

LEADERSHIP FORMATION

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Looking at the Future: ICCRS' Service for the Charismatic Renewal

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TEACHING OUTLINE

1. **ICCRS is an organisation set for co-ordinating and encouraging**
2. **Towards "ecclesiastical growth"**

In his message of 24th April 2000 given to the attendants of the Great Gathering of the Catholic Charismatic Family, taking place in Rimini (Italy), His Holiness, John Paul II has effectively stressed the role ICCRS is called to play for the International Renewal.

He has stated:

"...The International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services is an organisation whose task is to co-ordinate and encourage an exchange of experiences and reflections among the Catholic and Charismatic Communities all over the world."

Then he adds:

"...in view of a growing ecclesiastical awareness within the different Catholic and Charismatic Communities all over the world, the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services will play an important role."

As member of ICCRS, I am very honoured of the high consideration the Holy Father shows for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and for its authoritative role, it is nowadays asked to play in the Catholic Church.

He, in fact, considers ICCRS as an organisation:

1. whose task is to co-ordinate and encourage an exchange of experiences and reflections among the worldwide Catholic and Charismatic Communities and
2. an organisation which will play an important role for the growing of an ecclesiastical awareness within the different Catholic and Charismatic Communities all over the world.

Naturally, this authoritative recognition involves on the part of ICCRS much more commitment and responsibility, for this "important role" the Holy Church entrusts it with, has to be played according to God's will and not according to human expectations. As the Holy Father says, ICCRS is set before a new and decisive stage of our history: that of the growth of an "ecclesiastical awareness".

Therefore, I would like to share with you some key-points concerning the service ICCRS has to play for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

ICCRS is an organisation set for co-ordinating and encouraging the exchange of experiences of the worldwide Charismatic Renewal

The experiences of the Charismatic Renewal and of the Catholic Church coming out of II Vatican Council, have shown that the world has become a "small village" where Catholics are stimulated to give value to the particular and universal significance of the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ.

On one hand, we have its particular significance: the charismatic community, living and operating in a specific cultural, social and geographical area with its own traditions and habits, meeting with the vital needs of a particular church, the diocese, appointed to proclaim Christ's message to man, just where he lives.

On the other hand, thanks to the international diffusion of the charismatic experience, Renewal communities are taking on a missionary trait which keeps them in touch, by way of experiences of exchange and universal participation, with other communities having their different cultures, their geographical setting, each, notwithstanding, preserving its original consciousness. Renewal communities are thus taking on themselves the ecclesiastical shared challenges such as the new evangelisation, ecumenism, doctrinal and spiritual education, and so on... This is clearly demonstrated by the presence of the Catholic Fraternity of the Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships, founded with this purpose by the Holy See on the 30th November 1990.

The international nature of Catholic Charismatic Renewal reminds us of the urgency on the part of the Charismatic Communities to involve themselves not only within the particular reality of churches, dioceses, parishes but also within the awareness of a universal presence of the Catholic Church.

This has been made easier, if not positively encouraged, both by the recognition of ICCRS' Statutes by the Holy See on the 14th September 1993 with its continuous exhortations,

words of appraisal and encouragement expressed in many occasions by the Holy Father to the Renewal itself, and by the planetary and catholic significance of the mission of the Church, tending to promote the exchange among persons, communities from different cultural areas.

As a result, providentially, in the charismatic communities particular and universal aspects become more than ever the signs of an authentic ecclesiastical dimension, a sort of "*cum ecclesiae*" feeling.

Therefore, those who interpret the Holy Father's continuous interest in ICCRS as a simple question of sympathy are getting wrong. We know most certainly that ICCRS has received by the Pope and by God Himself, a fundamental mission: that of promoting the exchange and growth of Apostolic seeds sowed by the Holy Spirit among the charismatic communities.

On the basis of a recent analysis ICCRS has gathered information on the way Renewal has been diffused within even the most different surroundings of the Church and of the world, taking on in each of them a different trait of apostolate

such as: prayer groups covenant communities, ecumenical communities and associations, healing ministries, schools of evangelisation, services for the human and social development, ministries for young people, Christian music and art ministries... Consequently, the Renewal is in its strict sense "a centralised and organised movement" like all other ecclesiastical movements. Each charismatic reality lives in its own way the specific gifts of the Renewal (as for instance the baptism in the Holy Spirit). However, even showing a common denominator they are totally independent from one another. Sometimes, some of them, are canonically recognised by the Ecclesiastical Authority (Diocese and Holy See) even within the same geographical area always independent from one another. They entertain, even if not always, exchanges among them through the presence of National Service Committees and Continental Councils of the Charismatic Renewal.

From this richness of gifts spring inevitably the duty and urgency for ICCRS to promote periodically some International Consultations among key-leaders and theologians in order to stimulate the listening to the Spirit, and to follow Church guidelines and also to propose again some Charismatic Renewal's recurring matters already under examination and discussion, such as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Ecumenism and the Healing Ministry.

Since 1970's Cardinal Léon Joseph Suenens, as Episcopal Councillor of ICCRS, has began to promote such consultations among key-leaders and theologians of charismatic communities on some doctrinal subjects, these latter meant for becoming the basis of his well-known "Malines' Discourse" which would have been of benefit for the growth of the Renewal and would have worked out as pastoral guidelines in the Catholic Church.

In my modest opinion, such consultations of key-leaders and theologians are useful for strengthening within the Renewal the feeling of communion and ecclesiastical mission. Moreover, it would turn useful to plan a periodical and steady consultation among the Continental Councils of Leaders and the Council of ICCRS in order to improve the quality of *koinonia* in the Renewal and to promote together continental occasions of training.

These proposals seem to be well-grounded for such an important and articulated movement as the Renewal is, made up of more than 120 millions of Catholics and continuously expanding. The Renewal needs some moments of rest for positively reflecting, as it were submitted to a sort of a check-up, on his ecclesiastical commitment, taken for over 33 years!

Towards "ecclesiastical growth"

So wrote St. Paul to the Church of Corintho:
"It's like this: when I was a child, I spoke and thought as a child does.

But when I became a man my thoughts grew far beyond those of my childhood, and now I have put away the childish things." (1 Corinthians 13, 11).

This word is still topical for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. The only future perspective and reason of existence for ICCRS is that of encouraging worldwide the development of an "ecclesiastical awareness".

This was the primary ground which led in 1981 Cardinal Suenens to transfer the International Communications Office (former name of ICCRS) from his Archdiocese of Bruxelles-Malines to Rome, so to make it possible for the Renewal to work in the "heart of the Church" and in accordance with the Holy See. God knows only how wisely inspired was this important decision of Cardinal Suenens, and how positive was

to be turned out for the Church. Nowadays the International Office of ICCRS has its reputable head office in the nearby of the City of Vatican; this puts it in a privileged situation in terms of easier consultations with the Church of Rome (Curia, Ministries, Pontifical Councils...) and with the Universal Church, as it is stated in its Statutes.

Hence, the opportunity for charismatic communities, even within their legitimate right of freedom and independence, to find in ICCRS a point of reference, in order to build up the ecclesiastical unity, overcoming every sort of individualism and closure, so to make possible for the big family of Renewal to evolve from a simple "network" to a "*koinonia*", from a simple "communication" to an experience of "communion" for the unique mission of the Church of Christ.

Avoiding to smooth the identities, without creating an "organised movement", but always respecting others' different charisma, each of us will be able to contribute to the building of the one Church of Christ, as St. Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians: "*Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving*" (1 Corinthians 12, 4-6). "*Our bodies have many parts, but the many parts make up only one body when they are all put together. So it is with the "body" of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 12, 12).

The essential reason why the Pope entrusts ICCRS with this mission, lies, in my opinion, in a rightful concern, that is to say, making sure ICCRS to be deeply "Catholic" in its roots. This means that charismatic communities retain at the core of their mission a catholic undisguised identity, well rooted in the bosom of the Ecclesiastical Tradition. In this regard, the Pope has often reminded the Renewal of the need for a continuous and permanent doctrinal training, conforming to the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

This mission of ICCRS for the future of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a duty and a mandate, but it is also a great privilege!

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