The Church in Mission and the Movements

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Abstract: *The blossoming of new ecclesial movements before and after Vatican II was unplanned and unforeseen. While each is unique, almost all were inspired by one person who was able to communicate their charism to thousands of others. While these communities include all the Church's vocations, they are characterized by active laity who can enter milieus which had seemed impenetrable to the Church in the past. These communities' personal and collective witness of life builds friendships, leading to very fruitful relationships across all boundaries— ecumenical, interreligious and secular; others feel drawn to collaborate for the good of the human family. Many of these movements are now dealing with the challenge of being creatively faithful to the original inspiration after their founder's death.*

Claritas: Journal of Dialogue and Culture, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2019)
28–40 © 2019

An Unforeseen Phenomenon: *The Ecclesial Movements*

Many have defined ecclesial movements as "fruits of the Council."[1] The reason lies in the fact that they were founded and began to develop in the years following the great conciliar assembly of Vatican II. We are dealing with the "renewal movements" within the Catholic Church, a new constellation in the ecclesial firmament that appeared in the course of just a few decades.[2] The phenomenon of movements with which this presentation deals was characterized by an unpredictability that suggests the Spirit's intervention, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger emphasized in 1998.[3] The German theologian who would become Pope Benedict XVI put the movements' unexpected appearance in the context of the ecclesial panorama during a difficult phase, one almost of darkness.[4] Ratzinger's theological analysis of the movements

1. See Massimo Faggioli, *Sorting Out Catholicism: A Brief History of the New Ecclesial Movements* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2014), 6.
2. With regard to the link between these realities and the Council, it should be borne in mind that the bishops meeting in Rome between 1962 and 1965 dedicated rather little attention to Catholic associationism. The work concerning the laity, and the movementism to which they were connected, refers particularly, and almost exclusively, to the Catholic Action. The reason for this interest can be found in the effort to revive the traditional elite of Catholic laypeople. Some indications, especially those coming from the Catholic Church in France, seemed to offer encouragement in this respect, having come together in the so-called theology of the laity.
3. In fact, Cardinal Ratzinger had affirmed the following on the occasion of the first convention for reflection on the movements within the Catholic Church. "But suddenly here was something that no one had planned. Here the Holy Spirit himself had, so to speak, taken the floor. The faith was reawakening precisely among the young, who embraced it without ifs, ands, or buts, without escape hatches and loopholes, and who experienced it in its totality as a precious, life-giving gift." (Josef Ratzinger, "The Theological Locus of Ecclesial Movements," www.crossroadsinitiative.com/media/articles/theological-locus-of-ecclesial-movements-joseph-cardinal-ratzinger/).
4. In fact, Benedict referred to Karl Rahner's analysis. "In those times, Karl Rahner and others used to talk about a 'wintertime' in the Church; in reality it appeared

was also enriched by personal experience, a precious element that often informed the different spiritualities that took form during the second half of the twentieth century.[5]

The laity assumed an increasingly active and visible role within the Catholic ecclesial structure during the years of the Council and after. This Roman-universal event in itself was a fruit of Catholic movements in a certain sense, even if they had a different nature and origin. The experience and reflection stemming from the so-called reform movements—biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and patristic—had a central role in the remote preparation and long process leading up to Vatican II.[6] They left an important mark on European Christian life until the middle of the twentieth century. In spite of this, none of these manifestations of Christian movements ever had a direct influence on the ecclesial realities coming to life during World War II with the birth of Opus Dei, Cursillos de Christianidad, and the Focolare Movement. These were the movements opening up the new season, with the newness of their gospel experience and their worldwide reach.

Diversity and common elements

These new movements within the Catholic Church possess a variety of distinguishing characteristics. In contrast with the Catholic Action, they are not one single phenomenon. They vary quite a bit. In fact, *the* Catholic movement disappears with these communities, making room for a picture of movements which are quite different from one another.[7] At the same time, all of these new ecclesial realities bear marks that can be considered common denominators. The vast majority are composed of laity, and they follow a charismatic leader who proposes a radical commitment to live the gospel message in its entirety.

The movements are born because a charism is given to one of the faithful personally and it becomes the principle that educates and gathers the others, giving life to a community of believers who continue to reveal how persuasive the Christian event is.[8] At the same time, they identify their charism with a specific aspect of the gospel message and are sure to offer their members a formal

that a deep freeze had replaced the springtime after the flowering during the Council; fatigue had taken the place of the new dynamism. . . . Rahner's expression was completely understandable; it depicted the experience of all of us." (Ratzinger, "The Theological Locus").

5. "It was a wonderful event for me personally when I came into closer contact with movements such as the Neocatechumenate, Communion and Liberation, and Focolare and experienced the energy and enthusiasm with which they lived the faith and were impelled by their joy in it to share with others the gift they had received" (Ratzinger, "The Theological Locus").

6. The phenomenon of Catholic associationism during the nineteenth century was characterized more by the social and political dimensions rather than by the spiritual (See Massimo Faggioli, "Between Documents and Spirit: The Case of the New Catholic Movements," in *After Vatican II. Trajectories and Hermeneutics* ed. J. L. Heft and J. O'Malley, 1–22, 6 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), and Andrea Riccardi, "La nascita dei Movimenti Ecclesiali nella Chiesa italiana del Novecento: Un quadro storico," in *Paolo VI e Chiara Lubich. La profezia di una Chiesa che si fa dialogo*, ed. P. Siniscalco e X. Toscani, 12–23 (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, Edizioni Studium, and Rocca di Papa (Rome): Centro Chiara Lubich, Pafom).

7. See Michael Hochschild, "Laboratori del futuro: Aspetti sociologici delle nuove comunità spirituali," in *La Chiesa fiorisce. I movimenti e le nuove comunità*, ed. Christoph Hegge, 11–36, 17 (Rome: Città Nuova, 2006).

8. See Angelo Scola, "Movimenti ecclesiali e nuove comunità nella missione della Chiesa: Priorità e prospettive," in, *La Bellezza di essere cristiani oggi. I movimenti nella Chiesa*, Prontificium Consilium Pro Laicis, 57-80, 65 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007).

structure for studying the spirituality born from their respective charismatic leader.

They also show a remarkable variety of forms for association, and this aspect makes them a real galaxy within the Catholic Church.[9] I would emphasize an aspect that constitutes something significantly new, however. In the past, the laity was accustomed to receiving spirituality from monasteries or from consecrated communities. Today, the reverse is true, through this new phenomenon.

In fact, the spirituality of these new movements and ecclesial communities is shared by priests and members of religious orders and congregations. The spiritual life of some communities of consecrated men or women has been renewed and animated by the spirituality of these laypersons. This is why someone hazarded to call it the "Pentecost of the laity."[10] In general, the phenomenon has enriched the Catholic Church's *modernity*, taking some of the great social and ecclesiological issues as priorities for being Christian. Then, with regard to their respective beginnings, these communities arose in different geographic and cultural contexts—initially in Europe, but subsequently in Asia, South America, Africa, and North America as well.[11]

For a New Evangelization: Personal and Communitarian Witness

Besides the capacity to penetrate quite diverse social environments, a good number of these ecclesial realities have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate great mobility and a remarkable ability to spread into different geographic and ecclesial contexts, where they have often been able to take root in the local cultural and religious humus.[12] In both cases—the presence in the social fabric and

9. This is what justifies the manifold definitions and categories into which they have been divided by those studying the phenomenon starting from the second half of the 1980s. They have been differentiated as "reform" movements, "mobilization" movements, and "church" movements (Alberto Melloni, ed., *Movements in the Church* [Norwich, UK: SCM Press, 2003,13–35]); and as "lay" movements, "spiritual" movements, and "ecclesial" movements (Jean Beyer, *Il diritto della vita consacrata* [Milan: Ancora, 1989, 437–52]). Vanzan offers an interesting description, proposing a twofold distinction among the new movements in the Catholic Church: "movements with an intra-ecclesial and apostolic commitment" and "movements with a Christian animation with respect to realities in the world" (P. Vanzan, "Elementi comuni e identificativi dell'attuale fenomeno movimentista intraecclesiale con cenni a rischi e speranze" in *Fedeli Associazioni Movimenti*, ed. Gruppo Italiano di Docenti di Diritto Canonico [Milan: Glossa, 2002, 187–260]). The distinction proposed by the German sociologist Michael Hochschild is also very interesting; he suggests a distinction between fundamental models of "ecclesialism" and "holism." The first group includes ecclesial movements and communities like the charismatic ones, including Marriage Encounter, the Cursillios de Christianidade, and the Equipe de Notre Dame, which concentrate on intra-ecclesial activities to renew marriage, Baptism, and the community. These groups are generally deeply incorporated in the local church. Then there are the *holistic* movements like the Focolare Movement, Schönstatt, and associations of Opus Dei's collaborators, propounding a commitment within the church as well as in the world. In fact, they aim at renewing not only the church but also society. See M. Hochschild, "Laboratori del futuro. Aspetti sociologici delle nuove comunità spirituali", in *La Chiesa fiorisce*, 11–36, 17–18. The recent document released by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith defines the movements as "aggregations of faithful," "ecclesial movements," and "new communities" (see *Iuvenescit Ecclesia*, n2).

10. See Jesus Castellano Cervera, "Tratti caratteristici dei Movimenti Ecclesiali contemporanei," *Rivista Vita Spirituale* 39 (1985): 561–64.

11. It is clear that the first expressions of this phenomenon of the movements took off in a European context (particularly in Italy, Spain, and France, although not exclusively). The phenomenon widened to the other continents as the decades passed. For further information, see http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/laity/documents/rc_pc_laity_doc_20051114_associazioni_it.html.

12. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that these movements have a *universal* and *catholic* character. Their spread throughout the world has been extraordinarily rapid. This is an important factor generating esteem for their catholicity and their capacity

the spread beyond geographic-cultural borders—they offer a new "missionary" model that hinges on attraction generated by witnessing rather than proselytism, as suggested by the final document of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Aparecida: "The Church does not grow from proselytism, but from 'attraction'" (n159).[13]In fact, in today's globalized secularized world, faith is something that must be chosen. As a consequence, its transmission is not conditioned by the environment and neither is it a function of education. Rather, it requires witness.[14] Increasingly, making a choice with respect to faith is a courageous act prompted by an encounter with persons for whom the faith has become important through a personal encounter with God. And this is where witness becomes decisively important. In fact, these new ecclesial communities are formed by Christians who have encountered God in the routine of their own lives. Their understanding of scripture and the life of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, inspires dedication and a commitment to whoever may be next to them, beginning with the poor and the least among us.

Together with their communities, these Christians exert a strong attraction. All this has changed and continues to change the life and image of the church. It is a matter not just of preaching the truths of the faith but also of offering the fascinating beauty of Christian life.[15] This kind of witness is credible; it can be imitated in an act that may seem meaningless today, especially in the secularized Christian or post-Christian societies of the West—namely, the act of believing. Those belonging to these new ecclesial realities offer a life given by the Spirit to everyday men and women as manifested through both personal and communitarian witness.[16] It is a matter of the faithful, who, through the testimony of their own lives, "extend an invitation to men and women of any time to meet the Risen One in the ecclesial community: 'Come and see' (Jn 1:39)."[17] Beyond the noisy appearances of globalization exists a great silent, but real, hunger for spirituality; this hunger is satiated through personal encounters more than through books or remote meetings.

Along with the attraction aroused by persons who have met God and undergone as a result a radical existential change, the "communitarian" dimension must also be emphasized. Today's society appears to be remarkably attracted by communitarian experiences. People tend to take to environments and contexts where harmony exists among persons and where "witnesses" create credible places for a community based on meaningful values.

Places like Taizé and Bose are good examples; both are centers of powerful gospel witness that attract people, in the thousands,

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to be part of different situations and cultures with the local church. See Jesùs Castellano Cervera, "Tratti caratteristici dei Movimenti Ecclesiali contemporanei", 571.

13. This is a reference to a sentence often repeated by Pope Francis and pronounced by Benedict XVI in the homily right in Aparecida: Benedict XVI, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20070513_conference-brazil.html.

14. See C. Hennecke, "Per una pastorale comunitaria missionaria. La profezia reale delle nuove comunità spirituali" in *La Chiesa fiorisce*, 141–73, 149.

15. Wilfried Hagemann and Brendan Leahy, "'*Guardate come si amano l'un l'altro!*': Le conseguenze per la Chiesa, la comunità e la società del profilo Mariano nelle nuove comunità spirituali" in *La Chiesa fiorisce*, 141–73, 176.

16. See Scola, "Movimenti ecclesiali e nuove comunità, 57–80, 59.

17. Scola, "Movimenti ecclesiali e nuove comunità," 57–80, 59.

immersed in the global secularized routine. The little cities of the Focolare Movement, such as Loppiano or the recently born New Horizons community near Frosinone or even the experience of Nomadelfia, also confirm this. These enduring experiences, together with the local communities formed in different parts of the world, both within parishes and outside them, in particular socio-cultural contexts,[18] achieve Christian *communio* as a sacrament of union with God and of fraternity among ordinary men and women. And this is precisely what enables us to perceive and share the faith.[19] The communional dimension becomes decisive in the "missionary" experience of these movements. Essentially, being witness to God's manifestation from within a spiritual community joins with the personal testimony of our human encounter with God.

> If the inter-human relationship is God's image, in other words where God manifests himself, then the inter-human relationship is the place for the progressive experience of God's coming to humanity. The more the inner-human relationship grows, matures and becomes free and reciprocal as a result of God's presence and action in it, the more that God manifests himself from within this relationship.[20]

Announcement and Ecumenical Dialogue, Interreligious Dialogue, and Dialogue with Contemporary Culture

These experiences are not limited to the confines of the Catholic Church, however. The centrality of "personal" and "communitarian" witness for the credibility of the gospel message has also been recognized outside the Catholic Church in recent decades. When the ecumenical movement has seemed to stall, these communities have often been a source of hope, thanks to a relationship with the Spirit that is recognized by leaders and representatives of different Christian churches. Konrad Raiser, former secretary general of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, defines some of these movements or communitarian experiences as "communities of hope." Raiser calls attention to how these new forms of spiritual aggregation are typical of times when humanity enters unprecedented stages of history, forerunners of rapid and deep social changes. This leads to a clear conclusion: these are processes guided by the Spirit.[21]

> These communities are emerging in different parts of the world and they have become a source of renewal in the Church and in society, since they are held together by that hope which transcends any human hopes or plans. They are

18. Inspired and animated by ecclesial movements, people tend to gather on the basis of common interests in places of study or on the basis of particular professions. The outcomes of these gatherings are spontaneous and fluid; they are usually not institutionalized or formally structured. They consist of teachers or academics, university personnel, doctors, paramedics, artists, and people of different generations who are interested in the world of work and economics. It is a matter of groups acting in socio-cultural environments that are not religious per se but are fields that strive to bring spiritual values inspired by the charisms of their respective founders. Such groups can draw persons with different political positions or different religious convictions, including those without religious faith who are interested in affecting their environment based on the same values.

19. See Piero Coda, "Per una cultura della resurrezione," in *La Chiesa fiorisce*, 75–89, 81.

20. Coda, "Per una cultura della resurrezione," 75–89, 83.

21. See Konrad Raiser, "To Be Church: Challenges and Hopes for a New Millennium" (Geneva: WCC, 1997), 85. in Brendan Leahy, *Ecclesial Movements and Communities. Origins, Significance and Issues* (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2011), 8.

> in a position to forge new alliances in the struggle to rebuild liveable human communities in contexts of disintegration and social fragmentation. They often become the turning point to contribute to the efforts to build a culture of solidarity and sharing, of dialogue and reconciliation.[22]

Even the faithful of other religions end up being touched by the twofold witness of members and communities belonging to these movements. In fact, it is surprising how the path along which God has led some ecclesial communities over the decades has crossed the spiritual paths of the faithful of other religions. In this way, some Catholic movements have become promoters of dialogue with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs.

Chiara Lubich, who founded the Focolare Movement, was a protagonist of unexpected and unforeseeable encounters with Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus; she always shared her experience of meeting Christ and of the life of the gospel without compromising what she announced. This announcement was often preceded or accompanied by years of witnessing the Christian life, however, with meetings between Christian communities rooted in a particular place and groups of faithful belonging to other religions. This is where experiences of unexpected and prophetic dialogue came to life.

A fundamental element of these experiences is that each protagonist maintained his or her own identity, even while comprehending humanity's great religious traditions and building deep relationships with their respective followers, through shared experiences, through concrete collaboration on social projects and projects for peace, and even through theological and philosophical study. However, a view of ample "breadth" was needed to foster this "going out," to use Pope Francis's current terminology. A significant example of this "going out" is Chiara Lubich's invitation since the 1970s to the movement's members to not limit themselves to witnessing within the Catholic Church.

> And as the movement spread all over the world, . . . to every point on earth, [we became] aware that our place was where there was a synagogue, a mosque, a temple. We had the conviction that we were called to contribute to building universal brotherhood with them, especially on the basis of those principles, those values we had in common.[23]

This kind of dialogue with persons from other religions seems like a prophecy today, like something moved by the Spirit rather than something planned out. And as a consequence, it is a prophecy capable of addressing the "signs of the times." Neither Lubich nor the adherents of the movement she founded could foresee where these initial contacts with faithful from other religions would lead.

What Lubich wrote in her diary during the flight from Rome to Tokyo in December 1981 is significant: "A friend from the RKK who is studying our religion in Italy . . . said he was sure a certain unity between our movements would come about. This is why he prayed to God and Buddha. Let's see!"[24] A few days later, she

22. Raiser, "To Be Church," 8

23. Chiara Lubich, *L'unità nel Movimento dei Focolari,* speech to Muslims in a mosque in Harlem, New York, May 18, 1997.

24. Chiara Lubich, *Incontri con l'Oriente* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1987, 37).

ended up speaking to a few thousand Buddhists, an experience that strongly affected her.[25]

And yet, to be fruitful and well rooted, the dialogue with the faithful of other religions must be a "dialogue of life" fundamentally, as Muslims' experience in Algeria demonstrates; by building relationships of friendship and trust with Christians, they brought a Muslim edition of a Catholic Movement to life, deeply convinced that they belong to it; it inspires them to live their Muslim faith more consistently. Everything began with a little Christian community determined to bear witness to God's presence with the everyday life of the gospel in an entirely Islamic context. The life of the gospel was never expressed on a theological level, nor were there sermons or efforts to evangelize; rather, there was a sharing in the problems of the life of people next door, day by day. What Bishop Henry Tessier, archbishop emeritus of Algiers, defines as the "same vocation of our Church" was achieved.

> In fact, all our Christian communities in Algeria are called to place their vocation in an Islamic-Christian encounter overcoming the present distrust, the past prejudices, and dogmatic opposition, in order to establish a real everyday communion among persons.[26]

The Community of Sant'Egidio's interreligious dialogue is another example, born from John Paul II's convocation of the October 1986 Day of Prayer for Peace. Commenting on that event, the Polish pope spoke of "an open field" and the Sant'Egidio Community felt the "call" to work so that this field would not be abandoned.[27]

25. We find Chiara's impression of this encounter in the notes in her personal diary: "I just got back from speaking to 12,000 persons in the Risshō Kōsei-kai's Buddhist temple. A very new impression. It was as if I had never spoken this way before. It seemed to me that God was there. The audience was like well tilled soil, so well prepared that the seed went all the way to the bottom. And I announced Jesus and the Trinity! And it was all received as if they were people yearning to hear these things. . . . And what a unique impression to repeat Jesus's quoted words to those persons who did not know them." (Lubich, *L'unità nel Movimento dei Focolari*.) It is worth recalling how a few months after Lubich's first trip to Asia, von Balthasar defined this experience as an example of the possibility of dialogue on ethical bases. "Chiara Lubich . . . went to Japan and spoke to Buddhists, and they understood. Self-denial, denial of selfishness, self-renunciation: these are the center of Buddhism. It says the ego is something that is always selfish; the ego must be destroyed. So the sage reaches a self-denial, which is emptiness if you want. But a peace comes to him where there is no longer concupiscence, as a kind of benevolence toward all that exists. But if you say to this sage, 'Yes, it is necessary to deny oneself, and this is possible without reaching the point of destroying the ego. Yes, I have to overcome concupiscence to be myself, but without falling into nothingness, because I belong to an Other; another loves me. If you say this, he will understand. He will begin to see that there is a connection between Buddhism and Christianity.' Chiara Lubich did this. And I believe it can be a model for dialogue. And the one with Buddhism may be the most difficult."

26. Henry Tessier, Preface, in Mathilde Cocchiaro, *Nel deserto fiorisce la fraternita: Ulisse Caglioni fra i musulmani* (Rome: Nuova Umanità, 2006), 7–8.

27. The Sant'Egidio Community works with the poor, both in the peripheries and in the historical hubs, beginning with Rome, where it began between 1967 and 1970, following the Second Vatican Council. In addition to making friends with the poor, members of the community opened tutoring centers where children of families unable to pay for their studies could access an education; they built centers to take in the homeless, and they distributed meals to those who were hungry. At the same time, they gathered together every day, and still do, for a time of prayer and reading of the Gospels. The focus of their constitution and the community's growth was the encounter with God's word. Thanks especially to the encouragement and inspiration offered to the community by John Paul II, Sant'Egidio gradually opened itself to the world's challenges; beginning in the 1980s, it undertook initiatives focused on the culture of solidarity as a way to build and maintain peace among peoples, ethnic groups, and the faithful from different religions. The methodology was based on dialogue and relationships of friendship. Still today the community's greatest success in its peace-building commitment and diplomatic activity is considered to be the 1992 peace agreement between the different factions involved in the war in

It must be admitted that the experience of dialogue animated by these movements with faithful of other traditions is undoubtedly mysterious, but at the same time it is an effective demonstration of the Spirit's intervention. It is worth recalling what some members of other religions who are protagonists in this dialogue have affirmed. The African American judge from Indianapolis, David A. Shaheed, spoke about an extraordinary collaboration with a unique spiritual dimension, when he referred to the experience of dialogue between Focolare members and African American Muslims.

> [It goes] against any common sense that the son of the leader of an organization of militant black nationalists would begin a tight collaboration with a woman, a leader of a charismatic movement in the Catholic Church, taking courageous positions on forgiveness and the unity of the human family.[28]

Dialogue with those who do not believe or who affirm they have no religious point of reference also occurred. In fact, "universal brotherhood" is the reference point that helps some movements with a marked communitarian characteristic to work for the unity that Jesus sought at the end of his life: "Father that all may be one" (Jn 17:20). It is not only persons from other religious traditions who are embraced but even those without any faith.

A relationship of friendship and trust has developed over the years between believers and nonbelievers, including a conviction that it is possible to work together for specific goals: solidarity, economic projects benefiting the poor, political work based on shared values. This is how cultural dialogue has come to life in different fields; it draws inspiration from the role of brotherhood in economics, politics, art, psychology, and so on. It all requires that each side go beyond the barriers that traditionally exist among those with different beliefs, in particular those who have faith and those who claim to have none.

From a Missio *ad Gentes* to a Missio *inter Gentes*

Dialogue remains a challenge for the Catholic Church and for those communities who embrace it alike. They are vehicles for dialogue and are precious tools for implementing the new vision expressed by *Nostra Aetate* regarding interreligious dialogue. They have also been means to open new dimensions of what *Ad Gentes* affirmed regarding announcement and mission.

The challenge is twofold. For the church, in particular for some of its sectors, it is a matter of overcoming the fear that dialogue will water down, or worse, obfuscate Christian identity and the centrality of the mandate to *announce*, the so-called mandate *ad gentes*. It is important that the movements not see themselves as the sole "custodians" of dialogue, since dialogue remains part of the universal Church's mission to evangelize, and it makes sense only as an expression of this mission.

"Announcement" and "dialogue" are different aspects of the church's single mission to evangelize; in *Ecclesiam Suam*, Paul VI deemed dialogue the new term for mission. We cannot stay bound to one charism alone, even if it is modern, alive, and effective.

Mozambique. It was the result of a twenty-seven month-long process involving various peace agents. Other problematic or risky situations were resolved thanks to what is often called the "UN of the Tiber Neighborhood."

28. David A. Shaheed, "Islam's Response to the American Man," in *In ascolto dell'America. Popoli, culture, religioni, strade per il futuro*, ed. A. Trevisiol (Vatican City: Urbaniana University Press, 2014), 301–6, 304.

We must remain aware of being part of a universal design, within which it is possible and necessary to carry out the calling both to announce as well as to dialogue.

Furthermore, *Dialogue and Proclamation* (DP) emphasizes how these aspects are "both legitimate and necessary" as well as "intimately related, but not interchangeable" (DP 77). A few weeks before his resignation, Benedict XVI carefully distinguished between the two aspects, specifying, "Dialogue does not aim at conversion, but at understanding. In this respect it differs from evangelization, from mission."[29] Both have in common the search for the truth, however.

Pope Ratzinger went on to affirm courageously, "Both sides in this piece-by-piece approach to truth are therefore on the path that leads forward and towards greater commonality, brought about by the oneness of the truth. . . . To be sure, we do not possess the truth, the truth possesses us."[30] In *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), Pope Francis emphasizes, "Evangelization also involves the path of dialogue," (EG 238) and "far from being opposed, [the two] mutually support and nourish one another" (EG 251). So these new communities bear witness to how the wish expressed in *Dialogue and Proclamation* can be achieved in mission.

> All Christians are called to be personally involved in these two ways of carrying out the one mission of the Church, namely proclamation and dialogue. (DA 82)

However, there is an aspect in which the movements appear to have made a contribution to assuring an important breakthrough precisely with regard to mission. Linking "going out" *ad gentes* with different forms of dialogue based on brotherhood made it possible to achieve a new dimension in "announcing," whereby people from different churches, from other cultures and religions, and even non-believers become real *partners* rather than merely those who are to be reached and addressed.

New Charisms and New Models for Mission

This new charismatic push is expressed in a variety of ways, as Benedict XVI affirms in the post-synodal letter *Verbum Domini*.[31]

> The Synod also recognized with gratitude that the ecclesial movements and the new communities are a great force for evangelization in our times and an incentive to the development of new ways of proclaiming the Gospel. (VD 94)

Over these decades in fact, the progressive surfacing of these new realities and the related drive to evangelize has taken a variety of forms and new styles, both in proclaiming and bearing witness on a personal as well as a communitarian level. The process of proclamation and evangelization no longer occurs in the parish alone, at least in the traditional churches of Europe and some parts of Central and South America.

In fact, people spend their time in places far from the walls of the church: in their dwellings, in their city's transportation system,

29. Benedict XVI, Address on the Occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia, December 21, 2012.
30. Benedict XVI, Address on the Occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia.
31. Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. (http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html)

in their neighborhoods or workplaces, and today, on the internet. The people they encounter outside the church tend less and less to be believers, or, if they are, today's phenomenon of migration places people who believe in different ways in proximity to one another, or, in many cases, in proximity to those who believe but have no religious reference. It is in this context that the movements and new ecclesial communities have realized original communitarian forms of proclamation that can be a real experience of *inter gentes*.

As the bishops of India affirm, this act of being placed next to each man and woman as a child of God, and therefore as a brother or sister, inevitably leads to "being open to them, sharing their joys and sorrows."[32] "In this way we learn to accept others and their different ways of living, thinking and speaking" (EG 250). The first effect is respect for persons and cultures, which are seen "not so much as the object of Christian mission, but as partners in the [human] community where reciprocal testimony is needed," as Bishop Angelo Fernandes, archbishop of Delhi, affirmed (BIRA IV/12) (1991:548).

Even proclamation takes on new form in this framework. The church is no longer sent out *to the peoples* so much as it is a witness *among the peoples*. This is what is now called the *missio inter gentes*. Pope Francis recently affirmed to representatives of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, "We do not impose anything, we do not employ any subtle strategies for attracting believers; rather, we bear witness to what we believe and who we are with joy and simplicity."[33] And this can be done with everyone, Christians and non-Christians, believers, those who believe in something else, and nonbelievers.

32. The 30th General Body Meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India: *The Church's Role for a Better India* (March 8, 2012), 8.9.
33. Pope Francis, Address to the Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, November 28, 2013.

Conclusion

Christianity, in the course of these two millennia, has always created culture. It is enough to recall the schools and universities founded in Europe and then in the different continents under the missionary drive, even when that drive was conveyed by colonialism. Health and hospital care began in the same way from Christian sensitivity, often inspired by charismatic persons. This is how a humanistic and welcoming culture was created along with positioning society to contribute decisively to overcoming problems of social inequality in different places (beginning with Europe, but later in Asia and Africa) as a result of caste systems, tribalism, and class exploitation.

But we have to wonder what kind of culture Christianity is called to create today. The intercultural aspect and dialogue among cultures and religions is a high priority, given the current world situation, even though the places, structures, and roles necessary for promoting this dialogue may be absent. It is a matter of initiating processes that can create new social and educational roles, as has occurred with cultural mediators in the very recent past; indeed, this category did not even exist three decades ago. We also need places where persons, individually and in groups, from different cultures and religions can meet and encounter one another. Schools, universities, and hospitals are already precious places to begin. But it is necessary to creatively identify other elements for fostering these processes. The movements presented here can play a decisive role in these processes of cultural generation.

A reflection on the present and future of these movements and ecclesial communities is also needed. This reflection is important because some of them, initiated years before the Council, lost their founders a good while ago. I am referring especially to Opus Dei, Communion and Liberation, the Focolare Movement, and the

John XXIII Community. Losing the founder as a reference point is not a secondary issue.

These leading figures[34] had strong charismatic personalities and were able to construct an essential frame of reference for those coming to belong to these respective spiritual families. For many, especially outside observers, the emotional bond linking the movements' members and their respective founders, along with the reliance on their spiritual directives and practices, lent themselves to be interpreted as forms of "fanaticism."

But it must be acknowledged that they partook in a phenomenon that has manifested over the course of the church's history until today with the birth of spiritual families around charisms. As in the past, the spiritual and apostolic experience of the movements begun last century clearly passed through the mediation of these persons, who represented a reference point not only for those following the spirit they proposed but also for the entire church, and not just for the Catholic Church, as was shown above.[35]

The historical movements that characterize how the phenomenon generally developed, and that remain a reference point for the more youthful charismatic communities, today find themselves navigating a complex and fascinating process of mediation, between fidelity to their respective founder's charismatic inspiration, on the one hand, and the creative capacity to recognize how to achieve the incarnation of the charism in a rapidly evolving world and church, on the other. Such processes are not simple and cannot be taken for granted; they are demanding for these ecclesial realities right now and in their anticipation of the future of the church and all of humanity's social existence.

There are, of course, matters that call for careful attention. The Bergoglio papacy emphasizes both the essential need for fidelity to the charismatic inspiration and the effort required to avoid the possibility of closing the hatch to weather the storm or of forming ghettoes, especially in times of reflection like this. Pope Francis calls these communities to "pastoral conversion," calling these movements and communities to "a constant self-renewal born of fidelity to Jesus Christ" (EG 26).

This pastoral conversion calls each local church, just as it calls each movement or ecclesial community, to review thoroughly their own structures, plans, and works with the goal of avoiding the danger of a repetitive inertia, a kind of fossilization that jeopardizes the missionary energy unleashed during the "charismatic" period.[36] To effect the mediation between the "charismatic" foundational stage and that of "ordinary" history, adequate opportunities for individuals and communities to gather are increasingly necessary, even as we strive to avoid the danger of cooling the initial missionary drive. The dawn of these communities did not come with pastoral planning but rather with the spirit's intervention in times characterized by a turning point wherein "conventional Christianity" was left behind. What often prevailed was

34. In particular, we are considering Josemaría Escrivá, (Barbastro, January 9, 1902–Rome, June 26, 1975), Mons. Luigi Giovanni Giussani (Desio, October 15, 1922–Milan, February 22, 2005), Chiara Lubich (Trent, January 22, 1920–Rocca di Papa, March 14, 2008) and Fr. Oreste Benzi (San Clemente, September 7, 1925–Rimini, November 2, 2007).

35. Cervera, "Tratti caratteristici dei Movimenti Ecclesiali contemporanei," 564.

36. See Guzmán M. Carriquiry Lecour, "Rinnovare se stessi per rinnovare la Chiesa," *Congresso Mondiale dei Movimenti Ecclesiali e delle Nuove Comunità*, Rome, November 20-22, 2014.

the spiritual experience connected with a decisive encounter with Christ and the Spirit.

A "convinced Christianity" was born from this, but with a strong experiential connotation. All this had great value because it provided a strong credible witness that attracted thousands of people who were dissatisfied by more traditional forms of Christian life. It focused their decision to participate on a personal and/or communitarian event with God. Beyond the criticism that these communities aroused over the last few decades, however, there is a clear need emerging for processes of theological-pastoral discernment about one's own charism, its characteristics, and its ecclesial place, especially in the absence of the charismatic leaders and founders.

Each religious experience needs discernment and guidance; it needs to mature and be purified.[37] This is a fundamental part of the mediation process through which these ecclesial realities are passing in this phase. Theological-ecclesial reflection is also needed to allow the charism, which consists of both "encounter" and "experience," to be transformed into categories of thought, thereby assuring continuity with the personal and communitarian experience of communion with God that determined the initial charismatic thrust.

Another aspect that requires attention is presence in the social fabric. In fact, a typical characteristic of pre- and post-Conciliar movementism has not been flight from the world so much as the drive to renew the world in its deepest recesses—social, political, and economic life, not to mention culture in general. Despite noteworthy gradation and differences, all the movements have been shown to be attentive to the need for action, and they have had an important role in working for peace, justice, solidarity, and generally for an equitable united world. Individuals' and communities' own experiences of encountering God have provoked profound social change in many cases, lending credibility to Christian witness here as well.

Study and thought, along with renewed action, are also needed in the fields defined as "Christian militancy" or "Christian presence" in the social sphere. At the base of these social actions that inspire a spiritual renewal is often the element of "brotherhood"; it too must be duly studied in the categories of economics, political science, sociology, and so on. The original commitment that is linked to the charismatic founders must be renewed to assure that projects with an economic and political character have continuity and to avoid isolation by continuing to hold on to experiences that are undoubtedly paradigmatic but require innovation, since they are only at the beginning. To achieve all this, a new awareness must be acquired: "A charism should not be preserved like a bottle of distilled water, it should be made to bear fruit, courageously comparing it with current reality, with cultures, with history, as we are taught by the great missionaries of our institutes."[38]

These are among the challenges facing the movements and ecclesial communities today and in the near future. The charisms received and the experiences lived by the first generations of these ecclesial realities are a useful foundation for remaining profoundly "centered in Christ" and, at the same time, for continuing to be generously "decentered" in the lives of people and in humanity's

37. See Cervera, "Tratti caratteristici dei Movimenti Ecclesiali contemporanei," 568–569.

38. Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the National Assembly of the Italian Conference of Major Superiors (CISM)*, Vatican City, November 7, 2014.

great problems, where the church is called to have an active and credible presence.

Evangelii Gaudium invites us to evangelize by attraction, as was the case for the first Christians.[39] As mentioned above, however, it is clear that such evangelization involves not just going "towards the peoples" (*ad gentes*) but also living and bearing witness "among the peoples" (*inter gentes*) and also "with the peoples" (*cum gentes*). These dimensions obviously include Catholics but not only Catholics. Christians from other churches and denominations, faithful from the great religious traditions, and those without any specific faith—everyone can be co-protagonists in this testimony.

Pope Francis calls it the "mysticism of the we," which cannot and must not be closed within the Catholic Church or the Christian world. If the Catholic Church is to be "going out," as Pope Francis wants, it is absolutely vital that it be able to involve all those with whom it comes in contact and who believe in the reality of the world as one family. The movements and new communities have this capacity in their DNA, but they must always be open to the Spirit's voice, which will suggest to them how to achieve today the yearning of their respective founders. As Pope Francis suggests, we are all called to begin processes rather than merely occupy spaces. Fidelity to the original charism is decisive here, along with the creative courage to implement it in the current context of the church and humanity to create a real, new cultural humus.

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39. See *Evangelii Gaudium*, 14.