

Lithuania Priests

Talk Four

Charismatic Renewal of the Church

Plank Three in the Renewal of the Church. The first two, Biblical and Liturgical, were in preparation for many years in the biblical and liturgical movements (the biblical since Leo XIII and the liturgical since St Pius X). The third was not foreseen, but immediately followed the Council: the charismatic renewal of the Church.

Does it not seem an exaggeration to place charismatic renewal alongside biblical and liturgical renewal? I do not think so, because I mean by charismatic renewal something bigger than the Catholic charismatic renewal as we know it. The key to this interpretation is in Bl John Paul II's address to the new movements at Pentecost 1998 when he said: "Whenever the Spirit intervenes, he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history. This was the unforgettable experience of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council during which, under the guidance of the same Spirit, the Church rediscovered the charismatic dimension as charismatic dimension needs rediscovering.

In the ICCRS document this distinction is described in the following way: "The institutional is passed down from generation to generation and belongs to the permanent visible structure of the Church. The charismatic is given by the Lord in an unpredictable way and cannot be codified."¹ So the institution of the Church is essentially Word of God, sacraments and liturgy, plus the ordained ministry (including the Petrine ministry). Without these, you do not have Church. When John Paul II says the charismatic dimension is co-constitutive of the Church, he means that the institutional foundation is not enough by itself: it is absolutely essential, but it needs the breath of the Holy Spirit who blows where he wills. "Baptism in the Spirit, as a manifestation of the spontaneous working of the Spirit, belongs to the charismatic dimension, but at the same time it brings new life and dynamism to the institutional dimension of Christian life grounded in the sacraments." (ICCRS doc).

Pope John's calling of a Council was a charismatic act, responding to an impulse of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis called it as "prophetic intuition" (3 June). But not everyone realized it was a charismatic act. It could seem just a legal act, a Pope calling a meeting, but this time of all the bishops. Here the charismatic renewal demonstrates visibly the character of the charismatic: unexpected, breath of new life, new power. Pope Francis: Speaking about being open and obedient to the surprises of the Holy Spirit. The renewal is a school to learn about the charismatic in all dimensions of Church life. The charisms (spiritual gifts) can only be exercised by yielding ourselves to the present action of the Holy Spirit. It is very evident with the gift of tongues. But it is also true of prophecy and healing.

So what the charismatic renewal of the Church mean? Does it mean trying to turn everything into a charismatic prayer meeting? No, not at all. It means always being attentive to the Holy Spirit and seeking the leading of the Spirit. Being open to God's

¹ *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Rome: ICCRS, 2012), p. 69 (US edn.).

surprises. It means submitting our ideas to the Lord and being open to His correction. “Are we open to “God’s surprises”? Or are we closed and fearful before the newness of the Holy Spirit? Do we have the courage to strike out along the new paths which God’s newness sets before us, or do we resist, barricaded in transient structures which have lost their capacity for openness to what is new? We would do well to ask ourselves these questions all through the day.” (Pentecost). “Let yourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit. Do not be afraid of taking risks, just as he was not afraid. Docility to the Spirit, love for the Church and so on....” (To Bergamo pilgrims, 3 June 13).

It means allowing the Holy Spirit to bring all aspects of our humanity into our ministry – moving from being very intellectual to learning to be more intuitive; moving from being very controlling and well organized to becoming more flexible; or moving from being simply chaotic to learning elements of order from the Holy Spirit. The gift of tongues activates our spirit. St Paul says: “I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.” (1 Cor. 14: 15). Praying with spirit and with mind brings more of our being into the worship of God, producing a more total worship.

Preaching/preparing homilies and talks (preparing for this retreat): prepare more on your knees than at your desk. My experience in 1971 – 72. Seeking Lord’s word for this occasion and for these people.

Hearing confessions: being attentive to the Lord, being ready for a word of knowledge, wisdom, guidance.

Meetings: beginning with praise, declaring who God is, the Lordship of Jesus, etc. Then listening together to the Lord. Letting the Lord shape the agenda.

When you do that, meetings become far more fruitful beyond what we can imagine.

Experience of TJCII, weeks of prayer and fasting.

The Holy Spirit creates an incredible diversity which is then to be brought into harmony. Servants of unity not of uniformity. Diversity of charisms.

1 Cor 12: 4 – 6: “There are different kinds of gifts (charismata), but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service (diakonai), but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working (energemata), but the same God works all of them in all men.”

“He, the Paraclete, is the ultimate source of every initiative and manifestation of faith. It is a curious thing: it makes me think of this. The Paraclete creates all the differences among the Churches, almost as if he were an Apostle of Babel. But on the other hand, it is he who creates unity from these differences, not in “equality”, but in harmony. I remember the Father of the Church who described him thus: “Ipse harmonia est”. The Paraclete, who gives different charisms to each of us, unites us in this community of the Church, that worships the Father, the Son, and Him, the Holy Spirit.” (Pope Francis to the Cardinals, March 14).

Need to trust the Holy Spirit (characteristic of John XXIII). Even allowing some chaos, when there is wise leadership. Quality of leadership is crucial: on the one hand, wise discerning leadership and on the other hand good teaching.

Charismatic element needed to expose the devil (Pope Francis has spoken several times about the devil!). Need for deliverance and exorcism as occult practices and spiritualism

spread. Disturbing things can then happen – even when just praying for the Holy Spirit to come. So much pain in people's lives.