

ICCRS NEWSLETTER

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Pope John Paul II to the Italian Association of "RnS" "Charismatic Renewal is a gift to the Church"

Dear brothers and sisters,
With great joy I welcome you, representatives of the Group of Renewal in the Holy Spirit, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of your presence in Italy. I greet the coordinator of the National Service Committee and those who assist him.

I think back with pleasure to the meetings I have had with you in past years: from the first, on the Solemnity of Christ the King in 1980, to our meeting in 1998, during the prayer vigil of the Meeting with Ecclesial Movements and New Communities on the eve of Pentecost. Nor can I forget the contribution of the "Renewal in the Spirit" during the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, in particular helping young people and families, who from the beginning of my Pontificate I have constantly selected as priority targets for pastoral involvement.

I would also like to thank your directors for wishing to give to the Renewal a definite emphasis on collaboration with the hierarchy and with the leaders of other movements, associations and communities.

Yes! The Renewal in the Spirit can be considered a special gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church in our time. Born in the Church and for the Church, your movement is one in which, following the light of the Gospel, the members experience the living encounter with Jesus, fidelity to God in personal and community prayer, confident listening to his Word and a vital rediscovery of the Sacraments, not to mention courage in trials and hope in hardship.

Love for the Church and submission to her Magisterium, in the process of maturing in the Church supported by a solid permanent formation are relevant signs of your intention to avoid the risk of favouring, unwittingly, a purely emotional experience of the divine, an excessive pursuit of the "extraordinary" and a private withdrawal that may shrink from apostolic outreach.

On Thursday, 14 March, 2002, the Holy Father celebrated the 30th anniversary of the advent of the Charismatic Renewal in Italy when he received a delegation of members of Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo (RnS), the most representative Charismatic reality in Italy. RnS has about 200,000 members in 1,800 communities or prayer groups. The Holy Father summed up this movement in this wonderful way: "The Renewal in the Spirit can be considered a special gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church in our time. Born in the Church and for the Church, your movement is one in which, following the light of the Gospel, the members experience the living encounter with Jesus, fidelity to God in personal and community prayer, confident listening to his Word and a vital rediscovery of the Sacraments, not forgetting courage in trials and hope in hardship". Here is a translation of the Pope's Italian address.



On this special occasion I desire ideally to bless three projects, which you have launched, that send out groups and communities of the Renewal in the Spirit "from the Upper Room" with generous missionary ardour.

I am referring first of all to your support of the implantatio Ecclesiae in Moldavia, in close collaboration with the "Regina Pacis" Foundation of the Archdiocese of Lecce, establishing a missionary community associated with the Diocese of Chisinau. I greet with affection the pastors of those Ecclesial Communities, Archbishop Cosmo Francesco Ruppi and Bishop Anton Cosa, and the other bishops taking part in this meeting.

Another important project is your work of spiritual guidance in Marian shrines, privileged places of the Spirit, that gives you the opportunity to offer pilgrims ways of deepening their faith and spiritual reflection.

Then there is the "Burning Bush" project which is an invitation to ongoing adoration, day and night. You have wished to promote this appropriate initiative to help the faithful "return to the Upper Room", so that united in contemplation of the Eucharistic mystery, they may intercede by means of the Spirit for the full unity of Christians and for the conversion of sinners.

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These are three different areas of apostolic activity in which your experience can provide a very providential witness. May the Lord guide your labours and make your resolutions bear abundant fruit for yourselves and for the Church.

In the final analysis, all your evangelising activities tend to foster in the People of God constant growth in holiness. Indeed, holiness is the priority in every age, and therefore also in our own time. The Church and the world need saints, and we ourselves become holier the more we allow the Holy Spirit to configure us to Christ. This is the secret of the regenerating experience of the "outpouring of the Spirit", a typical experience that defines the process of growth proposed for the members of your groups and communities. With all my heart I hope that Renewal in the Spirit may be a true "gymnasium" in the Church for prayer, asceticism, virtue and holiness.

In a special way continue to love and spread love for the prayer of praise, the form of prayer that recognizes more immediately that God is God; praises him for his own sake, gives him glory for who he is, long before thinking of what he does (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.2639).

In our time that is so hungry for hope, make the Holy Spirit known and loved. Help bring to life that "culture of Pentecost", that alone can make fruitful the civilization of love and friendly coexistence among peoples. With fervent insistence, never tire of praying "Come Holy Spirit! Come! Come!"

May the Blessed Mother of Christ and of the Church, the Virgin at prayer in the Upper Room, always be with you! May the Blessing I cordially impart to you, and to all the members of Renewal of the Holy Spirit, also go with you!

Rome, 14th March, 2002

Joannes Paulus II

A year dedicated to volunteer work!

Last December, the Holy Father presented a Message to Volunteers for the conclusion of the United Nations' Year dedicated to Volunteerism. The Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", which Archbishop Paul Joseph Cordes presides over, is responsible for its diffusion and kindly asked the ICCRS Newsletter to publish the text to promote this culture of volunteerism. Remembering our friendship with Bp. Cordes, who was, for several years, ICCRS Episcopal Advisor, we want to offer our readers large quotations from this message, in order to propose again the authoritative magisterium of the Pope on a subject that is of great interest for us leaders in the CCR, working and serving our brothers and sisters on a volunteering basis for the health of their spirit.

Addressing volunteers, *the Holy Father expresses his "heartfelt appreciation for your constant dedication, in every part of the world..."*

He then explains what makes a volunteer dedicate his/her life to others saying that it is "first of all, the innate movement of the heart that inspires every human being to help his fellow man. It is a law of existence. A volunteer experiences a joy that goes far beyond what he has done when he succeeds in giving himself freely to others".

"Christ, the Son of God made man" continues Pope John Paul II "communicates to us the profound reason for this universal human experience. Revealing the face of God who is love (cf. I Jn 4,8), He reveals to the human person that love is the supreme law of his being. In his earthly life Jesus made the divine tenderness visible, emptying "himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2,7) and "gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph 5,1). Sharing our earthly life unto death, he has taught us 'to walk in charity'. (...)

Through love of God and love of the brethren,

Christianity releases all of its liberating and saving power. (...) It is not a matter of satisfying only the material needs of our neighbour (...) but to lead him to a personal experience of the charity of God. Through volunteer work, the Christian becomes a witness of this divine charity; he proclaims it and makes it tangible with courageous and prophetic contributions.

It is not enough to help whoever is in material difficulty; it is necessary at the same time to respond to his thirst for values and personal spiritual solutions. The kind of help we offer is important, but more important than the kind of help offered is the heart of the one who gives it. Whether dealing with microprojects or great initiatives, in any event, volunteer work is called to be a school of life, especially for young people, contributing to educate them in a culture of solidarity and outreach, open to the free gift of self.

Giving thanks to all volunteers the Holy Father concludes his message indicating Mary as a model to imitate, while she went "in haste to assist her cousin Elizabeth" becoming "a messenger of joy and salvation".

