



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOURTH
INTERNATIONAL LEADERS' CONFERENCE
OF THE CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL**

Thursday, 7 May 1981

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

In the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit I welcome all of you who have come to Rome to participate in the Fourth International Leaders' Conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and I pray that "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!"^[1].

1. Your choice of Rome as the site of this Conference is a special sign of your understanding of the importance of being rooted in that *Catholic unity of faith and charity* which finds its visible centre in the See of Peter. Your reputation goes before you, like that of his beloved Philippians which prompted the Apostle Paul to begin his Letter to them with a sentiment I am happy to echo: "I give thanks to my God every time I think of you... My prayer is that your love may more and more abound both in understanding and wealth of experience, so that with a clear conscience and blameless conduct you may learn to value the things that really matter, up to the very day of Christ"^[2].

2. In 1975 my venerable predecessor Paul VI addressed the International Charismatic Congress which assembled here in Rome, and he emphasized the *three principles* which Saint Paul outlined *to guide discernment*, according to the injunction: "Test everything, hold fast to what is good"^[3]. The first of these principles is *fidelity to the authentic doctrine of the faith*; whatever contradicts this doctrine does not come from the Spirit. The second principle is *to value the higher gifts* – the gifts which are given in service of the common good. And the third principle is the *pursuit of charity*, which alone brings the Christian to perfection: as the Apostle says, "Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect"^[4]. It is no less important at this time for me to underline these fundamental principles for you whom God has called to serve as leaders in the Renewal.

Pope Paul described the movement for renewal in the Spirit as "a *chance* for the Church and for the world", and the six

years since that Congress have borne out the hope that inspired his vision. The Church has seen the fruits of your devotion to prayer in a deepened commitment to holiness of life and love for the word of God. We have noted with particular joy the way in which leaders of the renewal have more and more developed a broadened ecclesial vision, and have made efforts to make this vision increasingly a reality for those who depend on them for guidance. And we have likewise seen the signs of your generosity in sharing God's gifts with the unfortunate of this world in justice and charity, so that all people may experience the priceless dignity that is theirs in Christ.

May this work of love already begun in you be brought to successful completion^[5]! In this regard, always remember these words which Paul VI addressed to your Congress during the Holy Year: "There are no limits to the challenge of love: the poor and needy and afflicted and suffering across the world and near at hand all cry out to you, as brothers and sisters of Christ, asking for the proof of your love, asking for the word of God, asking for bread, asking for life".

3. Yes, I am very happy to have this opportunity to speak from my heart to you who have come from all over the world to participate in this Conference designed to assist you in fulfilling *your role as leaders* in the Charismatic Renewal. In a special way I wish to address the need for enriching and making practical that ecclesial vision which is so essential to the Renewal at this stage in its development.

The role of the leader is, in the first place, *to give the example of prayer* in his own life. With confident hope, with careful solicitude it falls to the leader to ensure that the multiform patrimony of the Church's life of prayer is known and experienced by those who seek spiritual renewal: meditation on the word of God, since "ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ", as Saint Jerome insisted; openness to the gifts of the Spirit, without exaggerated concentration upon the extraordinary gifts; imitating the example of Jesus himself in ensuring time for prayer alone with God; entering more deeply into the cycle of the Church's liturgical seasons, especially through the Liturgy of the Hours: the appropriate celebration of the sacraments – with very special attention to the Sacrament of Penance – which effect the new dispensation of grace in accord with Christ's own manifest will; and above all a love for and growing understanding of the Eucharist as the centre of all Christian prayer. For as the Second Vatican Council has impressed upon us, "the Eucharist is the source and the summit of all evangelization; catechumens are gradually led up to participation in the Eucharist, while the faithful who have already been consecrated in baptism and confirmation are fully incorporated into the Body of Christ – the Church –through their reception of the Eucharist"^[6].

Secondly, you must be concerned to provide solid food for spiritual nourishment through the *breaking of the bread of true doctrine*. The love for the revealed word of God, written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is a pledge of your desire to "stand firm in the Gospel" preached by the Apostles. It is this same Holy Spirit, the Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation assures us, who "constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood"^[7]. The Holy Spirit who distributes his gifts, now in greater, now in lesser measure, is the same one who inspired the Scriptures and who assists the living Magisterium of the Church, to whom Christ entrusted the authentic interpretation of these Scriptures^[8], according to the promise of Christ to the Apostles: "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you always: the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, since it neither sees him nor recognizes him, but you can recognize him because he remains with you and will be within you"^[9].

God desires, therefore, that all Christians grow in understanding the mystery of salvation, which reveals to us ever more

of man's own intrinsic dignity. And he desires that you who are leaders in this Renewal should be ever more deeply formed in the teaching of the Church whose bimillennial task it has been to meditate on the word of God, in order to plumb its riches and to make them known to the world. Take care, then, that as leaders you seek a sound theological formation designed to ensure for you, and all who depend upon you for guidance, a mature and complete understanding of God's word: "Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, instruct and admonish one another"[10].

Thirdly, as leaders in the Renewal, you must take the initiative in building bonds of *trust and cooperation with the Bishops*, who have the pastoral responsibility in God's providence for shepherding the entire Body of Christ, including the Charismatic Renewal. Even when they do not share with you the forms of prayer which you have found so enriching, they will take to heart your desire for spiritual renewal for yourselves and for the Church, and they will offer you the sure guidance which is the task allotted to them. The Lord God does not fail to be faithful to the promise of their ordination prayer, in which he was implored to "pour out upon these chosen ones that power which is from you, the governing Spirit whom you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Spirit given by him to the holy apostles, who founded the Church in every place to be your temple for the unceasing glory and praise of your name"[11].

Many Bishops throughout the world, both individually and in statements of their Episcopal Conferences, have given encouragement and direction to the Charismatic Renewal – and at times even a helpful word of caution – and have assisted the Christian community at large to understand better its place in the Church. By this exercise of their pastoral responsibility, the Bishops have offered a great service to us all, in order to ensure for the Renewal a pattern of growth and development fully open to all the riches of the love of God in his Church.

4. At this time I would also like to call your attention to another point of special relevance to this Conference of leaders: it concerns *the role of the priest* in the Charismatic Renewal. Priests in the Church have received the gift of ordination as cooperators in the pastoral ministry of the Bishops, with whom they share one and the same priesthood and ministry of Jesus Christ, which requires their strict hierarchical communion with the order of Bishops[12].

As a result, the priest has a unique and indispensable role to play in and for the Charismatic Renewal as well as for the whole Christian community. His mission is not in opposition to or parallel to the legitimate role of the laity. Through the priest's sacramental bond with the Bishop, whose ordination confers a pastoral responsibility for the whole Church, he helps to ensure for movements of spiritual renewal and lay apostolate their integration with the sacramental, liturgical life of the Church, especially through participation in the Eucharist; there we say "Grant that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ"[13].

The priest shares in the Bishop's own responsibility for preaching the Gospel, for which his theological formation should equip him in a special way. As a result, he has a unique and indispensable role in guaranteeing that integration with the life of the Church which avoids the tendency to form alternative and marginal structures, and which leads to a fuller sharing, especially in the parish, in her sacramental and apostolic life. The priest, for his part, cannot exercise his service on behalf of the Renewal unless and until he adopts a welcoming attitude towards it. based on the desire he shares with every Christian by baptism to grow in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

You leaders of the Renewal, then, priests and laity, must witness to the common bond that is yours in Christ, and set the

pattern for that effective collaboration which has for its charter the Apostle's injunction: "Make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force. There is but one body and one Spirit, just as there is but one hope given all of you by your call"[14].

5. Finally, by your experience of many gifts of the Holy Spirit which are shared also with our separated brothers and sisters, yours is the special joy of growing in a desire for the unity to which the Spirit guides us and in a commitment to *the serious task of ecumenism*.

How is this task to be carried out? The Second Vatican Council instructs us: "The Catholic's primary duty is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and done in the Catholic household itself, in order that its life may bear witness more clearly and faithfully to the teachings and institutions which have been handed down from Christ through the Apostles"[15]. Genuine ecumenical effort does not seek to evade the difficult tasks, such as doctrinal convergence, by rushing to create a kind of autonomous "church of the spirit" apart from the visible Church of Christ. True ecumenism rather serves to increase our longing for the ecclesial unity of all Christians in one faith, so that "the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God"[16]. Let us be confident that if we surrender ourselves to the work of genuine renewal in the Spirit, this same Holy Spirit will bring to light the strategy for ecumenism which will bring to reality our hope of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and works through all, and is in all"[17].

6. Dear brothers and sisters, the Letter to the Galatians tells us that "when the designated time had come, God sent forth his Son born of a woman, born under the law, to deliver from the law those who were subjected to it, so that we might receive our status as adopted sons. The proof that you are sons is the fact that God has sent forth into our hearts the spirit of his Son which cries out 'Abba!' ('Father')"[18]. And it is to this woman, Mary the Mother of God and our Mother, ever obedient to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, that I confidently entrust your important work for renewal in and of the Church. In the love of her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, I willingly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.

[1] *2 Cor* 13, 13.

[2] *Phil.* 1, 3. 9-10.

[3] *1 Thess.* 5, 21.

[4] *Col.* 3, 14.

[5] Cfr. *2 Cor.* 8, 6. 11.

[6] *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 56.

[7] *Dei Verbum*, 5

[8] Cfr. *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, XIII (1975) 538.

[9] *Io.* 14, 16-17.

[10] *Col.* 3, 16-17.

[11] *Ritus Ordinationis Episcopi.*

[12] *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7.

[13] *Prex Eucharistica III.*

[14] *Eph.* 4, 3-5.

[15] *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4.

[16] *Ibid.* 1.

[17] *Eph.* 4, 6.

[18] *Gal.* 4, 4-6.

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