

Pope's Address to Charismatic Renewal

On the history and the future of this 'current of grace'

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Here is a ZENIT translation of the address Pope Francis gave last Friday night at a meeting with members of the Charismatic Renewal.

The Members of Renewal in the Holy Spirit were gathered on the occasion of the 38th Italian National Convocation held in Rome July 3-4.

The Convocation began in Saint Peter's Square at 4:00 pm with an ecumenical event on the theme "Ways of Unity and Peace – Voices in Prayer for Today's Martyrs and for a Spiritual Ecumenism." Present at the event, which alternated with singing and testimonies, were Cardinals Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches; Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Angelo Bagnasco, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, together with Orthodox and Catholic Eastern Patriarchs, Anglican and Lutheran Bishops and Pentecostal Pastors.

Pope Francis arrived in Saint Peter's Square around 6:00 pm and, after the greeting of the President, Salvatore Martinez, and the testimony of two participants in the Convocation, he gave the address that is translated below. * * *

Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

Good afternoon and welcome. May the water also be blessed because the Lord made it. I appreciate very much your response to my invitation made in the month of January to meet here in Saint Peter's Square. Thank you for this enthusiastic and warm response.

Last year in the Stadium I shared with all those present some reflections that I would like to recall today -- because it is always good to recall the memory --: the identity of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, from which the Association Renewal in the Spirit was born. I will do so with the words of Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens, great protector of Charismatic Renewal, as he describes it in the second book of his Memoirs.

In the first place he recalls the extraordinary figure of a woman who did so much at the beginning of Charismatic Renewal; she was his collaborator who also enjoyed the trust and affection of Pope Paul VI. I am referring to Veronica O'Brien: she was the one who asked the Cardinal to go to the United States to see what was happening, to see with his eyes what she considered the work of the Holy Spirit. It was then that Cardinal Suenens got to know Charismatic Renewal, which he described as a "flow of grace," and he was the key person to maintain it in the Church. In the Mass of Pentecost Monday in 1975, Pope Paul VI thanked him with these words: "In the name of the Lord I thank you for having brought Charismatic Renewal into the heart of the Church."

It is not a novelty of some years ago; Charismatic Renewal has a long history and in the homily of that Mass itself, the Cardinal said: "May Charismatic Renewal be able to disappear as such and be transformed into a Pentecostal grace for the whole Church: to be faithful to its origin, the river must be lost in the ocean."

The river must be lost in the ocean. Yes, if the river stops the water becomes stagnant; if the Renewal, this current of grace does not end in the ocean of God, in the love of God, it works for itself and this is not of Jesus Christ, this is of the Evil One, of the Father of lies. The Renewal comes from God and goes to God.

Paul VI blessed this. The Cardinal continued saying: "The first error that must be avoided is to include Charismatic Renewal in the category of Movement. It is not a specific Movement; the Renewal is not a Movement in the common sociological sense; it does not have founders, it is not homogeneous and it includes a great variety of realities; it is a current of grace, a renewing breath of the Spirit for all the members of the Church, laymen, Religious, priests and Bishops. It is a challenge for us all. One does not form part of the Renewal, rather, the Renewal becomes a part of us provided that we accept the grace it offers us."

Here Cardinal Suenens talks of the sovereign work of the Spirit, who without human founders aroused the current of grace in 1967. Men and women renewed that, after having received the grace of Baptism in the Spirit, as fruit of this grace gave life to Associations, Covenant Communities, schools of formation, schools of evangelization, Religious Congregations, Ecumenical Communities, Communities of help to the poor and the needy.

I myself went to the community of Kkottongnae, during my trip to Korea, and I also visited the Philippines. This current of grace has two international organizations recognized by the Holy See that are at its service and at the service of all its expressions throughout the world: "ICCRS" and "Catholic Fraternity." This is somewhat the history, the root.

Last year at the Stadium I spoke also of unity in diversity. I gave the example of an orchestra. In *Evangelii gaudium* I spoke of the sphere and of the polyhedron. It is not enough to speak of unity, it is not any sort of unity. It is not uniformity. Said thus it can be understood as the unity of a sphere where every point is equidistant from the center and there are no differences between one point and another. The model is the polyhedron, which reflects the confluence of all the parts that maintain their originality in it and these are the charisms, in unity but in their own diversity -- unity in diversity.

The distinction is important because we are speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit, not ours. Unity in the diversity of expressions of reality, as many as the Holy Spirit wills to arouse. It is also necessary to remember that the whole, namely, this unity, is greater than the part, and the part cannot attribute the whole to itself. For instance, one cannot say: "We are the current called Catholic Charismatic Renewal and you are not." This cannot be said. Please, brothers, it is thus; it does not come from the Spirit; the Holy Spirit breathes where He wills, when He will and as He wills -- unity in diversity and in the truth that is Jesus himself. What is the common sign of those who are reborn of this current of grace? To become new men and women, this is Baptism in the Spirit. I ask you to read *John* 3, verses 7-8: Jesus to Nicodemus, rebirth in the Spirit.

There is another point that it is very important to clarify in this current of grace: those who guide. Dear brothers and sisters, there is a great temptation for the leaders -- I repeat, I prefer the term servants, those who serve -- and this temptation for the servers comes from the devil, the temptation to believe they are indispensable, no matter what the task is. The devil leads them to believe they are the ones that command, who are at the center and thus, step by step, they slip into authoritarianism, into personalism and do not let the renewed Community live in the Spirit. This temptation is such as to make "eternal" the position of those who consider themselves irreplaceable, a position that always has some form of power or dominance over others. This is clear to us: the only irreplaceable one in the Church is the Holy Spirit, and Jesus is the only Lord.

I ask you: who is the only irreplaceable one in the Church? [The Square: the Holy Spirit!] And who is the only Lord? [The Square: Jesus!] We say that the Lord Jesus is the Lord, we praise Jesus, loudly! Jesus is the Lord! There are no others. There have been sad cases in this connection. There must be a limited time to posts, which in reality are services. An important service of leaders, of lay leaders, is to make those who will take their place at the end of their service grow and mature spiritually and in a pastoral way. It is appropriate that all service in the Church have an expiry date; there are no lifelong leaders in the Church. This happens in some countries where there is dictatorship. "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart," says Jesus. This temptation, which is from the devil, makes one go from servant to boss, one seizes a Community, a group. This temptation also makes one slide into vanity. And there are so many people -- we have heard these two testimonies, of the couple and Hugo's -- how many temptations lead to making a Community suffer and impede doing good, and become an organization as an NGO; and power leads us -- excuse me but I will say it: how many leaders become vain persons? -- power leads to vanity! And then one feels one can do anything, and then one slides in matters, because the devil always enters by the pocketbook: this is the devil's entrance door.

Something else are the founders who received from the Holy Spirit the charism of foundation. Because they received it, they have the obligation to look after it, making it mature in their Communities and Associations. The founders remain as such for life, namely, they are the ones that inspire, that give inspiration, but let the thing go forward. In Buenos Aires I knew a good founder, who at a certain point became the adviser, and let others become the leaders.

This current of grace leads us forward in a path of the Church that in Italy has borne much fruit, I thank you. I encourage you to go forward. In particular, I ask you for your important contribution to be committed to share with all in the Church the Baptism you have received. You have lived this experience; share it in the Church. And this is the most important service – the most important that can be given to everyone in the Church. To help the People of God in their personal encounter with Jesus Christ, who changes us into new men and women, in little groups, humble but effective, because it is the Spirit that works.

Do not look so much at having great gatherings which often end there, but to “crafted” relations stemming from witness, in the family, at work, in social life, in parishes, in prayer groups, with all! And here I ask you to take the initiative to create bonds of trust and cooperation with the Bishops, who have the pastoral responsibility to guide the Body of Christ, including Charismatic Renewal. Begin to take the necessary initiatives so that all the Italian charismatic realities born of the current of grace, can bind themselves with these bonds of trust and cooperation directly with their Bishops, there where they are.

There is another strong sign of the Spirit in Charismatic Renewal: the search for unity of the Body of Christ. You, Charismatics, have a special grace to pray and work for Christian unity, because the current of grace goes through all the Christian Churches. Christian unity is the work of the Holy Spirit and we must pray together -- spiritual ecumenism, the ecumenism of prayer. “But, Father, can I pray with an Evangelical, with an Orthodox, with a Lutheran?” – “You must, you must! You have received the same Baptism.” We have all received the same Baptism; we are all going on Jesus’ way, we want Jesus. We have all made these divisions in history, for so many reasons, but not good ones. But now, in fact, is the time in which the Spirit makes us think that these divisions are not on, that these divisions are a counter-testimony, and we must do everything to go together: spiritual ecumenism, the ecumenisms of prayer, the ecumenism of work, but of charity at the same time; the ecumenism of the reading of the Bible together ... To go together towards unity. “But Father, do we have to sign a document for this?” – “But allow yourself to be carried forward by the Holy Spirit: pray, work, love and then the Spirit will do the rest!”

This current of grace goes across all the Christian Confessions, all of us who believe in Christ – unity first of all in prayer. Work for Christian unity begins with prayer. Pray together.

[There must be] unity, because the blood of today’s martyrs makes us one. There is the ecumenism of blood. We know that when those who hate Jesus Christ kill a Christian, before killing him, they do not ask him: “Are you Lutheran, are you Orthodox, are you Evangelical, are you Baptist, are you Methodist?” You are Christian! And they sever the head. They are not confused; they know there is a root there, which gives life to all of us and which is called Jesus Christ, and that it is the Holy Spirit that leads us to unity! Those who hate Jesus Christ led by the Evil One do not make a mistake. They know and therefore kill without asking questions.

And this is something that I entrust to you, perhaps I have already told you this, but it is a true story. It is a true story. In Hamburg, a city of Germany, there was a parish priest who studied the writings to carry forward the Beatification of a priest killed by Nazism, guillotined. The reason: he taught children the catechism. And, while he studied, he discovered that after him, five minutes later, a Lutheran pastor was guillotined for the same reason. And the blood of both was mixed: both were martyrs, both were martyrs. It is the ecumenism of blood. If the enemy unites us in death, who are we to be divided in life? Let us allow the Spirit to enter, let us pray to go forward all together. “But there are differences!” Let us leave them to one side; let us walk with what we have in common, which is enough: there is the Holy Trinity; there is Baptism. Let us go forward in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

A few months ago, there were those 23 Egyptians who were also beheaded on the beach of Libya, and in that moment they said Jesus’ name. “But they were not Catholics ...” But they are Christians, they are brothers, they are our martyrs! -- the ecumenism of blood. Fifty years ago, in the Canonization of the young martyrs of Uganda, Blessed Paul VI made reference to the fact that their Anglican catechist companions also shed their blood for the same reason; they were Christians, they were martyrs. Excuse me, do not be scandalized, they are our martyrs! Because they gave their life for Christ and this is the ecumenism of blood -- pray remembering our common martyrs.

Unity in working together for the poor and the needy, who are also in need of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It would be very good to organize seminars of life in the Spirit, together with other Christian

Charismatic realities, for brothers and sisters that live on the street: they also have the Spirit within that pushes them, so that someone outside will open wide the door.

It seems that the rain has stopped. The heat has finished. The Lord is good, first he gives us heat, then a good shower! He is with us. Let yourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, by this current of grace, which goes forward always in search of unity. No one is the boss. There is only one Lord. Who is it?[The Square: "Jesus!"] Jesus is the Lord! I remind you: Charismatic Renewal is a Pentecostal grace for the whole Church. Agreed? [The Square: "Yes!"] If someone does not agree, raise your hand!

Unity in the diversity of the Spirit, not any unity -- the sphere and the polyhedron -- remember this well, the common experience of Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the fraternal and direct bond with the diocesan Bishop, because the whole is greater than the part. Then, unity in the Body of Christ: pray together with other Christians, work together with other Christians for the poor and the needy. We all have the same Baptism. Organize seminars of life in the Spirit for brothers that live on the street, also for brothers marginalized by so many sufferings of life. I permit myself to recall Hugo's witness. The Lord called him precisely because the Holy Spirit made him see the joy of following Jesus. Organize seminars of life in the Holy Spirit for people that live on the street.

And then, if the Lord gives us life, I expect you all together at the meeting of the ICCRS and of Catholic Fraternity, which are already organizing it, all of you and all those who wish to come at Pentecost in 2017 -- it is not so far away! -- here in Saint Peter's Square to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of this current of grace -- an opportunity for the Church, as Blessed Paul VI said in Saint Peter's Basilica in 1975. We will gather to give thanks to the Holy Spirit for the gift of this current of grace, which is for the Church and for the world, and to celebrate the wonders that the Holy Spirit has done in the course of these 50 years, changing the life of millions of Christians.

Thank you again for having responded joyfully to my invitation. May Jesus bless you and may the Holy Virgin protect you. And, please, do not forget to pray for me, because I need it. Thank you.

Before the final Blessing, the Pope spoke the following words:

And with Bibles, with the Word of God, go, preach the novelty that Jesus has given us. Preach to the poor, to the marginalized, to the blind, to the sick, to the imprisoned, to all men and women. The Spirit is within every one, who wishes to be helped to open wide the door to make him flourish again. May the Lord accompany you in this mission, always with the Bible in hand, always with the Gospel in your pocket, with the Word of Christ.

[Original text: Italian] [Translation by ZENIT]

THE POPE'S PRAYER

During the meeting in Saint Peter's Square with the Movement of Renewal in the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis pronounced the following prayer

We adore You, Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Father, send us the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised us. He will guide us to unity. He is the One who gives the charisms, who works variety in the Church, and it is He who brings about unity. Send us the Holy Spirit, that He may teach us all that Jesus taught us and that he may give us the memory of what Jesus said. Jesus, Lord, You asked for us all the grace of unity in this Church which is yours, not ours. History has divided us. Jesus, help us to go on the path of unity or of reconciled diversity. Lord, You always do what you promise, give us the unity of all Christians. Amen.

[Original text: Italian] [Translation by ZENIT] (July 07, 2015) © Innovative Media Inc

What the Popes have said about the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

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In 1975, Pope Paul VI said, "the Church lives by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit... He furnishes and directs her with various gifts, both hierarchical and charismatic... The Church and the world need more than ever for 'the miracle of Pentecost' to continue in history. Nothing is more necessary to this increasingly secularized world than the witness of this spiritual renewal that we see the Holy Spirit evoking..."

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In 1987, Pope John Paul II said, "the vigor and fruitfulness of the Renewal certainly attests to the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church these years after Vatican II."

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At Pentecost 2005 and 2008, Pope Benedict XV encouraged all the faithful to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

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In June 2014, Pope Francis said, "You, Charismatic Renewal, have received a great gift from the Lord. You were born of the will of the Spirit as a 'current of grace in the Church and for the Church ... I expect from you that you share with all, in the Church, the grace of Baptism in the Holy Spirit."

"In the New Testament and the early Church, it was taken for granted that the gift of the Spirit was not merely a doctrine but a fact of experience ... It is experience of an objective reality: God's gift of Himself to us through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit."