined, not least, by the extraordinary boom of horoscopes in papers and magazines of every kind, in television and on the internet. Horoscopes are now socially accepted; no one has any scruple about consulting them and in regulating his/her behaviour in accordance with their dictates, involving social, political and economic life. In some countries there are now more esoteric than there are religious bookshops. A priest who is an expert in the sects and new age recounted that, as part of his ministry, he had visited tens of highschool classes in a large European country: in all of them, with the exception of one, he found children who had practiced spiritualism of some form, some of them as young as ten.

### *The escape into imaginary worlds*

The success of the sects, the success of new age and esoteric beliefs, does not represent an isolated phenomenon in the contemporary world and cannot thus be separated from other phenomena, such as the generalized diffusion of drugs which raises a basic question about the state of our society; or the spread of alcohol among the young; or, on an even vaster scale, the extraordinary boom of imaginary or parallel worlds, as found in videogames, in television, in the world of show-business, and so on.

In short, if I may be permitted a rather hasty conclusion, one has

the impression that our world wants at all costs to escape from the real world. It is the escape from reality that forms the common denominator of sects, new age and the expansion of imaginary worlds. Television programmes, even television news bulletins, in many countries, at times have a very tenuous relation with reality. What is propelling us to undertake this gigantic collective flight from reality?

#### WHY THIS FLIGHT?

A phenomenon of this scale is unprecedented in the history of humanity, but, in my view, it is not difficult to discover its causes.

#### *A traumatic period in the history of humanity*

First, it is clear we have emerged from a particularly traumatic period in the history of the world. The twentieth century was the great century of bloodshed: more people were killed during this brief period of time than in the whole period from the origins of mankind to the start of the twentieth century. This is easy enough to demonstrate, unfortunately: the European wars of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period, between the end of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, caused the death of between one and two million people, a death toll that seemed, at the time, an enormity. But the First World War, in the space of four years, caused the death of 20 million and the Second World War roughly double that number, 40 million; Communism between 85 and 115 million; and post-colonial wars some 30 million. Eugenics and abortion have also caused an enormous holocaust: as a result of abortion, it is estimated that between 800 million and one billion children have been aborted in the space of fifty years, of whom more than 40 million in the USA! To this we must add a series of genocides: the Armenian genocide, the Shoah, the Cambodian genocide, and that of Rwanda. Never has the world experienced a similar explosion of violence.

*A failure of humanity?*

But if we look at the causes that inspired all these explosions of violence, we will realize that they were perpetrated in the name of human happiness. This prompts a reflection on modern history. It may confidently be asserted that we are in part children of the Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> A movement of thought that developed in Europe in the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment maintained that man, having finally overcome the impediments of childhood and adolescence, had now reached maturity. He had become master of his own reason; and through the exercise of his reason he would achieve mastery over the world, enabling it to realize its own happiness, both individual and collective. Man, now self-sufficient, had no more need for God. God, for his part, either did not exist, or had become redundant; and if he still had any use at all, it was confined to the moral field. God was no longer a Father, or a friend, still less a saviour: for man had no need to be saved.

Placed on these foundations, the nineteenth century, after the adventure of the Enlightenment despots and of the French Revolution, tried to pass to the phase of realizations. Most of the great ideologies were born in this period: scientism, nationalism, colonialism, marxism, anarchism, later freudianism etc. The twentieth century, in turn, was the period of applications, of the practical realization, of these ideologies. Happiness, the brave new world, was on the threshold: all that was needed was to eliminate or subject those who opposed it or stood in the way of progress. The result is familiar to everyone.

Humanity has now come to doubt in itself. We are very far from the optimism of the *golden Sixties*. Humanity, at least unconsciously, has the sensation of having squandered everything, of having failed. The project of universal and final happiness, accessible to everyone, has not been realized. This causes a feeling of fear, which largely explains the recourse to gurus, to miracle cures of every kind, to the flight from a disturbing reality. Reason is no longer sovereign: its failure has led to the loss of the criti-

<sup>1</sup> Even if the Enlightenment is only one of the components of Western society, together with Christianity and Greco-Roman antiquity.

cal sense and to confidence in the future, which in turn favours all the superstitions and causes the flight – all too understandable – from reality.

## BECOMING AWARE OF THE JOY AND THE HOPE OF CHRIST

Faced by this situation, the Church cannot confine herself to condemning, even if that is often necessary. We need to go further. As Christians, we need to help restore new hope to the world, to lead it to the civilization of love and to wean it from the sects and from hallucinations. But how?

### *Rediscovering the beauty of humanity*

Pope Paul VI said that the twentieth century was terrible and yet fascinating, according to the attitude of the Fathers of the Church, who in the society of their time, amid difficulties and obstacles, sought the *semina Verbi*, the scattered stones on which it was possible to build. Do these not exist in our world? The answer is yes. I will mention some of them, without claiming to be exhaustive.

#### a) courage

The twentieth century was the century of every kind of danger, but was also the century of courage. Millions of men and women risked their life, or gave it, for freedom and noble ideals. They were mainly simple people, but it is thanks to them that we are alive. Humanity has not exhausted its own reserves of courage, it is important to underline this point. This is an example for future periods.

#### b) unity of mankind

Organized societies, in the strict sense of the term, have existed on the face of the earth for little more than 40,000 years. For millennia man never had the sensation that the planet constituted a unity, nor

thought that all human beings formed a single human genus united by links of indispensable solidarity. From a merely geographical point of view, for how long have humans succeeded in circumnavigating the globe? For approximately 400 years. Not long at all. Entire zones of the globe, in Africa, in the North and South Poles, or in the Amazon Basin, were only explored less than a hundred years ago. And it's only more recently that we have explored the soil and the subsoil of our planet. In this context, since when has humanity had any awareness of its fundamental unity? Among Christians for a very long time, but among many people only for some decades. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights dates to 1948. At the present time we know that the world is a village and that we are all interdependent and responsible for our actions to others. Christians and people of good will are striving everywhere to secure more peace and more justice in the world: a goal that is now universally recognized. Of course, in many cases these universal truths have not yet been translated into practice and egoism reigns supreme. But the new planetary conscience represents considerable progress which perhaps we have not sufficiently recognized.

c) technological and scientific progress

The progress of science and technology may have negative consequences, but if they are prudently used, they represent enormous positive potential for our world, as justly emphasized by Vatican Council II. Problems that have dogged the life of humanity, such as food sufficiency or health, education or communication, could now in large part be solved. Thus the "green revolution", which has multiplied agricultural harvests, is a positive fact that has prevented the great famines of history, something that is not sufficiently recognized.

*Opening our eyes to the action of God*

As Christians we must also open our eyes to all that God has done and continues to do for humanity. Has God's arm perhaps been short-

ened? Is God now absent from our society? No, of course not. People are hesitant about speaking about God in the contemporary world. Paraphrasing the question “what theology can there be after Auschwitz?”, it is sometimes thought: how can we speak of Providence after the twentieth century? But we cannot accept this point of view: we must recognize God’s works, his manifestations among us. Newman often said: *you don’t realize*. It is important to open our eyes.

Here are some clear signs of God’s presence and action.

a) martyrs

The twentieth century was the great century of martyrs. Faced by the violence against humanity and hostility towards God, an immense throng of men, women and children have given their life to show that God’s love is always at work. If it is true that the martyrs are the seeds of new Christians, God is preparing a rich harvest for the future.

b) saints

By the same token the twentieth century was the golden age of saints. The introduction of so many causes of beatification and canonization in a single century is quite unprecedented. The yearbook of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, which ran to 391 pages in 1962, grew to 732 in 1999, while maintaining the same format and presentation. That’s just a very small sign of the magnitude of a movement of which we are not sufficiently aware and of which the many beatifications and canonizations presided over by John Paul II are the consequence. God has made, and continues to make, the gift of innumerable saints to his Church; they are the fathers and mothers of tomorrow’s world.

c) popes

If we look at the history of the Church, we cannot but be struck by the quality of the Roman pontificates in the twentieth century. In pre-



vious centuries, even if many popes were men of great value, there was never more than one man per century who died in the odour of sanctity: St. Pius V in the seventeenth, the Blessed Innocent XI in the eighteenth, Benedict XIII in the eighteenth and the Blessed Pius IX in the nineteenth century. But for the twentieth century we can cite St. Pius X, Pius XII, the Blessed John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I and John Paul II. This is another new phenomenon of which we have not yet gained awareness and which demonstrates God's action at the highest level of government of the Church.

d) Christian unity

At the start of the twentieth century, the divisions between Christians seemed insuperable. But the same cannot be said at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Even though we have probably still a long way to go, a new element, hope, has emerged in the history of Christianity: sign of the action of the Holy Spirit. The will for unity has become an inseparable component of the life of the Church and cannot be ignored.

e) new movements and communities

In the midst of the difficulties and crises of the post-conciliar period, the Holy Spirit has aroused new movements and communities in order to put the teachings of the Council into action and restore pastoral hope to the Church.<sup>2</sup> They have been added to the countless religious orders and movements that already operate in the Church. In a short space of time they have spread to all the countries of the world. They have touched millions of men and women. They already have two saints. One of the points they have in common is the desire to

<sup>2</sup> As regards the laity, cf. the recent handbook *International Associations of the Faithful. Directory*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2004.

evangelise. Their drive is all the more important if we consider the vitality of the evangelical world, to which the Catholic Church cannot be indifferent.

f) action of Mary

Lastly, we have the impression that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries we are witnessing a “new” action of the Virgin Mary in the world. Of course, Mary has always been close to her children, but the phenomenon of the great Marian apparitions has experienced an unprecedented magnitude. Fatima, for example, has as it were accompanied the tortured history of the twentieth century. In some way the Virgin Mary has been manifested as the woman of the Apocalypse, who takes part in the struggle in the world to guide and support her children.

CONCLUSION

If the movement of the sects and new age, and everything connected with them, is to be countered, the causes for their success have to be understood and combated. It's no use lamenting the situation: we need to restore to the world the joyful hope of Christ, and for this we need to bear witness and evangelise on every occasion, opportune or inopportune. “The sects are evangelization *manqué*”, said John Paul II. The most important thing is that Christians, and Catholics in particular, be themselves, that they be converted, live as real disciples of Christ and rediscover the reasons of hope for the world and for the Church.

The new movements and communities are of recent origin and therefore still close to the “pentecost” that is inseparable from each of their founders. Still being under the creative flame of the Holy Spirit, they are able to communicate the spirit of hope and life that the world awaits. We have the duty to respond to the deep aspirations of mankind, which yearns for a better world.

A clear proof was the funeral of John Paul II. As his biographer Georges Weigel pointed out, he was the man seen by the largest number of people in the history of the world. The transmission of his funeral was the most watched television programme ever broadcast. The representatives of all the religions and of all the countries of the world attended his funeral. It was not just the Catholic Church that buried her own spiritual head: it was also the people of faith who saluted the man who had been able to bring them together. And the whole of humanity had come to pay tribute to their father. The mysterious and profound appeal that the Church of Christ, represented in that circumstance by John Paul II, has on humanity, has never been so strong as it is today.



## Giving a reason for the beauty of Christ in the world of today in relations with Islam

Archbishop FOUAD TWAL\*

In his encyclical *Deus caritas est*, Benedict XVI describes how love as *Eros*, when it is inhabited by divine Love, ends up by taking on the form of love as donation, *agape*. In other words, it is transformed from selfishness to self-giving.

In my view, the description given by the Pope of the various modes of love illustrates both the attitude of the disciples of Christ in the Gospels and his later disciples, including those in our own time.

Peter, James, John and the others followed Jesus by answering his call, but also because they wanted a place at the side of the future king of Israel. Time, and in particular the experience of the death and resurrection of Christ, suffering and persecution that accompanied the proclamation of the Good News, purified their motivations. There is a Gospel passage that always strikes me, the one in which Peter, after being asked by Jesus no less than three times: “do you love me?”, replies with the sincerity that is part of his nature: “you know that I love you” (*Jn* 21: 15-17).

It is in this context of intentions purified in the process of time – purified because they have existed since the beginning – that I think of the way that the Christian presence has developed in the Maghreb over the last few decades. After independence and the departure *en masse* of the faithful, a Christian community, animated by the spirit of Vatican II, was reconverted to become a visible sign for itself and for all those who surrounded it. It thus became the living symbol of God’s fidelity to humankind. I arrived in the Maghreb in the early 1990s and

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I found an apparently fragile community, due to its reduced number and its past, and totally dependent on the good will of the Muslim authorities. But in actual fact it was a solid community, accustomed to live in a situation of precariousness. It also accepted its own vulnerability. It was therefore strong, strong in its contemplative spirit and its rooting in God. I arrived at just the right time to give it greater visibility and the pride of being what we are without any hang-ups: “disciples of Christ”. As in any miniscule progress caused by the Holy Spirit, a minor re-conversion was also needed to rediscover the obligations of Baptism in truth, avoid a “low profile” and accustom ourselves to a dignified and visible ecclesial life, constantly subservient to the universal Church and the Magisterium.

New vigour was indispensable. The ecclesial movements and new communities replied to our appeal: Communion and Liberation, the Neocatechumenal Way and the Focolare Movement. So our Church began to be rejuvenated and to experience universality more fully through the diversity of their charisms. All of us were embraced by God’s loving kindness. We shared the apostolate and the various tasks, both in the joyful and in the sorrowful mysteries. We dispelled our differences and deepened the beauty of our vocation, tangible sign and proof that we are the Lord’s disciples. It was clear to everyone that no one could claim to live the Gospel better than his neighbour, and that no one, in the exercise of his own charism, had the monopoly of the whole truth. A healthy competition in trying to outdo each other was established between us. The Church was enriched by a supplement of souls. The Body of Christ grew. We could not afford the luxury of being divided: we were already so few. We were the grain of leaven in the large Muslim mass, ready to accept us or at times to oppress us. The Muslims regarded us with astonishment; they stared at us, provoking us to say who we are.

On the one hand, Moslem Arab youths want nothing more than to travel to Europe to escape from an environment in which violence, fear and the lack of secure prospects for the future reign. On the other, European youths, good-looking, enthusiastic and committed

members of the ecclesial movements, leave behind them their creature comforts and their freedom, disembark among us and begin to work with generosity and discretion, thus showing the beauty and greatness of the God who revealed his love to them and sent them into the Arab world. For the Muslims, this was a shock, a salutary shock that caused them to reflect. And the questions they asked are, with the grace of God, the beginning of a dialogue and an inward conversion.

I seize this opportunity to thank all the leaders of the ecclesial movements who understood our mission to the Muslims and did not hesitate to send us personnel, thus giving us the chance to carry forward this responsibility. I also wish to thank them for having accepted to work within the local Church and in its pastoral plans, under the paternal guidance of the local Ordinary.

A new understanding of our mission, more serene and profound, is growing in the conscience of our faithful: being genuine “disciples of Christ” and not just pretending to be one. In this way it becomes possible to proclaim the Good News. Our presence is already Word and witness. The cathedral, well restored and re-frescoed, is regularly visited by hundreds of Muslims every day. It too is becoming Word and witness and a fine occasion to forge links of friendship with our Moslem brothers.

The massacre of the monks of Tiberine took place in 1996. A hymn of the action of grace, mingled with our tears, was raised in all the masses celebrated in North Africa. There were no cries for revenge, no displays of hatred, no insensate reaction, but instead prayers and supplications so that the bloodshed would be a seed of love and reconciliation among peoples. That is the beauty of Christianity, the sole language able to change man’s heart.

In writing these lines, it is not my intention to sing the praises of a particular Church, though that is something I would gladly do. I would like instead to invite you to meditate on the mystery of the Church, a human and divine Church, capable of submitting to and being overpowered by the Spirit, and hence capable of evolving and adapting herself to circumstance, though without losing her own roots and her own identity.

What I have said about the Church of Tunisia goes also for the mother Church of Jerusalem which aspires to the peace and unity of its children, though unfortunately in vain. Even the tears of the Saviour have failed to reunite that Church round him. In vain has he wept over her. During its whole history Jerusalem has been divided. I arrived there in November 2005.

The current crisis is even worse than that two thousand years ago: the divisions, the camps that need to be reunited, are many and contradictory; the temptation to give way to discouragement, to live from hand to mouth, and to forget God's plans for us is very strong among us. The experience of the Church in the long history of the Middle East is that of an immutable attachment to Jesus, to the holy places, to the rites and to our parishes, at times with a tribal spirit. The ruins and the alleyways of the Holy City bear witness to this. Jesus is the one source of our identity. He is our common ancestor and root. It is he who makes us important, even if this importance could make us a target and a scapegoat. Folly, greatness and beauty meet together. Christians alone are able to sing Halleluja even when our *via crucis*, our Good Friday, seems to have no end.

So many men and women feel uprooted, lost and thwarted today. Europeans speak of the collapse of ideologies: we Arabs of the Middle East know only too well that globalization, materialism and international injustice, which have turned this geographical area into a supermarket of interests and intrigues, are among the causes of our alienation and of the reactions, at times insensate and exaggerated, linked to identity, religion or culture. Jerusalem remains a city of surprises, beginning with the Resurrection of Christ. We hope that we too will one day have our Resurrection to enable us to enjoy more joy, more justice and more peace.

I was asked to "give a reason for the beauty of Christ in the contemporary world in relation with Islam". Those who surround us, Muslims and Jews, envious of and at the same time struck by our serenity, ask themselves various questions: how come Catholics seem to have so much ability to adapt, in spite of the great diversity of their



origins? (In Jerusalem our faithful belong to some seventy different nationalities). How do they manage to have such inward peace in the midst of torment and maintain a calm and contemplative attitude amid the upheavals of history? How is it that religious, laypeople and the consecrated feel at home wherever the Spirit sends them? Is this not the secret of their great Passion for Christ and for their fellowmen? A Passion that provokes and causes crisis, that attracts and spreads fear?



# Giving a reason for the beauty of Christ in the world of today in the education of youth

LUIS FERNANDO FIGARI\*

## INTRODUCTION

Perhaps we are not faced by the worst moment in history, but undoubtedly we are living in a time in which the pressure of the external world makes it difficult to practise our faith. It's a period in which, as I happened to read the other day, "the right to believe without suffering intimidation needs to be vindicated anew". Following the Lord Jesus, believing in him and practising that faith in our lives, being inspired by the wonder of the Revelation and its beauty as essential appropriation of the Truth, are now occasions for conflict in our surrounding world and even in our own family. The culture of death seems to be almost scandalized by the fact that its profanity has not yet succeeded in totally uprooting God and preventing the freedom of human beings from following God's plan, in a world that he himself created.

But the challenges to Christian life do not come only from outside. There is a widespread loss of faith in many people that has repercussions among the young, weakening its credibility. Moreover, the problems of Christian and ecclesial identity within the People of God themselves represent an active and grievous counter-witness, whose effects are all the more devastating in view of the globalization and universal dissemination of modern culture.

To all this is added a phenomenon that is not new but that produces ever new effects: "the sons of this world are wiser [...] than the

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sons of light” (*Lk* 16: 8).<sup>1</sup> It is precisely for this reason that the Lord invites his followers to wake up from their lethargy, to “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (*Mt* 10: 16). Today we ascertain culpable ignorance and negligence so serious as to be translated into ignorance of our own history, of the expressions of Christian life and thought, in particular of the last three or four centuries. In this way we contribute to the diffusion of a myth of “progress” of Enlightenment stamp comprising a gradual process of the weakening of faith from which many are suffering, especially the young.

These situations need to be taken into consideration if, when speaking of how to educate the young in the faith, we are not to remain at the level of abstractions, of good intentions, fine words or at the merely aesthetic level. Pope Benedict XVI has said that young people “are easily attracted instead by other things, by a way of life that is rather remote from our convictions”.<sup>2</sup> So, faced by a spectacle of a world that closes its ears to the proclamation of faith, the Holy Father wrote in these terms: “It is your duty to propose anew, with your own competence, the beauty, goodness and truth of the Face of Christ, in which every human being is called to recognize his or her most authentic and original features, the model to be ever better imitated. Consequently, this is your arduous task, and your exalted mission: to point out Christ to the people of today, presenting him as the true measure of maturity and human fullness”.<sup>3</sup> This is the precious key offered by Pope Benedict XVI for educating the young in the faith: presenting the Lord Jesus as the one who illuminates their personal reality, their most disturbing questions, their horizon and their mission, as the crucial key for understanding the meaning of life, and as the way of achieving self-fulfilment in the definitive encounter with God.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. PIUS IX, Encyclical Letter *Apostolicae nostrae caritatis*, 1 August 1854, no. 1.

<sup>2</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Meeting with Diocesan Clergy of Aosta, Italy, 25 July 2005.

<sup>3</sup> ID., Message to the 10<sup>th</sup> annual public session of the Pontifical Academies, 5 Nov. 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, no. 10.

PREMISES

It is well known that every educational process, and especially religious formation, presupposes an idea of the human being. “The subject of Christian education is man whole and entire”,<sup>5</sup> declared Pope Pius XI. And with the realism proper to the Christian approach he invited the faithful to recall that the man in question has fallen from his original estate, his “likeness” has been injured, and with the effects of original sin, especially weakness of will and disorderly inclinations, embedded in his nature, even though he has been redeemed by the Lord Jesus, who offers him the way of reconciliation.

To approach the image of the complete human being, and not of mutilated visions of man, we must bear in mind that we were created in the “image and likeness” of God (cf. *Gen* 1: 26). We must remember that we human beings bear God’s trace in our heart, and that it was the Eternal Word that assumed human nature in the Immaculate womb of Mary to redeem us, to show us our identity and to give meaning to our most intimate anxieties, propelling us onto the path of personal mission that leads to the horizon of the full encounter with the Love of God.

The goals of the formative process of the faith were authoritatively formulated in the Declaration *Gravissimum educationis* of Vatican Council II.<sup>6</sup> It affirms that although the aim of education, as is logical from a Christian perspective, is to achieve the maturity that leads the person to self-fulfilment, it was essential above all to ensure that those who have been baptized become daily more appreciative of the faith they have received, be gradually introduced to a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, learn to adore God, especially in the liturgy, and be trained “to live their own lives in the new self, justified and sanctified through the truth (cf. *Eph* 4: 13)”.<sup>7</sup> They should thus direct their

<sup>5</sup> PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Divini illius Magistri*, no. 58.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum educationis*, no. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

life to the achievement of the stature of the perfect human being, the supreme *hagionormo*. They should also deepen their own vocation, bear witness to the hope that is in them (cf. *1 Pt 3: 15*), contribute to the growth of the Church and “promote the Christian concept whereby the natural values, assimilated into the full understanding of humankind redeemed by Christ, may contribute to the good of society as a whole”.<sup>8</sup>

So, by gradually drawing close to the faith of the Church, and by gradually achieving the stature of the integral human person, we should learn to know the mystery of salvation and its importance in the personalization of the human being (faith in the mind), adore God, abide in him in a vital way, and model our life on that of the Lord Jesus (faith in the heart). We should live the Christian life, bear witness to hope, and help society and culture to transform themselves according to God’s plan (faith in action).

This perspective in three dimensions was already expounded by the French school of spirituality several centuries ago. For example, it spoke of keeping Jesus before our eyes, Jesus in our heart and Jesus in our hand, symbol of action,<sup>9</sup> and of cooperation.<sup>10</sup> This approach corresponds to an anthropological perspective of the complete human being.<sup>11</sup> We need to return to the sources and follow the various strands of the tradition.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. J.-J. OLIER, *Introduction à la vie et aux vertus chrétiennes*, Le Rameau, Paris 1954, 23. Olier emphasises the idea of looking at Jesus, joining ourselves with Jesus, and operating in Jesus. Louis Tronson established and codified the method of prayer of Saint Sulpice inspired by Olier, but thought that looking at Jesus and “considering Our Lord Jesus Christ” were equivalent (Cf. *Exámenes particulares sobre diversas materias peculiares a los eclesiásticos y a todas las personas que deseen adelantar en la perfección cristiana*, Librería y Tipografía Católica, Barcelona 1885, 100).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J.-J. OLIER, cit. With regard to this dimension of action symbolized by the hand, cf. I. NOYE et M. DUPUY, ‘Olier, Jean-Jacques’, in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 11, Paris 1982, col. 745; J. SAWARD, ‘Bérulle and the French School’, in: *The Study of Spirituality*, SPCK, London 1986, 395.

<sup>11</sup> The theological expressions or the prayer of these perspectives of the French school of spirituality do not need to be analysed here: it suffices to say they exist.

The foundations for the growth of faith are threefold: knowing, feeling and doing. And these three areas are closely interrelated. Christian formation must be founded on an invitation to a response on three levels: knowledge, feeling and action. What the person knows, conditions his reactions, his attitudes and inclines him to a certain kind of conduct. What the person feels, his emotional experience, reflects what he knows and how he behaves. What a person does, influences his feelings and his potential to learn. These three fundamental dimensions are intimately combined in the person. However, to try to understand them better, let us look at each of them separately.

#### FAITH IN THE MIND

Faith in the mind corresponds to the spirit of the cognitive being. It covers the intellectual aspect, but in the vital, not in the cold sense: “you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (*Jn* 8: 32) and “for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth” (*Jn* 17: 19). These statements of the Lord show a horizon of getting to know the truth that goes well beyond any merely cerebral activity: it touches the existential dimension of the human being, and that is something that makes it particularly attractive for the young.

The learning aspect of faith is inescapable. Indeed, it is worth recalling Romano Guardini’s teaching that truth is the soul of beauty.<sup>12</sup> The category of “encounter” or the perspective of “beauty” itself, despite their high value, cannot supplant the learning aspect of the faith. The Church has always maintained the importance of intellectual formation, especially in the field of faith. Pope Leo XIII declared that

<sup>12</sup> Cf. R. GUARDINI, *El espíritu de la liturgia*, Centro de Pastoral Litúrgica, Barcelona 1999, 80.

<sup>13</sup> LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Officio sanctissimo*, no. 7.

ignorance “is the greatest enemy of religion”.<sup>13</sup> St. Pius X also insisted on the need to combat the “pernicious ignorance” about religion: “How many and how grave – he exclaimed – are the consequences of ignorance in matters of religion!”<sup>14</sup> Vatican II, and together with it the supreme pontiffs of the later twentieth century, and now Pope Benedict XVI, have continued to underline the importance of knowing and interiorizing the faith.

One of the gravest evils of our time is to relegate the doctrine of the faith to the sidelines. For incomprehension or ignorance of the faith facilitates its dissolution in the clash with aggressive secularism, utilitarian agnosticism or the many other threats to the faith presented in the contemporary world. It would seem that the political correctness of the North American world or weak thought have infected many, with the result that it “sounds” disagreeable to insist on the existence of truth or the need to abide by the truth. For those who share this view, even tolerating, let alone accepting, the truth is a source of irritation. But the person, the young person in particular, is naturally a searcher after truth.<sup>15</sup> At all events, the fact remains that in the modern critical world a faith that is poorly known will be a faith that is poorly lived; moral conduct will be anything but coherent, and worship will be either non-existent or superficial, as we often ascertain today and not only among the young. The irrationalism imposed by the culture of death is ever more absurd when a person assimilates without conscience and acts with an arrogance equal to his ignorance. Renouncing reason is a form of renouncing what is human. There are those who are already speaking of the “post-modern”. The grim consequences of this vision of humankind can be observed in contemporary irrationalism, called by some “post-modern”, with all its attacks against life, against dignity, and against human rights, especially against those who are most vulnerable and most in need. These manifestations, briefly alluded to here, are com-

<sup>14</sup> PIUS X, Encyclical Letter *Acerbo nimis*, no. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Qob* 1: 13; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, no. 21.



bined with the expressions of the evil of dualism, or the divorce between faith and life, as it has often been called.

In spite of its transcendence, there are those who do not consider faith in the mind important. The result is that religious education has been abandoned, or replaced by more subjective curricula, in many Catholic fields of instruction. It is as if the faith were something trivial on which everyone can express whatever he likes or whatever is dictated by his whim, leaving on one side the teaching of and the meditation on the revealed truth, as if it were a mere subjective emotional sensation.

Behind these erroneous views we can find a form of reductionism, mixed with activism, or perhaps the lack of any capacity for knowledge, or the effective loss of faith and its substitution by surrogates of “impact”, or by fashionable sociological or anthropological notions. Whatever the cause of the abandonment of intellectual formation, its pernicious effects can easily be perceived; it's enough to observe the world in which we live.

Only from the splendour of the truth of God can we discover the genuine wellsprings of human activity, and the values and interpretational keys that guide and give a meaning to that truth, and to the questions posed in particular by the young.

The approach that should be followed in this field is one that must offer young people sufficient knowledge to satisfy their search for the truth. That is the first of the acts of prudence – the virtue that disposes reason to discern our true good –, *consiliari*, i.e. consulting or finding. So the young people are placed in a condition of analysing in the light of right reason, judging whether what they have found is consonant with the end, and this is the second act of prudence: *iudicare*. And if their conscience, thus formed, accepts it, in the communion of faith, they will embrace this knowledge, and become more capable of interpreting in the Christian way their relation with God, with themselves, with others and with nature. In this way teachers must work hand in hand with their pupils to ensure they learn to think in a critical way and develop an integral perspective of human knowledge. At the same

time the teacher must inculcate in them firm catechetical knowledge and the elements of Christian anthropology and psychology so as to avoid the tension between young people's mental development and maturity, on the one hand, and the content and projection of their faith, on the other.

During this whole process of Christian instruction, an educational method that attracts and thus succeeds in capturing and maintaining the interest of the pupil must be developed. This is not an artificial assumption, but a deepening of the truth. It means allowing the truth to illuminate with its splendour and emphasizing those aspects of the rich deposit of faith that respond to an organic process geared to those being taught, bearing in mind their particular situation.<sup>16</sup>

Two considerations should be underlined here. First, it should not be forgotten that faith in the mind forms part of an integral process and makes reference to the reality of the whole person.<sup>17</sup> Second, as we have already said, intellectual activity is fundamental in the hierarchy of human acts. We need to underline its particular value for the restoration of the dignity to which human beings have a right in their individual and social life; this clearly does not exclude other aspects that are also important.

## FAITH IN THE HEART

Faith in the heart corresponds to the sphere of feelings and will. It is not enough to grasp the Truth merely at the cognitive or intellectual level: it must also be *experienced*. Truth must not just enter the young person's mind, but reach to the depth of his heart. Faith is not con-

<sup>16</sup> Cf. SECOND GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE LATIN-AMERICAN EPISCOPATE, *Documentos finales de Medellín*, September 1968, V, 14<sup>a</sup>, and VII, 13b.

<sup>17</sup> This is no novelty. For example, in the first decades of the twentieth century, A.-D. Sertillanges, in his treatise *La vita intellettuale*, emphasises and develops the concept that it is the whole man, the integral human person, who thinks (cf. chapter II, in the version of *Ediciones Encuentro*, Madrid 2003, 28).

fined to its objective and conceptual aspect; its vital impulse seeks to irradiate the whole person. By the experience of faith an expansion of the Truth is achieved, until it is experienced as a gift that, in proportion to how much it has expanded, arouses affection and even appears as *pulchrum fidei*.

Although Christian life is far more than mere sentiment, the voluntary manifestation of the act of faith is produced not just through the intellectual motivation, but also through an emotional attachment. So the affective and psychological aspect is shown to be basic and indispensable. The learning process must also attract the young person at the emotional level so that he feels in dialogue with a personalizing perspective that is addressed to him in his integrity, and thus feels prompted by his own free will to deep commitment in his process of education in the faith.

It is of the utmost importance to conceive the approach to this dimension in the perspective of sharing on the basis of a person's own experience of faith and encounter with the Lord Jesus. The person needs to bear witness to his encounter with Christ<sup>18</sup> and express his own emotionally convinced assent to him. The ideal way of this attachment is that indicated by Christ on the cross: "Behold, your Mother" (*Jn* 19: 27). This opens the way of the filial love for the Mother, the woman of faith, which leads, through her Immaculate Heart, to Jesus himself, and to a passionate and beautiful experience of loving faith and of intimate encounter with him.

With this approach we experience not only the dimension of witness with the ardour of expressing the faith in all its beauty, joy and enthusiasm, but also the great and never-ending wonder of the recognition that by educating in the faith we educate ourselves.

We also need to consider that education in this field is concentrated, also, in the transformation of moral habits or virtues, by direct-

<sup>18</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Homily in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo during Mass for the clergy and other consecrated souls, 26 January 1979, in: *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English*, no. 6 – 5 February 1979, 10.

ing the person to the good that perfects him as a human being. If the will often falters, it is because it is dragged down by mistaken notions of what constitutes our good; it succumbs to surrogates, and confuses the idea of beauty, as the expression of harmony and order in goodness, and truth, with our own personal taste perverted by mere subjectivism or caprice. The mastery and exercise of the virtues help to direct the will towards the objective good and wean it from disorder.

Giving our emotional assent to Jesus and following him with ardour along the path of faith are fundamental dimensions of a vital encounter with and heartfelt acceptance of him: of the Lord who is the full response to the hunger for the infinite, for the goodness, beauty and truth of the human being. In all this it is indispensable to bear in mind that Christianity is a personalizing religion. It is based on the relation to the person, of the individual to God, One and Triune. This interpersonal relation must be emphasized not only at the intellectual level, but also, and in a very special way, at the emotional and experiential level.

#### FAITH IN ACTION

Faith in action is the projection, in daily life and in witness, of faith in the mind and faith in the heart. In its educational aspect, it consists not just in promoting action, but more fundamentally in creating the habits of how to act rightly and how to act rightly in response to God's plan for the realization of the human being, both in itself and in its relation to others.

In this field it is fundamental to refer to the liturgy, since the liturgy, if well conducted and understood, produces a highly positive impact both on the mind and on the heart. At the same time it is the support and expression of the Christian life that is born from the liturgy and that leads to it.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Cf. VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 10.

Equally, the functional sense of *diakonia* – the exercise of charity – for the Christian needs to be remembered. Life is service (cf. *Gal* 5: 13; *Mt* 20: 28; *Mk* 10: 45; *Lk* 1: 38). This diaconal sense must be emphasized and applied through the transmission of the Good News and the transformation of the world according to the divine plan.

The whole effort of educating in the faith must seek to cooperate with the gift given by God to the person who derives benefit from the educational process; this process is aimed at accompanying the person in his pilgrimage of faith. In this sense education must express reverence for a far wider process in which it is only one, and certainly not the main, factor. So real respect for the freedom of the individual, and the non-imposition of particular ways of being or acting, must be one of its characteristics. The educational process must communicate, instead, the enthusiasm of accepting the Lord Jesus and what this means in terms of the person's integral realization, which includes the community dimension. The task of contributing actively to the mission of the Church, and to the building of the Kingdom, is the unifying goal that gives a sense to good works, both personal and social.

## CONCLUSION

We have tried briefly to express some ideas about the education of youth in the faith as response to their deepest needs, their daily anxieties, their existential dilemmas, and their horizons, on the basis of the light of truth, goodness and beauty that Jesus inspires in all those who learn to respond to his call and open themselves to the vital impulse of his love and reconciliation.



## Giving a reason for the beauty of Christ in the world of today in the presence of Catholics in society

DINO BOFFO\*

We all know the wonderful passage of *Lumen Gentium* in which the secular character is said to be “proper” and “peculiar” to the laity: “by reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of society and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. [...] It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer”.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to draw attention to the two verbs “illuminate” and “order”: both – considered more closely – can be redeemed from their common significance and draw instead on the syntax of beauty that is intrinsic to the creation (cf. *Gen* 1: 4: “And God saw that it was good/beautiful”), and on what humankind is called to redeem, following the corruption caused by sin. These two verbs – illuminate and order – concern us laity in a specific and uplifting way, as co-restorers of the beauty of creation and inexhaustible contemplators of the face of Jesus. Humanity, masterpiece of God, is called to participate in the restoration of corrupted beauty and in the refraction of the beauty of Christ in every space and time, until the *parusia*.

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<sup>1</sup> VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, no. 31.

Illuminate, we said. But how? Humankind is called to be the light of the creation. Humankind is called to become what Christ is. “Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (*Mt 5: 16*). A modern author, Pavel Florenskij, priest and “martyr under Stalinist atrocities”, as he was justly described by Bruno Forte,<sup>2</sup> comments on this gospel passage not in the least in a philanthropic or moralistic fashion. “Good deeds”, says Florenskij, are “shining and harmonious revelations of spiritual personality – especially a radiant and beautiful face, whose beauty allows the ‘inner light’ of Humankind to shine forth in the outer world. Won over by this irresistible light, men and women will then praise the heavenly Father”.<sup>3</sup>

Illuminate, we said, and order, the other verb attributed by Vatican Council II to the laity. Order is restored (i.e. re-ordered) wherever there is confusion; things that were misconceived are put back in their right order; proportions are re-established wherever their measure has been lost. How many lay activities, how many professional activities can be detected precisely according to these criteria! Ordering, that is, as an attitude of lay Christians, who by virtue of their baptism bear within themselves the spirit that moves them to beauty: that beauty which, according to Augustine, is order, harmony and peace [...], the search for the intimate link that gives rise to a fitting whole.<sup>4</sup>

Does not the effort to grasp in individual things their intimate reason to make it shine out anew in the jigsaw puzzle of God consist just in this, in the explication of this ability? Does not the impetus to that constant movement of the soul and the mind to recognize Christ in the world, at the root of every event and every circumstance, consist just

<sup>2</sup> B. FORTE, “Trinitarian Holiness of the Priest”, in: *Priests for the Formation of Saints for the New Millennium. In the footsteps of the Apostle Paul. Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Congress for Priests. Malta, October 18-23, 2004*, Congregation for the Clergy, Rome 2005, 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, quoted from P. FLORENSKIJ, *Le porte regali. Saggio sull'icona*, Adelphi, Milano 1997, 50.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *De vera religione* 32, 59.



in this? Namely, in the *ordo pulchritudinis*, within the individual transactions of the world. Involved in history, lay Christians are called to be creators of beauty in all their activities, whatever they be, and in all the dimensions of their existence.

If we can interpret the mission of the laity in this key, perhaps we can also grasp from a new angle the shortcomings of many Christian practices. How many times do we seem to involve ourselves actively in society, in our profession, in our relations, without being able to detect the hoped-for results! We may think of our exertions in the ordinary circumstances of our everyday day to persuade others to respect the truth that seems to us so splendid, to make them perceive the goodness so superabundant, it seems to us, of the Cause that lies behind everything. Yet, as far as we can see, nothing, or next to nothing, changes.

Von Balthasar observes: “In a world without beauty – even if people cannot dispense with this word and constantly have it on the tip of their tongues in order to abuse it – in a world which is perhaps not wholly without beauty, but which can no longer see it or reckon with it; in such a world the good also loses its attractiveness, the self-evidence of why it must be carried out; and man remains perplexed before it [...]. In a world that no longer has enough confidence in itself to affirm the beautiful, the proofs of the truth have lost their cogency”.<sup>5</sup> We feel the power of these words. Possessed as we are by the needs of truth and goodness, but insensible to the claims of beauty, perhaps we are paying the price of an insufficient maturation of our faith. It is almost as if, in our experience of God, beauty were a peripheral optional, nothing but a bauble. Goodness and truth seem to us more compelling than beauty. In all our efforts to advance the kingdom an inadequacy remains; we aim high, it is true, but only so far. It is as if we lack – even conceptually – the last piece. Perhaps we

<sup>5</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics*. Vol. I: *Seeing the Form*. Translated by E. Leiva-Merikakis, Ignatius Press, San Francisco/Crossroads Publications, New York, 1982, 19.

are discouraged from recognizing it by the conditions of the world, by the spread of non-sense. How can the beautiful exist in the midst of so much darkness, so much unbridled competition, and so much innocent suffering? How can it?

The then Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in a message for the Meeting of Friendship among Peoples that whoever believes in God knows that beauty is truth and that truth is beauty. But in the suffering Christ he also learns that the beauty of truth comprises insult, suffering and even the obscure mystery of death, and that it can only be found in the acceptance of suffering, and not by ignoring it.<sup>6</sup> So, we are authorized to seek beauty, to know that beauty exists, and to recognize that it lies hidden behind the banalities of our daily life, in the struggles of our will, in the boring chain of unexpected events, in the interminable standing in line before counters of every kind, in the incomprehension that is expressed even after all our efforts, and in the patience and long-sufferingness that is requested of us every day, and all day, just in the performance of our basic duties. We are experts in beauty violated.

The exertion of the labourer, the precariousness of the peasant farmer, the repetitiveness of the manual worker, the frustration of the scientist, the dissatisfaction of the journalist, the disappointment of the teacher, the incomprehension of the politician, the insignificance of the housewife, the humiliation of the poor... are the contexts in which we are challenged by beauty. The beauty of Christ. John Paul II liked to quote his compatriot poet Cyprian Norwid, for whom "beauty is to enthuse us for work, / and work is to raise us up".<sup>7</sup> Work, commitment, but where? The spheres of life that we know are those that contain us, and that define us. The Christian is he for whom the world exists, we were taught. The Christian is he who is engaged in the minute and strategic safeguard of creation; in the defence, indeed in the promotion of life, of all life, from conception to natural death,

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *La Bellezza. La Chiesa*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana e Itaca, Roma 2005, 14.

<sup>7</sup> C. NORWID, *Promethidion*, quoted in: JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Artists*, 4 April 1999.

even the most unfortunate human life that must be made supportable through ever more appropriate legislative and administrative provisions; in scientific research and in technological progress which, even if to the detriment of some performance, is able to respect the dignity and integrity of the person; in political action, interpreted exclusively in the interests of the population and for the improvement of living conditions, beginning with those who are most disadvantaged; in relations between individuals, families, communities and peoples, based on good faith, far-sightedness and peace; in art in every field and in every style; and in public culture to ensure that pluralism be not synonymous with relativism. There is no beauty in escapism or inability to communicate. And last but not least, the Christian is the one who is involved in the Church, so that it may be a beautiful sign and a means of transmitting beauty also through the love and dedication of the laity, and so that it may strike, even if not immediately attract, non-believers and those who are indifferent or antagonistic to its message.

Care for the fragment in which we find the whole: that is what moves us. “To contemporary mankind, who has intensely embraced worldliness and constantly tries to break free from any dependence that does not belong to the mundane sphere, we must urgently propose the idea of truth that inspires love, of goodness that attracts and the fascinating – albeit disquieting – scandal of God’s holiness”.<sup>8</sup> The way of beauty should be conceived not as an absolute formula, but as the metaphor of a possible and fruitful way for restoring a horizon of meaning and grasping the real source of the dignity of each fragment in the ultimate and sovereign truth. That is our role: being diviners of beauty in the world.

Beauty is not to be managed in some way. Indeed there is a style that is suggested to us on how to pass from the beauties of the world to Beauty. We find it evoked with rare eloquence in *Gaudium et Spes*: “Redeemed by Christ and made a new creature by the Holy Spirit, man can, indeed he must, love the things of God’s creation: it is from

<sup>8</sup> B. FORTE, *Trinitarian Holiness of the Priest*, cit., 36.

God that he has received them, and it is as following from God's hand that he looks upon them and reveres them. Man thanks his divine benefactor for all these things, he uses them and enjoys them in a spirit of poverty and freedom: thus he is brought to a true possession of the world, as having nothing yet possessing everything".<sup>9</sup>

If I am not mistaken, we are here at the summit of a new construction, discovered just for us. Let us think for a moment of that further pair of verbs: *Utens ac fruens*, using and enjoying the things of the world. It's the second verb "enjoying" that strikes, we have to admit it. But the two verbs together, "enjoying" and "using", seem to balance each other out and together to form a suitable and more properly lay Christian way of being in the world. And they seem also to inaugurate a new way towards a specifically modern spirituality, no longer marked prevalently by the flight from and contempt for the world, but by commitment in the world, and empathy with the world and its beauties. It implies an ability to be behind the events of history and the responsibilities of our state, and a readiness to realise the full potential of Christianity, without censorship but also without illusions.

Fascinating, indeed seduced by beauty, and by its yearned-for integrity, let us spend our days learning to shape our thoughts and works to it, as if it were our destiny to remain on earth for ever while our gaze already reaches up to Heaven.

<sup>9</sup> VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 37.

## **Giving a reason for the beauty of Christ in the world of today in situations of poverty and violence**

ANDREA RICCARDI\*

I am happy to be able to speak at this Congress that may represent, after that in 1998, a further step in the wisdom and maturity of the communities. I wish to thank the Pontifical Council for the Laity for holding this event with its spirit of authoritative and sympathetic brotherhood for us all.

I am happy to greet many of you, whom we have in past years met in friendship, in council, and in communion. I am in fact convinced that the maturity of our communities has enjoyed a decisive experience here [at this Congress], in mutual esteem, friendship, self-giving and listening to each other, albeit in the diversity of our histories and charisms. It's true: a period of adolescence, of immaturity, exists whenever the wonder of the charism received leads us to concentrate on ourselves, with the consequent difficulty of entering in relation with outsiders and of listening to others. Self-reference is, with the passage of time, revelatory of an adolescence grown old. The charisms, in their maturation, also lead to brotherhood with other communities.

History shows how the charismatic aspect of the Church has found such a warm welcome and such serene discernment in the Pope. This is not just recognition, but mature and generous co-penetration with the universal mission of the Church: with the spirituality of communion of which the Bishop of Rome is master. According to an ancient thirteenth-century tradition, St. Francis, St. Dominic and St. Angelo of Jerusalem, of the Carmelite Order, met together near the cathedral of the Bishop of Rome at the Lateran in the thirteenth century, and

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entered into intimate dialogue on the Church and an exchange of experiences.

Something similar is happening at this Congress: a model of communion that must now be transferred to daily life, thanks to mutual support, understanding and friendship. It is communion that forms the beauty of being Christians. Otherwise even those communities called “new” fall ill of a rather common disease that is the egocentrism of fragments in a world that is too large, the protagonism of founders, leaders and members. There is a temptation: the attraction of a new community to focus on itself, on its protagonism, its internal problems, its debates. And problems are never lacking in community life. The charism cannot be reduced to self-concentration. It’s self-absorption that distracts us from the mission of the Gospel, the mission to which John Paul II recalled the new communities on several occasions, and that of Vatican Council II. A life concentrated on itself, and for itself, can never be beautiful. The charism calls us to express the logic of the gift in our lives. Otherwise we lose the beautiful and the new. This we owe to, and for this we must thank, the one Founder, Jesus, the finest among the sons of man.

In this panel discussion, as in the address of Cardinal Ouellet, there is an invitation: giving a reason for the beauty of Christ. It’s the dynamic of Pentecost that leads the community and Peter to communicate the Gospel in a passionate way. Their preaching was convincing and their life beautiful: that’s why others decided to join it. But can a Christian life be lived in contact with what is not beautiful, indeed, often horrible? In general we tend to flee situations of poverty and violence: those involved in them have nothing to offer, on the contrary we risk the contagion of suffering. But there is a profound link between Christians and poverty, which lies at the very origin of the long history of charity. Once Danielle Mitterand, who has no Christian faith, said to me: “why is it that in the most terrible situations I have seen in the world, I always find a Christian or a nun?”

The great political passions for rescuing the poor have evaporated in recent decades. Now, indeed, resignation prevails. It leads us not to

see, and not to let ourselves be upset, accepting poverty, violence and war as facts of nature. But the encyclical of Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, was not only prophetic, but gave voice to the experience of many Christians in their relation with violence and poverty.

There was a period in the life of the Church when it was sometimes thought that to express solidarity with the most desperate situations, we need to renounce the beauty of the Christian life, the liturgy and prayer: that all that is superfluous, a baroque luxury in the face of so much poverty. A great error on the part of many social and charitable, even institutional endeavours of the Church was the pride of believing it was possible to tackle the problems without prayer and without love.

But precisely our fidelity to difficult situations is impossible without a living faith. I say so also on the basis of the experience of my friends of Sant'Egidio in Africa (I think of the 25,000 Aids patients we are treating, I think of the prisons of that continent) or in Europe. I think that there cannot be life with the poor without a community that prays. But I also think that the various forms of poverty in this world must hold out a greater challenge to the life of our communities: without the poor they cannot be beautiful.

Love for the weak is not linked to fashions or ideologies: it is rooted in Christianity. Cardinal Congar wrote that the poor are integral to the Church. They are not just her clientele or the beneficiaries of her material support: the Church cannot fully live her mystery without the poor.<sup>1</sup> This is not least because the poor form such a large part of the world. I don't just refer to marginal situations, but a good part of the contemporary world that is poor and suffers violence. There are thirty wars that are still open and I feel the power of criminal organizations, often a school of life for so many young people. I would like to recall just one statistic: 2,800,000,000 people live on less than two dollars per day in the world. Oceans of poverty.

The world of globalization has not created peace, as was hoped after the end of the Cold War. There are wars; terrorist violence; crim-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Y. CONGAR, in: *Chiesa e povertà*, Ed. A.V.E., Roma 1968, 286.

inal violence. Michel Camdessus speaks of economic violence. There is the grim situation of Africa, caught in a vicious circle of widespread violence, Aids, corruption, exclusion from world markets, and absence of statehood and rule of law.

Above all there is so much hatred in our world: hatred for those who are stronger, for those who are different, for strangers. Hatred may exacerbate situations of poverty, political marginality and also cultural and moral bankruptcy. At Easter I was in Guinea Conakry and, passing through a town in the interior, I saw a boy wearing a T-shirt with the portrait of Bin Laden. I asked him: "Do you know who that is?" He answered me: "Someone who struggles for justice!" Today, with the spread of fearful weapons and with a strong level of acculturation, many may make war and sow violence.

Christians do not accept that war and violence are facts of nature. War cannot be won just by force. Even in the heart of extreme situations of violence, Christians do not renounce peace, indeed they pray for it. Prayer for peace is a great power of believers to vanquish evil and arouse energies of peace.

The experience of the Sant'Egidio Community is that of discovering that Christians have a power of peace and of reconciliation: this is visible for all to see in the peace deal we brokered between Mozambicans in the midst of a civil war that had caused a million dead. But I don't want to speak of us. I only wish to remind you that we cannot be afraid of standing up to demons so strong that it seems to us – as it did to the Lord's disciples – that they are beyond our powers to heal. The demon of war is one of these. War is satanic, said an early pope: humankind is disfigured by it; it leaves a terrible legacy; indeed, it is the mother of all poverty.

The absence of war is the beginning of peace, which is, for us, something deeper, something that may lead to the identification with Christ himself, who is our peace. With their gaze fixed on him, our peace, Christians can and must communicate to others how beautiful it is: from heart to heart, curing the violence that is the great disease of man. This is also all the more needed in a world like ours in which a



few men can destabilize or terrorize whole regions. For we must speak to our fellowmen. We must begin once again to speak to the heart of our fellowmen, sick with violence or brought up in the school of violence. The Christian faith teaches us the value of communicating from heart to heart. Indeed, evangelising makes this world more human.

I could dwell on dramatic scenarios. I could describe them through statistics and figures or through personal experiences. I wish to emphasize instead that we are now in a particular situation: we see not only the poverty close to us, but the poverty in distant countries that is brought to us by the media. What are we to do? It all seems too much. The way of charity begins with the individual in need, but often it leads much further. It leads us to cross over the barricade of the impossible (or believed to be such) and to experience the miracles of charity.

Africa is the poorest of the continents. Its problems seem insoluble. But Africa represents a challenge for the Church and for the movements. If our movements have a missionary dimension, they cannot ignore the most recent land of mission, the continent most scourged by violence, evil and poverty, even if African men and women have great resources.

So what does the beauty of Christ and of Christian life have to say in so many really ugly situations?

The poor teach us to love; they wrest us from self-love, which becomes a prison and an idol of our affluent world. The poor need to be liberated, but they in turn can liberate us.

*Philocalia*, the love of beauty, is not something aesthetic. It also concerns those who do not have anything to give in exchange, those poor whose presence seems to deface our life, our streets, our countries, our world. The Gospel reveals the sadness of self-love; it leads to existential ruin. Self-love (*philautia*) is – as Maximus the Confessor teaches – the mother of all passions.<sup>2</sup> It is man's ancient sin that finds further justifications in our time in the sense of fragility, in the victim-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. I. HAUSHERR, *Philautia. Dall'amore di sé alla carità*, Qiqajon, Bose 1999.

ism of the world of the rich, in the psychological hang-ups of our societies. The gulf that separates us from the poor is born from the impulse of self-love. Self-love has grown into a fully developed culture, an ethos of its own.

This culture needs to be destroyed, because it kills those who cultivate it and excludes those in need. Only the repudiation of self-love, through conversion, can lead to the maturation of philocalic love, in which the beautiful and the good are fused together. There is no aesthetic of Christian life without charity. The poor do not mar, do not take away beauty. The poor are a spiritual experience of great maturity for a Christian community and for everyone. Personal contact with a poor person forms an integral part of the spiritual experience. For the poor are not, for us, just a social or economic problem; they are faces, stories, persons with whom to have a personal relationship. That's why, even despite the sheer scale of poverty, each of us may support a poor person, and break down the walls of abandonment and indifference. Whoever supports a poor person liberates him/herself from the complicity of self-love. One of our African brothers said: "No one is so poor that he cannot help a poor person".

Holy Scripture helps us to discover the beauty of the poor: "He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief", says the prophet Isaiah (*Is* 53: 2-3). Cardinal Ratzinger, in a little book on Christian brotherhood, commenting on Matthew 25, forcibly underlined Jesus' identification with the poor, with the outcast, with those in prison: "There is nothing here to suggest that it is only the faithful [...] but all the suffering without distinction" who should be the beneficiaries of Christian charity,<sup>3</sup> he concludes.

Love for the poor leads to the discovery of the beauty of those who are weak. For the poor, the invalid and the disabled also have their beauty. That is the experience we have with the world of the dis-

<sup>3</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Fraternità cristiana*, Edizioni Paoline, Roma 1960, 45 (our translation).

abled at Sant'Egidio, but it is also the experience of Jean Vanier's L'Arche Community: if we look with the eyes of love we will see great beauty in the faces and lives of the poor and the disabled. In this sense I am convinced that, as in the great spiritual movements of Christian history, we need to devote greater attention to the poor in our midst. And this should not be confined to the particular specializations of the movements. We need to encounter the face of Christ in the world's poor. It is a social and personal, but also a spiritual experience. The love of God leads us to those who are poor and leads us to declare: "You are the fairest of the sons of men..." (Ps 45 [44]: 3).



## **I.4. Liturgical meditations**



## Christians, that is *christóphoroi* at the heart of the world

Archbishop STANISŁAW RYŁKO

Today the Church is celebrating the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After the Angel's annunciation – as we have heard in the Gospel of St. Luke – Mary sets out on the journey to visit her cousin Elizabeth and to offer her service. It is easy to imagine with what feelings her soul must have been filled as she meditated on the mystery that had been announced to her: deep inner joy and humble gratitude for the unprecedented greatness of the gift she had received from the goodness of God. The simple narrative of the evangelist expresses all the extraordinariness of this meeting between two mothers whom God had singled out and the children they bore in their wombs. On hearing the Virgin's greeting, the elderly Elizabeth, full of the Holy Spirit, exclaims: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (*Lk* 1: 42-43). Elizabeth's joy is matched by that of her child: "For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord" (*Lk* 1: 44-45). To the inspired words of her cousin Mary replies with the marvellous canticle of the *Magnificat* that the Church repeats every evening in the evening prayer of Vespers:

"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed:  
For he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
And holy is his name" (*Lk* 1: 46-49).

The image of the Visitation is extremely suggestive. It speaks to us of the meeting between the old and new Covenant. The history of salvation has here reached its decisive turning point. In the Son who becomes flesh, God the Father opens a new page in the history of humanity. In the silence of the house of Zechariah, in the hill country of Judah, two covenants embrace each other in the embrace of two mothers. Elizabeth, symbol of the waiting of Israel, bears in her womb the child who would become John the Baptist: “among those born of women there has risen no one greater” (cf. *Mt* 11: 11), the last of the prophets of the old Covenant; Mary, handmaiden of the Lord, bears in her womb the Messiah promised by the prophets, the Redeemer who for our salvation would shed his blood on the cross – the blood of the New Covenant. So, in the event of the Visitation, Mary becomes the “ark of the new Covenant” chosen by God himself, as *christóphora*, as she who bears Christ to the humanity that yearns for salvation. That is why the liturgy of the feast of the Visitation is so joyful. That is the reason for the exultation of the prophet Zephaniah (Sophonias) who says: “Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! [...] The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst [...] The Lord your God is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory” (*Zeph* 3: 14-17).

This, then, is the liturgical context in which the Second Congress of the ecclesial movements and new communities is beginning its work. The feast of the Visitation, which speaks of the joy and wonder of an encounter, is for all of us an invitation to experience this event in the same way. During our Congress we are all called to rejoice and to be amazed by the wonderful variety of charisms with which the Holy Spirit enriches the Church of our time; to be astonished by their profound unity in the mystery of ecclesial communion; and to be moved by their beauty, when embraced to the full in our lives, with enthusiasm, and in fidelity! How beautiful is the Church adorned by these wonderful gifts that give a powerful impetus to her evangelising work in the world! How beautiful is the life transformed by the personal meeting with Christ! How beautiful is the Christian life that bears fruits of genuine holiness!



For all this we will, in the course of our Congress, join our voices with the voice of the Virgin in the *Magnificat* and glorify the Lord for the great works that he performs through the ecclesial movements and new communities. This has nothing to do with triumphalism, self-centredness or self-adulation. We will glorify God, urged by the consciousness that the works of which we are called to give account during this Congress are not the fruit of our ingenuity, or of our intelligence. We know that their real author and protagonist is the Holy Spirit. “The Lord has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden”, sings the Virgin of the Visitation. May she clothe in humility our thanksgiving! May she teach us every day of our life the humility of true disciples of Christ who recognize themselves as “unworthy servants” (cf. *Lk* 17: 10).

The Virgin of the Visitation, “ark of the new Covenant”, indicates the way of evangelization: that of being *christóphoroi*, that of bearing Christ in ourselves as she bore him in her womb. Our evangelization would be poor if the moving beauty of Christ did not transpire from our life. Our Christian life would be poor if it did not arouse an impulse, a question, a desire in those who look at the way we live in order to get to know the Lord. “The men and women of our day – wrote John Paul II –, often perhaps unconsciously, ask believers not only to ‘speak’ of Christ, but in a certain sense to ‘show’ him to them”.<sup>1</sup> And here it is natural to think of the new charisms present in the Church and the new catechetical itineraries generated by them, which have formed so many authentic witnesses of the beauty of Christ, ready to give everything for the cause of the Gospel. And so, lights of hope shine out amid the drabness of our world, places of irresistible irradiation of the beauty that saves man, as Dostoevsky said.

At the end of this meditation, let us therefore pray with the words of the collect: Lord, during our Congress “grant to us to be submissive to the action of your Spirit, to magnify with Mary your holy name”.

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 16.



## New boldness, new creativity and renewed generosity

Bishop VINCENZO PAGLIA\*

The Gospel we have listened to brings us the third and last part of Christ's prayer for the Church. He has before him the little group of disciples he had called, loved, cared for and instructed for three intensive years. He knows that the time has come for him to leave them; and so he has to entrust his mission to their hands. He has them right in front of him; he knows them one by one: he knows their enthusiasm and their willingness, but also their limitations and their poverty. Yet, it is just them he has chosen to continue his work among mankind. He reminds them of this that very evening: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (*Jn* 15: 16). Jesus does not seem unduly concerned by their inadequacies. Perhaps it was just for that reason that he had chosen them. St. Paul understood this very well and would write to the Corinthians: "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong" (*1 Cor* 1: 27). That evening Jesus has them before him and entrusts them to the Father: "I do not pray that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil one" (*Jn* 17: 15).

Dear brothers and sisters, the prayer of Christ we have heard addressed to the Father is for the Church, but it is also for us. It includes the countless members of the ecclesial movements who are ideally present here and who will gather round the Holy Father in St. Peter's Square on the vigil of Pentecost. The Lord knows our limitations and our weaknesses, but despite that he has called us and sent us as "apostles" to com-

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municate the Gospel to the ends of the earth. That is a consciousness and a responsibility that have increasingly matured in us over these years, also thanks to the work of John Paul II who never ceased to exhort us to follow the Gospel with promptness and with joy. Yesterday we recalled more than once our meeting with the Pope in St. Peter's Square in 1998, an event that left its indelible mark on all us of us. And by a singular and providential coincidence, it was just on that occasion that the then Cardinal Ratzinger described "the spiritual essence" of the movements and also expounded their theological rationale: he linked them in particular to the ministry of the Pope. We felt that those words showed a deep understanding for us: he showed the connection between the apostolic dimension and the experience itself of the movements. He emphasized in particular the universal dimension of the evangelizing mission which, combined with the need for a radical following of Christ, made the Church more ready to bear witness to the beauty of being Christians and the joy of being able to communicate it to many in this difficult and complex watershed of human history. Today we can say that beauty and joy are inscribed in our history, in the history of our movements. This of course is not through our merits – we know our limitations only too well – but by the grace of the Lord that wished to inspire so beautiful a springtime in his Church.

Dear sisters and brothers, at this Congress the Lord invites us once again to reflect together on our life and on that of the Church so that we may embark on a period of new maturity. The new millennium has just begun and we are faced by new challenges; new perspectives, new horizons are opened before our eyes. And once again the Lord invites us as his witnesses. The Gospel passage of Christ's prayer for the Church, which today's liturgy has brought to us, among its many claims on us, confirms to us the need for that unquenchable missionary spirit that is without doubt one of the peculiar dimensions of the ecclesial movements. It is significant that Jesus, after he had said to the Father: "As Thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world", adds: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word" (*Jn* 17: 18,20). The Lord, while he prays for his dis-

ciples, immediately widens his gaze beyond the upper room of the Last Supper to touch the end of the earth. Those tired and exhausted crowds, like sheep without a shepherd, for whom no one cared, appear once again before his eyes. Those crowds now await these disciples to be rounded up: "That they may all be one" (*Jn* 17: 21). And the dream of Jesus is one we must increasingly make our own. The risk of self-absorption, self-reference, is not alien to us – we have seen the dangers of it in our more adolescent moments. The Lord invites us once again to embrace his dream about the world, as he did that evening in the upper room of the Last Supper when in so singular a manner he linked that little group of disciples to the great multitude of the world, giving them the power to heal and to gather together. They did not well understand him that evening, but all became clear when they received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Only then did they begin to preach the Gospel to each and every person. So too did Paul, who heard the Lord say to him, while he was in chains, as we have heard: "Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome" (*Acts* 23: 11). And it was in Rome that St. Justin Martyr, whom we remember today, tried as a layman to give a reason for Christian hope on the frontier of Roman culture.

Dear sisters and brothers, this missionary drive that forms an integral part of the whole body of the Church must find in us and our movements a new boldness, a new creativity and a renewed generosity. But it presupposes the bond with the Lord that Jesus himself laid down as a condition for mission: "that they may all be one, even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us", and he added: that "they may become perfectly one" (*Jn* 17: 21, 23). Jesus asks his disciples the impossible, yet that is the only way "so that the world may believe that you have sent me". He invokes the Father also for us: "I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (*Jn* 17: 26). Dear brothers and sisters, let us embrace the love of the Lord. That is the source of our strength, of our beauty, of our joy and of our mission.



## Following in the footsteps of Christ

Bishop JOSEF CLEMENS\*

Today the liturgy of the Word presented to us two professions of faith in Jesus: one of St. Paul and the other of St. Peter. They undoubtedly differ from each other, but both are fundamental.

In the first reading (*Acts* 25: 19) the governor of Judaea, Porcius Festus, lays the case of Paul, his prisoner, before Agrippa, the king. He presents Paul as the supporter of a controversial doctrine “about one Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive”. So Paul proclaims Jesus Christ as the risen Lord, as someone who was still living!

The Gospel is taken from the last chapter of John. It describes the third apparition of the Lord after his Resurrection by the Sea of Tiberias. In particular we have heard Peter thrice profess his boundless love for the Lord (*Jn* 21: 15-19). The risen Lord is everything for Peter! The experience of life matured in the intimate following of Jesus has led the apostle to confess to him his unconditional love for him. We may recall in this regard Peter’s words in the synagogue of Capernaum: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (*Jn* 6: 68). We have also heard how the Lord confirms to the apostle his full power over the nascent Church: “Feed my lambs”, “Tend my sheep” (*Jn* 21: 15-16). Immediately after, Peter twice hears the Lord’s exhortation “Follow me!” (*Jn* 21: 19, 22). We know he had received the same commandment from Jesus, again on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, some years previously, at the time of his first calling (cf. *Mt* 4: 19 and *Mk* 1: 17). So Peter’s experience of following the Lord is defined by a kind of great “inclusion”, a great arc flung between the day of his first calling and the day of the final entrustment

\* Titular Bishop of Segerme, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

to him of his unique mission; the calling and the subsequent following are thus the key to understanding Peter. But the following of Jesus, described in this way, is realized in every form of apostleship. All the members of the Church are called through the sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation to follow the Lord; and all follow the same Lord, whatever be their mission in the Church.

But what does it mean to “follow”, “ἀκολουθεῖν”?

The following of Christ, the *sequela Christi*, is a classical theological concept. Already in the New Testament it does not refer just to the circle of apostles, but also comprises all the disciples. So we can undoubtedly affirm that it also includes the apostleship of all the ecclesial movements and new communities. All the founders and initiators of these new movements in the Church felt themselves addressed by the call of Jesus: “Come and follow me!”. All of them accepted the call and set out on the journey: they entered “into movement”. Following Jesus is movement! Following him means establishing a peculiar relation with *Christus viator*, Christ the traveller, who went everywhere and preached the good news of the Kingdom of God wherever he went. Obeying the command “Follow me!”, going with Jesus, is inconceivable without having “left everything” (cf. *Mk* 10: 28), without a real change of heart, and of route. “Following the Lord” means really uniting ourselves with him (cf. *Mt* 4: 18-22; 9: 9; 19: 21) and renouncing any other lord.

Moreover, what all the initiators of new ecclesial groups have in common is the fact that they wished to share their calling with others, to experience it in *communion*; indeed, right from the start, by accepting the call of Jesus they formed an association with others with whom they recognized a spiritual affinity. Following Jesus is essentially realized in a community and often by forming a community.

It goes without saying that the response to Christ’s calling has assumed very varied forms and approaches, at different times and in different places; in this sense, the *sequela Christi* is a dynamic concept, a concept in movement. By its very nature, it is opposed to every “static” or “hermetic” interpretation of Christian life. So, given the aston-



ishing variety of gifts and charisms that characterize the ecclesial movements and new communities in our time, we can say that following Jesus is something that unifies them all. It ensures not only the upright profession of faith, but also the bond that unites all the faithful: all their peculiarities, all their diversities, are harmonized in the *sequela Christi*. That's why there cannot be, fundamentally, any conflict between the various forms and emphases of following Jesus, because all his disciples live by the same Spirit and aspire to the same goal.

Lay ecclesial movements and new communities seek to respond in a radical way, "without any ifs or buts", to the call of Jesus, just as did the monastic orders, mendicant orders and religious congregations throughout the whole history of the Church. Of course, their *sequela* involves different ways and different emphases, but their unity in fidelity to the one Lord Jesus Christ, whom they all wish to follow, remains steadfast and clearly perceptible. Jesus' commandment "Follow me!" involves a continuous reference to the Lord, a constant obedience to the One who constitutes the content, measure and aim of our calling.

The ways assumed by the *sequela Christi* in the ecclesial movements and new communities vary. They range from contemplative life to evangelization and catechesis, from care for the sick, for the disabled and for the disadvantaged to missionary effort in every corner of the earth. But these various forms of service are clearly different emphases in the same *sequela*. The underlying theological content always remains the same: namely, obedience to Christ and, through him, to the Father. What prevails is not preoccupation with private spiritual perfectionism, but a sincere submission to Christ and a deep desire to bear witness to him.

Today's Gospel introduces the theme of martyrdom as possible consequence of following Jesus, just because following the Lord involves a real participation in the same fate as Jesus, a real communion of life to the point of sharing the cross of the Messiah. On conferring the mission of universal Pastor on Peter, Jesus does not fail to prophecy to him the sufferings and dangers that mission would bring

with it, even the shedding of blood: “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go”. He tells him this to indicate to him with what death he would glorify God: “And after this he said to him, ‘Follow me’” (*Jn* 21: 18-19).

I think we can recognize, without fear of exaggeration, that some of these new lay groups in the Church have experienced an intimate communion with the sufferings of Jesus. Suffering means incomprehension, rejection, calumny and defamation. Suffering also means any kind of difficulty encountered in the tough work of mission, in bringing the message of salvation “from door to door”.

Of course, in spite of the fundamental decision to follow Jesus, doubts and exclusions, shortcomings and failures sometimes arise in pursuing the way. Let us remember the harsh reproof addressed by Jesus to Peter, immediately after he had entrusted to him the pastoral ministry, as we read today in Matthew’s Gospel: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men” (*Mt* 16: 23). Or let us think of the bitter defeat to which Peter succumbs by denying the Lord in the supreme hour, terrified by being interrogated by a maid outside the door of the court of the high priest: “Are not you also one of this man’s disciples?”. And he replies: “I am not” (*Jn* 18: 17). In Luke’s Gospel the repudiation of the charge is even more peremptory: “Woman, I do not know him” (*Lk* 22: 57).

Peter thrice denied Jesus and thrice declared to the Risen Lord his unconditional love. St. Peter had to undergo many trials before recognizing that he could deny his Lord. But the Lord did not abandon him, indeed, he wished to have him at his side, and entrusted to him the supreme pastoral care of the community of those who follow Christ. This faithful love of Jesus profoundly converted Peter. It transformed him into a courageous herald of the Good News (*Acts* 2: 14-36; 3: 11-26). In the Acts of the Apostles we read: “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit...” (*Acts* 4: 8) and a little further on the boldness, the fearlessness, of Peter is recognized as one of the gifts of the Holy

Spirit: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter... they recognized... that [he] had been with Jesus” (*Acts* 4: 13). Peter’s pilgrimage had now reached its goal. He who out of fear had denied he knew Jesus, is now recognized for his courage as he who had shared the life of Jesus. The man who had once cowered in fear and pusillanimity before his accusers has now become a faithful and intrepid apostle, ready to bear the gospel to the ends of the earth. Peter preached and enacted in his life the gospel preached by Jesus until his death on the cross.

We are about to celebrate the solemnity of Pentecost. We shall then pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We shall pray for the gift of perseverance in following in the footsteps of Jesus, the gift of discernment, the gift of fidelity, the gift of courage, the gift of witness, the gift of unity, and the gift of coherence between preaching and life.



## **PARTE II**

# **Meeting with the Holy Father Benedict XVI Vespers of the Vigil of Pentecost**

St. Peter's Square, 3 June 2006



## **II.1. The Pope's words**





## Homily of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You have come to St Peter's Square this evening in really large numbers to take part in the Pentecost Vigil. I warmly thank you. You belong to different peoples and cultures and represent here all the members of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, spiritually gathered round the Successor of Peter to proclaim the joy of believing in Jesus Christ and to renew the commitment to be faithful disciples in our time. I thank you for your participation and address my cordial greeting to each one of you. My affectionate thoughts go in the first place to the Cardinals, to my venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood and to the men and women Religious. I greet those in charge of your numerous Ecclesial Associations who show how alive the Holy Spirit's action is among the People of God. I greet the organizers of this extraordinary event, and especially those who work at the Pontifical Council for the Laity with Bishop Josef Clemens, the Secretary, and Archbishop Stanisław Ryłko, the President, to whom I am also grateful for his cordial words at the beginning of the Vespers Liturgy.

A similar meeting that took place in this same Square on 30 May 1998 with beloved Pope John Paul II springs to mind. A great evangelizer of our time, he accompanied and guided you throughout his Pontificate. He described your Associations and Communities on many occasions as "providential", especially because the sanctifying Spirit makes use of them to reawaken faith in so many Christian hearts and to reveal to them the vocation they have received with Baptism. He also helps them to be witnesses of hope filled with that fire of love which is bestowed upon us precisely by the Holy Spirit.

Let us ask ourselves now, at this Pentecost Vigil, who or what is

the Holy Spirit? How can we recognize him? How do we go to him and how does he come to us? What does he do? The Church's great Pentecostal hymn with which we began Vespers: "*Veni, Creator Spiritus...* Come, Holy Spirit" gives us a first answer. Here the hymn refers to the first verses of the Bible that describe the creation of the universe with recourse to images. The Bible says first of all that the Spirit of God was moving over the chaos, over the waters of the abyss. The world in which we live is the work of the Creator Spirit. Pentecost is not only the origin of the Church and thus in a special way her feast; Pentecost is also a feast of creation. The world does not exist by itself; it is brought into being by the creative Spirit of God, by the creative Word of God. For this reason Pentecost also mirrors God's wisdom. In its breadth and in the omni-comprehensive logic of its laws, God's wisdom permits us to glimpse something of his Creator Spirit. It elicits reverential awe. Those very people who, as Christians, believe in the Creator Spirit become aware of the fact that we cannot use and abuse the world and matter merely as material for our actions and desires; that we must consider creation a gift that has not been given to us to be destroyed, but to become God's garden, hence, a garden for men and women. In the face of the many forms of abuse of the earth that we see today, let us listen, as it were, to the groaning of creation of which St Paul speaks (*Rom 8: 22*); let us begin by understanding the Apostle's words, that creation waits with impatience for the revelation that we are children of God, to be set free from bondage and obtain his splendour. Dear friends, we want to be these children of God for whom creation is waiting, and we can become them because the Lord has made us such in Baptism. Yes, creation and history – they are waiting for us, for men and women who are truly children of God and behave as such. If we look at history, we see that creation prospered around monasteries, just as with the reawakening of God's Spirit in human hearts the brightness of the Creator Spirit has also been restored to the earth – a splendour that has been clouded and at times even extinguished by the barbarity of the human mania for power. Moreover, the same thing happened once again around Francis of

Assisi - it has happened everywhere as God's Spirit penetrates souls, this Spirit whom our hymn describes as light, love and strength. Thus, we have discovered an initial answer to the question as to what the Holy Spirit is, what he does and how we can recognize him. He comes to meet us through creation and its beauty. However, in the course of human history, a thick layer of dirt has covered God's good creation, which makes it difficult if not impossible to perceive in it the Creator's reflection, although the knowledge of the Creator's existence is reawakened within us ever anew, as it were, spontaneously, at the sight of a sunset over the sea, on an excursion to the mountains or before a flower that has just bloomed.

But the Creator Spirit comes to our aid. He has entered history and speaks to us in a new way. In Jesus Christ, God himself was made man and allowed us, so to speak, to cast a glance at the intimacy of God himself. And there we see something totally unexpected: in God, an "I" and a "You" exist. The mysterious God is not infinite loneliness, he is an event of love. If by gazing at creation we think we can glimpse the Creator Spirit, God himself, rather like creative mathematics, like a force that shapes the laws of the world and their order, but then, even, also like beauty - now we come to realize: the Creator Spirit has a heart. He is Love. The Son who speaks to the Father exists and they are both one in the Spirit, who constitutes, so to speak, the atmosphere of giving and loving which makes them one God. This unity of love which is God, is a unity far more sublime than the unity of a last indivisible particle could be. The Triune God himself is the one and only God. Through Jesus let us as it were cast a glance at God in his intimacy. John, in his Gospel, expressed it like this: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (*Jn* 1: 18). Yet Jesus did not only let us see into God's intimacy; with him, God also emerged, as it were, from his intimacy and came to meet us. This happened especially in his life, passion, death and Resurrection; in his words. Jesus, however, is not content with coming to meet us. He wants more. He wants unification. This is the meaning of the images of the banquet

and the wedding. Not only must we know something about him, but through him we must be drawn to God. For this reason he had to die and be raised, since he is now no longer to be found in any specific place, but his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, emanates from him and enters our hearts, thereby uniting us with Jesus himself and with the Father, the Triune God.

Pentecost is this: Jesus, and through him God himself, actually comes to us and draws us to himself. "He sends forth the Holy Spirit" – this is what Scripture says. What effect does this have? I would like first of all to pick out two aspects: the Holy Spirit, through whom God comes to us, brings us life and freedom. Let us look at both these things a little more closely.

"I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly", Jesus says in the Gospel of John (10: 10). Life and freedom: these are the things for which we all yearn. But what is this - where and how do we find "life"? I think that the vast majority of human beings spontaneously have the same concept of life as the Prodigal Son of the Gospel. He had his share of the patrimony given to him and then felt free; in the end, what he wanted was to live no longer burdened by the duties of home, but just to live. He wanted everything that life can offer. He wanted to enjoy it to the full - living, only living, immersed in life's abundance, missing none of all the valuable things it can offer. In the end he found himself caring for pigs and even envying those animals - his life had become so empty and so useless. And his freedom was also proving useless. When all that people want from life is to take possession of it, it becomes ever emptier and poorer; it is easy to end up seeking refuge in drugs, in the great deception. And doubts surface as to whether, in the end, life is truly a good. No, we do not find life in this way. Jesus' words about life in abundance are found in the Good Shepherd discourse. His words are set in a double context. Concerning the shepherd, Jesus tells us that he lays down his life. "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (cf. *Jn* 10: 18). It is only in giving life that it is found; life is not found by seeking to possess it. This is what we must learn from Christ; and the

Holy Spirit teaches us that it is a pure gift, that it is God's gift of himself. The more one gives one's life for others, for goodness itself, the more abundantly the river of life flows. Secondly, the Lord tells us that life unfolds in walking with the Shepherd who is familiar with the pasture - the places where the sources of life flow. We find life in communion with the One who is life in person - in communion with the living God, a communion into which we are introduced by the Holy Spirit, who is called in the hymn of Vespers "*fons vivus*", a living source. The pasture where the sources of life flow is the Word of God as we find it in Scripture, in the faith of the Church. The pasture is God himself who we learn to recognize in the communion of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Dear friends, the Movements were born precisely of the thirst for true life; they are Movements for life in every sense. Where the true source of life no longer flows, where people only appropriate life instead of giving it, wherever people are ready to dispose of unborn life because it seems to take up room in their own lives, it is there that the life of others is most at risk. If we want to protect life, then we must above all rediscover the source of life; then life itself must re-emerge in its full beauty and sublimity; then we must let ourselves be enlivened by the Holy Spirit, the creative source of life.

The theme of freedom has just been mentioned. The Prodigal Son's departure is linked precisely with the themes of life and freedom. He wanted life and therefore desired to be totally liberated. Being free, in this perspective, means being able to do whatever I like, not being bound to accept any criterion other than and over and above myself. It means following my own desires and my own will alone. Those who live like this very soon clash with others who want to live the same way. The inevitable consequence of this selfish concept of freedom is violence and the mutual destruction of freedom and life. Sacred Scripture, on the other hand, connects the concept of freedom with that of sonship. St Paul says: "You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship", through which we cry, "Abba! Father!" (*Rom* 8: 15). What

does this mean? St Paul presupposes the social system of the ancient world in which slaves existed. They owned nothing, so they could not be involved in the proper development of things. Co-respectively, there were sons who were also heirs and were therefore concerned with the preservation and good administration of their property or the preservation of the State. Since they were free, they also had responsibility. Leaving aside the sociological background of that time, the principle still holds true: freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. True freedom is demonstrated in responsibility, in a way of behaving in which one takes upon oneself a shared responsibility for the world, for oneself and for others. The son, to whom things belong and who, consequently, does not let them be destroyed, is free. All the worldly responsibilities of which we have spoken are nevertheless partial responsibilities for a specific area, a specific State, etc. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, makes us sons and daughters of God. He involves us in the same responsibility that God has for his world, for the whole of humanity. He teaches us to look at the world, others and ourselves with God's eyes. We do not do good as slaves who are not free to act otherwise, but we do it because we are personally responsible for the world; because we love truth and goodness, because we love God himself and therefore, also his creatures. This is the true freedom to which the Holy Spirit wants to lead us. The ecclesial movements want to and must be schools of freedom, of this true freedom. Let us learn in them this true freedom, not the freedom of slaves that aims to cut itself a slice of the cake that belongs to everyone even if this means that some do not get any. We want the true, great freedom, the freedom of heirs, the freedom of children of God. In this world, so full of fictitious forms of freedom that destroy the environment and the human being, let us learn true freedom by the power of the Holy Spirit; to build the school of freedom; to show others by our lives that we are free and how beautiful it is to be truly free with the true freedom of God's children.

The Holy Spirit, in giving life and freedom, also gives unity. These are three gifts that are inseparable from one another. I have already

gone on too long; but let me say a brief word about unity. To understand it, we might find a sentence useful which at first seems rather to distance us from it. Jesus said to Nicodemus, who came to him with his questions by night: “The wind blows where it wills” (*Jn 3: 8*). But the Spirit’s will is not arbitrary. It is the will of truth and goodness. Therefore, he does not blow from anywhere, now from one place and then from another; his breath is not wasted but brings us together because the truth unites and love unites. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit who unites the Father with the Son in Love, which in the one God he gives and receives. He unites us so closely that St Paul once said: “You are all one in Jesus Christ” (*Gal 3: 28*). With his breath, the Holy Spirit impels us towards Christ. The Holy Spirit acts corporeally; he does not only act subjectively or “spiritually”. The Risen Christ said to his disciples, who supposed that they were seeing only a “spirit”: “It is I myself; touch me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have” (cf. *Lk 24: 39*). This applies for the Risen Christ in every period of history. The Risen Christ is not a ghost, he is not merely a spirit, a thought, only an idea. He has remained incarnate - it is the Risen One who took on our flesh - and always continues to build his Body, making us his Body. The Spirit breathes where he wills, and his will is unity embodied, a unity that encounters the world and transforms it. In his Letter to the Ephesians, St Paul tell us that this Body of Christ, which is the Church, has joints (cf. *4: 16*) and even names them: they are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (cf. *4: 12*). In his gifts, the Spirit is multifaceted – we see it here. If we look at history, if we look at this assembly here in St Peter’s Square, then we realize that he inspires ever new gifts; we see how different are the bodies that he creates and how he works bodily ever anew. But in him multiplicity and unity go hand in hand. He breathes where he wills. He does so unexpectedly, in unexpected places and in ways previously unheard of. And with what diversity and corporality does he do so! And it is precisely here that diversity and unity are inseparable. He wants your diversity and he wants you for the one body, in union with the permanent orders -

the joints – of the Church, with the successors of the Apostles and with the Successor of St Peter. He does not lessen our efforts to learn the way of relating to one another; but he also shows us that he works with a view to the one body and in the unity of the one body. It is precisely in this way that unity obtains its strength and beauty.

May you take part in the edification of the one body! Pastors must be careful not to extinguish the Spirit (cf. *I Thes* 5: 19) and you will not cease to bring your gifts to the entire community. Once again, the Spirit blows where he wills. But his will is unity. He leads us towards Christ through his Body. “From Christ”, St Paul tells us, “the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love” (*Eph* 4: 16).

The Holy Spirit desires unity, he desires totality. Therefore, his presence is finally shown above all in missionary zeal. Anyone who has come across something true, beautiful and good in his life - the one true treasure, the precious pearl – hastens to share it everywhere, in the family and at work, in all the contexts of his life. He does so without any fear, because he knows he has received adoption as a son; without any presumption, for it is all a gift; without discouragement, for God’s Spirit precedes his action in people’s “hearts” and as a seed in the most diverse cultures and religions. He does so without restraint, for he bears a piece of good news which is for all people and for all the peoples. Dear friends, I ask you to collaborate even more, very much more, in the Pope’s universal apostolic ministry, opening doors to Christ. This is the Church’s best service for men and women and especially for the poor, so that the person’s life, a fairer order in society and peaceful coexistence among the nations may find in Christ the cornerstone on which to build the genuine civilization, the civilization of love. The Holy Spirit gives believers a superior vision of the world, of life, of history, and makes them custodians of the hope that never disappoints.

Let us pray to God the Father, therefore, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that the celebration of the



Solemnity of Pentecost may be like an ardent flame and a blustering wind for Christian life and for the mission of the whole Church. I place the intentions of your movements and communities in the heart of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, present in the Upper Room together with the Apostles; may she be the one who implores God to grant them. Upon all of you I invoke an outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit, so that in our time too, we may have the experience of a renewed Pentecost. Amen!



## **II.2. Greetings to the Holy Father**



## *Archbishop Stanisław Ryłko*

Holy Father,

The people of the movements and new communities have gathered round you. They are bursting with joy and gratitude for the gift of this meeting of prayer, which will be another milestone in their life and their service to the Church. Answering the invitation of Your Holiness, they set out on the journey from every corner of the earth towards the heart of the Church to re-live with the successor of Peter the mystery of Pentecost. And today, with the whole community of believers, they ideally return to that gathering of the first apostles that lies at the origin of the Church and that is a perennial source from which to draw the living flame of the passionate love for Christ and the missionary zeal from that roar like thunder, that “sound [...] from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind” that “filled all the house where they were sitting” (*Acts 2: 2*). Recalling the descent of the Paraclete, the movements and new communities wish to invoke together with you, Holy Father – as eight years ago with the Servant of God John Paul II – a new and abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit on his Church and on the world as a whole.

Together with Your Holiness, this people wish to express their thanksgiving to the Spirit for the gift of hope that the ecclesial movements and new communities represent for the Church. For it is thanks to these charisms that multitudes of men and women of our time, in spite of all the adverse winds, have discovered the beauty of being Christians and find the joy to communicate it to others. The proof of this is their festive presence in this open-air house of Pentecost that St. Peter’s Square has become today, to testify before the world that being disciples of Christ is beautiful, that encountering Christ is the most fascinating adventure we are able to experience.

Holy Father, you have taught us that wherever it erupts, the Holy Spirit arouses astonishment, disconcertment, wonder, because it transforms the person, changes the course of history, and generates fruits that could never have been the result of mere human planning. And today we wish to raise high our song of praise for the fruits of holiness of life, communion, courage and missionary flair that these new charisms give rise to and enable to blossom in the Church of our time and that are the signs of a new Christian springtime.

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (*Is* 43: 19-21), says God in the prophecy of Isaiah. The historical moment we are living through is an extraordinary reflection of the prophet’s words! The square in which we are gathered today places before everyone’s eyes a wonderful epiphany of the multiplicity of the gifts with which the Spirit of God continues to enrich and adorn the Church. Each of them is so different, and yet they are profoundly united in the mystery of ecclesial communion and unanimously projected at mission, a miracle of unity that St. Paul explains to us when he writes: “Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (*1 Cor* 12: 4-7).

The movements and new communities are gathered here to say once again to the Successor of Peter: we are ready for the mission! The Church can count on us! The Pope and the bishops can count on us!

Your Holiness, bless this people moved with passion for the great cause of the Kingdom of God and eager to listen to your words as master in the faith and father.

## *Chiara Lubich\**

Holy Father,

I address you on behalf of all the ecclesial movements and new communities represented in this square.

It is especially our deep and heartfelt gratitude we wish to express to you, Your Holiness, for having once again convened and gathered us all together round you, here on the threshold of Peter.

How can we fail to recall on this day your much-loved predecessor, the Holy Father John Paul II and our memorable meeting with him on the vigil of Pentecost 1998?

On that day he had prophesied to us that “a new stage” was being unfolded before us: “that of ecclesial maturity [...]. The Church – he told us – expects from you the ‘mature’ fruits of communion and commitment”.<sup>1</sup>

These words of John Paul II, with others in which he had defined our place in the Bride of Christ as a significant expression of the charismatic dimension of the Church, co-essential with the institutional dimension,<sup>2</sup> were for us a sign of understanding and recognition, but also a great responsibility. We wish to be worthy of this trust.

On that occasion, in agreement with other founders, I had promised to the Holy Father John Paul II that we would strive to increase the communion between the movements and new communities.

\* The present text was read in St. Peter’s Square by Graziella De Luca, on behalf of the movement’s founder.

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address on the occasion of the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, Rome (30 May 1998), in: *Movements in the Church. Proceedings of the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, Rome, 27-29 May 1998*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, Vatican City 1999, 222.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, in: *Movements in the Church*, cit., 18-19.

Today we can say that mutual love and unity among us all have increased beyond all our expectations.

Our communities and our movements seem to us like so many networks of love that God is weaving in the world, in continuity with the wonderful work of the religious orders and congregations, almost heralding – at the laboratory level – the unity of the human family.

And our boundless gratitude goes to the One whom we feel is the real protagonist of the flourishing of the movements: the Holy Spirit who always fills us anew with his gifts.

He is at work in our time and continues his action through the centuries on behalf of the Church that is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (*Eph* 2: 20) and is the leaven of the civilization of love.

We wish to assure Your Holiness that collaboration and communion between the movements and new communities will continue, so that, in full communion with and obedience to you and to the pastors of the Church, we shall work for the realization of the same aims wished by Jesus, first and foremost: unity.

We shall work for our beloved Church, so that it be more united, more of a family, more welcoming, more beautiful in her variety. We shall bear witness to Christ in his multiple prerogatives and to Mary, the Mother of God, the charismatic *par excellence*.



## *Patti Gallagher Mansfield*

Dear Holy Father,

With all our hearts we thank you for inviting us to meet with you on this glorious feast of Pentecost. We are your sons and daughters; we are sons and daughters of the Church, children of Mary, and we are the fruit of the Second Vatican Council. Holy Father, I was given the grace, in February 1967, to be baptized in the Holy Spirit at a retreat for students from Duquesne University which marked the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Immediately I turned to the Documents of Vatican II for guidance in understanding my experience. What I read in *Lumen Gentium*, in number 12, about the charismatic gifts encouraged me to be open to the Holy Spirit and His surprises. Every movement and community has its own special history, but in each one exists this same reality: “The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (*Rom 5: 5*). Holy Father, thank you for loving us. Thank you for your constant support and encouragement. Thank you for saying that you are a friend of the movements and that we are a sign of the new springtime. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my word” (cf. *Jn 14: 23*), and we stand ready to receive your word, Holy Father, and to follow your direction because we love you. St. Catherine of Siena called the Pope of her day, “Daddy, the sweet Christ on earth”. We echo her tenderness and affection today by calling you, Pope Benedict XVI, “the sweet Christ on earth” for us. We place ourselves in full availability to your service in the new evangelization. For it is not ourselves that we preach – not our movements, our communities, nor our works – no, it is not ourselves that we preach, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake (cf. *II Cor 4: 5*). Holy Father, you have cried out to the Church and to the world: “*Deus Caritas*

*Est!*” May we join you in proclaiming that Jesus himself is indeed the pearl of great price and the treasure hidden in the field worth giving up everything else to possess (cf. *Mt 13: 46*).

Thank you, Holy Father, for calling us here to the heart of the Church, for it is here that we discover the vocation we share as ecclesial movements and new communities. Our vocation is love! Today we make our own the words of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and we say: “In the heart of the Church, our Mother, we want to be and we will be love!”

## *Luis Fernando Figari*

Holy Father,

In this feast our faith I would like to share the strong experience aroused in me by the meditation on the passage of Scripture that says: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him” (*Rev 3: 20*). The Lord Jesus presents himself as he who asks to be heard, as he who knocks repeatedly on the heart and asks to be admitted to enter into the sphere of personal existence. What humility in the Lord! His merciful love knows no limits! It appeals insistently to the intimacy of each one and asks to be heard. What faithful perseverance! An eschatological goal is discovered, but the journey towards it begins here on this earth with the call of Jesus. Listening to the Lord and opening one’s own life to him means encountering the Lord: it means cherishing the Word and participating in his transforming love. He who accepts the invitation of the Virgin Mary at Cana: “Do whatever he tells you” (*Jn 2: 5*), listens to and obeys Christ, and also opens his heart to the Father, who comes to dwell in him. The marriage feast speaks to us of the communion to which we are invited, but also of the journey of communion and friendship with Jesus. I think this is one of the most magnificent syntheses offered to us by Scripture to encourage us to pursue the path towards the full and definite encounter with the Lord.

The eternal Word that became flesh in the immaculate Virgin Mary to redeem human beings comes to meet each one of us to offer the wonderful gift of reconciliation with God, with ourselves, with our neighbour, with the whole of creation. He calls us with loving persistence to live the Christian life in every moment. He teaches us, with his luminous presence among us, to be persons according to God’s design. In him is revealed our deepest identity. He responds to the existentially most urgent questions that the human being can pose.

Today we are faced by a world that has closed itself off from the voice and light of Christ. The Church, *His Church*, seeks with love to illuminate and give warmth to human beings. Like the tongues of fire at Pentecost, today too the fire of the Spirit seeks incessantly to illuminate minds, inflame hearts, and irradiate life. The Lord Jesus therefore knocks at our door and invites men and women today to a freely given response.

Each age has its dark sides that are posed to us as challenges. Personal crises, the rupture between faith and life, suffocating secularism, relativism, utilitarian agnosticism, the loss of the Christian identity, the hegemony of superficiality and routine, incomprehension of what is meant by self-fulfilment according to God, new and old ideologies and mindsets that deviate man from his road, standardization, injustices, the scourge of poverty and violence: are these all challenges that, often unconsciously, await a genuine response of love that may bring peace and reconciliation to individuals and peoples. This is a cry to the Lord Jesus! For only he is the answer to the spiritual wounds and anxieties of the human being!

The Spirit who overshadowed the Virgin in the annunciation-incarnation (*Lk 1: 35*), he who with tongues of fire touched hearts and minds at Pentecost (*Acts 2: 3*), is the same who, in the course of history, aroused a wave of ecclesial movements and lay communities to live the Christian life, to proclaim to the world that Christ is alive, that he reconciles man and reveals his true identity to him; that he invites him to love and to communion, and to participate in his divine nature. It is God who comes to the aid of human beings and, as on so many other occasions in our bimillennial history, arouses new movements in the Church which, by showing her rich plurality, contribute, in communion with Peter and under Peter, to the great mission of the Church: proclaiming the Lord Jesus to the world, and calling for the transformation of man and earthly realities according to God's plan.

Holy Father, with immense gratitude, we members of the ecclesial movements and new communities want to feel ourselves, in spite of our fragility, courageously urged to a greater challenge in the new

evangelization. We want to strengthen coherence between life and faith. We want to revive the fervour of witness in the Church, by seeking new and bold methods and expressions to proclaim Christ and his teachings, through the experience of those who have heard his call, listened to his voice, and opened their hearts to him in a living encounter, bearing witness of faith, hope and charity, according to all that shall be granted to us by the Spirit, to the ends of the earth and in all the realities of humanity.

With our hearts filled with deep gratitude, Holy Father, we wish to say to you: help us to follow in the footsteps of Christ! Guide our steps! Strengthen us in the faith! With our deepest thanks for everything.



### **II.3. Reflections on the psalmody of Vespers**





## The grace and gift of concord in prayer\*

Praying with the Psalms on the Vigil of Pentecost in the place that preserves the memory of the martyrdom of the apostle Peter is a spiritual occasion for which we are extremely grateful to you, Holy Father, from the depths of our heart. The Psalms are precious for those of us who do not know how to pray: they are the gift of a kind of spiritual alphabet with which to address ourselves to the Lord. He, with his Word, teaches us to pray: “Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord” (*Ps* 113[112]: 1). *Laudate pueri*: whoever prays, at whatever age, finds the heart of the child. He cries out the name of the Lord, like a child who seeks his mother at nightfall. In this there is a teaching for us members of the new communities and movements: “unless you change and become like children...” (*Mt* 18: 3). A charism bears fruit with prayer and with a child’s heart. Because it is a gift!

“From the rising of the sun to its setting” (v. 3). The apostle exhorts: “pray constantly” (*1 Thess* 5: 17). Without cease: how is that possible? We are laypeople; we are immersed in the things of this world: attracted and distracted by them. So how is it possible? Prayer is not only possible, but necessary. Jesus says: “apart from me you can do nothing” (*Jn* 15: 5). It’s true. I look back on so many events: the storms, the fragilities, the obstinate banality of sin, evils and miseries too great even to contemplate. Without prayer we would have given way to resignation. I can say so at least for myself, at least for my friends in the Sant’Egidio Community.

The more time passes, the more we feel the duty to pray. Community life is a school of prayer for everyone, young and old: “Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore” (v. 2). Prayer is the fabric in which the charism is not quenched, nor improv-

\* Reflection on Psalm 112 by Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant’Egidio Community.

erished in pride, but bears fruit. For charism is a gift, not a utopia, not an ideology, not a project dictated by power.

Through the years we have seen the stars of the utopias that promised a brave new world successively lit up and extinguished; we have concurrently seen resignation grow: resignation that is indifferent to the sufferings of others and acquiescent to evil. But the Word of God, the liturgy and prayer have formed us to feel in a quite different way: they have formed us for tenacious and patient love. It is the love of God, gift of Pentecost, foundation of every charism, that is communicated to our hearts thanks to the Spirit that is given to us.

The Psalm praises God, “high above all nations” (v. 4). Devout Jews imagined him above the heavens: “his glory [is] above the heavens” (v. 4). Aloof from the mysteries of the earth. In our world the disparities between people are growing (between big and small nations, between peoples, between civilizations): and big disparities generate mistrust, even conflict. But he, who is really far removed from our wretched world, is he who is closest to it: “Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down upon the heavens and the earth?” (v. 5). The Almighty bows down. It is written in so many pages of Scripture: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite” (*Is* 57: 15).

Human lives are not forgotten, under the indifferent gaze of people. The eleventh Psalm says: “his eyes behold, his eyelids test, the children of men”. God is not aloof or indifferent to us. His eyes penetrate the indifference of man. Jesus, so many times, looks at man in his suffering, even Peter after his betrayal. The Almighty bows down and looks. This does not leave the life of men and women indifferent. Our Psalm praises the Lord in two small but effective images: the poor man and the barren woman.

*The poor man.* Whoever knows the slums of the world, whoever frequents them, has often seen piles, mountains, of refuse, on which children sometimes play. He travels along dusty roads. I think, in this

moment, of Africa which is so close to our hearts. But I also have in mind the poor whose home is a refuse heap; the old people abandoned; those who live in prisons. And that is unfortunately what a large part of our world is like. And people do not see, they do not bow down. But God is not indifferent: "He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people" (vv. 7-8). The poor man sits with dignity among princes. And the princes, if they do not take account of the poor, may become an assembly of evil men.

This is a world turned upside down by love. It happens: we have seen it with our own eyes. It is not a utopia. It is born from the patient and tenacious love that God pours out in the hearts of believers. The God who listens to the lament of the poor and the humble: "For thou hast been a stronghold to the poor; a stronghold to the needy in distress" (*Is* 25: 4).

*The barren woman.* No, we are not condemned to the barrenness of living for ourselves. That is the great barrenness. Living for oneself. The barren woman of the Psalm recalls barren lives: women of the Bible, but also men in our own time, rich in resources, but incapable of giving life. There is a world of rich and barren people who are afraid to give life and do not know how to give it. To them too the Lord bows down: "The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men" (*Ps* 14: 2). He bows down to us. We see him in Jesus: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them" (*Is* 63: 9). This is the Pasch we have celebrated and that remains in our heart.

Today we hail the fertility of the life of the Spirit: "He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children" (v. 9). This happens for so many people who were rich and barren. It is the great joy of this evening, of us who are rich and barren, but who have finally been made humble and fruitful, fathers of children in this fine home without walls, and yet so brotherly and intimate. Here with the successor of Peter where the small and big charisms that the Lord

gives to the Church, and gives to men who were barren, always find welcome and support.

We members of the communities and movements are barren people who, thanks to the love of God, of that God who bows down to us, have received a fruitful charism. And now we live joyously with his children in the Church. Today we live joyously with you, Holy Father, with the Bishops, with all of you, our dear friends. I feel, however, that apart from those present in this square, there are others with us this evening: a great army of the poor, a “people humble and lowly”, says the prophet Zephaniah (*Zeph* 3: 12): so many poor people raised by love for these humble and lowly people and by the hands that were given to us.

It is the original covenant of the humble and the poor who live only in the Church, fruit of the Spirit. Yes, in the Church we live what you, Holy Father, wrote in your encyclical for which we are grateful: “Love of God and love of neighbour have become one”.<sup>1</sup>

John Chrysostom, a bishop in difficult times, said: Psalm 112 invites us to concord in prayer. How true that is! It demands ever more charity and esteem among us. We are different, but not aloof: called by You, Holy Father, to communicate the Gospel with greater love and strength. In our weakness we are clothed by a power from above. We therefore wish to thank the Lord with the “Praise the Lord!” that opens and closes the Psalm. And we bear in our hearts, within us, the question posed by the Psalmist: “Who is like the Lord our God?” (v. 5).

<sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 15.

## “The Lord builds up Jerusalem!”\*

Thank you for the opportunity given to me to speak.

We have listened to Psalm 146 in which we are invited to praise God because “the Lord builds up Jerusalem” (*Ps* 147 [146]: 2).

Jerusalem and especially its Temple were reconstructed by Zorobabel and Joshua, a layman and a priest. And before, Moses and Aaron, later Peter and Paul, the two witnesses of whom the Book of Revelations speaks... we may say: charism and institution. Charism and institution combined are co-essential to the mission of the Church, said Pope John Paul II at Pentecost in 1998.

With reference to the feast we are celebrating today, Pope John Paul II, speaking of the Church’s need for new evangelization at the Symposium of European Bishops in 1985, said: “To realize an effective work of evangelization we must once again seek inspiration from the very first apostolic model. This model, founding and paradigmatic, we contemplate in the gathering of the apostles at Pentecost: the apostles are united and persevering with Mary while waiting to receive the gift of the Spirit. Only with the outpouring of the Spirit does the work of evangelization begin. The gift of the Spirit is the prime motor, the prime source, the prime inspiration of genuine evangelization. So we need to begin evangelization by invoking the Spirit and seeking where the wind blows (cf. *Jn* 3: 8). Some symptoms of this breath of the Spirit are undoubtedly present in Europe today. To find them, support them and develop them, we must at times abandon atrophied schemes and trace our steps back to the beginning of life, where we see that fruits are produced “according to the Spirit” (cf. *Rom* 8)”.<sup>1</sup>

\* Reflection on Psalm 146 by Kiko Argüello, Initiator of the Neocatechumenal Way.

The Pope said this to the European bishops after having spoken of the destruction of the family and the secularisation of Europe, affirming that the Holy Spirit had already given the reply. And is giving the reply! We can say: here we are, Holy Father, here is the reply, here are the new charisms, the new realities that the Holy Spirit is arousing as an aid to priests, as an aid to parishes, to bishops, and to the Pope. “The Lord builds up Jerusalem”.

We all have a need for the ecclesiology of Vatican II, an ecclesiology of communion, of the Church as a body, to be put into practice. In short, the implementation of Vatican Council II is more than ever urgent today. Pope John XXIII in his Apostolic Constitution *Humanae salutis* with which he called the Council exhorted as follows: “The Church today is witnessing a crisis in society. While humanity is a turning point of a new era, tasks of huge gravity and scale await the Church, as in the most tragic epochs of its history. What is needed is to place modern man in contact with the re-vivifying and perennial energies of the Gospel”.<sup>2</sup> Pope John XXIII prophesied what today submerges us: “the turning point of a new era”, postmodernity, nihilistic atheism and the apostasy of Europe. The Book of Revelations says that the slaughtered Lamb vanquishes the beast. If Christians are to become this lamb they have a need for charisms, they have a need for new ecclesial realities, movements and new communities. All of us have a need for an adult faith, and that is why courses in Christian initiation need to be opened in the parishes. Communities such as the Holy Family of Nazareth are needed. Our Lord Jesus, to become an adult, had a need for a family, for the Family of Nazareth. The small Christian community saves the family and the family saves the Church. That is the mission of the Neocatechumenal Way in the Church and in the parishes.

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the participants in the VI Symposium of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences, 11 October 1985, in *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English*, no. 42 – 21 October 1985, 3.

<sup>2</sup> JOHN XXIII, Apostolic Constitution *Humanae salutis*, no. 3.

*“The Lord builds up Jerusalem!”*

I will conclude, Your Holiness, by saying that the Neocatechumenal Way together with so many other movements and communities that are present here in this piazza today, are the sign of the realization of this Psalm: “The Lord builds up Jerusalem”. The Lord builds up his Church.

I hope that this fact, in this wonderful vespers of Pentecost 2006, may be for You and for all of us a sign of hope and of great consolation.





## The unassailable fascination of Christianity. Christ who begs for man's heart\*

**T**he true protagonist of history is the beggar: Christ who begs for man's heart, and man's heart that begs for Christ".<sup>1</sup> With these words, eight years ago, father Giussani concluded his address here in St. Peter's Square, kneeling before John Paul II. Today we come back as beggars, even more desirous of Christ, astonished at how Christ has continued begging for our hearts.

1. "GREAT AND WONDERFUL ARE YOUR WORKS, LORD, GOD ALMIGHTY;  
JUST AND TRUE ARE YOUR WAYS, KING OF ALL NATIONS!"

Like the martyrs of the Apocalypse, after seeing His victory we, too, can say: "Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord, God Almighty". What are the works that make us sing? The Resurrection of Christ, who, by the work of the Holy Spirit, has taken hold of us in Baptism, making us "His".

Christ's victory makes us exult with joy and gratitude at seeing how He takes the whole of our humanity and brings it to a fullness beyond compare, making us live no longer for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose for us (cf. 2 *Cor* 5:14-15). It is in the flesh, in all the events of life, that we are given the grace to live this newness: "Though living in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (*Gal* 2:20). Our astonishment at

\* Reflection on the hymn of Moses and the Lamb (*Rev* 15:3-4) by father Julián Carón, President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation.

<sup>1</sup> L. GIUSSANI, "Cristo, mendicante del cuore dell'uomo", in: *Il Papa e i Movimenti*, edited by the Pontificium Consilium Pro Laicis, Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano) 1998, 39.

Christ's love for each of us dominates our life, because "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (*Gal 2:20*). This is how we have experienced "the power of His Resurrection" (*Phil 3:10*).

This is the defeat of the nothingness that constantly looms over every man, and that often makes him doubt that there is an answer that corresponds to the need for truth, for beauty, for justice, and for happiness in his heart, because nothing is able to wholly fascinate him for long. For, "without Christ's Resurrection, only one alternative remains: nothingness".<sup>2</sup> In the Risen Christ, instead, we see the victory of Being over nothingness, and therefore the reawakening in us of the one hope that does not disappoint (*Rom 5:5*).

The encounter with Fr. Giussani's charism, in the great riverbed that is the Church, has made Christ more and more familiar to us, more familiar than our father and mother, to the point of arousing in us the question: "Who are you, Christ?" – following the same method that led the disciples from the experience of the encounter with Christ's humanity to the great question about His divinity. In this way, we, the baptized, have become one with Christ (cf. *Gal 3:27*). This is the unassailable fascination of Christianity: it makes us participate in an event that takes up our whole "I" and rescues us every time we fail, like the disciples of Emmaus, who said, "Were our hearts not burning within us as we spoke with Him on the road?" (*Lk 24:32*). Thus, in the light of the Holy Spirit's gifts, the whole of reality and the whole of life witness the reasonableness of faith in Christ, the world's destiny and salvation.

2. "WHO SHALL NOT FEAR AND GLORIFY YOUR NAME, O LORD, YOU ALONE ARE HOLY!"

It is the immensity of His love that shines out in His works and makes it easy to recognize the Lord; as it was for the people of Israel, who before God's mighty hand, "feared the Lord and believed in

<sup>2</sup> L. GIUSSANI, "Cristo risorto, la sconfitta del nulla", in: *Tracce*, no. 4, year XXXIII, April 2006, 5.

Him” (Ex 14:31). All that is needed is for our freedom to give in and, as Your Holiness wonderfully reminded us in your encyclical, let ourselves be drawn by Christ into the “dynamic of His self-giving” to us.<sup>3</sup> In the person of Christ, this giving reaches an “unprecedented realism”.<sup>4</sup> God incarnate becomes so overwhelmingly attractive that He “draws us all to Himself”.<sup>5</sup> A person who meets Him finds Him so correspondent to his heart’s expectation, that he does not hesitate to exclaim before the manifestation of the beauty of His holiness: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God” (Jn 6:68-69).

But, as Peter himself, many times we perceive, too, the whole drama of human freedom which, instead of opening us trustingly in astonished and grateful acknowledgment of the Lord present, can close itself up in the conceited pride of autonomy or in skepticism, to the point of despair, faced with one’s own impotence and the immensity of evil. But, as Your Holiness again reminded us in the encyclical, God’s holiness reveals itself as a passionate love for His people, for every man, and at the same time a forgiving love.<sup>6</sup> All man’s frailty, his betrayal, all the dreadful possibilities of history are traversed by that question put to Peter on the lake that morning: “Do you love Me?” (Jn 21:17). Through this simple, definitive question, God’s unique holiness reveals in Christ its inconceivable and mysterious depth: God is mercy. In this, man, each one of us, is recreated in the truth of his original dependence, and freedom blossoms once more as humble, glad adhesion full of entreaty: “Yes, Lord, You know everything, You know that I love You” (Jn 21:17). In this free “yes” of the creature, in every circumstance of life, the glory of God echoes and is at work. “*Gloria Dei vivens homo*”.<sup>7</sup> The glory of God is man who is alive.

<sup>3</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, no. 10.

<sup>7</sup> IRENAEUS OF LYON, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 20, 7.

3. “ALL NATIONS SHALL COME AND WORSHIP YOU LORD, BECAUSE YOUR JUDGMENTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED”

The judgment of the Apocalypse reveals to us the truth of the last day, when all will come to bow down in acknowledgment that Jesus is the Lord, and Christ will be definitively “everything in everyone” (*Col* 3:11). This radiant judgment is not contradicted by a world that seems to be moving away from God, but the dramatic situation in which we are living intensifies Christ’s distressing question: “When the Son of man comes, will He find faith on earth?” (*Lk* 18:8).

Answering this question makes us more aware of the importance of this meeting. Our coming together here around Peter makes us certain that that final fulfillment lives in belonging to the Church, to the “little flock”, the anticipation and pledge of the final manifestation. But, at the same time, we are pressed by the urgency of the task we are called to. As at the first Pentecost, we, too, have been chosen, called to be witnesses of the beauty of Christ before all nations. What simplicity of heart is needed to let oneself be molded by Christ so as to make the whole of our daily life, our work and family, our relationships and initiatives resplendent with newness! Only one thing can arouse in those we meet the desire to come with us to worship before the Lord: seeing realized in us the promise of Christ that those who follow Him will have the hundredfold here on earth (*Mk* 10:29-30).

# APPENDIX



## “ His Spirit is the true protagonist of the Church ”

*Homily of the Holy Father Benedict XVI  
at the Mass on the Sunday of Pentecost,  
St. Peter's Square, 4 June 2006*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended with power upon the Apostles; thus began the mission of the Church in the world. Jesus himself prepared the Eleven for this mission, appearing to them on many occasions after his Resurrection (cf. *Acts* 1: 3). Prior to the Ascension into Heaven, he ordered them “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father” (cf. *Acts* 1: 4-5); that is, he asked them to *stay together* to prepare themselves to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And they gathered in prayer with Mary in the Upper Room, awaiting the promised event (cf. *Acts* 1: 14).

To stay together was the condition laid down by Jesus in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; the premise of their harmony was prolonged prayer. In this way we are offered a formidable lesson for every Christian community. Some think at times that missionary effectiveness depends primarily on careful programming and its subsequent intelligent application through a concrete commitment. The Lord certainly does ask for our collaboration, but before any other response his initiative is necessary: his Spirit is the true protagonist of the Church. The roots of our being and of our action are in the wise and provident silence of God.

The images used by St Luke to indicate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit – wind and fire – recall Sinai, where God revealed himself to the people of Israel and offered his covenant (cf. *Ex* 19: 3ff.). The feast of Sinai, which Israel celebrated 50 days after the Passover, was

the *feast of the Covenant*. Speaking of the tongues of fire (cf. *Acts* 2: 3), St Luke wants to show Pentecost as a new Sinai, as the *feast of the New Covenant*, where the Covenant with Israel is extended to all the nations of the earth. The Church has been catholic and missionary from her birth. The universality of salvation is meaningfully manifested with the list of the numerous ethnic groups to which those who heard the Apostles' first proclamation belonged (cf. *Acts* 2: 9-11).

The People of God, which had found its first configuration in Sinai, extends today to the point of surmounting every barrier of race, culture, space and time. As opposed to what occurred with the tower of Babel (cf. *Gen* 11: 1-9), when people wanted to build a way to heaven with their hands and ended up by destroying their very capacity of mutual understanding, in Pentecost the Spirit, with the gift of tongues, demonstrates that his presence unites and transforms *confusion* into *communion*. Human pride and egoism always create divisions, build walls of indifference, hate and violence. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, makes hearts capable of understanding the languages of all, as he re-establishes the bridge of authentic communion between earth and heaven. The Holy Spirit is Love.

But how is it possible to enter into the mystery of the Holy Spirit? How can the secret of Love be understood? The Gospel passage takes us today to the Upper Room where, after the Last Supper, a sense of loss has saddened the Apostles. This is due to the fact that Jesus' words arouse disturbing questions: He spoke of the world's hatred of him and of his own, he spoke of his mysterious departure; and there were still many other things to be said, but for the time being the Apostles were not able to bear the weight (cf. *Jn* 16: 12). To console them, he explains the meaning of his departure: he will go, but he will return; meanwhile, he will not abandon them, will not leave them orphans. He will send the Consoler, the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit will enable them to understand that Christ's work is a work of love: love of the One who gave himself, love of the Father who has given him.

This is the mystery of Pentecost: the Holy Spirit illuminates the



human spirit and, by revealing Christ Crucified and Risen, indicates the way to become more like him, that is, to be “the image and instrument of the love which flows from Christ”.<sup>1</sup> The Church, gathered with Mary as at her birth, today implores: “*Veni, Sancte Spiritus!* – Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love! ”. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, no. 33.



## “One great movement animated by the Holy Spirit”

*Words of the Holy Father Benedict XVI  
before the recitation of the Marian prayer Regina Coeli,  
St. Peter's Square, 4 June 2006*

Today's Solemnity of Pentecost invites us to return to the origins of the Church, which, as we affirm in the Second Vatican Council, was “made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit”.<sup>1</sup> At Pentecost, the Church shows herself as one, holy, catholic and apostolic; she shows herself as missionary, with the gift of speaking all the languages of the world, because the Good News of God's love is destined for all peoples. The Spirit, the Council again teaches, “guiding the Church in the way of all truth and unifying her in communion and in the works of ministry, he bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her; and he adorns her with his fruits”.<sup>2</sup> Among the realities raised up in the Church by the Holy Spirit are the Movements and Ecclesial Communities, which yesterday I had the joy of meeting in this Square in a great worldwide gathering. The entire Church, as beloved Pope John Paul II used to say, is one great movement animated by the Holy Spirit, a river that travels through history to irrigate it with God's grace and make it full of life, goodness, beauty, justice and peace.

<sup>1</sup> VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 4.



## “LAITY TODAY” COLLECTION

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