



Pope Francis to participants in the 37th National Convocation of the CCR in Italy

■ Olympic Stadium, Rome, Italy. June 1, 2014

“ The charismatic renewal is a great force meant to serve the preaching of the Gospel in the joy of the Holy Spirit. ”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you so much for your welcome. Someone must have told today's organizers that I really like the hymn: “Jesus the Lord lives”. When I would celebrate Mass in the cathedral in Buenos Aires with the charismatic renewal, after the consecration and a few moments of adoration in tongues, we would sing this hymn with great joy and fervour, as you have today. Thank you! I felt at home!

I thank Renewal in the Spirit, ICCRS and the Catholic Fraternity for this opportunity to be with you, which is a source of great joy for me. I am grateful for the presence here of the first members of the renewal, who had an intense experience of the Holy Spirit's power. I believe that Patty is here... You, the charismatic renewal, have received a great gift from the Lord. Your movement's birth was willed by the Holy Spirit to be “a current of grace in the Church and for the Church”. This is your identity: to be a current of grace.

What is the very first gift of the Holy Spirit? It is the gift of himself, the one who is love and who makes us fall in love with Jesus. And this love changes our lives. That is why we speak of “being born again in the Spirit”. It is what Jesus told Nicodemus. You have received the great gift of diversity of charisms, the diversity which becomes harmony in the Holy Spirit, and in service to the Church.

When I think of charismatics, I think of the Church herself, but in a particular way: I think of a great orchestra, where all the instruments and voices are different from one another, yet all are needed to create the harmony of the music. Saint Paul speaks of this in the twelfth chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians. As in an orchestra, no one in the renewal can think of himself or herself as being more important or greater than the others, please! Because when you think of yourselves as more important or greater, disaster is already on the horizon! No one can say: “I am the head”. Like the Church, you have only one head, one Lord: the Lord Jesus. Repeat with me: Who is the head of the renewal? The Lord Jesus! Who is the head of the renewal? [the crowd:] The Lord Jesus! And we can say this with the power given us by the Holy Spirit, since no one can say “Jesus is Lord” without the Holy Spirit.

As you may know – because news gets around – in the first years of the charismatic renewal in Buenos Aires, I didn't



care very much for charismatics. I used to think: “They strike me as some kind of samba school!” I didn't share their style of prayer or the many new things which were happening in the Church. Later, I got to know them and I finally realized all the good that the charismatic renewal was doing for the Church. And this story which began with the “samba school” had an unexpected ending: a few months before entering the conclave, I was named the spiritual assistant for the charismatic renewal in Argentina by the Conference of Bishops.

The charismatic renewal is a great force meant to serve the preaching of the Gospel in the joy of the Holy Spirit. You received the Holy Spirit and he has made you appreciate God's love for all his children; he has also made you love God's word. In the early days, they used to say that you charismatics always carried around a Bible, the New Testament... Do you still carry one today? [the crowd:] Yes! – I'm not so sure! If not, return to this first love, and always carry the word of God in your pocket or bag! And read a bit of it. Keep the word of God with you always.

You, the people of God, the people of the charismatic renewal, must be careful not to lose the freedom which the Holy Spirit has given you! The danger for the renewal, as our dear Father Raniero Cantalamessa often says, is that of getting too organized: the danger of excessive planning.

Yes, you need organization, but never lose the grace of letting God be God! “Yet there is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide, and direct us, leading us wherever he wills. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place.

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This is what it means to be mysteriously fruitful!" (Evangelii Gaudium, 280).

Another danger is that of becoming arbiters of God's grace. Many times, leaders (I prefer the name "servants") of a group or community become, perhaps without intending to, "managers" of grace, deciding who can receive the prayer of outpouring or baptism in the Spirit and who cannot. If any of you are doing this, I ask you to stop; no more! You are dispensers of God's grace, not its arbiters! Don't act like a tollhouse for the Holy Spirit!

In the Malines Documents, you have a guide, a reliable path to keep you from going astray.

The first document is Theological and Pastoral Orientations. The second is Ecumenism and Charismatic Renewal, written by Cardinal Suenens himself, an outstanding figure of the Second Vatican Council. The third is Charismatic Renewal and Social Action, written by Cardinal Suenens and Bishop Helder Camara.

This is your path: evangelization, spiritual ecumenism, caring for the poor and needy, and welcoming the marginalized. And all of it is based on worship! The foundation of the renewal is worshipping God!

They asked me to tell you what the Pope expects of you. The first thing is conversion to the love of Jesus which changes our lives and makes each Christian a witness to God's love. The Church expects this witness of Christian life from us, and the Holy Spirit helps us to live the Gospel fully and consistently for our own growth in holiness.

I expect you to share with everyone in the Church the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit (a phrase we find in the Acts of the Apostles).

I expect you to evangelize with the word of God, which proclaims that Jesus lives and that he loves all men and



women. To give a witness of spiritual ecumenism to all our brothers and sisters of other Churches and Christian communities who believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

To remain united in the love that the Lord Jesus asks us to have for all people, and in prayer to the Holy Spirit for the attainment of this unity which is necessary for evangelization in the name of Jesus. Remember that "the charismatic renewal is de facto ecumenical in nature ... The Catholic renewal rejoices in what the Holy Spirit is accomplishing in the other Churches" (1 Malines 5,3).

Be close to the poor and to those in need, so as to touch in their flesh the wounded flesh of Jesus. Please, draw near to them!

Seek unity in the renewal, because unity comes from the Holy Spirit and is born of the unity of the Trinity.

Who is the source of division? The devil! Division comes from the devil. Flee from all infighting, please! Let there be none of this among you!

I wish to thank ICCRS and Catholic Fraternity, the two groups of pontifical right of the Pontifical Council for the Laity which are at the service of the worldwide renewal and are

entrusted with preparing the world meeting of priests and Bishops in June of next year.

I know that they have decided to work together and to share office space as a sign of unity and to make better use of their resources. This makes me very happy. I would also like to thank them because they are already working on preparations for the great jubilee of 2017.

Brothers and sisters, remember: Worship the Lord your God. This is fundamental! Worship God. Seek holiness in the new life of the Holy Spirit. Be dispensers of the grace of God. Avoid the danger of excessive organization.

Go out into the streets and evangelize. Proclaim the Gospel. Remember that the Church was born "on the move", that Pentecost morning. Draw close to the poor and touch in their flesh the wounded flesh of Jesus. Let yourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit, in freedom; and please, don't put the Holy Spirit in a cage! Be free!

Seek unity in the renewal, the unity which comes from the Trinity!

And I am waiting for all of you, charismatics the world over, to celebrate with the Pope your great jubilee on the feast of Pentecost 2017 in Saint Peter's Square!

Thank you! 🙏

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