

(Transcription)

Assisi, 26 October 2000

Communion among charisms

Taken from a talk at the Meeting "Charisms in dialogue and communion in the Catholic Church"

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As you may recall, on the vigil of Pentecost, May 30, 1998 in Rome, something truly historical took place for the Movements and the new ecclesial Communities in St. Peter's Square crowded with 300,000 people, belonging to approximately 60 of these new ecclesial realities.

On that occasion, the Holy Father gave a talk which clarified our place in the Church, and he did so with great love. He explained that the Church has two aspects profoundly in harmony with one another: one is institutional and the other is charismatic. They are co-essential, the latter being the effect of new and old charisms. He said that we are "significant expressions although not the only ones" of its charismatic aspect.

Knowing of the Holy Father's wish that the Movements be in communion with one another, when I was called upon, together with three other founders, to say a few words in front of the Pope, I made a promise to him. "Because our Movement has the charism of unity," I said, "I will make every effort, together with others already oriented in this direction, to work towards full communion among the Movements." The Holy Father was especially pleased with this.

We began at once, and today there are more than 16 of these Movements involved in this communion, and others are coming.

What do we do? First of all, we pray for one another. For example, every day we ask for graces for the other Movements as for our own. We actively collaborate in the initiatives of the other Movements. Then, depending on the needs, we lend houses, meeting halls, churches, and so on. We speak of the other Movements and their activities in our publications. Then, our respective central councils occasionally meet in order to know one another better and to inform one another of the Kingdom of God that is advancing due to the respective initiatives, and we rejoice together, we are encouraged. We also help one another in difficulties. We try to inform the members of our Movement throughout the world so that this communion may be shared by as many people as possible.

In some of the Movements, secretariats have been created, staffed by two or three persons, in order to maintain this relationship on behalf of the founder or the directors. We find incredible eagerness and great enthusiasm to partake in this communion everywhere! We all saw this continual, spontaneous friendship blossom in Rome especially when the Pope said: "Today, from this Upper Room of St. Peter's Square, a great prayer is being raised: 'Come, Holy Spirit'." After that prayer, we were no longer as we were before: mutual indifference disappeared, prejudice faded away, resistance melted. Love was born among all, a mutual embrace in Jesus.

Owing to this new encouraging situation, shortly afterwards, day meetings were planned and held in various dioceses throughout the world, at times, overpowering meetings which involved 12, 15, 20 Movements. So far, with the blessings and presence of the local bishop, we have had 120 of these day meetings. There are a number of effects: love for the Pope has increased. We feel personally linked to him because of our service to the universal Church; our soul has been enlarged onto all the Body of Christ, for the benefit of which the Spirit has given every charism; at the same time, we noted with joy that these day meetings have unveiled to some of the local Churches what they have in their dioceses: these new forces, at times unknown, so that they could benefit from their presence and take courage.

In Christmas, 1998 I received an autograph letter from the Holy Father John Paul II in answer to a letter I had written giving him some news on how the Movements were growing in communion. It was very comforting news which filled him with joy because, he said: "The indispensable collaboration among the various ecclesial realities will certainly bear much fruit." And this can already be seen.

In a very successful event promoted by one Movement, in which we also gave a contribution, a cardinal, but he wasn't the only one, affirmed: "If the Movements join together they will be a power in the Church." A power for the Church, therefore, all for the glory of God!

From what has taken place among the Movements during these two years, we can already foresee how the Church might be in the future – because we could see it during those day-meetings – if this communion continues: the Church will be more one, more attractive, warmer, more like a family, more dynamic, more Marian, more charismatic.

Later on – because example attracts – leaders of Movements in the Lutheran and Anglican Churches learned about this initiative and wanted to know more about it. Now they too wish to go on with a certain communion among themselves and with us, as much as possible, of course. And the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity is pleased.

But – in conclusion – I always have in my heart those last words of John Paul II when he described the Movements: "Significant expressions of the charismatic aspect of the Church, **even though they are not the only ones!**"

There are in the Bride of Christ numberless jewels – just look at you! – mines of saints and heroes, stupendous doctrines, countless miracles of good, all fruits of charisms bestowed by the Holy Spirit down through the centuries. Because of them, because of what they represent, that is, a Word of Jesus, an attitude of his, because of the religious families that incarnate these words or attitudes of Jesus, the Church appears and is a presence of "Christ spread out through the centuries" which is also the title of one of my books.

May the Lord increase this communion also with you, for the glory and pride of the Church, so that its charismatic aspect may acquire new vigour, new splendour; and in full and cordial unity with the institutional aspect, may it bear fruits as never before.

May Mary, Mother of all, the first charismatic of the Church, help us and enlighten us with the Holy Spirit, her spouse. May she make us one, to the benefit of the Bride of Christ and the glory of God.

Thank you, dearest fathers, sisters, lay people, brothers, sisters, friends and focolarini for listening to me. Peace and every good to all.

Chiara Lubich