

To the members of Charismatic Renewal movement: share with all the baptism you have received

Vatican City, 4 July 2015 (VIS) – Unity in diversity and ecumenism of prayer, word and blood were the key themes of the Pope's improvised address to the thousands of members of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit movement yesterday afternoon, on the occasion of their 38th National Convocation, held in Rome from 3-4 July on the theme “Ways of Unity and Peace – Voices of prayer for the martyrs of today and for a spiritual ecumenism”. The encounter began at 4 p.m. in St. Peter's Square, and was attended by Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches; Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, president of the Italian Episcopal Conference, along with the Orthodox and Catholic oriental Patriarchs, Anglican and Lutheran bishops, and Pentecostal pastors.

In his address, the Pope emphasised that unity does not mean uniformity. It is not a “spherical” unity in which “every point is equidistant from the centre and there is no difference between one point and another. The model is the polyhedron, which reflects the confluence of all the parts that nonetheless maintain their originality, and these are the charisms, in unity but also diversity. ... The distinction is important because we are speaking about the work of the Holy Spirit, not our own. Unity in the diversity of expressions of reality, as many as the Holy Spirit has wished to inspire”.

Another point the Holy Father considered very important to clarify related to those who guide. “There exists a great temptation for leaders to believe themselves indispensable, step by step to head towards authoritarianism, to personality cults, and not to allow the communities renewed in the Holy Spirit to thrive. This temptation renders 'eternal' the position of those who consider themselves indispensable. ... We must be very clear that only the Holy Spirit is indispensable in the Church and Jesus is the only Lord. There are no others. ... A time limit should be established for roles in the Church, which are in reality a form of service. An important service carried out by lay leaders is to facilitate the growth and the spiritual and pastoral maturity of those who will take their place at the end of their service. It would be opportune for all roles of service in the Church to have a time limit – there are no lifelong leaders in the Church”.

The Holy Father asked the members of Renewal in the Holy Spirit to share with all in the Church the baptism they have received. “It is the most important service that we can give to all in the Church”, he emphasised: “helping the people of God in their personal encounter with Jesus Christ, Who transforms us into new men and women, in small groups, humble but effective, because the Spirit that works within them. Do not focus on large-scale meetings that often go no further, but instead on the 'artisanal' relationships that derive from witness, in the family, at work, in social life, in parishes, in prayer groups, with everyone!”.

Another strong sign of the Spirit in Charismatic Renewal is the search for unity in the Body of Christ. “You, as Charismatics, have the special grace of praying and working for

Christian unity, so that the current of grace flows through all Christian Churches. Christian unity is the work of the Holy Spirit and we must pray together. ... We have all received the same baptism, we all follow Jesus' path. ... We have all caused these divisions throughout history, for different reasons, but not good ones. But now is the time that the Spirit makes us think that these divisions are a sort of 'counter-witness', and we must do all we can to walk side by side: spiritual ecumenism, the ecumenism of prayer”.

There is also another form of unity: “the unity of the blood of martyrs, that makes us one. There is the ecumenism of blood. We know that those who kill Christians in hatred of Jesus Christ, before killing, do not ask: 'But are you a Lutheran, Orthodox, Evangelical, Baptist, Methodist?' They say, 'You are Christian', and behead them. ... Fifty years ago, Blessed Paul VI, during the canonisation of the young martyrs of Uganda, referred to the fact that for the same reason the blood of their Anglican companion catechists had been shed. They were Christians, they were martyrs. Forgive me, and do not be scandalised, but they are our martyrs! Because they gave their lives for Christ, and this is ecumenism of blood. We must pray in memory of our common martyrs”.

Finally, there is “unity in work with the poor and the needy, who also need baptism in the Holy Spirit. It would be good to organise seminars on life in the Spirit, along with other Christian charismatic entities, for those brothers and sisters who live on the streets: they too have the Spirit within them that pushes for someone to throw open the door from outside”.

Before imparting his final blessing, the Pope invited those present to go forth and preach the good news of Jesus “to the poor, to the marginalised, the blind, the sick, the imprisoned, to all men and women. In each one of them there is the Spirit, Who wants to be helped to throw open the door so as to be revived. May the Lord accompany you in this mission, always with the Bible in your hand, always with the Gospel in your pocket, with the Word of Christ”.