

Thy Kingdom come!

**CENTRAL COMMISSION FOR THE REVISION OF THE *STATUTES OF REGNUM CHRISTI***

***Study and Reflection on the Statutes of Regnum Christi***

September, 2014

**I.** What are the study materials?

The study materials are the basic material that the Central Commission offers to the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree of *Regnum Christi* for their study and reflection. If the members absorb the contents of these packets they should be sufficiently prepared to undertake the task of revising the statutes. These will have to contain a clear and detailed description of the identity and mission of the lay members of the *Regnum Christi* Movement.

**II.** How are the study packets structured?

Each study packet is about twelve pages long. Some may be heavy going, since the teaching of the Magisterium on each of the themes is presented in summary fashion.

**III.** How are the study materials intended to be used?

The study materials can be used for personal study, as well as for group reflection among all the members of the Movement. They contain information which forms the basis for subsequent reflection. To contribute to the assimilation of this information on the part of the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree the facilitators of the process can employ various means to

support this process, such as presentations by experts, audiovisuals, group discussions, interviews, etc...

At the end of each study packet there is a list of questions which are intended to foster group reflection and discussion. The objective here is to help the participants concentrate on the essentials and see the concrete applications for their own lives. The group answers the questions for its own benefit. Therefore it is not necessary to respond to them all. The group moderator can choose those questions which seem to be most helpful for the participants.

It is good to organize activities dedicated to the study of the themes which allow for group reflection and discussion while at the same time having one or two people present who can give answers to questions which may arise. These activities should be part of those that form part of the normal life of the sections, such as, for example, courses, study circles, team

meetings, etc... The local process leader together with the section directors should find the most appropriate way to hold these activities.

In each of the study packets various texts are recommended for those who want to delve more deeply into the theme in question. These texts are especially helpful for those who will guide the moments of study, give conferences or prepare presentations.

**IV. Which themes are being proposed for study?**

The Central Commission proposes five themes for study. For each of these a study packet has been prepared. The themes and their contents are the following:

Study Packet Title	Contents of the Study Packet
1. The Ecclesial Identity of the Laity	<p>The lay person’s place in the mystery of the Church. Who is the lay person and what are his defining characteristics? The lay vocation springs forth from the mystery of Christ and expresses it in a specific way. The mutual ordering between the common and the ministerial priesthood. The complementarity of the lay state and consecrated life. Rights and obligations of the laity.</p>
2. The Lay Apostolate within the Mission of the Church	<p>The mission of the Church. The apostolate of the laity.</p>
3. The Associations of the Faithful and the Ecclesial Movements	<p>The right of association of the laity and the distinct forms of association within the Church. “Public” and “private” associations of the faithful. Movements and new ecclesial communities. The canonical</p>
4. The Church as Communion	<p>The Church in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The concept of communion. The ecclesiology of communion. The spirituality of communion.</p>
5. The Charism and History of <i>Regnum Christi</i>	<p>What is a collective charism? Introduction to the charisma of <i>Regnum Christi</i>. Some fundamental aspects of our charism Historical origin of the Movement <i>Regnum Christi</i>.</p>

## THEME FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION No. 1

### **The Identity and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World**

#### **I. The Ecclesial Identity of the Laity**

*September, 2014*

#### OBJECTIVE

Pope Francis tells us that —there has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church ; but that —a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places (*Evangelii gaudium*, 102). In fact, in our day there are quite a few believers who still have a reductionist view of the role of the laity, believing it is limited to receiving the sacraments, listening to homilies, obediently following the teachings of the Church and helping the priests in the parish and with activities. Many are not acquainted with the theological depth of the lay vocation. The Second Vatican Council delved into the riches of the lay vocation, opening up a wonderful spiritual and apostolic panorama which the succeeding Popes have continued to broaden.

Here we want to explore what a *lay person* is, what his vocation and charism is, what his role within the Church is, all in order to be enthusiastic —living stones of the Church, and to live in accordance with our identity and our vocation.

#### BASIC LAYOUT

A. The lay person has a place in the mystery of the Church:

the vocation of the lay person is rooted in baptism and finds its sense in the mystery of the Church as —communion .

B. Who is the lay person and what are his defining characteristics?

the lay person differs from the other members of the Church; he has a specific talent or charism which enables him to enrich others in a specific way.

- C. The lay vocation springs forth from the mystery of Christ and expresses it in a specific way: the lay person participates in Christ's priestly, prophetic and kingly nature in a particular way.
- D. The mutual ordering between the common and ministerial priesthood: The common and the ministerial priesthood are intimately ordered to each other since they are two forms of participating in the one priesthood of Christ.
- E. The complementarity of the lay state and consecrated life:

Knowing more about the complementarity between the lay and consecrated state of life will help us to live out the various types of dealings between ourselves and consecrated from a profound spirit of ecclesiology of communion.

F. Rights and Obligations of the Laity:

The specific rights and duties of the laity, also in their dealings with priests, religious and consecrated, are laid out in Canon Law. Being acquainted with these rights and obligations will be helpful for the task of setting up suitable structures for the future.

KEY CONCEPTS

Divine filiation

The lay state

Common

priesthood

Union of the laity with Christ

Complementarity of vocations

**A.** The lay person has a place in the mystery of the Church

The Church is the great family of the children of God<sup>1</sup>. Christians are adopted children, for in baptism we received from Christ – who is Son in his divine nature – the divine life of grace. We are therefore *sons in the Son*, through his redemption inserted into him like branches into the vine. The life of grace flows through him to us all. Christ is the Head and we are the members of the one Body, living in deep communion with one another. In this way the Church is the mystical body of Christ, prolonging his presence in the world. Like a true family of God in Christ, in which we are all children of God and brothers, it bears witness to the world of the love of God and attracts all to him. The Church is the –sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race<sup>2</sup>. We can further say that the Church is a mystery in which –communion and mission are profoundly interconnected<sup>3</sup>. Our communion with God and with our sisters and brothers in God is an invitation to all peoples to join in this same communion of divine filiation.

The various parts of a body die and do not serve their purpose if detached from the body; they find their fulfillment in being a part of the whole and at the service of all other parts. In the same way everyone who is baptized participates in the life and holiness of the Church, benefitting from as well as contributing to the

—communion of the saints<sup>4</sup>. The different states of life within the Church, the various ministries, the variety of charisms and talents which the members receive, in short, the various vocations within the Church, contribute to strengthening the communion and the mission of the Church as a whole. This is their ultimate meaning and purpose. Christ gives each vocation for the good of the Church and its mission. By *vocation* we mean the call of God to the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 25b: -The Church is God's family in the world. Ibid, 19: The Father

-wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son.

<sup>2</sup> II VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 23, and POPE JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 32.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 1 *Corinthians* 12: 12-27 and *Christifideles laici*, 17. For more on the *communion of the saints*: cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 946-962.

individual, by which he invites him to complete the mission for which he has created him. This call therefore includes all of the elements of the plan of God, his plan of love for this person so that he might achieve his fulfillment.

—The vocations to the lay life, to the ordained ministry and to the consecrated life can be considered paradigmatic, inasmuch as all particular vocations, considered separately or as a whole, are in one way or another derived from them or lead back to them.<sup>5</sup> —The various vocations are like so many rays of the one light of Christ,<sup>6</sup> and are

—at the service of one another, for the growth of the Body of Christ in history and for its mission in the world.<sup>7</sup>

All the baptized are —living stones<sup>8</sup> in the Church, a spiritual building, the house of God on earth. We are all called to be Church, to build it up with the holiness of our lives and to contribute to the fulfillment of her mission<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, we are not all called to fulfill this responsibility in the same way, though, for God has given a variety of vocations so that communion is possible and authentic<sup>10</sup>. Each person has to listen to the voice of God to discover what his vocation is, that is, what God expects of him and what the best way is for him to contribute to the communion and mission of the Church.

In the body of the church, God calls the vast majority of its members to the lay state. Within the common vocation which all laity share he also calls each person to live it in a specific way. Without the laity the Church would not be the church that Christ established.

## B. Who is the lay person and what are his defining characteristics?

### 1. Categories of the faithful

The word *laity* derives from the Middle English *laite*, which ultimately stems from the Greek *laikós* (λαϊκός), meaning *common* or *(one) of the people*. The related word *lay* stems from the Greek *laós* (λαός), meaning *people*. In the Church the word *laity* designates those believers who have not received the sacrament of orders and as a result are those who are not clerics (ordained ministers). From this point of view one can divide believers into clerics and the laity, depending on whether or not they have received the sacrament of orders.

There are however some lay people and some clerics, who without ceasing to be such, commit to living the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. In a way they live according to the way of life which Jesus himself followed while on earth. They will not be able to live the virtues with the same perfection but they seek to make Christ present through their way of life. These believers consecrate themselves to God in a special way, which sets them apart from



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<sup>5</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, 31.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, 31.

<sup>8</sup> 1 *Peter* 2, 5.

<sup>9</sup> II VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution *Lumen gentium*, Chapter V: The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church; as well as IDEM, Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 2: –In the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission .

<sup>10</sup> Cf. 1 *Corinthians* 12: 4-28; *Christifideles laici*, 20, and POPE FRANCIS, Homily on the Solemnity of Pentecost (May 19, 2013): –the Holy Spirit would appear to create disorder in the Church, since he brings the diversity of charisms and gifts; yet all this, by his working, is a great source of wealth, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which does not mean uniformity, but which leads everything back to *harmony*. In the Church, it is the Holy Spirit who creates harmony [...].He is indeed harmony. Only the Spirit can awaken diversity, plurality and multiplicity, while at the same time buildingunity .

those lay people and clerics who do not. The laity who do not consecrate themselves are in this sense simply *the laity*, and the clerics who do not consecrate themselves are known as the *secular clergy*. All believers are consecrated to God by reason of their baptism and confirmation, but not all the faithful receive this new and special consecration<sup>11</sup>. The sacrament of Holy Orders also consecrates the person that receives it, making him a sacred minister, but this is not the —new and special consecration being discussed here either. For this reason, in current usage within the Church, the term *consecrated* refers exclusively to those believers who have consecrated their lives to God in a new and special way. This usage does not deny that we are all consecrated to God by means of baptism and confirmation and that some of the faithful are also consecrated to him by means of Holy Orders. As part of their specific vocation these *consecrated* faithful have gifts as well as responsibilities which exceed those proper to the lay or clerical vocation as such. Not only do consecrated members of the Church welcome the Kingdom of God into their own lives, but they put their entire existence at the service of this cause, leaving behind everything in order to imitate closely the way of life which our Lord led<sup>12</sup>. Some of these consecrated believers profess to live according to the three evangelical counsels by means of public vows within the heart of a religious institute, in which they live a common life and separate themselves in a particular way from the temporal affairs of the world. These are the so-called *religious*. One could consider them a sub-group of the more general grouping indicated by *consecrated*.

There also exist other types of consecrated believers who are not religious but rather *secular* consecrated. The adjective *secular* derives from the Latin word *saeculum*, which means (*present*) *age; generation; century*; the *secular* members of the Church are those who are occupied with the temporal affairs of the present age, fully involved in the temporal affairs of the world. In this sense secular consecrated are in fact consecrated since they take on all the elements proper to consecrated life, living according to the evangelical counsels, but they are secular because they remain at the same time fully immersed in the temporal affairs of the world<sup>13</sup>.

A technical question arises: Is a *lay* and a *secular* member of the Church the same thing? In common speech the two terms are used interchangeably, as synonyms to refer to all Christians who are neither clerics nor religious. Actually, though, if we want to be totally precise, a *lay* person is one who is not a cleric, and a *secular* person is one who is not a religious. This is why diocesan priests are technically referred to as *secular clerics*, they are clerics, but not religious.

In ordinary usage, the term *lay person* refers to any baptized Christian who is neither a cleric nor a religious, that is, who has neither received the sacrament of orders nor follows a religious Rule of life.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, 30.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. IDEM, 14.

<sup>13</sup> The fact that the members of secular institutes are considered consecrated does not take anything away from their being *secular*, involved in temporal affairs. It is true that they do not manifest their consecration in

an external fashion. However, they assume the three evangelical counsels in a public manner within the Church, and dedicate themselves completely to temporal affairs without the complications family entailed by family ties. Another case of secular consecrated persons can be found within the new ecclesial movements, when their members assume the living of the evangelical counsels. In general the consecrated people in these movements practice common life while the members of the secular institutes generally do not live in community. However, the consecrated people in the movements do not change their canonical state of life upon assuming the evangelical counsels, whereas members of secular institutes in fact do enter into the consecrated state of life, according to Canon Law.

<sup>14</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 31: -The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church . Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 934: —Among the Christian faithful by divine institution there exist in the Church sacred ministers,

## 2. The characteristics proper to lay persons

What is it then that characterizes a lay person? In the recent teaching documents of the Church the specific *charism* or *talent* through which lay people contribute to the building up of the Church is called the *secular character*<sup>15</sup>. This *secular nature* consists in —living in the midst of the world and its concerns in a Christian manner<sup>16</sup>.

Can living in the midst of temporal affairs really be a charism given by the Holy Spirit? Is it not simply a sociological condition? The charism of the lay people—that grace which the Holy Spirit grants to lay people for the building up of the whole Church—consists in the call and the capacity which the Holy Spirit grants them so that they can be present in the world in a Christian manner and imbue temporal affairs with the spirit of the gospel. This secular *character* of lay persons is without doubt a special grace from God, because only a child of God can restore the realities of this world through sanctifying grace so that God can truly find his pleasure in them. It is a charism rooted in the gift of baptism, or better said, the capacities received in baptism develop in a certain way under its influence. With this charism the laity contribute greatly to the building up of the Church, which has the mission of spreading the Kingdom of Christ throughout the earth. Therefore the secular character of the lay people has to be understood as —not simply an external and environmental framework, but as a reality *destined to find in Jesus Christ the fullness of its meaning*<sup>17</sup>.

Before we can understand what the *Christian identity of the lay person in the world* is, we must first grasp what is meant by the word —world means in this context. When we speak of the *world* here, we are not here referring to the negative concept frequently found in the theology of Saint John, where the world is traditionally placed in the list of the enemies of the salvation of mankind: *the devil, the flesh and the world*. In this context, the concept of *world* expresses the sum total of all evil realities present in this life which are in opposition to the will of God (such as injustice, etc...). This usage of the term *world* would also cover even the neutral realities of this life, insofar as they often in fact serve to tempt us and pull us away from fulfilling God's will (one example of this would be *money*, neutral in itself, but which in fact can be used as a symbol of avarice, etc...). The world in this sense is the kingdom of sin, God's enemy, which resists him and attempts to prevent the salvation of women and men. When understood this way it is valid to say that Christians are in the world but not of the world (cf. *John 17:16*).

The biblical and Christian tradition also contains other meanings for the word *world*. There is for instance the concept of *world* understood as the *cosmos*, the whole created material universe, which as it leaves the hands of God is called *good*. The world in this sense reveals the goodness and beauty of God. Man receives the wonderful task of recognizing this, giving glory to God, and through his actions perfecting it. (cf. *Genesis 1:28-31; Wisdom 11:25; Romans 1, 20*). *World* in another context is used to refer to the vast expanse of this universe, the entire creation and all peoples who dwell in it, all of whom wait in longing for the revelation of the children of God (cf. *Mark 16:15; Mark 4:26-27; John 3:16; Romans 8:19*). Lay Christians are the ones who bring the gospel into all the distinct areas and circumstances of daily life. As the beautiful, ancient Letter

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who are also called clerics in law, and other Christian faithful who are also called laity. In both groups there are those Christian faithful who, professing the evangelical counsels, are consecrated to God and so serve the Church's saving mission (cf. CIC, can. 207 § 1, 2) .

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 31, and *Christifideles laici*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Christifideles laici*, 15.

to Diognetus puts it, —they are to the world what the soul is to the body<sup>18</sup>. This world can and should be pleasing to God and give him glory; it was for this everything was created.

Speaking of lay people, we referred to the Christian believer who is set apart from other baptized people through his specific *secular character*. However when we speak of this being set apart we have to remember that:

The ecclesiology of communion has taught us that what characterizes each state of life within the Church should not be considered as something exclusive but rather as something which is meaningful. Each Christian is made into a sign for the other Christians of that which he lives in a more intense way due to his particular charism. It serves as a reminder for all other baptized believers of that element which he lives in a more intense way than the others. It also reminds others of this aspect which they too have to live,

though in a different fashion<sup>19</sup>.

The whole Church, in all its vocations and states of life, has a secular dimension here on this earth. Christ himself entered into solidarity with all of mankind in this world through his Incarnation, and he willed that the Church as well is *incarnate* in all of creation. Christ sends the Church to the ends of the world to make it present in every aspect of human existence<sup>20</sup>. It is in fact the lay people who live and bear witness to this secular character in a more intense way, because their lives are so intimately intertwined with their social conditions. For the good of the whole Church and of the world itself they make Christ present wherever they are.

Let us return to a text from the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* which sheds a great deal of light in this regard:

Pursuing the saving purpose which is proper to her, the Church does not only communicate divine life to men but in some way casts the reflected light of that life over the entire earth, most of all by its healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by the way in which it strengthens the seams of human society and imbues the everyday activity of men with a deeper meaning and importance. Thus through her individual members and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly toward making

the family of man and its history more human<sup>21</sup>.

The entire Church is responsible for making this contribution to the human family, but it is the lay people who occupy pride of place in this task, due to their *secular character* which obliges them with the irreplaceable means proper to them, in the Christian transformation of the temporal order<sup>22</sup>.

Just because God granted the lay vocation to the vast majority of Christians does not mean that it is less valuable nor less important than the others. To think in this way would be to despise the gifts of God, like throwing pearls to swine (cf. *Matthew* 7:6).

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<sup>18</sup> Chapters 5 and 6 of the *Letter to Diognetus* are highly recommendable. .

<sup>19</sup> Antonio BOTANA, *Compartir la espiritualidad en la misión: clave para compartir la vida*, in «Revista Testimonio» 252 (2012), (pp. 30-39), 3rd point.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Christifideles laici*, 15: -The Church, in fact, lives in the world, even if she is not of the world (cf. *Jn* 17:16). She is sent to continue the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, *which by its very nature concerns the salvation of humanity, and also involves the renewal of the whole temporal order*[AA 5]. Certainly *all the members* of the Church are sharers in this secular dimension but *in different ways*. In particular the sharing of the *lay faithful* has its own manner of realization and function, which, according to the Council, is "properly and particularly" theirs. Such a manner is designated with the expression "secular character" [LG 31]».

<sup>21</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

All vocations are always personal, whether they are granted to an individual or to a group, since God always calls specific persons, and there are no *generic* vocations. Therefore the *lay vocation* is always a vocation given to an individual, who does not exist *generically*. There are as many lay vocations as there are lay people, in the concrete circumstances in which they find themselves. The vocation of the woman differs from that of the man, that of the married person from that of the single person, that of the father from that of the child, that of the sick person from that of the healthy. The journalist has a different role to play than the businessman, the rich person than the poor, the house maid than the politician, the worker than the teacher. The *secular character* of each lay person takes on concrete form in the particular relations with his temporal surroundings. Each lay person has to learn to read these circumstances under the light of faith so as to live his very personal vocation to the full.

**C. The lay vocation springs forth from the mystery of Christ and expresses it in a specific way**

Through his *secular character* the lay person is called to imitate Christ in the heart of the world and to make him present everywhere, in the concrete circumstances of his social life as well as in the midst of the difficulties that come with everyday living. The secular character is given by Christ himself, the incarnate Word, who was the first to live the newness of the gospel in the midst of temporal realities so as to make present the Kingdom of God and to renew the world from within the world itself, in accordance with the Father's plan. Jesus defines himself as –he whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world (*John* 10:36). He is the model for every lay person.

–The *laity*, by virtue of the secular character of their vocation, reflect the mystery of the Incarnate Word particularly insofar as he is the Alpha and the Omega of the world, the foundation and measure of the value of all created things<sup>23</sup>. The lay person is in the world to bear witness to the incarnation of the Word, making the redemptive work of the Lord who regenerates all of creation present in the world<sup>24</sup>.

The Christian lay person, incorporated into Christ through baptism as a living member of the Church, also partakes in the lot of the society of which he forms a part. He is fully identified with both Christ and with society. He is like *another Christ* in the world<sup>25</sup>. The lay person participates in

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<sup>23</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. II VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 43: (–Christians should rather rejoice that, following the example of Christ Who worked as an artisan, they are free to give proper exercise to all their earthly activities and to their humane, domestic, professional, social and technical enterprises by gathering

them into one vital synthesis with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are harmonized unto God's glory. Secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to lay people ); Ibid., 45 (–For God's Word, by whom all things were made, was Himself made flesh so that as perfect man He might save all men and sum up all things in Himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the longings of history and of civilization, the center of the human race, the joy of every heart and the answer to all its yearnings. He it is Whom the Father raised from the dead, lifted on high and stationed at His right hand, making Him judge of the living and the dead. Enlivened and united in His Spirit, we journey toward the consummation of human history, one which fully accords with the counsel of God's love: *To reestablish all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on the earth* (Ephesians 11:10)), and *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 5.



<sup>25</sup> The reference to the Christian as being *another Christ* (*alter Christus*) can be found in the writings of Saint John Eudes (1601-1680) and more recently in the twentieth century, particularly in the writing and preaching of Blessed Columba Marmion (1858-1923 ). The idea itself, though, if not the concrete expression, can be traced back to the patristic era and has its roots in the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ found in the writings of St. Paul. Cf. *Christifideles laici*, 17, where expressions employed by Saint Leo the Great, Saint Maximus of Turin and Saint Augustine are included in the main text; Saint Augustine, for example, is quoted as saying, —Let us rejoice and give thanks: we have not only become Christians, but Christ himself... Stand in awe and rejoice: We have become Christ".

the threefold office through which Christ's mission finds its expression, and he is called to continue making this mission present in the concrete circumstances in which his life unfolds. —The participation of the lay faithful in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King finds its source in the anointing of Baptism, its further development in Confirmation and its realization and dynamic sustenance in the Holy Eucharist and finds adequate expression in accordance with his secular character.<sup>26</sup>

—The lay faithful are sharers in the *priestly mission*, for which Jesus offered himself on the cross and continues to be offered in the celebration of the Eucharist for the glory of God and the salvation of humanity. Incorporated in Jesus Christ, the baptized are united to him and to his sacrifice in the offering they make of themselves and their daily activities (cf. *Rom* 12:1, 2). —In profound adoration they act in holy fashion in all places, so consecrating the world itself to God<sup>27</sup>. They participate in the *prophetic* office of Christ, accepting the gospel into their lives and witnessing to it by word and deed in all circumstances with courage and patience. Their testimony

—acquires a specific characteristic and singular efficacy for evangelization by the fact that it is given in the normal conditions of this world<sup>28</sup>. The lay people participate in the *royal* office of Christ in that they order all created goods towards the true good of man. This gives back to creation its original value once again through the regeneration worked by Christ beginning with the fundamental tasks of conquering sin in their own lives and sacrificing themselves by serving others in that charity through which God will be all in all (cf. *John* 12:32; *1 Corinthians* 15:28)<sup>29</sup>.

The Second Vatican Council underlines the role which the laity play in the royal mission of Christ. By virtue of their secular character, the Holy Spirit capacitates them in a special way to establish his Kingdom on earth. —The Lord wishes to spread His kingdom also by means of the laity, namely, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace. In the fulfillment of this mission the laity have pride of place<sup>30</sup>.

#### D. The mutual ordering between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood

Jesus Christ is the only priest of the New Covenant<sup>31</sup>. The whole Church, being the mystical body of that same Christ, participates in the priesthood of Christ, its head. By divine institution there exist in the Church two ways of participating in the one and only priesthood of Christ, and they differ essentially one from the other. For the Church to perform its priestly role, though, both forms are necessary, for they are reciprocally ordered to each other<sup>32</sup>.

The common priesthood is the participation in the priesthood of Christ and is common to all of Christians. Therefore, all the members of the Church (laity and clerics, secular and religious) are capacitated to make offerings pleasing to God through a holy life, and in this way they sanctify the world. The ministerial priesthood is a participation in the priesthood of Christ reserved for those who have received the sacrament of Orders in the grade of bishop or of priest. Only bishops receive it in its fullness, whereas priests do not. Through the ministerial priesthood, some members of the Church (bishops and priests) are identified with Christ, the head and pastor of the Church. They are invested with a specific grace which capacitates them to consecrate the Eucharist and to

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<sup>26</sup> *Christifideles laici*, 14, and cf. *Lumen gentium*, 31.

<sup>27</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 34.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Christifideles laici*, 14, and *Lumen gentium*, 36.

<sup>30</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 36.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1544-1545.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 1546-1547.

sanctify, teach, and guide the faithful in the communion of the Church. Deacons receive the sacrament of orders which makes them ordained ministers of the Church, but they do not receive the ministerial priesthood in relation to the Eucharist and the remission of sins. They receive the sacrament of Orders –to offer a service and not to exercise the priesthood , as the Catechism reminds us<sup>33</sup>.

The common priesthood is ordered to the ministerial priesthood because it is precisely the holy life of the Christians which are associated with the merits of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist. This all becomes one unique offering of the Church to the Father through Christ, with him and in him. In other words, the faithful need the priestly minister so that their good works might be united to Christ and presented to God the Father through him, by means of the sacrifice of the Eucharist. At the same time the ministerial priesthood is ordered to the common priesthood because it is at the service of the life of grace of all the faithful. This service or ministry is the very reason for being of the ministerial priesthood<sup>34</sup>.

#### E. The complementarity of the lay state and consecrated life

The lay faithful "can never remain in isolation from the community, but must live in a continual interaction with others, with a lively sense of fellowship, rejoicing in an equal dignity and common commitment to bring to fruition the immense treasure that each has inherited .<sup>35</sup>

There has always been collaboration between lay people and consecrated people (religious and secular consecrated) in the history of the Church. In our times, though, this has grown noticeably, both in intensity and diffusion, and the concrete ways in which it takes form have multiplied tremendously<sup>36</sup>. The growth in this style of collaboration can be seen a *sign of the times*. At this moment in time, –a new chapter, rich in hope, is beginning in the history of the relations between consecrated persons and the laity<sup>37</sup>. Consecrated faithful and lay people are joining forces in order to complete their common mission, sharing initiatives and getting involved in each other's initiatives<sup>38</sup>.

The life of special consecration consists in committing oneself to live the evangelical counsels with the radicality of the gospel. The Lord himself calls some of the members of the Church, moved by the Holy Spirit, –to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and

proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come<sup>39</sup>. This more intimate consecration has its roots in baptism, through which every Christian has already been consecrated to God. Moreover, like everything in the Church such a consecration tends to the perfection of charity, of holiness, to which all Christians are called. Even so it is good to remember that it is in fact a new consecration,

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ibid., 1548-1571 (the quotation is taken from 1569), and *Evangelii gaudium*, 104.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 874-879 and 1547.

<sup>35</sup> *Christifideles laici*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> In the present age many new forms of evangelical life are emerging; *Vita consecrata*, 62: -...composed of

mixed groups of men and women, of clerics and lay persons, of married couples and celibates, all of whom pursue a particular style of life [...]; their commitment to the evangelical life also takes on different forms, while, as a general rule, they are all characterized by an intense aspiration to community life, poverty and prayer. Both clerics and lay persons share in the duties of governing according to the responsibilities assigned to them, and the apostolate focuses on the demands of the new evangelization .

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>39</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 916.

essentially different from the baptismal consecration. Although it has its roots in baptism it is not a necessary consequence of baptism, but rather involves a response to a personal call from God.

-The state of consecrated life is neither clerical nor lay<sup>40</sup>; it is compatible with both the clerical state and the lay state, and —by its very existence in the Church, seeks to serve the consecration of the lives of all the faithful, clergy and laity alike<sup>41</sup>.

The lay people bear witness to the reality that the Kingdom of God must be built up in this world, at the same time knowing full well that this Kingdom is directed to a fullness which will only be reached in eternity. The consecrated members of the Church announce that this Kingdom which even now is being constructed will have its definitive culmination only in eternity. In theological terms one would say that they announce through their very lives the *full eschatological realization* of the Kingdom. Those members of the Church who are both lay *and* consecrated are called to combine both of these aspects in their lives.

Lay people receive a great stimulus through the testimony of the consecrated members of the Church because consecrated life —appears as a sign which can and ought to attract all the members of the Church to an effective and prompt fulfillment of the duties of their Christian vocation . Consecrated people have to show in a particular way —to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below and that it is already possible to live the —new and eternal life acquired by the redemption of Christ . We are already walking towards —the future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom . They are to live the same way of life that Jesus led when he was in this world, and, through the testimony of their poverty, chastity and obedience, they bear witness to the fact that supernatural goods are superior in beauty and greatness to earthly ones. All Christians are called to bear witness to these supernatural goods, but living the evangelical counsils in imitation of Jesus shows this forth in a special way. Consecrated life should be an eloquent testimony to —both the unsurpassed breadth of the strength of Christ the King and the infinite power of the Holy Spirit marvelously working in the Church<sup>42</sup>.

On the other hand, the consecrated faithful receive very much from the lay people. These

—offer Religious families the invaluable contribution of their *being in the world* and their specific service<sup>43</sup>. The testimony of lay people living in the world helps the consecrated people to overcome the temptation of a subjective sort of holiness, which isolates itself from others, and which can lead, especially in the case of religious, to a scandalous separation between faith and life<sup>44</sup>.

#### **F. Rights and Obligations of the Laity**

The Code of Canon Law, which contains the universal legislation of the Church, seeks in general to guarantee the basic rights of all believers as well as to spell out their obligations. Those canons (laws) related to lay persons in the Church are intended to protect them as well as to create the conditions for them to flourish in the various relationships that arise among themselves and with the other members of the Church.

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<sup>40</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, 588 §1.

<sup>41</sup> *Vita consecrata*, 33.

<sup>42</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 44.

<sup>43</sup> *Vita consecrata*, 55.

<sup>44</sup> On the danger of this separation, cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 43.

Like all the other members of the Church, with whom they share a true equality in dignity<sup>45</sup>, lay persons have to maintain communion with the universal Church and with the particular church to which they belong, according to the prescripts of Canon Law<sup>46</sup> and to accept the teachings and prescriptions of the competent ecclesiastical authority<sup>47</sup>. They must direct their efforts to lead a holy life<sup>48</sup>, and they —have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in every land<sup>49</sup>. They also are obliged —to assist with the needs of the Church so that the Church has what is necessary for divine worship, for the works of the apostolate and of charity, and for the decent support of ministers as well as to —promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor<sup>50</sup>. They have the right to receive assistance from their pastors —out of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the word of God and the sacraments<sup>51</sup>. In addition they are —free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones,... their desires and their opinions —on matters which pertain to the good of the Church<sup>52</sup>; to direct associations of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world and to hold meetings for the common pursuit of these purposes<sup>53</sup>, and to receive a Christian education and acquire knowledge of Christian doctrine appropriate to their capacity and condition<sup>54</sup>.

Like all Christians they have the obligation and the right to work so that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world, both on an individual basis or joined together in associations. —This obligation is even more compelling in those circumstances in which only through them can people hear the gospel and know Christ . As lay persons they have a particular duty —to imbue and perfect the order of temporal affairs with the spirit of the gospel and thus to give witness to Christ<sup>55</sup>.

Those who have received the vocation to marriage have a —special duty to work through marriage and the family to build up the people of God , and as parents have the obligation and the right to —take care of the Christian education of their children according to the doctrine handed on by the Church<sup>56</sup>.

In normal temporal affairs, they have a right to exercise their freedom and good judgment but should —take care that their actions are imbued with the spirit of the gospel , —to heed the doctrine set forth by the magisterium of the Church and —in matters of opinion, ... to avoid setting forth their own opinion as the doctrine of the Church<sup>57</sup>.

—Lay men who possess the necessary age and qualifications ... can be admitted ... to the ministries of lector and acolyte , and lay persons in general can fulfill certain other liturgical functions<sup>58</sup>. Those lay persons who possess the necessary qualities and capacities can hold

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 208.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 209.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 212 §1.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 210.



<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 211.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 222.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 213.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 212 §2 and §3.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 216.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, canons 217 and 229.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 225 §1 and §2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 226.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 227.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, c. 230.

certain ecclesiastical offices and functions, assist the pastors of the Church as experts and advisors and receive a mandate to teach the sacred sciences<sup>59</sup>.

Finally, Canon Law states of those who commit themselves in a special way to the service of the Church:

—Lay persons who permanently or temporarily devote themselves to special service of the Church are obliged to acquire the appropriate formation required to fulfill their function properly and to carry out this function conscientiously, eagerly, and diligently.

[...] lay persons have the right to decent remuneration appropriate to their condition so that they are able to provide decently for their own needs and those of their family. They also have a right for their social provision, social security, and health benefits to be duly provided<sup>60</sup>.

These are rights and obligations contained in the universal legislation of the Church, which apply to every lay person within the Church. Those so-called *associative entities*--such as Institutes of Consecrated Life, associations of the faithful, as well as various movements and communities— have particular legislation (such as Statutes, regulations, etc.), in which the general rights and obligations of all Christians and laity found in Canon Law are applied to the specific identity and mission of each association.

#### ASSIMILATION QUESTIONS FOR TEAM REFLECTION

1. What have I learned through the study of these materials? (share with your fellow team members)
2. What is a lay person? What is characteristic of being a lay person?
3. Which aspect(s) of the mystery of Christ (that is, of his Person, his life and his mission) are better witnessed to by the lay vocation than the priestly or the religious vocation? What aspects of Jesus Christ does the lay person reflect in a more eloquent way?
4. Is being a lay person a Christian vocation or a sociological condition? In what sense can it be called a vocation?
5. How do you live out your lay vocation in the concrete circumstances of your life? (share with your fellow team members)

6. When have you experienced the presence of Christ in the world through the witness of a lay person?
  
7. What experience have you had of exercising your priestly, prophetic and royal function?
  
8. What does —living in the world— mean for us? How do we experience and conceive of our relationship with the world? How does it enrich us and how do we enrich it?

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, canons 228 and 229 §3.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 231 §1 and §2.

9. In the Church, the priestly, consecrated and lay vocations are each necessary because they each contribute something specific and necessary to the Church's mission of making Christ present in the world. If we were all priests or all consecrated or all laity, the Church would be incomplete. How is the existence of the laity a source of blessings for the Church? What do we contribute to it? Would something go missing in the Church if all its members received holy orders? What would be lacking?
10. Which benefits do we lay people receive from the priests? Of all these, which do we appreciate the most? What benefits do priests receive from us?
11. Which benefits do we lay people receive from consecrated members of the Church? Of all these, which do we appreciate the most? What benefits do the consecrated members of the Church receive from us?

#### RECOMMENDED READINGS

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 897-913

II VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, nn. 1-17 and 30-42

II VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, nn. 1-3, 11-12, 22, 24-25, 29-39, 41-45 and 47-52

JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, nn. 1-31 and 45-56

FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, nn. 46, 61-75, 87-92, 102-109 and 268-274

JOHN PAUL II, Collection of Catechesis on the Laity, Catechesis 1-10

*Letter to Diognetes* (2nd century A.D.)



[Translation from the original Spanish]

Thy Kingdom come!

CENTRAL COMMISSION FOR THE REVISION OF THE STATUTES OF REGNUM CHRISTI

Theme for Study and Reflection Number 2

**Identity and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World,**

**II. The Apostolate of the Laity**

*September 2014*

### Objective

We continue to try to better understand the identity and mission of the laity. Now we stop to consider how the lay faithful are called to participate in the mission of the Church, that is, the mission that the laity have in the Church and in the World.

We will see that the laity can cooperate in the apostolate proper to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, that is, that of the clergy, but that they also must develop a specific apostolate proper to them, the lay apostolate.

Above all, we are going to seek to understand better what the mission of the Church consists in and in what manner the lay apostolate contributes to this mission.

## Outline

A. The mission of the Church: The mission of the Church is to continue the mission of Jesus Christ in the world, that is, to evangelize. Evangelization means to make the Kingdom of God present in the world. The Church evangelizes in union with Christ as Priest, Prophet and King. The evangelizing action of the Church has three forms: pastoral, new evangelization and the mission *ad gentes*.

B. The apostolate of the lay faithful: The laity is responsible – in harmony with its nature – for the mission of the Church because it is part of the Church. Its “lay nature” prepares it in a specific way for the lay apostolate, that is, to order temporal realities according to the plan of God in such a way that they support the discovery and promotion of the dignity of the children of God. Through these realities the laity can give glory to God and merit in Christ their salvation.

### Key Concepts

Evangelization

Kingdom of Christ

Lay Apostolate

Temporal Realities

Pastoral Action

“New Evangelization”

Mission *ad gentes*

#### A. The Mission of the Church

The Church has as her mission the extension or continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ since she is his Mystical Body and is united to him as his Spouse.<sup>1</sup> The Church is an instrument of Christ and through her, he ‘simultaneously manifests and exercises the mystery of the love of God for men.’<sup>2</sup>

Through the Church, God wanted us to become children of God in Christ. He also wanted to make us participants in Christ’s own mission.<sup>3</sup> What is this mission? It is the mission of the Son, of being loving children who do the will of the father. The will of the Father is “that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth.”<sup>4</sup>

“As the ‘convocation’ of all men for salvation, the Church in her very nature is missionary, sent by Christ to all the nations to make disciples of them.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the Church accomplishes her mission by calling us to the love of God and making us live as children of God who, for love of our Father and seeking his glory desire to make all peoples sharers in salvation. Thus, motivated by love for God, The Church fulfills her purpose of bringing all peoples to communion with God and with each other: “the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.”<sup>6</sup>

The Church “receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom.”<sup>7</sup> This means that her presence in the world anticipates the “new earth” mentioned in Revelation,<sup>8</sup> working to make the life of men and women on the earth correspond to their dignity as children of God and to make social relationships harmonize with what God desired for his children. This means that the Church is the active seedling of the civilization of Christian justice and love, making the Kingdom of God present. Thus, through the Church, Christ accomplishes the plan of God that all peoples will be united under him.<sup>9</sup>

#### 1. What does ‘evangelizing’ mean?



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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ephesians 5:25-27.

<sup>2</sup> Vatican II Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 45. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 776

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John Paul, II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 11-13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Timothy, 2:4.

<sup>5</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 767. Cf. Matthew 28: 19-20; Vatican II Ecumenical Council, Decree *Ad gentes*, 2, 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Vatican II Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Revelation 21:1.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ephesians 1:10. Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 772.

Jesus Christ preached the good news: “The Kingdom of God is at hand.” It has arrived, is present in the world and therefore is within reach of everyone; and, with his works, he manifested and accomplished this Kingdom, specifically through his Incarnation. In him, in his person, the Kingdom of God – that is, the life of God’s grace that makes us his children – becomes present on the earth.<sup>10</sup> Jesus has come, and with him, we have in our reach the true life that God offers us. Thus, the “good news” is the saving presence of Jesus. The gospel that Jesus preached first and his disciples later preached is Jesus himself. To evangelize is to carry this good news to others, that is, to transmit Jesus, announce him and communicate him to others. It consists not only in saying, but above all in manifesting, witnessing, sharing that “Jesus is Lord” (the *kerygma*) – that Jesus is the Son of God incarnate who loves us, has given his life for our salvation, is living, accompanying us and who reconciles us with the Father, making us new men and women – and in really communicating the presence of Jesus to the entire world, a presence that renews all things.

Evangelizing is not simply informing someone about something. For the Christian, announcing means witnessing and communicating means making others participants in his own experience – the encounter with the living Christ. In this way, evangelizing is not only giving knowledge but giving the experience of Christ’s salvation and therefore, it is not only preaching, but also transforming hearts and lives (one’s own first of all and through witness and the word, helping others to let themselves be transformed by Christ) to the point of making the whole world rise to the dignity of the children of God for his glory.

The goal of evangelization is that all our life, personal and social, and all of creation, finding its meaning in Christ, corresponds to the plan of God’s love and glory and so reaches fullness.

This is why Pope Francis says that “evangelizing is making present the Kingdom of Christ in the world.”<sup>11</sup> This is what Jesus did and continues to do through the Church, that is, through us.

We are all called to be apostles by our baptism and by our confirmation because Jesus in making us children of the Church sends us, like he sends the whole Church, to the evangelizing mission. The Church is missionary communion and the mission that generates communion. Therefore, the Pope affirms that each Christian should say, “I am a mission on this earth, that is why I am here in this world.”<sup>12</sup> This demands from us coherence between words and life because the apostolate is contagious and fruitful witnessing of holy Christian living: of a life reconciled with the God who renews the world. In fact, the best witness of the Gospel is the martyr. Only the saint can become a fully fruitful apostle, since only the saint can be a truly docile instrument of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the perfect example of Christian coherence between words and life since in him (being the Word of God) person and mission coincide.<sup>13</sup> The Christian apostle should seek coherence between words and works, making sure that his evangelizing words are not accompanied by actions that fail to witness to Jesus Christ. We evangelize like Jesus, with works and with words: with eloquent works – so that seeing our good works all glorify our Father<sup>14</sup> – and with words in action – so that, announcing the

Lord explicitly, we do his will<sup>15</sup> – like Jesus, the Son, the Word, who “went about doing good and healing all that were

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth, From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, Doubleday, New York 2007. Chapter 3 “The Gospel of the Kingdom of God”.

<sup>11</sup> Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 176.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 273.

<sup>13</sup> “In Jesus, person and mission tend to coincide: all Christ’s saving activity was, and is, an expression of his ‘filial consciousness’ which from all eternity stands before the Father in an attitude of loving submission to his will.” (Benedict XVI, Letter, June 16, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Matthew 5:16.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Matthew 7:21 and Luke 6:46.

oppressed by the devil” making it obvious that “God was with him.”<sup>16</sup> In this way we will evangelize by attraction and not by proselytism: taking the first step, being involved, supporting, bearing fruit and rejoicing.<sup>17</sup>

Here’s how the Second Vatican Council presents the evangelizing mission of the Church:

The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all men to share in His saving redemption, and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ.<sup>18</sup>

It goes on to define evangelizing activity as “apostolate”:

All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate, which the Church carries on in various ways through all her members. For the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate.<sup>19</sup>

## *2. What is the Kingdom of God?*

It is necessary to go deeper into the rich theological concepts of “Kingdom of God” and of the “Kingdom of Christ” because we have said that evangelization consists precisely in making present the Kingdom of God or in propagating the Kingdom of Christ in the entire world, and because they are core concepts of the charism of the Movement.

The “Kingdom” indicates the reach of the salvation communicated by God. It does not refer to any political or geographic reality but to the Lordship of God over souls.<sup>20</sup> It indicates the effective dominion of the love of God who through his salvation frees us from the dominion and slavery to sin and from death in order to introduce us into the kingdom of his love, in which we live in the freedom of the children of God who for love fulfill all God wants. The Kingdom of God (or kingdom of the heaven) is the full accomplishment of the saving plan of God, which will have its culmination in eternity. Christ has already brought the Kingdom of God to this earth through his work of Redemption. Therefore, to enter into the Kingdom of Christ is to accept his Redemption and to begin already here in this temporal world to experience the primacy of God’s love and to live the life of the new man and woman redeemed by Christ. The Kingdom of Christ is an anticipation on this earth of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ founded the Church as his instrument to communicate Redemption, that is, to extend his Kingdom and anticipate the Kingdom of God through it. “To carry out the will of the Father, Christ

inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He

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<sup>16</sup> Acts of the Apostles 10:38.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 14 and 24.

<sup>18</sup> Vatican Council II, Degree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> We are using Kingdom to translate the Greek word *basileia* and the Hebrew word *malkut*; which indicate the exercise of dominion, of being Lord. So we are not referring to a future kingdom awaiting establishment, but the

sovereignty of God over the world. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, Chapter 3. The preface for the solemnity of Christ the King describes his Kingdom like this: “a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace”.

brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world."<sup>21</sup>

"From this source the Church, equipped with the gifts of its Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom."<sup>22</sup> "But the Lord wishes to spread His kingdom also by means of the laity."<sup>23</sup> "On this earth that Kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns it will be brought into full flower."<sup>24</sup> "The expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one.

For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age. Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God."<sup>25</sup>

### *3. The Threefold Office of Christ and the Mission of the Church*

If the mission of the Church is prolonging the work of Christ, spreading his Kingdom, we must remember that theology speaks of a threefold office of Christ. He is Priest, Prophet and King. With these three Old Testament terms, we are trying to express what Christ's being the Messiah consists in – that is, his saving mission.

The Church participates in this threefold office of Christ, making Christ present in the world, since she is already his Mystical Body. Participating in the Priesthood of Christ, the Church sanctifies, distributes supernatural grace, and reconciles man with God. Participating in the Prophetic Office of Christ, the Church teaches, preaches, and calls to conversion. Participating in the Kingship of Christ, the Church serves, heals, practices charity, and restores social relationships as well as the whole world in God.

### *4. The Three Expressions of Church Apostolate*

The apostolate of the Church has three expressions according to the situation in which evangelization takes place.<sup>26</sup>

*-Pastoral Action:* This is the apostolic activity directed towards the baptized and practicing faithful with the goal of helping them grow in their Christian life. In pastoral action the administration of the

sacraments, the official teaching of Christian doctrine and the promotion of public worship occupies an eminent place.

-*The new evangelization*: In its strict sense, it is the apostolate directed towards baptized persons who don't live the demands of baptism and towards those places that once were Christian and now are secularized or dechristianized. It seeks to present the Gospel anew to persons and societies that already

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<sup>21</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 3

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 5

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 36

<sup>24</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 39

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Ad Gentes*, 6; John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, 33-34, and Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 14.

received the preaching of the Gospel, but where the mutual influence between faith and culture is lost. The creativity of the lay apostolate will find here ample room for expansion.<sup>27</sup> By “new evangelization” we also understand in a wide sense the new spirit and new methods for doing apostolate in our time, in response to contemporary challenges, as much in pastoral work as in the re-evangelization of dechristianized societies in the mission *ad gentes*.

-Mission *ad gentes*: This is the traditional meaning of the missionary apostolate of the Church, which seeks to present the Gospel to those who haven't heard it yet with the goal that they will be converted by it and imbue their societies or surroundings with it, that is, that they join the Church, enriching it with their own gifts. All Christians should cooperate in the evangelization of those who are separated from Christ, since this is always the primary task of the Church.<sup>28</sup>

There are not clear borders between these three expressions of the apostolate. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish them conceptually in order to understand how to insert our apostolate into the apostolate of the Church.

Lay people committed to their missionary vocation are necessary in all three cases.

## B. The Apostolate of the Lay Faithful

The lay person participates in the threefold office of Christ, fulfilling the mission of Christ according to a specific lay vocation.<sup>29</sup> The fact of being a lay person prepares one in a specific way for the evangelizing mission, so that the lay state represents a necessary value for the Church to be able to make Christ present in the world and so fulfill its reason for being: “The apostolate of the laity derives from their Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it.”<sup>30</sup> Without the laity, just as without ordained ministers, the world would be left without the Church and without Christ.

The Second Vatican Council explained how Christ performs his priesthood, his prophetic office and his kingship through the laity.<sup>31</sup> In the lay person the duty to make the mission of Christ and of the Church one's own – the duty to evangelize – is born from the moment we are inserted into Christ through our baptism and confirmation. That is why the Code of Canon Law, canon 225 s1 establishes:

Since, like all the Christian faithful, lay persons are designated by God for the apostolate through baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and possess the right as individuals, or joined in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world.



There is a type of apostolate that is proper to the laity and that represents the specific way they are called to contribute to the mission of the Church. “Lay people, whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks, must for this very reason

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Christifideles laici*, 34

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Redemptoris missio*, 34, and *Evangelii gaudium*, 15

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Christifideles laici*, 14

<sup>30</sup> *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 1

<sup>31</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 34, 35 and 36, and *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 10. These are numbers of the Magisterium that it is necessary to read and reflect on personally and as a group.

exercise a very special form of evangelization.”<sup>32</sup> When we say that the laity is called to evangelize the world from within, we refer to the world as a conglomeration of persons, societies and created realities that is the immense field where the Kingdom of God has to grow – that is, to the positive meanings of the word, “world”. In fact, to evangelize, the lay person counts in a special way on the genius of the “secular nature”, that is, on being rooted in the world in such a way that the lay person evangelizes from within like leaven.<sup>33</sup>

Besides fulfilling the lay apostolate that characterizes them, the lay faithful also can and should cooperate with the apostolate that is proper to the clergy and with the apostolate that is accomplished through the ecclesiastical structures governed by the clergy.<sup>34</sup> The laity should contribute to the building up of the Church participating in the life of their own parish and diocese.<sup>35</sup>

The Council also placed special value on the generous self-giving of the laity to the apostolate of the Church when it entailed deeper levels of commitment:

Deserving of special honor and commendation in the Church are those lay people, single or married, who devote themselves with their professional experience, either permanently or temporarily, to the service of associations and their activities. There is a source of great joy for the Church in the fact that there is a daily increase in the number of lay persons who offer their personal service to apostolic associations and activities, either within the limits of their own nation or in the international field or especially in Catholic mission communities and in regions where the Church has only recently been implanted.

The pastors of the Church should gladly and gratefully welcome these lay persons and make sure that the demands of justice, equity, and charity relative to their status be satisfied to the fullest extent, particularly as regards proper support for them and their families. They should also take care to provide for these lay people the necessary formation, spiritual consolation, and incentive.<sup>36</sup>

Today it is necessary for us all to be aware of the responsibility that the laity should assume in the mission of the Church. Pope Francis tells us:

A clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given

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<sup>32</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 70

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 31, and *Christifideles laici*, 15

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 33, and *Code of Canon Law*, canon 228

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Christifideles laici*, 25-27

<sup>36</sup> *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 22. Note that in this passage, devoting oneself refers to full dedication in a stable or

secular form. Therefore, it does not mean consecration in the sense of those who profess the evangelical counsels (vows) with the radicality of Christ. John Paul II explains: "However, by reason of the above-mentioned principle of discernment, these forms of commitment cannot be included in the specific category of the consecrated life.

Worthy of praise are those forms of commitment which some Christian married couples assume in certain associations and movements. They confirm by means of a vow the obligation of chastity proper to the married state and, without neglecting their duties towards their children, profess poverty and obedience. They do so with the intention of bringing to the perfection of charity their love, already "consecrated" in the Sacrament of Matrimony [*Gaudium et spes*, 48]. This necessary clarification regarding the nature of such experiences in no way intends to underestimate this particular path of holiness, from which the action of the Holy Spirit, infinitely rich in gifts and inspirations, is certainly not absent." (*Vita consecrata*, 62)

the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making. Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge.<sup>37</sup>

The lay mission, in fact, demands a continuous formation that measures up to the needs of the mission.<sup>38</sup> "Lay persons are bound by the obligation and possess the right to acquire knowledge of Christian doctrine appropriate to the capacity and condition of each in order for them to be able to live according to this doctrine, announce it themselves, defend it if necessary, and take their part in exercising the apostolate."<sup>39</sup>

The laity, like all the faithful, have to remember that one is only a missionary in the measure that one is a disciple of the Lord. The sincere and growing welcome of the Gospel in one's own life is a necessary condition to transmit it through apostolic activity. We are missionary disciples.<sup>40</sup>

### *1. Lay Apostolate*

The lay apostolate, which is the apostolate proper to lay people, is oriented toward organizing temporal realities according to the plan of God.

What are temporal realities? With this term, we refer to all that which pertains to the secular world in which man walks as a pilgrim toward the definitive encounter with God. Some temporal realities are:

- all the levels of social life, such as: the family, the neighborhood, the city, the region, one's nation, the international community;
  - professional and social services in all their fullness and variety, such as education, scientific research, the economy, business, international relations, social justice, public order, medicine, media, art, shows, charitable institutions, etc.
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<sup>37</sup> *Evangelii gaudium*, 102. Cf. Francis, Speech, March 22, 2014: “there would be no clericalism if there weren’t laymen who wanted to be clericalized.” Video message to the participants in the pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe (November 16, 2013): “The temptation of clericalism, which does so much damage to the Church in Latin America, is an obstacle for the development of maturity and the Christian responsibility of a good part of the laity. Clericalism implies a self-referential posture, a group posture, which impoverishes the projection towards the encounter with the Lord, which makes us disciples, and toward the encounter with the men who await the proclamation. [...] Moreover, a formation of quality requires solid and lasting structures, which prepare to address the challenges of our days and is able to take the light of the Gospel to the different situations that the presbyters, the consecrated men and women, and the laity will meet in their pastoral action.” And *Gaudium et spes*, 53

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 28-32, and *Christifideles laici*, 57-63

<sup>39</sup> Code of Canon Law, canon 229 s.1

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 120 “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love

of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’.”

-the circumstances of life, such as joys, illnesses, loss of loved ones, recreation, sports, social events, food, etc.

-the states of life, such as, infancy, childhood, adulthood, old age;

-culture in all the breadth of its meaning<sup>41</sup>

All these realities should be formed and transformed by the love of God for man manifested in Jesus Christ and so, renewed according to the dignity of the children of God, making them instruments for the glory of God; that is, they should become means for the expression of our love for God as his children.

In the midst of these temporal realities, each one not only should strive in order to receive the eternal salvation that Christ offers in heaven, but also and above all to accomplish the mission of cooperating with God so that the world will recover its original meaning<sup>42</sup> and returning to unity under Christ,<sup>43</sup> all creatures will give glory to God by achieving their final goal.<sup>44</sup> That is, by managing temporal realities, the lay person makes his apostolic contribution in the construction of the civilization of justice and love according to the loving plan of God: sanctifying the world by reconciling humanity and creation with God, announcing the truth of the Gospel to his brothers and to creatures, and submitting, serving and healing the world to the Lordship of God.

Explaining this, the Second Vatican Council teaches:

The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.<sup>45</sup>

Canon law affirms the obligation of each lay person to accomplish this properly lay apostolate as leaven. "According to each one's own condition, they are also bound by a particular duty to imbue and perfect the order of temporal affairs with the spirit of the gospel and thus to give witness to Christ, especially in carrying out these same affairs and in exercising secular functions."<sup>46</sup>

Also, there are places in the world and circumstances of life where the Church can only make herself present and announce Christ through the laity.<sup>47</sup> That is why the missionary obligation “is even more

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<sup>41</sup> On the concept of “culture”, cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 53

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Genesis 1:28

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Colossians 1:18

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Revelation 21:1

<sup>45</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 31

<sup>46</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, canon 225 s. 2

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 33

compelling in those circumstances in which only through them can people hear the gospel and know Christ.”<sup>48</sup>

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* is a valuable instrument for understanding what the Church expects from the laity in the evangelization of society and of its different parts.

The Council reminds us that in our time it is also necessary for the laity to consider their apostolate in a framework that goes beyond the geographic limits of the local Churches, reaching out nationally and internationally.<sup>49</sup>

We are dealing with an apostolate called to acquire very diverse forms and means and that the laity can engage in either in as an individual or as members of a group.<sup>50</sup>

With this apostolate of restoring the temporal order, the laity make the Church present in the world, given that this task forms an undeniable part of the evangelizing mission of the Church<sup>51</sup> and in fact, “evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial.”<sup>52</sup> The laity assume the exercise of this apostolate of evangelization of temporal realities on their own responsibility and achieve it in their own name; as a consequence, in the programming and carrying out of this apostolate, they are the protagonists, respecting the jurisdiction and authority of the Pope, of the bishops and of parish pastors according to the laws of the Church.

The Second Vatican Council taught that priests and religious should support in the lay apostolate in a way that can be very significant; but this apostolate remains the responsibility of the laity, who carry it out in virtue of their vital union with Christ.<sup>53</sup> The clergy therefore should not restrict the just freedom of the laity in the evangelization of secular affairs.<sup>54</sup> So, for example, in the family – which is the ‘domestic Church’ – the primary responsibility for the religious education of the children belongs to the parents and in this mission they cannot be replaced, but only assisted by priests and religious. In the same way, in the promotion of social justice and in political activity, it is the mission of the laity to cooperate with other citizens, motivated by charity and under their own responsibility.<sup>55</sup> In the same way, in the evangelization of the other temporal realities, the layperson cannot defer his responsibility to priests or consecrated persons, in whom he can find support, but never a substitute.

Even when the layperson exercises his apostolate through activities done on his own without involving Church authority at all, he is still a witness and a protagonist of the Church in its missionary outreach towards all the “peripheries” that need the light of the Gospel.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 225 s.1



<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 10 and 14

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 15-21

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 5

<sup>52</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 60

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 4, 10, 24 and 25

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 36 and 37; *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 13 and 24; *Code of Canon Law*, canons 215, 216, 225,

227, 275; *Evangelii gaudium*, 104: “Even when the function of ministerial priesthood is considered ‘hierarchical’, it must be remembered that ‘it is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members’. Its key and axis is not power understood as domination, but the power to administer the sacrament of the Eucharist; this is the origin of its authority, which is always a service to God’s people.”

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 29

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 20, 45 and 46

## 2. Cooperation in the Priests' Mission

It is also proper to the faithful to give their support to the tasks and institutions headed by the hierarchy of the Church, under its direction; supporting priests in a greater and more penetrating pastoral action.<sup>57</sup> We refer to the collaboration in the liturgical and sacramental pastoral apostolate, in the promotion of public worship, in the teaching of doctrine through parroquial catechesis or teaching in seminaries and other ecclesial centers, in the promotion of Christian life through pastoral action in parishes or other ecclesial institutions. This collaboration can be occasional or more habitual. It can be done under the supervision of a priest or it can be done in virtue of the reception of a ministry (lectorate or extraordinary eucharistic minister, for example) or a special mission within the Church (teaching in an ecclesial university, for example).

Referring to apostolic commitment in the parish, the Second Vatican Council says: "The laity should accustom themselves to working in the parish in union with their priests, bringing to the Church community their own and the world's problems as well as questions concerning human salvation, all of which they should examine and resolve by deliberating in common. As far as possible the laity ought to provide helpful collaboration for every apostolic and missionary undertaking sponsored by their local parish."<sup>58</sup>

## 3. Conclusion

Pope Paul VI masterfully synthesized the essential elements of the lay apostolate, telling the laity that:

Their primary and immediate task is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community- this is the specific role of the pastors- but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world. Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering. The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them, competent to promote them and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often buried and suffocated, the more these realities will be at the service of the kingdom of God and therefore of salvation in Jesus Christ, without in any way losing or sacrificing their human content but rather pointing to a transcendent dimension which is often disregarded.<sup>59</sup>



## Study Questions for Team Reflection

1. What have I learned from studying this guide? (To be shared with team members)

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 24; *Christifideles laici*, 23, and *On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests* (1997)

<sup>58</sup> *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 10

<sup>59</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 70. In this text, by “ecclesial community” we understand the Church itself. We are not

referring to associations of the faithful or particular ecclesial communities that laypeople might belong to, whether consisting of only laypeople or of laypeople with clergy and consecrated persons.

2. Why do the lay faithful have an obligation and right to work so that the Gospel will be known and accepted by the entire world? What does this obligation arise from? Why is it a right?
  
3. What is the specific contribution the laity bring to the apostolate of the Church according to the definition of *Apostolicam actuositatem* 2? What is the difference between the lay apostolate and the apostolate of priests?
  
4. Do I grasp the difference between “doing apostolate” and being an apostle? In reference to the vocation to the lay apostolate, how is the world made more Christian through daily activities?
  
5. What would be some examples (real or imaginary) of lay apostolic initiatives for the evangelization of the different cultural environments of the world?
  
6. As members of this reflection team, what temporal realities do we feel called to evangelize?
  
7. Do we think we have the necessary formation to fulfill our evangelizing mission? Do we concern ourselves with receiving ongoing formation?
  
8. How can priests help us in accomplishing lay apostolates?
  
9. How can religious help us in accomplishing lay apostolates?
  
10. How can lay consecrated men and women help us in accomplishing lay apostolates?
  
11. How can the lay faithful help our priests in fulfilling their priestly apostolate?

## Recommended Readings

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 836 – 856, and 863 – 865

Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*

Second Vatican Council, Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*

John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, nos. 32 – 44 and 57 – 64

Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*

John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris mission*

Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*

John Paul II, Collection of Catecheses on the Laity, Catecheses 11 – 27<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Translator's note – Most of the other documents are relatively easy to find, either as a hard copy or on the Vatican website. This one is a little more difficult. It is published in English as part of *Catechesis on the Creed*,

*Letter to Diognetus* (Second Century AD)

Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, Doubleday, New York 2007, Chapter 3 “The Gospel of the Kingdom of God”

*Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church*

Thy Kingdom Come!

[Translated from the original Spanish] Central

Commission for the Review of the Regnum Christi Statutes

Theme for Study and Reflection Number 3 The Church as  
a Mystery of Communion

**Objective**

It is important to understand that the Church is a *mystery of communion*, since our lay vocation and the charism of Regnum Christi only make sense within the Church and the Church is a communion of vocations and charisms within the love of God. We are called to live our vocation and our charism in communion with the other vocations and charisms in the Church. Also, we cannot understand ourselves deeply if not in light of the other vocations and charisms; and together with them, we cannot understand our identity, mission and charisms if not within the communion of the Church.

Moreover, communion is precisely the great task that John Paul II singled out, doubtlessly in a prophetic way, for the Church in our time: “To make the Church *the home and the school of communion*: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, each day Regnum Christi aspires more and more to be a home for communion, and the current process of renewal should point in that direction.

This exposition of the theme opens with a brief initial exposition on the notion of communion within the doctrinal teaching of the Magisterium on what the Church is, in order to present afterwards the three stages of the historical evolution of the concept of communion from the Second Vatican Council to today. As support material, we add a selection of texts about the theological foundations of communion.

Outline

A. The notion of “ecclesial communion”. Communion is an appropriate notion for a deeper understanding the mystery of the Church. This concept is fundamentally



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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43.

a fruit of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and has been developed by the Magisterium following the Council. We present the supernatural nature, origin in the Trinity, organic configuration and missionary dimension of ecclesial communion.

**B.** The concept of “communion” from its beginnings to the Second Vatican Council. The first Christian communities understood communion as a spiritual reality and at the same time as a visible reality. Later there was a growing emphasis on its juridical dimension, overshadowing its theological dimension. Since the Second Vatican Council, we are seeking to recover and deepen our understanding of the richness of the original sense of this concept.

**C.** The “ecclesiology of communion”. The Church sees itself as a communion, rooted in the sacraments and therefore as a spiritual reality and not just a social or juridical reality. In the Church, there is at the same time unity and diversity between its members.

**D.** The “spirituality of communion”. Communion is not only a form of understanding the Church, but must become a way of thinking, feeling and working. Communion is made real in determined places and presupposes the restoration of the value of the identity and mission of all – nowadays particularly that of the laity – as a necessary condition for the fulfillment of the Church’s mission.

**E.** Some texts to support the theological foundation of communion.

## Key Concepts

Communion

Ecclesiology of Communion

Spirituality of Communion Dignity

of the Lay Faithful

## A. The Notion of Ecclesial Communion

## 1. Means of Explaining the Mystery of the Church

Communion “embodies and reveals the very essence of the mystery of the Church”.<sup>2</sup> In the decades prior to the Second Vatican Council, the most common image of the Church among Catholics was that of the Mystical Body of Christ.

This image harmonized unity with the plurality of the members, underlining that Christ is the Head from which the life of the whole ecclesial body springs and that many different types of members participate in the common life of the body and serve it with their specific contribution. With the Second Vatican Council, there was a change to make more use of the image of the Church as People of God, underlining the shared dignity of all the faithful by reason of their baptism and of the universal call to holiness and the pilgrim character of this people within the world. As we will see in this theme, in the last few decades, the Magisterium is putting the accent on “communion” when referring to the mystery of the Church. In everyday religious language, we are used to calling the reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist, “communion”. Here, we are not referring to that, but to a way of understanding the Church itself, to the whole of those baptized who are conformed to the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, since the Eucharist is the “fount

and apex of the whole Christian life”,<sup>3</sup> it is good to remember that the Church draws life from the Eucharist and that the Eucharist is the summit of the communion between humanity and God and of the faithful with each other.

Therefore, the name of “communion” for the Eucharistic sacrament makes sense, since the celebration of this sacrament consolidates ecclesial communion and brings it to perfection.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, we should not forget that the Church can be seen – and studied

– in different dimensions. This takes effort. We shouldn’t confuse these with its definition, as if by force we wanted to distill all the Church’s aspects into a single phrase. Remember that the Church is above all a *mystery*<sup>5</sup> and therefore, we know

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>3</sup> Ecumenical Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 1: “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth

does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates *the heart of the mystery of the Church*. The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates *the heart of the mystery of the Church*.”; 34: “The Church is called during her earthly

pilgrimage to maintain and promote communion with the Triune God and communion among the faithful. For this purpose she possesses the word and the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, by which she “constantly lives and grows” [*Lumen gentium*, 26] and in which she expresses her very nature. It is not by chance that the term *communion* has become one of the names given to this sublime sacrament.” And 34-46 (these numbers correspond to Chapter IV *The Eucharist and Ecclesial Communion*).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 770-780, “Mystery” is spoken of in the sense in which we refer to a reality

revealed by God with salvific value for us that we know by faith (in this case, that reality is the Church). Therefore,

it through analogy, which presents a reality in a partial form and not in its fullness. So, it is important to be clear that *communion* is one of the possible models and that we should not forget to frame it within all Catholic doctrine on the Church in order to interpret it correctly, without trying to reduce to this one word all that we can say about the Church. Throughout history, ecclesiology (that is, the part of theology that studies the Church itself) has used different images or concepts in order to express the mystery of the Church according to what is most helpful or possible within the conditions of cultures and times. In our days, the concept of the Church as communion is what the universal Magisterium insists on the most.

In fact, through the centuries, the Church – led by the Holy Spirit – discovers its true identity ever more deeply. More recently, the Second Vatican Council (1962- 1965) has been an important landmark, since it continued the reflection on the Church in its relation with the modern world, which produced a renewed concept of the identity and mission of the Church. When we study the documents of the Council (principally the dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*), we find five principal notions: The Church as the People of God, the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church as the Universal Sacrament of Salvation, the Church as the Vine and the Branches, and the Church as Communion. All five seek to express the mystery of the Church, in which they are closely related to each other. The notion of the Church as communion (which this theme deals with) has undergone later development, based on the council's documents.

## 2. *Supernatural nature of ecclesial communion*

It would be an error to limit ecclesial communion to the visible complementarity between the states of life in the Church, to the practical cooperation in some affairs or the effective distribution of tasks. This would be to reduce it to a superficial, external, organizational, pragmatic and materialistic dimension that definitely will not make us commit ourselves profoundly, but at best only superficially in a few activities. It would be no less an error to limit communion to an interior sentiment, an intellectual supposition or a blind affirmation, since this would be to reduce it to a dimension that is spiritualistic and in the end individualistic, that also fails to make us question our own lives or make us grow. In the same way, it would be a mistake to identify communion with fellowship, with growth in numbers, with communication, with socializing or with empathy or friendship. In such a case,

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although we do have a sure knowledge of this reality through the certainty of the faith, we can never in this life have a complete knowledge of it. All the truths of the faith are “mysteries” (the mysteries of the life of Jesus, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, etc.), since

they contain a salvific reality that remains hidden to our eyes, even when faith permits us to have some knowledge of it.

we would be assuming a non-transcendent and naturalistic vision of ecclesial life. Also, it would be wrong to confuse communion with just any relationship with others, beyond reason or measure or awareness of one's own identity and that of our neighbor. Lastly, it would be equally wrong to interpret communion as the imposition of uniformity, simple submission to authority or silencing minorities. This would be the equivalent of reducing the Faith to ideology and ecclesial life to a system of power.

Ecclesial communion is participation in the love of the Trinity that, through the Church, is poured out on the world attracting us to union with God and with others. It is fundamentally the "communion of the saints" in virtue of the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> It is "a communion of life, charity and truth" instituted by Christ to be the instrument of universal redemption and extend itself throughout the world being in it light and salt.<sup>7</sup> It is brotherhood in Him who makes us participants in the divine life as adoptive children of the Father according to his plan, the anticipation and beginning of the eternal gathering together with "the Father in the universal Church".<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, communion is built on the reciprocal, aware and free self-giving of the faithful through Christian charity, based on the faith in which we belong to one another in Christ.<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis has invited all people since the beginning of his pontificate to care for one another, like brothers and sisters who share the same humanity, and even more we are invited as Christians, to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit of unity and diversity, to the Spirit of harmony.<sup>10</sup> "For all of us, who

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<sup>6</sup> The Holy Spirit "unifies the Church in communion" and "the members of the People of God are called to a communication of goods" that is spiritual, apostolic and temporal; *Lumen gentium*, 4, 13 and cf. 50. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 949-953.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 9 and cf. 50 ("the communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ").

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Francis, Homily at the beginning of his pontificate (March 19, 2013); "The vocation of being a "protector",

however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. The vocation of being a "protector", however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. [...]. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, [...]; Idem, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 216; "all of us, as Christians, are called to watch over and protect the fragile world in which we live, and all its peoples. all of us, as Christians, are called to watch over and protect the fragile world in which we live, and all its



peoples”; Idem, Homily with the movements on Pentecost (May 19, 2013); “the Holy Spirit would appear to create disorder in the Church, since he brings the diversity of charisms and gifts; yet all this, by his working, is a great source of wealth, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which does not mean uniformity, but which leads everything back to harmony. In the Church, it is the Holy Spirit who creates harmony. the Holy Spirit would appear to create disorder in the Church, since he brings the diversity of charisms and gifts; yet all this, by his working, is a great source of wealth, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which does not mean uniformity, but which leads everything back to harmony. In the Church, it is the

are sons of God and constitute one family in Christ, as long as we remain in communion with one another in mutual charity and in one praise of the mostholy Trinity, are corresponding with the intimate vocation of the Church.”<sup>11</sup>

### 3. An “organic” communion: unity and diversity

What introduces us into the communion of the Church is our divine childhood in Christ. From Baptism – and from the other sacraments of Christian initiation – proceeds the common dignity of all Christians and at the same time the *raison d’etre* of the diversity of vocations: “From their rebirth in Christ, there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality regarding dignity and action by which they all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ according to each one’s own condition and function.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore:

Ecclesial communion is more precisely likened to an “organic” communion, analogous to that of a living and functioning body. In fact, at one and the same time it is characterized by a *diversity* and a *complementarity* of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities. Because of this diversity and complementarity every member of the lay faithful is seen *in relation to the whole body* and offers a *totally unique contribution* on behalf of the whole body.<sup>13</sup>

The Pauline image of a body remains as a point of reference: “Just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other.”<sup>14</sup> Thus: “the chosen People of God is one: ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism’; sharing a common dignity as members from their being regenerated in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, in the Church, we are all – clergy and laity – “brothers and sisters” and “if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ. For the distinction which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God bears within

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Holy Spirit who creates harmony [...] He is indeed harmony. Only the Spirit can awaken diversity, plurality and multiplicity, while at the same time building unity.” Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 20; “One and the same Spirit is always the dynamic principle of diversity and unity in the Church.”

<sup>11</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 51.

<sup>12</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, canon 208. Cf. *Christifideles laici*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Christifideles laici*, 20.

<sup>14</sup> *Romans* 12: 4-5.

<sup>15</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 32.

it a certain union, since pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need.”<sup>16</sup>

#### 4. *Missionary communion*

Ecclesial communion is “missionary communion” since the Church is called to welcome all and is sent to everyone to reconcile humanity with God and, in him, make brothers of all men.<sup>17</sup> “Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that *communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion.*”<sup>18</sup>

### B. The concept of *communion* from its beginnings to the Second Vatican Council

The Latin word, ‘*communion*’, is a translation from the Greek ‘κοινωνία’ (*koinonia*). The root ‘κοιν-’ (*koin-*) means ‘that which is in common’.

“What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us, as we are in union with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing this to you to make our own joy complete.” (1 John 1: 3-4)

This passage from the first letter of Saint John can be considered the reference point for any correct Christian interpretation of communion, since it brings together its essential elements; communion begins with the encounter with the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who comes to us through the proclamation of the Church.

Thus is born our communion with each other, which is founded on our communion with the One and Triune God.<sup>19</sup>

Studying other texts from the New Testament, we can say that communion is presented in three different senses:

-With reference to Christ (Christological sense). Communion with Christ, the Son of God: called to the brotherhood with the Son (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:9), communion

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Christifideles laici*, 8: The Church “is *mystery* because the very life and love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the gift gratuitously offered to all those who are born of water and the Holy Spirit (cf. *John* 3:5), and called to

relive the very *communion* of God and to manifest it and communicate it in history (mission)”.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Conference on the ecclesiology of Lumen gentium pronounced in the International Congress on the Application of the Second Vatican Council, organized by the Great Jubilee of the year 2000*.

with the Body and Blood of Christ (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:16), our part in the sufferings of Christ (Philippians 3:10) etc.

-With reference to the Holy Spirit (Pneumatological sense). Communion with the Holy Spirit; we participate in the divine nature (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:4), cooperation with evangelization (Philippians 1:5), communion with the Spirit (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:13, Philippians 2:1), etc.

-With reference to the Church (Ecclesiological sense), that is, communion with the Church; the community of the believers in Christ, the brothers who share among themselves different gifts (Acts 2:42-45; 4:32-37), acts of solidarity with the community (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:4), the ministry of the apostle in the different communities (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:23), etc.

“Communion is a notion which is held in high honor in the ancient Church (and also today, especially in the East).”<sup>20</sup> With the passing of the centuries, the ecclesial sense came to be the dominant one, which continued throughout the Middle Ages. On the other hand, the concept of ecclesial communion will gradually take on a more and more *juridical* character (regulation of the relationships between communities, between the bishop and the faithful, for example) than *theological-spiritual* especially since the Council of Trent (1545- 1563), which in response to the protestant reform, sought to emphasize the

visibility of the Church, that is its institutional dimension. For the purposes of this theme, we can consider that this tendency will be maintained practically without change until the end of the nineteenth century.

Influenced by the theological currents that were brewing during the first half of the twentieth century, the Second Vatican Council returned to communion in its original sense, going beyond the juridical. The constitution *Lumen gentium* presents the Church which “is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race”<sup>21</sup> that is, like an internal spiritual reality or mystery, that is expressed visibly, understanding that the Church at the same time is a visible assembly and spiritual community.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Lumen gentium*, Preliminary note of explanation, 2<sup>nd</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognize that the word “communion” does not expressly occupy a central place in the documents of the Council.<sup>23</sup> Although the texts on ecumenism<sup>24</sup> mention it and *Lumen gentium* refers to it thirty-four times, most of the time, when we encounter the word “communion” in these documents its meaning is primarily juridical (the unity of faith and communion with Peter and with his successors, the link between ecclesial government and ecclesial communion, the particular Churches, the office of bishop, etc.). As we will see, the process of explanation and theological development of the concept came later, yet always based on the Council texts.

### C. The “Ecclesiology of Communion” since the Second Vatican Council

The 1985 Synod of Bishops, that attempted to strike a kind of balance on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Council, tried to present the whole of the conciliar ecclesiology starting with a new basic concept: that of ‘the ecclesiology of communion;’<sup>25</sup> which we could define as “the effort to understand the Church more clearly as communion and to apply this idea more concretely to life.”<sup>26</sup>

“The Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985 saw in the concept of an “ecclesiology of communion” the central and fundamental idea of the documents of the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>27</sup> Three principal contributions from the final relation of the Synod stand out:

-Communion is based on the sacraments. It is of the spiritual order. Therefore, “the ecclesiology of communion cannot be reduced to purely organizational questions or to problems which simply relate to powers.”<sup>28</sup>

-The one, universal Church is present in all the particular churches. The unity and plurality of the Church must be recognized.

-Participation and co-responsibility,<sup>29</sup> which should exist on all levels and between all levels: bishops, priests, religious, laity, young people, adults, etc. Communion commits all the baptized

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Conference on the ecclesiology of Lumen gentium pronounced in the International Congress on the Application of the Second Vatican Council, organized by the Great Jubilee of the year 2000.*

<sup>24</sup> We are referring to the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* and the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*.



<sup>25</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Conference on the ecclesiology of Lumen gentium pronounced in the International Congress on the Application of the Second Vatican Council, organized by the Great Jubilee of the year 2000*.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 34. Cf. 1985 Synod of Bishops, *Final Report*, C1.

<sup>28</sup> 1985 Synod of Bishops, *Final Report*, C1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. C6.

faithful to Christ (and not only some more committed ones or those who have consecrated their life, for example),

This last idea will be important, because it reflects a change passing from an ecclesiology that starts from the principle of authority and from the *sacra potestas* exercised by those who have received the sacrament of orders as the principle of structure in the Church, towards a self-concept of the Church that characterizes the Christian communities of the first centuries and that starts from the fundamental equality of the faithful in virtue of baptism.<sup>30</sup>

In the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici* (1988) the concept of communion is mentioned one hundred times, reinforcing the link between the different states of life in the Church, which is made up of these challenges:

-That of conceiving of communion of as both a spiritual and visible reality. This implies that ecclesial communion cannot be adequately understood when it is understood as a simple sociological and psychological reality (as something purely practical, means of organizing, programming, having common objectives, etc.). The exhortation is categorical when it affirms that the identity and mission of the laity only will be understood adequately from the living context of Church as communion.<sup>31</sup>

-That of organic communion, which is diversity and complementarity. In the Church different vocations live together. It is precisely thanks to this complementarity that each faithful layperson finds his or her place in relation with the entire body and offers it his or her own contribution.<sup>32</sup>

What's more, *Christifideles laici* deepens the relationship between communion and mission: Christ, as the Son of God incarnate, is the source of communion with God and between persons, and is at the same time source of evangelization, that is, the announcement of the Kingdom among us. Both mutually imply each other, communion being the efficacious sign of evangelization.

"Even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). The fruitfulness of missionary activity is to be found in this communion.<sup>33</sup>

Communion in itself is missionary, since through it, the Church presents itself and acts as the visible sacrament of salvific unity.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. A. Anton, *El Misterio de la Iglesia, Evolucion historica de as ideas eclesiologicas*. II, BAC maior (Madrid-Toledo 1987) 930-931. (No English translation exists)

<sup>31</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 18-19.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 20.

<sup>33</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris mission*, 75.

Notwithstanding the contribution of the Synod of 1985, the understanding of communion in some situations continued to lose transcendence and empty itself of its theological content to transform itself into a "slogan".<sup>35</sup> For this motive and for others, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a clarification in 1992: *Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*, whose content we now lay out:

-This communion is not just visible, but also invisible. The doctrine of the Apostles, the sacraments and the hierarchical order manifest the intimate relation between visible communion and invisible communion. Because of this, we cannot separate one dimension from the other. In fact, it is this relationship that constitutes the Church as the sacrament of salvation, and therefore, it cannot be a reality folded in upon itself or self-referential,<sup>36</sup> but permanently open to the missionary and ecumenical dynamic, since "she is sent to the world to announce and witness, to make present and spread the mystery of communion which is essential to her: to gather together all people and all things into Christ."<sup>37</sup>

-The idea of unity in diversity is explicitly linked to the ecclesiology of communion. The Church is not a democracy nor can it renounce the principle of hierarchical constitution set in place by Christ.

*"The universality of the Church involves, on the one hand, a most solid unity, and on the other, a plurality and a diversification, which do not obstruct unity, but rather confer upon it the character of 'communion'".* This plurality refers both to the diversity of ministries, charisms, and forms of life and apostolate within each particular Church [...]. In the context of the Church understood as communion, consideration should also be given to the many institutes and societies that express the charisms of consecrated life and apostolic life, with which the Holy Spirit enriches the Mystical Body of Christ. Although these do not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, they belong to its life and holiness.<sup>38</sup>

That same year, 1992, the Catechism of the Catholic Church was also published. Its contribution will be very important when collecting and organizing the ideas that the Magisterium had been laying out about communion. Here, we will only mention the title of two paragraphs of the catechism: *The Church Is One* (numbers

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Conference on the ecclesiology of Lumen gentium pronounced in the International Congress on the Application of the Second Vatican Council, organized by the Great Jubilee of the year 2000*.

<sup>36</sup> *Evangelii gaudium*, 236.

<sup>37</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*, 1992, 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 15-16.

813-822) and *Christ's Faithful – Hierarchy, Laity, Consecrated Life* (numbers 871-873).<sup>39</sup>

#### D. The “Spirituality of Communion” in our Days

The apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata* (1996), that mentions communion ninety-five times, will be the first text to speak expressly of a “spirituality of communion” and will continue to deepen the idea of “missionary communion”, already present in the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*.<sup>40</sup>

We could define this “spirituality of communion” as “a way of thinking, speaking and acting which enables the Church to grow in depth and extension.”<sup>41</sup> “*communion begets communion*: in essence it is a *communion that is missionary*”.<sup>42</sup> In a world that lives a reality of division and discord (individualism, destruction of the family and of society); communion presents itself as a way to liberation in the face of the slavery of sin. The desire for communion is a clear sign of the times, not only for the Church, but also for the world. It becomes a point of union between them: a Church called to be witness of communion, the image of the One and Triune God and a world that fervently looks for that witness.

In the apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), outlining a plan for the Church of the third millennium, St. John Paul II gives us the most complete development of the concept. Between numbers 42 and 46 (Part IV: Witnesses to Love), we can find a synthesis of the spirituality of communion. Number 43 is particularly revealing:

But what does this mean in practice? Here too, our thoughts could run immediately to the action to be undertaken, but that would not be the right impulse to follow. Before making practical plans, we need to *promote a spirituality of communion*, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are a part of me”. This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings,

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<sup>39</sup> The titles in the Catechism in Spanish are much different: *The Unity of the Church* (numbers 813-822) and *The Diversity of Ministries* (871-873) – *Translator's note*.

<sup>40</sup> *Christifideles laici*, 32.

<sup>41</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata*, 46.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a "gift for me". A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to "make room" for our brothers and sisters, bearing "each other's burdens" (*Gal 6:2*) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of

communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, "masks" of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.<sup>43</sup>

Communion is related with the living of charity: communion as a fruit of the love that makes of us all a single heart and a single soul (cf. *Acts 4:32*) and is converted into the heart of the Church, as Saint Therese of Lisieux wrote: "I understood that the Church had a Heart and that this Heart was aflame with Love. I understood that Love alone stirred the members of the Church to act [...] I understood that Love encompassed all vocations, that Love was everything".<sup>44</sup> We can say that from the spirituality of communion, I consider the *other* as a part of myself and that following the dynamic of love, the other comes to be *necessary* for me. We cannot

fulfill our own vocation except in communion with others.

The so-called places of communion are also presented in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, as the spiritual places where this spirituality can be promoted, that should be cultivated in every moment and on every level: between bishops, priests, and deacons; between the clergy and the entire people of God, between religious and the laity; between ecclesial associations and movements. Only the entire Church makes Christ present in the world, since only the entire Church is his Mystical Body. Because of this, no groups or particular ecclesial class can try to fulfill the work of Christ isolated from the rest. No ecclesial vocation can try to monopolize the richness of Christ nor the reality of the Church.

Customs and institutions that foster participation should be promoted and valued. Although they may be consultative and not deliberative, they have a full meaning and importance. In this way, a reciprocal and effective listening can be promoted among all, preserving on the one hand unity in essentials and on the other seeking to move toward well thought out and shared decisions:

While the wisdom of the law, by providing precise rules for participation, attests to the hierarchical structure of the Church and averts any temptation to arbitrariness or unjustified claims, the spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with



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<sup>43</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 42, where the text of St. Therese of Lisieux is quoted.

the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul. While the wisdom of the law, by providing precise rules for participation, attests to the hierarchical structure of the Church and averts any temptation to arbitrariness or unjustified claims, the spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with

the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul.<sup>45</sup>

In the structure of communion, which recognizes the legitimate differences between different places and states of life, there will be inevitable situations of occasional conflict. The way to resolve them will never be to silence disagreements or to immediately have recourse to authoritarian solutions, but to live charity, which is always liberating and unbiased. This can only be achieved by promoting a culture of mutual esteem, respect and harmony in the heart of the Church, recognizing the legitimate differences to open a real dialog between all the members of the people of God, whether clergy or lay. The bonds of union will

always be greater than the motives for division; as St. Augustine says unity in the necessary, freedom in the doubtful, charity in everything.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, it is important in the light of spirituality of communion that all the baptized be aware of their own responsibility in the ecclesial life. All the vocations are a richness for the Church and should be welcomed since they are rooted in Baptism.

Finally, we can affirm that a community is Christian in the measure in which it is in communion with God, with the brethren – including hierarchical communion, in distinctive aspects and degrees – and with the world, including love of enemies.

So, the Kingdom of God is made present and built up. The Church is a community called together by the Word; a community of faith, of life and of love; a liturgical community, especially a Eucharistic and prayerful community; a community in dialog; a community that is evangelizing and missionary without limits.

## **E.** Some support texts for a foundation of the theology of communion

### *1. Foundation in the Trinity*

The mystery of the communion of the Church has its source in God himself, who reveals himself as an interpersonal communion of love and calls us to the salvation of all humanity, from the heart of the Trinity.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 45.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Javier Del Rio, *Eclesiología de Comunión y Nueva Evangelización*, 9 [There is no English translation – Translator’s note], and *Gaudium et spes*, 92.

The communion of Christians with Jesus has the communion of God as Trinity, namely, the unity of the Son to the Father in the gift of the Holy Spirit, as its model and source, and is itself the means to achieve this communion: united to the Son in the Spirit's bond of love, [...] From the communion that Christians experience in Christ there immediately flows the communion which they experience with one another [...] In this communion is the wonderful reflection and participation in the mystery of the intimate life of love in God as Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit <sup>47</sup>

Communion, then, has two dimensions: the transcendent dimension, communion with God, and the non-transcendent dimension that is communion with humanity, which springs from the first. In this double dimension, the agent of this communion is the Holy Spirit and it is manifested concretely in the life of the Church, which is like a visible, efficient continuation, that is, like a sacrament of the life of the Trinity. Since Pentecost, the Church is in Christ and Christ in the Church, in virtue of the Spirit. Thus, God is all in all. (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:28) <sup>48</sup>

## 2. *Christological Foundation*

The Church is communion with Jesus. Three texts chosen from the Catechism:

From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them, and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings. (cf. Mark 1:16-20; Mark 3:13-19; Matthew 13: 10-17; Luke 10: 17-20; Luke 22:28-30) Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion between him and those who would follow him: "Abide in me, and I in you.... I am the vine, you are the branches." (John 15:4-5) and he proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood

abides in me, and I in him." (John 6:56) <sup>49</sup>

When his visible presence was taken from them, Jesus did not leave his disciples orphans. He promised to remain with them until the end of time; he sent them his Spirit. (cf. John 20:22; Acts 2:33) As a result communion with Jesus has become, in a way, more intense: "By communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation." <sup>50</sup>

The comparison of the Church with the body casts light on the intimate bond between Christ and his Church. Not only is she gathered around him; she is united in him, in his body. Three aspects of the Church as the Body of Christ are to be more specifically noted: the unity of all her

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<sup>47</sup> *Christifideles laici*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Bruno Forte, *La Iglesia, icono de la Trinidad*, Sigueme (Salamanca 1992), 30. (English edition is Bruno Forte,

*The Church: Icon of the Trinity: A Brief Study*, Pauline Books and Media (1991). –*Translator's note*)

<sup>49</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 787.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 788; Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 7.

members with each other as a result of their union with Christ; Christ as head of the Body; and the Church as bride of Christ.<sup>51</sup>

### *3. Pneumatological Foundation*

The Holy Spirit and communion:

In order that we might be unceasingly renewed in Him, (Ephesians 4:23) He has shared with us His Spirit who, existing as one and the same being in the Head and in the members, gives life to, unifies and moves through the whole body. This He does in such a way that His work could be compared by the holy Fathers with the function which the principle of life, that is, the soul, fulfills in the human body.<sup>52</sup>

The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. the Spirit prepares men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. the Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to bring them into communion with God, that they may "bear much fruit."<sup>53</sup>

Thus the Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity. All of us who have received one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense blended together with one another and with God. For if Christ, together with the Father's and his own Spirit, comes to dwell in each of us, though we are many, still the Spirit is one and undivided. He binds together the spirits of each and every one of us . . . and makes all appear as one in him. For just as the power of Christ's sacred flesh unites those in whom it dwells into one body, I think that in the same way the one and undivided Spirit of God, who dwells in all, leads all into spiritual unity.<sup>54</sup>

### *4. Sacramental Foundation*

Believers who respond to God's word and become members of Christ's Body, become intimately united with him: "In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe, and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his Passion and glorification." (cf. Romans 6:4-5; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12: 13) This is especially true of Baptism, which unites us to Christ's death and Resurrection, and the Eucharist, by which "really sharing in the body of the Lord . . . we are taken up into communion with him and with one another."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 789.

<sup>52</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 7

<sup>53</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 737.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.<sup>56</sup>

[...] to see clearly how the *res* of the sacrament of the Eucharist is the unity of the faithful within ecclesial communion. The Eucharist is thus found at the root of the Church as a mystery of communion. The relationship between Eucharist and *communio* had already been pointed out by the Servant of God John Paul II in his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. He spoke of the memorial of Christ as "the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church" [...] "the oneness and indivisibility of the eucharistic body of the Lord implies the oneness of his mystical body, which is the one and indivisible Church."<sup>57</sup>

Communion means that the seemingly uncrossable frontier of my ego is left wide open and can be so because Jesus has first allowed himself to be opened completely, has taken us all into himself and has put himself totally into our hands. Hence, Communion means the fusion of existences; just as in the taking of nourishment the body assimilates foreign matter to itself and is thereby enabled to live, in the same way my ego is "assimilated" to that of Jesus, it is made similar to him in an exchange that increasingly breaks through the lines of division. This same event takes place in the case of all who communicate; they are all assimilated to this "bread" and thus are made one among themselves – one body.

In this way, Communion makes the Church by breaching an opening in the walls of subjectivity and gathering us into a deep communion of existence. It is the event of "gathering", in which the Lord joins us to one another. The formula "The Church is the Body of Christ" thus states that the Eucharist, in which the Lord gives us his body and makes us one body, forever remains the place where the Church is generated, where the Lord himself never ceases to found her anew; in the Eucharist the Church is most compactly herself – in all places, yet one only, just as he is one only. [...] The Fathers summed up these two aspects – Eucharist and gathering – in the word *communio*, which is once more returning to favor today. The Church is communion; she is the communion of the Word and Body of Christ and is thus communion among men, who by means of this communion that brings them together from above and from within are made one people, indeed, one Body.<sup>58</sup>

## 5. Ecclesiological Foundation

The Church is one because of her source: "the highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit." The Church is one because of her founder: for "the Word made flesh, the prince of peace, reconciled all men to God by the cross . . . restoring the unity of all in one people and one body." The Church is one because of her "soul": "It is the



Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 1324, Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, 15.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion, Understanding the Church Today*, 1996, 37, 76.

faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity." Unity is of the essence of the Church: What an astonishing mystery! There is one Father of the universe, one Logos of the universe, and also one Holy Spirit, everywhere one and the same; there is also one virgin become mother, and I should like to call her "Church."<sup>59</sup>

From the beginning, this one Church has been marked by a great diversity which comes from both the variety of God's gifts and the diversity of those who receive them. Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together. Among the Church's members, there are different gifts, offices, conditions, and ways of life. "Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church there are also particular Churches that retain their own traditions." The great richness of such diversity is not opposed to the Church's unity. Yet sin and the burden of its consequences constantly threaten the gift of unity. and so the Apostle has to exhort Christians to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3)<sup>60</sup>

"In virtue of their rebirth in Christ there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality with regard to dignity and the activity whereby all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ in accord with each one's own condition and function."<sup>61</sup>

The very differences which the Lord has willed to put between the members of his body serve its unity and mission. For "in the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by his power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God." Finally, "from both groups [hierarchy and laity] there exist Christian faithful who are consecrated to God in their own special manner and serve the salvific mission of the Church through the profession of the evangelical counsels."<sup>62</sup>

Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that *communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion*. It is always the one and the same Spirit who calls together and unifies the Church and sends her to preach the Gospel "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). On her part, the Church knows that the communion received by her as a gift is destined for all people. Thus the Church feels she owes to each individual and to humanity as a whole the gift received from the Holy Spirit that pours the charity of Jesus Christ into the hearts of believers, as a mystical force for internal cohesion and external growth. The mission of the Church flows from her own nature. Christ has willed it to be so: that of "sign and instrument... of unity of all the human race"(120). Such a mission has the purpose of making everyone know and live the "new" communion that the Son of God made man introduced into the history of the world. In this regard, then, the testimony of John the Evangelist defines in an undeniable way

the blessed end towards which the entire mission of the Church is directed: "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you

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<sup>59</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 813.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 814.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 872, *Code of Canon Law*, canon 208, Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 32.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 873, *Code of Canon Law*, canon 207 s.2.

may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).<sup>63</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

*Church communion then is a gift, a great gift of the Holy Spirit, to be gratefully accepted by the lay faithful, and at the same time to be lived with a deep sense of responsibility. This is concretely realized through their participation in the life and mission of the Church, to whose service the lay faithful put their varied and complementary ministries and charisms.*<sup>64</sup>

### Assimilation Questions for Team Reflection

1. How did I understand these ideas before reading this theme? How do I understand it now? In what ways has it enriched me?
2. What do I understand by "communion"? What do I understand by "ecclesiology of communion"? What do I understand by "Spirituality of communion"?
3. How can we grow in communion to avoid being reduced to mere juridical or practical units?
4. *Novo millennio ineunte* speaks of "places of communion". What places of communion could I identify in the life of Regnum Christi? How could we take better advantage of them?
5. With respect to the life of Regnum Christi in the Church, how can we live our place within the Church in the light of the ecclesiology of communion?
6. What does the necessity of having unity in diversity mean to me? How does this apply to life in the Movement (in the different branches of Regnum Christi, in the sections, in the works of apostolate, etc.)?

7. The apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata* speaks of spirituality of communion as a mode of thinking, speaking and working. How can we activate it in our teams, sections, localities and territories?

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<sup>63</sup> *Christifideles laici*, 32.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 20.

8. We know that the Church should not be turned in on itself, but missionary. Is our section a missionary community?
9. Does the spirituality of communion motivate me to invite others to the Movement?
10. Read *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43. If I had to choose one phrase from this text, which one would it be?

### Recommended Reading

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, numbers 770 – 879.

Ecumenical Council Vatican II, Dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, numbers 1 – 17, 30-38.

John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, numbers 18 – 21. John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata*, numbers 46 – 51.

John Paul II, Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, numbers 42 – 46.

Joseph Ratzinger, *Conference on the ecclesiology of Lumen gentium pronounced in the International Congress on the Application of the Second Vatican Council, organized by the Great Jubilee of the year 2000*.

Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion, Understanding the Church Today*, 1996. 1985 Synod of Bishops, *Final Report*, numbers C1, C2, C6.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Some Aspects of the Church Considered as Communion*, 1992, numbers 1 – 6, 15 – 16.

*October 2014*

## Theme for Study and Reflection Number 4

### The Movements and New Ecclesial Communities

#### Goal

We want to understand the identity, nature and principal characteristics of ecclesial movements more deeply so that we can more firmly ground our love for God's call to be a part of the Regnum Christi Movement.

In order to do this, we will try to understand what characterizes these new ecclesial realities: how have they developed through history – in broad strokes – and the encouragement given them by the Second Vatican Council, what are their features, as well as the reasons for their existence from the theological point of view and their place within canon law.

#### Outline

**A.** A Look at History: The movements as an expression of the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church through the ages. Their originality starting with the ecclesiology of communion of the Second Vatican Council and the rise of the movements as answers to the needs of the Church and the World.

**B.** Nature of ecclesial movements: 1) Their place in the Church: the co-essentiality of the institutional dimension (Petrine and episcopal ministry) and the charismatic dimension (the action of the Holy Spirit that bursts into the life of the Church) and the apostolicity in the movements (as a continuation of the evangelizing mission of the Church). 2) Definition of movements starting with their essential elements, like the participation of faithful from different states of life, a journey of faith and witness of Christian life, the unique charism and the apostolic dedication with a unique missionary drive. 3) Place in canon law.

**C.** Criteria of Ecclesiality (what makes them part of the Church): the primacy of the universal vocation to holiness. The witness of a firm and convinced communion, with the Pope, the Bishop and all the forms of



apostolate in the Church. Participation in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Presence in human society, at the service of the integral dignity of humanity.

D. Closeness of the movements to the recent Popes: The encouragement of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI through the world congresses of ecclesial movements. The movements as gift and richness for the Church's going forth, in the Magisterium of Pope Francis. Joy as a characteristic of the movements.

### Key Concepts

Movement

New Ecclesial Communities New Forms

of Consecrated Life Apostolicity

Association of the Faithful International

Association of the Faithful Criteria of Ecclesiality

### A. A Look at History

In his conference on *The Theological Locus of Ecclesial Movements* at the World Congress for Ecclesial Movements in 1998, the then Cardinal Ratzinger said that throughout history “there are the ever renewed irruptions of the Holy Spirit, which ceaselessly revitalize and renew this structure [of the Church],”<sup>1</sup> identifying different “apostolic movements” that have appeared throughout the centuries. One of the first of these movements, was the monasticism of St. Anthony (250-356) and St. Basil (330-379), in which we find the desire to live the Gospel radically in its fullness and to establish a rule for living Christianity in an integral way. Another was the movement of monastic reform of Cluny (in France in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries). Afterwards there followed the mendicant orders of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (the

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “The Theological Locus of the Ecclesial Movements”. Discourse at the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, Rome, May 27, 1998.

Franciscans of St. Francis of Assisi and the Dominicans of St. Dominic Guzman). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were important movements of evangelization, among them the Jesuits. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was the "missionary" movement with the birth of many new congregations dedicated to evangelization. We can see how the Holy Spirit constantly has inspired new charisms in the Church and how historically there have been "movements" that have promoted conversion and reform in the *Ecclesia semper reformanda* (Church is always in need of reform).

Nevertheless, the movements – as we understand them today – constitute an innovation in the life of the Church born from the vision of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). As we have seen in a previous theme, this council returned to the concept of the Church as a mystery of communion. The movements base their own essence on the "ecclesiology of communion". The constitution *Lumen gentium* helps us to understand this innovation by turning to the theology of the charisms (which is valid in all times and places):

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:11), He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit" (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:7). These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church."<sup>2</sup>

Although some of these great associative realities were founded before the Second Vatican Council (for example, Chiara Lubich founded the Focolare Movement or Work of Mary in 1943, during the Second World War, and Communion and Liberation was born from the initiative of Fr. Luigi Giussani in 1954), it is since the time of the Council that we have witnessed an exceptional flowering of the movements, their world-wide diffusion and multiplicity, and other group realities, especially with a lay character. It has been a flowering that as St. John Paul II would say:

We can speak of a *new era of group endeavours* of the lay faithful. In fact, "alongside the traditional forming of associations, and at times coming from their very roots, movements and new sodalities have sprouted, with a specific feature and purpose, so great is the richness and the

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<sup>2</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 12.

versatility of resources that the Holy Spirit nourishes in the ecclesial community, and so great is the capacity of initiative and the generosity of our lay people"<sup>3</sup>

As Pope Benedict XVI said, "the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities are one of the most important innovations inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Church for the implementation of the Second Vatican Council."<sup>4</sup> He also emphasized in an address to the German bishops:

After the Council, the Holy Spirit endowed us with the "movements". They sometimes appear to be rather strange to the parish priest or Bishop but are places of faith where young people and adults try out a model of life in faith as an opportunity for life today. I therefore ask you to approach movements very lovingly. Here and there, they must be corrected or integrated into the overall context of the parish or Diocese. Yet, we must respect the specific character of their

charism and rejoice in the birth of communitarian forms of faith in which the Word of God becomes life.<sup>5</sup>

The flowering of the Movements throughout history is related in a very constant way with moments of confusion and crisis in which "man, having lost his clear and defined identity, in his disorientation reacts by seeking reference points through which he can find again and redefine his identity."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, St. John Paul II believed that "here are the movements and the new ecclesial communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium."<sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI emphasizes that the Movements should commit themselves to enlighten "the darkness of a world overwhelmed by the contradictory messages of ideologies!"<sup>8</sup>

## **B.** Nature of the Ecclesial Movements

### *1. The Place of the Movements in the Church*

Beyond the socio-cultural and historical context in which they are born, these associative realities have a deeper meaning – a theological one.

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<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, Address to the participants in a seminar for Bishops organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. May 17, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict XVI, Address to the German bishops on their *Ad Limina Apostolorum* visit, November 18, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. Gianfranco Ghirlanda, SJ, "Le nuove esperienze associative", in *Esperienze associative nella Chiesa. Aspetti canonistici, civili e fiscali*, (studi Giuridici CV), Libreria Editrici Vaticana 2014, (pp. 47-78). Our translation.

<sup>7</sup> John Paul II, Address to the participants in the Congress on the Ecclesial Movements, May 27, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Benedict XVI, Message to the participants in the Second World Congress for the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, May 22, 2006.

In Cardinal Ratzinger's conference that we cited at the beginning (and whose content is valid for all the movements that have enriched the Church throughout the centuries), he tried to clarify the co-essentiality of the institutional and charismatic dimensions of the Church. The institutional dimension is characterized by the episcopal ministry, a permanent structure that carries the Church through time. The charismatic dimension, on the other hand, consists in the continual "irruptions" of the Spirit, in fact, the Church as an institution has passed ceaselessly in its history "through waves of new movements, which reinvigorate the universalistic aspect of its apostolic mission and precisely in so doing also serve the spiritual vitality and truth of the local churches."<sup>9</sup> The complementarity of these dimensions already had been illustrated by St. John Paul II who affirmed:

The Church, born of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ and the effusion of the Spirit, spread throughout the whole world and through all times on the the foundation of the Apostles and their successors, has been enriched during the centuries by the grace of gifts that are eternally new.

These gifts in different epochs permitted the Church to be present in new and different forms adapted to the thirst for truth, for beauty and for justice that Christ raises up in the hearts of men and to which he himself is the only satisfying and fulfilling response.<sup>10</sup>

From this point of view we can affirm that "the correct theological place of the movements in the Church has to be distinguished in apostolicity,"<sup>11</sup> since they contribute to "ensure the carrying on of Jesus' mission to make all nations his disciples and to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth."<sup>12</sup> From this apostolicity "rises the particular bond that unites the movements with the ministry of the successor of Peter."<sup>13</sup> In the words of Ratzinger:

The papacy did not create the movements, but it did become their principal reference-point in the structure of the Church, their ecclesial support. [...] The pope has to rely on these ministries [the missions of the movements], they on him, and the collaboration between the two kinds of ministries [the pope's ministry with the movements' ministry] completes the symphony of the Church's life.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, Address to the priests participating in the experience of the Communion and Liberation Movement, September 12, 1985. Our translation (no official translation into English on Vatican website).

<sup>11</sup> Stanislaw Rylko, Press conference presenting the Second World Conference of the Ecclesial Movements, May 30, 2006. Our translation.



<sup>12</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “The Theological Locus of the Ecclesial Movements”

<sup>13</sup> Stanislaw Rylko, Press conference presenting the Second World Conference of the Ecclesial Movements, May 30, 2006. Our Translation.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “The Theological Locus of the Ecclesial Movements”

## 2. *Defining the Movements*

In order to attempt a definition, we need to consider what Cardinal Ratzinger said: “We ought also to beware of too strict a definition, for the Holy Spirit always has surprises in store, and only in retrospect do we recognize that the movements have a common essence in the midst of their great diversities.”<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, some attempts at a definition are worth mentioning. For example, for St. John Paul II, a movement is “a concrete ecclesial reality with predominantly lay membership, a faith journey and Christian witness which bases its own pedagogical method on a precise charism given to the person of the founder in specific circumstances and ways.”<sup>16</sup> Another attempt at a definition is that of Fr. Fidel Gonzalez Fernandez, MCCJ, for whom the ecclesial movements are “Those realities born in the heart of the Church from particular Christian charisms and experiences that have generated a new life in the Church itself and in society.”<sup>17</sup> According to Fr. Gianfranco Ghirlanda, SJ:

Synthetically we can consider the ecclesial Movements as those associative forms that have their root and origin in a specific gift of the Spirit, an element that unites different vocations of both sexes, different orders or categories of the faithful (bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, and laity [whether married, single, widowed, religious, or consecrated] in the Movement in a form that is contemplative, apostolic, secular, etc.), characterized as much by diversity of ages as by diversity of the socio-economic groups they belong to. What’s more, in them there is a commitment of the person in his entirety, in that it demands a way of life that conforms with the charism, that often carries with it the sharing of goods and fraternal life in common, as well as in

all cases a submission to an authority, dedication to the apostolic works of the Movement, in many with motivation towards missionary activity and a strong ecumenical orientation.<sup>18</sup>

## 3. *The Place of the Movements in Canon Law*

In reference to the associative realities of the faithful, today we usually speak of “associations”, “ecclesial movements” and “new communities.”

In canon law there does not exist a juridical definition of “movement” and as a consequence, the movements are usually juridically configured as *associations of*

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, Address to the participants in the Congress on the Ecclesial Movements, May 27, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Fr. Fidel Gonzalez Fernandez, MCCJ, "Carismi e movimenti nell storia della Chiesa", in Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, *I Movimenti ecclesiali nella sollecitudine pastorale dei vescovi*, 2000. Our translation.

<sup>18</sup> Fr. Gianfranco Ghirlanda, SJ, "Le nove esperienze associative." Our translation.

*the faithful* – although not all the associations of the faithful are movements – or more precisely as *international associations of the faithful* when they have an international character because of their existence throughout the world, placing them in direct dependence on the Holy See.

The Second Vatican Council affirms the right of association of the faithful, who, because of their baptism and participation in the mission of the Church, can associate themselves in light of spiritual and apostolic goals. This right of association of the faithful legitimizes their establishing and directing associations within the Church and joining those associations already established. In past centuries, the Christian faithful have exercised this right in many and varied forms, instituting, for example, confraternities, secular institutes, societies of apostolic life, etc. In this form, the teaching of the council has emphasized the need, validity and freedom of the faithful to associate with others within the Church; in such a way that ecclesial authority juridically favors, motivates and regulates the associations born from the free will of the faithful.

The “new communities”, frequently born from the environment of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (for example, the Community of Emmanuel, the *Shalom* Catholic Community, the Community *Cancao Nova*, etc...), can be distinguished by the strong sense of community, uniting priests, lay men and women – single and married, that share a lifestyle. These communities can be of an apostolic, monastic or secular type.

There also exist the so-called “new forms of consecrated life,”<sup>19</sup> that are characterized by the taking of the evangelical counsels with a particular sacred bond, but that are distinguished from the institutes of consecrated life by being made up of members of a priestly branch, a masculine lay branch and a feminine lay branch, all consecrated with one charism, one goal and one government, to which single and married laypeople (not consecrated) also affiliate themselves (for example the Missionary Fraternity *Verbum Dei*).

All these realities, very different from one another, are distinguished from what we could call the tendency towards “traditional associations,” that throughout the history of the Church, has produced specialized and organized apostolic associations (for example, Catholic Action and the different forms of association

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 605 and John Paul II, Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 12 and 62.

born within it), apostolic associations of genders (the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, the International Federation of Catholic Men), associations of different work or professional categories (Catholic teachers, doctors, pharmacists, etc.) among others.

### C. Criteria of Ecclesiality

St. John Paul II, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, established some criteria that the movements should observe to correctly live their membership in the Church.<sup>20</sup>

- *The primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness*, as it is manifested "in the fruits of grace which the spirit produces in the faithful" and in a growth towards the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity.

In this sense whatever association of the lay faithful there might be, it is always called to be more of an instrument leading to holiness in the Church, through fostering and promoting "a more intimate unity between the everyday life of its members and their faith".

- *The responsibility of professing the Catholic faith*, embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church's Magisterium, as the Church interprets it. For this reason every association of the lay faithful must be a *forum* where the faith is proclaimed as well as taught in its total content.

- *The witness to a strong and authentic communion* in filial relationship to the Pope, in total adherence to the belief that he is the perpetual and visible center of unity of the universal Church, and with the local Bishop, "the visible principle and foundation of unity" in the particular Church, and in "mutual esteem for all forms of the Church's apostolate".

Communion with the Pope and one's Bishop must be expressed in loyal readiness to embrace the doctrinal teachings and pastoral initiatives of both the Pope and the Bishop. Moreover, Church communion demands both an acknowledgment of a legitimate plurality of forms in the associations of the lay faithful in the Church and at the same time, a willingness to cooperate in working together.

- *Conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals*, that is, "the evangelization and sanctification of humanity and the Christian formation of people's conscience, so as to enable them to infuse the spirit of the gospel into the various communities and spheres of life".

From this perspective, every one of the group forms of the lay faithful is asked to have a missionary zeal which will increase their effectiveness as participants in a re-evangelization.

- *A commitment to a presence in human society*, which in light of the Church's social doctrine, places it at the service of the total dignity of the person.

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<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 30.

Therefore, associations of the lay faithful must become fruitful outlets for participation and solidarity in bringing about conditions that are more just and loving within society.

Besides these criteria of ecclesiality, there are some distinctive features of spirituality and apostolic action that characterize all these associative realities – among them we can mention the appreciation for our baptismal identity and the rediscovery of the path of Christian initiation; the desire to radically live the fullness of the Gospel; the strong sense of belonging to a community (diocese – parish, movement – new community); the complementarity of the different states of life and the co-responsibility of the lay and consecrated members; the “pillar of ecclesiality” understood as a strong link with the Holy Father; missionary and apostolic zeal, including in reference to the “new evangelization.”

#### **D. The Closeness to the Movements on the Part of Recent Popes**

The support that St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI have shown ecclesial movements and new communities has been emphasized by a continual pastoral attentiveness and solicitude toward these realities during their respective pontificates. St. John Paul II undertook the first world meeting of the ecclesial movements in 1998 (May 30, 1998, the vigil of Pentecost in St. Peter’s Square in the Vatican) and Benedict XVI called these ecclesial groups to Rome again for Pentecost 2006 (June 3, 2006).

Pope Francis, while he was still the Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires, was the president of the commission that edited the conclusions of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops’ Conference (Aparecida, Brazil, May 13-31, 2007), which says: “The new movements and communities are a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. In them the faithful find the opportunity to be formed as Christians, growing, and committing themselves apostolically as true missionary disciples.”<sup>21</sup>

From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has demonstrated his support to the ecclesial movements and new communities, meeting with them shortly after his election to the papacy during the Year of the Faith, on the Solemnity of Pentecost, 2013, and before the *Regina Coeli*, directing these words to them: “You



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<sup>21</sup> V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean, Concluding Document, Aparecida, May 2007, 311. Antilles Episcopal Conference translation.

are a gift and a richness for the Church! [...] Always bear the strength of the Gospel! Always have joy and passion for communion within the Church!”<sup>22</sup> (May 18, 2013) Afterwards, Pope Francis published the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* to start a new stage of the evangelizing mission of the Church characterized by renewed drive and joy and by a “dynamic of missionary going forth.” In it, the Holy Father affirms that:

The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms. These gifts are meant to renew and build up the Church. They are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the centre which is Christ and then channelled into an evangelizing impulse. A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God’s holy and faithful people for the good of all.

Something truly new brought about by the Spirit need not overshadow other gifts and spiritualities in making itself felt. To the extent that a charism is better directed to the heart of the Gospel, its exercise will be more ecclesial. It is in communion, even when this proves painful, that a charism is seen to be authentic and mysteriously fruitful. On the basis of her response to this challenge, the Church can be a model of peace in our world. The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms. These gifts are meant to renew and build up the Church. They are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the centre which is Christ and then channelled into an evangelizing impulse. A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God’s holy and faithful people for the good of all. Something truly new brought about by the Spirit need not overshadow other gifts and spiritualities in making itself felt. To the extent that a charism is better directed to the heart of the Gospel, its exercise will be more ecclesial. It is in communion, even when this proves painful, that a charism is seen to be authentic and mysteriously fruitful. On the basis of her response to this challenge, the Church can be a model

of peace in our world.<sup>23</sup>

The element of “joy,” “the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing,”<sup>24</sup> which Pope Francis in *Evangelii gaudium* considers to be the motive of missionary conversion and the reform of the Church’s “going forth,” was identified as the essential element of the life of the ecclesial movements by St. John Paul II, when, referring to the associative realities said that “They are an antidote to the spread of sects and an invaluable aid to the spread of joy and life in the Church,”<sup>25</sup> and by Pope Benedict XVI , who, speaking of Christians in “movement” in the Church

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<sup>22</sup> Our translation. Extemporaneous remarks not found on Vatican website.

<sup>23</sup> Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 130.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 80.

<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, 16.

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through the centuries, mentioned the “newness of life of persons and communities capable of bearing an incisive witness of love, unity and joy.”<sup>26</sup>

### Assimilation Questions for Team Reflection

1. What is it that the popes have valued in the movements? Why do they value it so highly?
2. What do you understand by an “ecclesial movement”?
3. What are the criteria for ecclesiality listed in the Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*?
4. What characteristics of the movements do you consider to be especially fruitful for the mission of the Church?
5. What does the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* tell us about the movements and how can we apply it to *Regnum Christi*?
6. What brought me to participate in *Regnum Christi*, rather than trying to live my Christian life without belonging to a movement?
7. How do I live the complementarity of my state in life with the other vocations of *Regnum Christi*? With the Legionary priests? With the consecrated women? With the consecrated men? What do I receive from them and what do I give them as a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> degree?

### Recommended Reading

Joseph Ratzinger, "The Theological Locus of the Ecclesial Movements". Discourse at the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, Rome, May 27, 1998.

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<sup>26</sup> Benedict XVI, Message to the Second World Congress on Ecclesial Movements and New Communities "The beauty of being Christian and the joy of communicating it", May 22, 2006.

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(English translation found here:

[http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library\\_article/549/Theological\\_Locus\\_of\\_Ecclesial\\_Movements\\_Joseph\\_Cardinal\\_Ratzinger.html](http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/549/Theological_Locus_of_Ecclesial_Movements_Joseph_Cardinal_Ratzinger.html)

and here: <http://www.communio-icr.com/articles/view/the-theological-locus-of-ecclesial-movements>)

John Paul II, Address to the participants in the Congress on the Ecclesial Movements, May 27, 1998.

Benedict XVI, Message to the Second World Congress on Ecclesial Movements and New Communities “The beauty of being Christian and the joy of communicating it”, May 22, 2006.

Benedict XVI, Address to the participants in a seminar for Bishops organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. May 17, 2008.

Fr. Fidel Gonzalez Fernandez, MCCJ, Los movimientos en la Iglesia, Encuentros, Madrid, 1999 (No English translation available).

Fr. Gianfranco Ghirlanda, SJ, “Le nove esperienze associative.” In *Esperienze associative nella Chiesa. Aspetti canonistici, civili e fiscali*, (Studi Giuridici CV), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2014 (No English translation available).

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*Volume 4 – The Church, Mystery, Sacrament, Community.* The individual catecheses can also be found on the Vatican website. The catecheses listed comprise those given by John Paul II between March 23, 1994 to September 21, 1994 during his Wednesday audiences and can be found on his webpage under Audiences (udienze). A link to the Vatican Website that groups these audiences can be found at the ‘catechesis of the popes’ website at [http://catechesisofthepopes.wikispaces.com/The+Church#General Audiences-4](http://catechesisofthepopes.wikispaces.com/The+Church#General+Audiences-4). The Role of the Laity On this page, go to 4. The Role of the Laity. The catecheses referenced are numbers 11-27.





# Thy Kingdom Come!

## Central Commission for the Review of the Statutes of Regnum Christi

### Theme for Study and Reflection Number 5 Charism and

#### History of Regnum Christi

#### Goal

To prepare ourselves for the revision of the statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement for the first and second degrees, we need to take into account the charism of Regnum Christi, since the statutes should serve precisely to guard and promote that charism. We are seeking to understand what is the charism of a movement and how it is lived, so that then we can go on to remember the fundamental characteristics of our own, remembering the spiritual experience we share and its history, as well as the approval and other indications of the authority of the Church.

#### Outline

**A.** The charism of a spiritual family: Charisms are special graces that the Holy Spirit grants to faithful Christians for the good of the Church and of its mission in the world. By spiritual family, we mean a group of faithful Christians that, sharing a charism, are united by spiritual affinity and friendship in Christ. The charism of a spiritual family is collective and dynamic and generates a spiritual heritage. We pay special attention to the case of the founder of Regnum Christi.

**B.** What spiritual experience helps us to form Regnum Christi? The discovery of the personal love of Christ, who calls us to share his mission, generates in us the desire to respond to him by doing our best to be authentic Christians and to make an active effort to introduce people to him so they will be transformed into his disciples.

**C.** Some fundamental aspects of the charism of Regnum Christi. Formed by members from distinct states of life, the Movement works to make Christ reign in the heart of all men and women and in societies, going out to encounter other persons, form them and encourage them to be apostles of Christ in their own surroundings and to zealously and proactively promote the organization of Christians for the

evangelization of society. Its style is contemplative and evangelizing at the same time. The rich spiritual reality of the Kingdom of Christ is a treasure to live and share.

D. How was the Regnum Christi Movement born? As a secular movement, it was born in January 1968. It was the result of an insight from Fr. Maciel, the efforts of some legionaries and the response of some young people to create groups of Christians seeking personal holiness and the evangelization of their personal, family and social surroundings by joining efforts with the Legionaries.

## A. The Charism of a Spiritual Family

### I. What is a Charism

The word 'charism' comes from the Greek word *χάρισμα*, which means "a gift freely and graciously given".<sup>1</sup> It was introduced in the religious environment of Christianity by St. Paul, who uses it sixteen times in his letters. St. Peter also uses it on one occasion (cf. 1 Peter 4:10). St. Paul uses the word 'charism' with various meanings; but in general, we can say that he means a special grace granted by God to someone for spiritual growth or for service to others.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards, in the life of the Church, it has taken on this second meaning: charisms "are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to building her up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world."<sup>3</sup>

Pope Francis would say that "The charisms are special graces, given to some for the good of many others"; "gifts" that the Holy Spirit gives us "to be shared with others."<sup>4</sup> Charisms, insofar as they are graces, are gratuitous helps that God gives;<sup>5</sup> this means that God does not give them because the people who receive them deserve them. He gives them because of his mercy. What's more, the recipients of the good that he wants to do by granting charismatic graces are not only those who receive them directly from him but also the rest of humanity. Charisms are "special" or "individual" in the sense that that all the faithful are not given the same charismatic graces. They are given by the Holy Spirit because he gives life to the body of the Church. He is its principle of life.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, Meeting with Young People and Seminarians, New York, April 19, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Domenico Grasso, *Los carismas en la Iglesia: teología e historia*, ediciones Cristiandad, Madrid 1984, pp. 15--30 (chapter titled "Los carismas en San Pablo"). [No English translation]

<sup>3</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 799, cf. *ibid.* 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Francis, General audience, November 6, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> They are *gratiae gratis datae* (freely given graces); cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 111, a.1

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 797-798.

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“Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit ‘distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank’ for the building up of the Church. (*Lumen Gentium* 12) Now, ‘to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.’ (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:7)”<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis synthesizes:

“A charism is a *grace, a gift bestowed by God the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit*. And it is a gift which is given to someone not because he is better than others or because he deserves it: it is a gift that God gives him, because with his freely given love he can place him *in service to the entire community*, for the good of all. Speaking in a rather more human way, one says: ‘God gives this quality, this charism to this person, not for himself, but in order that he may

put it at the service of the whole community’.”<sup>8</sup>

The entire Church, the great family of the children of God, is charismatic because it is enriched by the Holy Spirit with various charisms that guide its life. In fact, each Christian is enriched by the Holy Spirit with the charisms which prepare him or her to serve the spiritual good of others. “These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, “all charisms are important in the eyes of God. At the same time, no one is irreplaceable. That is to say that within the Christian community, we need one another, and each gift received is fully realized when it is shared with one’s brothers and sisters, for the good of all.”<sup>10</sup>

“An important thing that should be highlighted immediately is the fact that *alone, one cannot understand whether one has a charism, and which one.*”<sup>11</sup> It is the People of God who confirm the charisms. This People depends on the guidance of its pastors, given that the charisms are always at the service of the Church community, belong to the Church and the Church authority is the judge of them all. That is to say, the Pope and the bishops have the faculty of discerning the authenticity of the charisms according to the authorized form. Do they really come from God and are therefore real charisms? They also have the authority to regulate the exercise of the charisms as helpful for the good of the community they lead.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. *The Charism of a Spiritual Family, Congregation or Movement.*

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 951.

<sup>8</sup> Francis, *Charisms: diversity and unity*. General Audience, October 1, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Francis, *Charisms: diversity and unity*. General Audience, October 1, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 12, and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 801.

St. John Paul II comments that “charisms can be individual or collective.”<sup>13</sup> “These charisms are given to individual persons, and can even be shared by others in such ways as to continue in time, serving as a source of a particular spiritual affinity among persons.”<sup>14</sup> Those charisms – granted to men and women destined to found ecclesial works and that continue through time as a living and precious inheritance, that generates a spiritual affinity and friendship in Christ between persons that participate in it – can be called collective, since they go on to characterize an entire spiritual family. This is precisely the case of those who start movements.<sup>15</sup> Insofar as they live their charismatic identity with fidelity, the movements, congregations and other spiritual families enrich and embellish the Church.

The Church asks the members of spiritual families to be faithful to their foundational charism (also called charism of the foundation or in an expression of Benedict XVI, the founding charism<sup>16, 17</sup>). We are talking about the charism that a spiritual family has received through its founder,<sup>18</sup> that is, the “experience of the Spirit” granted to the founder that, transmitted to his own disciples, was received by them and inspires the lifestyle and action of the group approved by Church authority.

“The very charism of the Founders (*Evangelica testificatio*, 11) appears as an “*experience of the Spirit*,” transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth.”<sup>19</sup> In this way, the person who first receives the charism must transmit it to a first group of persons who receive it, give it life and begin to live it in common. This gift is configured from an inspiration of God to the founders, who – contemplating in the mystery of Christ the response to the

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<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, *Consecrated Life in the Church*. General audience, September 28, 1994. (Our translation – no English translation on the Vatican website)

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Discourse to the ecclesial movements, May 30, 1998, 6 and General audience, September 28, 1994, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict XVI, Address to young people and seminarians, New York, April 19, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> For example, cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree *Perfectae caritatis*, 2b,; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica testificatio*, 11 and John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 36.

<sup>18</sup> Sometimes there can be various persons and not just one who initially receives the charism, as is the case for example of the Seven Founders of the Servite Order.

<sup>19</sup> Sacred Congregation for Secular Religious Institutes and Sacred Congregation for Bishops, Document *Mutuae Relationes*, (May 14, 1978), 11b.



needs of the Church and the world<sup>20</sup> – conceive an idea or intuition about the nature and spirit of the work to begin (this is the ‘mind’ or ‘spirit’ of the founder) and about the projects or initiatives needed for the work to accomplish its mission (these are the ‘proposals’ of the founder). The founders share their mind and proposals with the first members who join in the initiative and participate in the same spiritual experience.<sup>21</sup> From the first moments, it is necessary to verify the authenticity of the gift received. In order to guarantee and preserve the authenticity of the charism, it is necessary “that every movement submit to the discernment of the competent ecclesiastical authority. For this reason no charism can dispense with reference and submission to the Pastors of the Church,”<sup>22</sup> to whom belongs the judgment over the “genuinity [of the charisms] and proper use.”<sup>23</sup> “A charism is a gift made to the Church and she, through the legitimate authority, recognizes it as her own;” because of this “it forms part of the patrimony of the institute – not the one the founder tried to bring into existence, but the one the Church approved,” “the constitutive elements of the charism only those recognized as such by the same Church authority.”<sup>24</sup> Saint John Paul II explained it to religious like this:

“that particular gift of your founders, which, received from God and approved by the Church, has become a charism for the whole community. That gift corresponds to the different needs of the Church and the world at particular moments of history, and in its turn it is extended and strengthened in the life of the religious communities as one of the enduring elements of the Church's life and apostolate.”<sup>25</sup>

The Spiritual experience which the charism refers to must be brought to life, deepened and developed constantly by the members of the spiritual family. The charism is a grace from the Holy Spirit and therefore only the Holy Spirit is its source and the Spirit communicates it to each person called by him to form part of the work. So, when dealing with a collective charism, he serves in a greater or

<sup>20</sup> The Holy Spirit “distributes charisms in relation with the growing needs of the Church and the world.” John Paul II, *The Consecrated life at the service of the Church*. General Audience. January 11, 1995, 3. [Our translation – there is no English translation at the Vatican website.]

<sup>21</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Ecclesial Movements, May 30, 1998, 6: “The passage from the original charism to

the movement happens through the mysterious attraction that the founder holds for all those who become involved in his spiritual experience.”

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Cardinal Velasio de Paolis, CS, Letter of presentation of the *Outline of the charism of the Movement Regnum Christi*, October 19, 2012, and idem. *La vida consagrada en la Iglesia*, BAC, Madrid 2011, pp. 123---126. [Our

translation. There is no English translation of the book]

<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptionis donum*, 15.

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lesser degree as the guide and companion of the persons that constitute the group (starting with the founder himself or herself) to introduce the persons he calls into the living of the charism, just as he helps the person discern whether or not there is a divine call to live that charism. The transmission of the charism is not identified with the handing on of something the founder has already completed and passes to the first members and these to the following members as someone would hand on an object or an art or an idea.

Each one of the members is called to make the charism his or her own and can use his or her own personal charisms to enrich the patrimony of the spiritual family. In fact, spiritual families

receive the characteristic elements of their charisms from the founders, live and act under their influence and in the measure of their fidelity, receive new gifts and charisms for each member and for the whole of the community. Therefore this characterization can discover new forms of apostolate according to the demands of places and times, without breaking the line of continuity and development that starts with the founder, while easily maintaining its identity and dynamism.<sup>26</sup>

We could say that the charism is converted into a source of inspiration for life through time and its richness will be able to be discovered by the members of future generations. This demands a creative fidelity to the founding charism in order to respond to new situations and needs.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Saint John Paul II reminded the Legionaries: "This fidelity to your charism cannot be static, anchored in the past, but it has to be dynamic and able to adapt to the different cultural and social environments in which the Lord calls you to work."<sup>28</sup>

The patrimony of the institute presents itself as a dynamic vital reality. It has its origin in the Holy Spirit through the founder, but at the same time is enriched with the flow of history and the development of the institute itself. It is alive. It is always the same, but adapts itself continually to new realities. Although it changes, it remains always itself; in its being it is always itself, it should continually adapt itself to arising demands.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, General Audience, September 28, 1994, 4. [Our translation – no English translation available at Vatican website]

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Idem. *Vita consecrata*, 37.

<sup>28</sup> John Paul II, Speech to the participants in the General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, December 18, 1992. [Our translation]

<sup>29</sup> Velasio De Paolis, CS, *La vida consagrada en la Iglesia*, p. 124 [Our translation]

The patrimony of a spiritual family is characterized by being a harmonious assemblage of a plurality of charisms in permanent growth: “The wondrous array of charisms proper to each Religious Institute is an extraordinary spiritual treasury.”<sup>30</sup>

It is important to understand that the gift of God “lives in the institute and its members.”<sup>31</sup> As a consequence, with the collective and dynamic character of the gift received, we understand that “An effective renewal and adaptation demands the cooperation of all the members of the institute.”<sup>32</sup>

In the process of institutionalization of all spiritual families, one stage is the writing of the statutes or a fundamental code of the new foundation. The statutes should contain the fundamental norms in order to guard more faithfully the vocation and identity of each institute.<sup>33</sup> Afterwards, the approval of the text of the statutes by the competent ecclesiastic authority is required and it cannot be changed without the approval of the same authority.<sup>34</sup> The right of approval belongs to those who are pastors who have the responsibility of discerning charisms, confirming through their authority the authenticity of the charism and defining its correct usage.<sup>35</sup> The approval of the statutes has the effect of confirming the authenticity of the charism, guiding the grace given by God to the Church and confirming that it is in line with the original charism.<sup>36</sup>

### 3. *The question of the founder of Regnum Christi*

The Regnum Christi Movement recognizes Fr. Marcial Maciel as its founder. We know that during his life he practiced very grave immoral behavior. How could God have transmitted a gift to us through him?

The answer should begin from the awareness that the authority of the Church has confirmed for us that the Legion of Christ and the Regnum Christi Movement are

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<sup>30</sup> Benedict XVI, Meeting with young people and seminarians, New York, April 19, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado sobre el camino de renovacion que estamos recorriendo* (Janary 20, 2014). [Our translation]

<sup>32</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree *Perfectae caritatis*, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Code of Canon Law, 304, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 314 and 322, 2

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 12, and Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> The associations or institutes of pontifical right have to present modifications to the text of their statutes to the Holy See; if they are of diocesan right, to the diocesan bishop (cf. canon 589 of the Code of Canon Law).

bearers of an authentic charism. The Legion of Christ and the associations of the faithful Regnum Christi, Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi and Regnum Christi Lay Consecrated Men exist in the Church. The constitutions of the Legion of Christ resulting from the recent Extraordinary General Chapter have been approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (October 16, 2014). The statutes of the consecrated men and consecrated women have the approval *ad experimentum* of the Pontifical Delegate.<sup>37</sup> The statutes of Regnum Christi have pontifical approval (November 26, 2004) and although they being revised, they are in force for the members of first and second degree and for all those who perform apostolic work in Regnum Christi. In his letter of July 11, 2012, the Pontifical Delegate Cardinal Velasio De Paolis referred to the members of first and second degree of *Regnum Christi* as “another beautiful reality of great importance and meaning” within the joined realities of Regnum Christi, “that participate in the same charism lived by each group according to its own identity.”

As we can see in the communication of the Holy See on the life of Fr. Maciel (May 19, 2006), in the letter of the Secretary of State to the General Director of the Legion of Christ announcing the Apostolic Visit (May 1, 2010) and in the interview in the book *Light of the World, The Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times* (Ignatius 2010), Pope Benedict XVI condemns the behavior of Fr.

Maciel and at the same time approves of the Legion of Christ and of Regnum Christi.

“An inadequate understanding of the concept of founder,”<sup>38</sup> such as predominated in the past of the Legion and the Movement, can make the understanding of the charism – a gift from God – more difficult. Therefore, the Legionaries united in the latest General Chapter affirmed: “We recognize his place as founder.

Nevertheless, a religious congregation and its essential elements do not have their origin in the person of the founder. They are a gift from God that the Church welcomes and approves and that afterwards lives in the institute and in its members.”<sup>39</sup> The founder is neither the source nor the master of the charism of the

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<sup>37</sup> Once the question of the final canonical configuration of all of Regnum Christi is resolved (one of the objectives of the revision of the statutes), we will be able to proceed to the approval of the statutes of the Lay Consecrated Men and the Consecrated Women by the Holy See, as well as numbers 1, 2; 16; 112 and 130,2 of the Constitutions of the Legion of Christ.

<sup>38</sup> Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado sobre el camino de renovacion que estamos recorriendo* (January 20, 2014). [our translation]





work. He is the first voice, not the last. He is an instrument, for the granting of this gift from God to the Church and to humanity. He counts on particular graces in order to be able to begin the work and in this sense, introduces other persons to its accomplishment so they develop and continue it.

The charism is a freely-given gift from God that should not be confused with personal qualities or gifts, even when God uses them for the communication of the charism, nor should they be confused with errors or immoral conduct: “The charism is not identified with the person of the founder, and much less with his holiness or with his sinfulness.”<sup>40</sup> Theology clearly says that the charisms, as graces *gratis data* (freely given) are destined to the benefit of the community and can be granted by God to persons that do not lead morally good lives.<sup>41</sup> What’s more, thinking above all of our own case, history makes us realize that “not all founders that bring a good grace to the Church live according to the grace that they communicate.”<sup>42</sup>

Having it clear that the charism of our spiritual family already has the recognition of the Church – even when we are in a period of revising and deepening our understanding of the same charism – and knowing that Fr. Maciel received from God the charism of the founder to put the Legion and the Movement in march, we have to recognize at the same time that the founders of charismatic families have to lead an exemplary life in order to be recognized as inspiring figures of spirituality for their respective families: “the genuine figure of the *Founders* entails men and women whose proven virtue (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 45) demonstrates a real docility both to the sacred hierarchy and to the following of that inspiration, which exists in them as a gift of the Spirit.”<sup>43</sup>

## B. What spiritual experience helps us to grow Regnum Christi?

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<sup>40</sup> Cardinal Velasio De Paolis, CS, *Carta de presentacion de los Lineamientos del charisma del Movimiento Regnum Christi*, October 19, 2012. [our translation]

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Gianfranco Ghirlanda, SJ, *Carisma del instituto y derecho propio*. Conference to the Legionaries of Christ,

Rome, March 31, 2011; Domenico Grasso, *Los charismas en la Iglesia: teologia e historia*, p. 70--72. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, II--II, q. 172, a.4, and Saint John Chrysostom, in J.P. Migne, *Patrologia cursus completes*, PG 51, col. 81.

<sup>42</sup> Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, Press Conference, January 30, 2014, cited in the Extraordinary General Chapter of the

Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado y decretos*, Rome 2014, Comunicado “Identidad carismatica de la Legion de Cristo,” note 6.

<sup>43</sup> Document *Mutuae relationis*, 51

It is necessary to approach every grace we receive from God with faith. Our knowledge of the charism of the Regnum Christi Movement, being a gift that comes from God, will always be wrapped in an atmosphere of mystery, like all sacred things. We can share our own spiritual experience in Regnum Christi to try to understand the grace that the Lord gives us all more deeply. What follows is meant to be an aid for each one of us to deepen our own spiritual experience.

Therefore, it is not meant that what is told here has to be accepted by all the members of the Movement as something of their own, nor is it meant to be taken as an authorized expression of the living of the charism. Rather, it is meant to be a starting point for reflection and dialog on what the spirituality of Regnum Christi brings to me.

In the light of what we have already lived, we can see that the members of Regnum Christi are characterized by living our Christian lives according to a certain style, “a style or means of adhesion to Christ and to the Church.”<sup>44</sup> How can we describe it? Traditionally, we have called it ‘militant’, wanting to indicate that we live our Christian life seeking to correspond to the love of Christ with a sincere, committed, generous, grateful and joyful effort to give the best of ourselves in the accomplishment of the mission that he has called us to with so much love – the mission of cooperating with the growth of his Kingdom in ourselves, in others and in the entire world. “For you, soldiers [*militantes*<sup>45</sup>] of that Kingdom, fidelity to your own charism means filling all your life with Gospel values;”<sup>46</sup> And “the lived Gospel should forge witnesses who are ardent and contagious with faith and love for Jesus Christ; the world and the Church need convinced Christians.”<sup>47</sup> Saint John Paul II told the Legionaries of Christ “your work in the Church should be done through the militancy [*militancia*<sup>48</sup>] with which your institute was born, as an apostolic, dynamic and ardent mission.”<sup>49</sup> The communication of the Holy See from May 1, 2010 was inviting us to preserve “the true core” of our charism: “that of the *militia Christi* [a militia or army of Christ – Translator], that characterizes

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<sup>44</sup> *Manual del Regnum Christi* (1990), 48 [our translation]

<sup>45</sup> A ‘*militante*’ is someone who fights like a soldier, who wages war; so ‘fighter’, ‘soldier’ and ‘warrior’ are all possible translations, but none carries quite the full connotation that the word ‘*militante*’ implies. It seems clear that the Holy Father specifically wants to emphasize the word from our spirituality. [Translator’s note]

<sup>46</sup> John Paul II, Speech to the participants in the General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, December 18, 1992. He continued: “It means to make charity and justice, respect for the human person, universal openness, solidarity towards the neediest reign in your own hearts through initiatives of service and human advancement.”

<sup>47</sup> *Manual del Regnum Christi* (1990), 48 [our translation]

<sup>48</sup> ‘*Militancia*’ in Spanish essentially means to be at war, on a war footing without the negative connotations of stubbornness and unreasonableness that the word ‘militancy’ carries in English.

<sup>49</sup> John Paul II, Speech to the participants in the General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, December 18, 1992.

the apostolic and missionary activity of the Church.”<sup>50</sup> Significantly, the ‘charism tour’ of Fathers Owen Kearns and Patrick Langan have synthesized the heart of our charism with the expression of St. Paul: *Caritas Christi urget nos* [Christ’s love compels us – Translator] (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:14)<sup>51</sup>

What is the spiritual experience that we share and that moves us to respond to the love of Christ with this “militant” style? Doubtless it has to do with an encounter with the love of Jesus Christ: “The *Regnum Christi* Movement promotes the powerful and personal experience of the love of Christ “who has loved me and given himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20) and seeks to make him reign in the hearts of men and of society, according to the demands of Christian justice and charity.”<sup>52</sup> This encounter with the personal love of Christ moves us to a continual conversion that results in a personal commitment of holiness and of apostolate.

Knowing this love of Jesus for us, we seek to give him a place in our hearts and therefore we feel called to communicate that love, to seek that others have that experience and become his apostles. “The Mission stems from a deep and personal experience: your living and life-changing encounter with Christ.”<sup>53</sup>

How do we discover this love of Christ? Of course, each person has his or her own history of love with the Lord and the Lord makes each one discover an experience his love in a very personal and unique manner. Nevertheless, sharing something of our experiences, we notice that Jesus Christ has granted us to hear the call to be his apostles with faith and a very special intensity. The moment I discover that Jesus invites me personally to share his mission, is when I realize that he loves me very much: Jesus wants to make me not only the recipient of his salvation, but also his instrument for communicating that salvation to my brothers and sisters and to renew the world according to the plan of God. He focuses on me, counts on me to accompany him in his mission, which is far beyond my possibilities since I am the one who most needs his grace and pardon, his salvation. If Christ calls me to be

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<sup>50</sup> Communication of the Holy See on the Apostolic Visit to the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ, May 1, 2010, 4a. In Sacred Scripture, especially in the letters of Saint Paul, we find revealing texts on what Christian ‘*milicia*’ [the art and training for war, and so, something close to the English concept of spiritual warfare --- Translator] consists of; as well as in the writings of the Holy Fathers. The aspect of ‘*militancia*’ was already emphasized as a characteristic of the Legion of Christ and *Regnum Christi* Movement by Paul VI (Greeting during the General Audience of January 2, 1974) and by John Paul II (Speech to the chapter fathers, December 18, 1992 and speech to the members of *Regnum Christi*, January 4, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> Fr. Owen Kearns, LC, & Fr. Patrick Langan, LC, *The Quest for the Core of the Regnum Christi Charism*, Cheshire

2014, pp. 154-156

<sup>52</sup> *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 1c.

<sup>53</sup> *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 101

his apostle it is because he wants to show his strength through my weakness<sup>54</sup> and this helps me discover his great love for me that is merciful and compliant. This call reveals to me the great confidence Christ placed in me; the hope with which he looks at my life and gives me the great certainty that he will always accompany me with his grace. In the faith then, I have “the experience of a new, gratuitous, unlimited and unconditional love, which fills our soul with joy and security.”<sup>55</sup> I realize that really “Christ alone is the definitive and complete answer to man’s most dearly held desires and aspirations, his thirst for transcendence, and his insatiable hunger for happiness.”<sup>56</sup> The vocational sense of the Christian life is lived with great strength by each member of Regnum Christi, it is Christ who calls us to unite us in communion and send us out to the mission.<sup>57</sup> The words of the ritual of incorporation to the Movement are very meaningful:

Christ is the height of human aspirations, [...] he constitutes the joy and the fullness of every heart [...]. And it is a duty of our religious faith, a need of our human conscience to recognize confess and celebrate this. [...]<sup>58</sup>

It depends on me that your words, Lord are not lost. It depends on me that your message of salvation reaches all men. It depends on me to live your word in such a way that those who see me give glory to God and feel themselves driven by your grace to participate in my faith and give living testimony of it.

The call to the apostolate is perceived then as a precious gesture of Jesus’ love, like something that ennoble us and speaks to us of the loving choice of the Lord, like the ‘good news’ of the Gospel, and not as a burdensome obligation, a heavy duty or an imperative derived from the alarming situation in which the world finds itself.<sup>59</sup> From here is born the desire to correspond to that love, seeking holiness and letting ourselves “be permeated by Christ’s love for each person,”<sup>60</sup> making an effort to give the best of ourselves in the mission that we well know infinitely

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:9

<sup>55</sup> *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 29.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 28.

<sup>57</sup> Fr. Owen Kearns, L.C., & Fr. Patrick Langan, LC, *The Quest for the Core of the Regnum Christi Charism*, pp. 131-- 153.

<sup>58</sup> Words taken from Paul VI, General Audience, February 3, 1965. [our translation]

<sup>59</sup> *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 105: “Being an apostle is not only a duty of Christian life, it is an extraordinary way to discover the full meaning of your own life as you serve others.”

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 103. Cf. *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement*, 36: “The preaching and extension of the Kingdom of

Christ constitutes the ideal that inspires, stimulates, directs and forms the Regnum Christi Movement. Therefore let yourselves be deeply penetrated by the love of Christ for humanity, the inspiring source of the apostolic vocation and activity, and feel yourselves called to work tirelessly and passionately to proclaim and extend this kingdom by all lawful and good means to achieve that Jesus will reign in the hearts of men and societies.”



surpasses our possibilities. Thus, our effort is above all a sample of our love for Christ with which we want to make him see that we appreciate his invitation, that we trust in his grace completely, since only that grace can make our commitment bear fruit for the Kingdom of God and that we give him our heart to love others with his own love.

The phrase “Thy Kingdom Come!” (Luke 11:2) summarizes this spiritual experience. It expresses both theological hope in the definitive coming of the Kingdom of Christ and the primacy of grace in apostolic work, as well as the ardent desire and the urgent need to work now in order to establish the Kingdom of Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:10), fulfillment and definitive meaning of the whole of the history of salvation.<sup>61</sup>

What current needs does our charism respond to? In our days, in which apostolic zeal has been weakening because of individualism and horizontalism,<sup>62</sup> it seems that we are not interested in the eternal fate of others and of the world. The Church urges us towards a new missionary dynamism. In this context, *Regnum Christi* emphasizes the apostolic dimension of the Christian vocation, helping each person to discover the beauty of the personal call that the Lord makes to ask us to be apostles. Transmitting the ‘good news’ to others; the news that Jesus calls us to collaborate with him so that his Kingdom becomes a reality in this world, the member of the Movement witnesses to his or her own love.

The call to the apostolate is for every Christian and resounds in all times and places. But in our own time, God has wanted to raise up a clearer sense and universal awareness of this obligation. So all Christians have a duty to respond with action and conviction to this urgent call of God to extend his Kingdom among men.<sup>63</sup>

What does the originality of *Regnum Christi* consist in if the call to the apostolate is obviously for all Christians? Every charism has its origin in the Gospel, it is a participation in the mystery of Jesus Christ, and is destined to serve all. Therefore, its particular charism should not be understood as a novelty with respect to the deposit of the faith, nor as a treasure reserved exclusively for a few.<sup>64</sup> The richness

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<sup>61</sup> *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 1b.

<sup>62</sup> The tendency to see things from only the materialistic point of view. Seeing the spiritual aspects of things, seeing their transcendence is regarded as adding a vertical dimension. [Translator’s note.]

<sup>63</sup> *Manual del Regnum Christi* (1990), 56c. [our translation]

<sup>64</sup> John Paul II, Message to the World Congress of Movements and Ecclesial Communities, May 27, 1998: “The

charism's own originality, which gives life to a movement, neither claims nor could claim to add anything to the richness of the *depositum fidei*, safeguarded by the Church with passionate fidelity. Nonetheless, it represents a powerful support, a moving and convincing reminder to live the Christian experience fully, with intelligence and creativity.”

of every charism comes from being an expression of the Gospel and its reason for existing is precisely its common usefulness. The charismatic originality is rather in the special mode of living this gift from God destined for all. Precisely because all should be apostles, it is very useful that some receive a charism that can help to remind all of this call. The Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi expressed it like this: “The experience of the personal love of Christ and his love for the salvation of souls generates in each consecrated woman the interior urgency to surrender herself to the extension of this Kingdom, so that persons will meet him and be converted into his apostles.”<sup>65</sup> And, “the charism of Regnum Christi is situated within the context of the New Evangelization that the recent popes have done so much to promote, especially in today’s heavily secularized society.”<sup>66</sup> We remember that the communication of the Holy See of May 2010 concluded with a call by the Pope to renew faith in our own vocation:

Finally the Pope [Benedict XVI] renews his encouragement to all the Legionaries of Christ, to their families, to the lay people belonging to the Regnum Christi Movement, [...]. He exhorts them to never lose sight that their vocation, born in the call of Christ and animated by the ideal of

giving testimony of their love in the world, is an authentic gift of God, a richness for the Church, the indestructible foundation on which to build their personal futures and the Legion.<sup>67</sup>

### C. Some Fundamental Aspects of the Charism of Regnum Christi

Without attempting to draw conclusions nor be exhaustive, we now present some elements that we can identify as constitutive of the charism of Regnum Christi in the light of the Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism<sup>68</sup> and the suggestions of the General Chapter of the Legion of 2014 and of the general assemblies of the consecrated members of the Movement of 2013. They are definitively manifestations of the charismatic originality of our Movement, of the way in which all the members, each one according to his or her condition or state of life, seek to live our “Christian lives in light of the mystery of Christ the King”<sup>69</sup>

In its nature, Regnum Christi is not only a spirit, but also an ecclesial community. Therefore, it has a structure and activities that characterize its way of being

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<sup>65</sup> Statutes of the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi, 5 [our translation]

<sup>66</sup> *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 1b and 1c.

<sup>67</sup> *Communication of the Holy See*, May 1, 2010, 7.

<sup>68</sup> The suggestions to this document made by the members of the first and second degrees are in the Center of the General Directorate and will be taken into account by the Central Commission for the preparation of the working

document for the revision of the statutes.

<sup>69</sup> *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 1a.

organized and living. In it, “there are various categories of members: single and married lay people, lay people who consecrate themselves by taking on and practicing the evangelical counsels and religious and priests of the Legionaries of Christ. Each one lives according to their own vocation and state in life, with a function for the good of the one body (cf. 1st Corinthians 12:12-29), as members of one charismatic and apostolic family;” in this way, it is constituted by different branches with “their own norms for their internal life, according to their circumstances and state in life. The common charism will also provide the reference point to determine how they all relate and collaborate with one another.”<sup>70</sup> There is an interchange, a rapport, a complementarity among them.

They all live the mission and each one contributes the best of himself or herself for the fulfillment of the common mission.

Referring to its goal, Regnum Christi seeks ardently “establish Christ’s Kingdom by means of the sanctification of its members in the state and condition of life in which God calls them and by means of personal and organized apostolic action [...] so that Christ will reign in the hearts of men and of societies.”<sup>71</sup>

The charism of the Regnum Christi Movement is properly speaking apostolic because the experience of the love of Christ begets an interior urgency in each member to correspond to the command to evangelize. Thus they become passionate apostles of the Lord who work to establish the Kingdom of Christ. This response is characterized by initiative, zeal and passion and brings them to employ all the licit and good means available to bring Christ to reign in all hearts and in society. The mission of announcing Christ and of recapitulating all things in Christ, overcoming the divide between faith and culture, spurs us on.<sup>72</sup>

“Christ’s Kingdom becomes present in the world to the degree to which God’s love is known lived and transmitted to each heart and to society as a whole.”<sup>73</sup> To know, live and reveal the love of God is the necessary condition to incarnate the charism of *Regnum Christi*.<sup>74</sup> Regnum Christi evangelizes through the calling together of persons in Christ, in the Church and in his evangelizing mission; to form them into groups with natural social bonds; to form them christianly in a way that is personal and communal, and to motivate them apostolically by promoting, accompanying and increasing the reach of their initiatives forevangelization

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 3d and  
3e. <sup>71</sup> Ibid. 3a

and 3c. <sup>72</sup> Ibid.  
4a.

<sup>73</sup> *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 27.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement*, 2, 1.

through *Regnum Christi's* own social reality.<sup>75</sup> The members of the Movement seek to focus their endeavors by forming or joining groups of Christians to evangelize the different branches of society.

The life and activities of the sections of *Regnum Christi* are organized for the mission its members have of evangelizing secular realities and not simply for the personal Christian activity of the lives of its members.<sup>76</sup> Because of this, the apostolate of *Regnum Christi*, according to its charism, cannot be limited to 'pastoral action', but is oriented towards the evangelization of the pluralistic and globalized society of today through "lay apostolate".<sup>77</sup> Pope Francis says that reality is understood better from the outskirts than from the center.<sup>78</sup> We might reflect: what are our 'outskirts'? The "outskirts" in which the members of the Movement bear witness and preach Christ are many since the apostolic activity of *Regnum Christi* arises and is organized according to the needs of society for evangelization. If we had to summarize them, we could say that our "outskirts" are principally the ignorance that so many people have that they are called by Christ to be apostles in their own surroundings and to effectively transform them for him.

We are called to wake up souls to the love of Christ, to help them discover that he calls them to join the mission of renewing the entire world for the glory of God.

These "slumbering" souls today live in surroundings that are de-Christianized or never were Christian. They require the "new evangelization" and the mission *ad gentes*.

Therefore, the sections of *Regnum Christi*, while being Christian communities, are not called to substitute the pastoral labor and sacramental assistance of the parishes. The sections of *Regnum Christi* are fundamentally teams of adults or the young "going forth" to evangelize according to their own charism, in an apostolic effort that is rich in initiatives for the evangelization of their own surroundings. To accomplish this, sections offer spiritual guidance and formation to their members.

*Regnum Christi* also has a universal aspiration, as does the Church itself, of which *Regnum Christi* is a living part; and as does the social action of humanity, that

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 1, 2 and 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 15-20, and *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 318-323.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 374: "Its members serve the Church not simply by giving personal witness in the world, but by committing themselves, as sons and daughters of the Church, to be the yeast and soul of society, transforming temporal realities according to the spirit of the Gospel through apostolate."

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Francis, Greeting in the Parish of SS. Elizabeth and Zachariah (Rome, May 26, 2013): “we understand reality better from the outskirts not the centre. We understand it better.”



today is reaching global dimension.<sup>79</sup> Its apostolic influence should have universal aspirations. People today establish social and cultural relationships in environments that escape geography and go beyond local, diocesan and even national limits. These unbounded environments are also those that the members of Regnum Christi seek to evangelize.

Since Regnum Christi feels itself called to cooperate with the evangelical renewal of societies, it also tries to evangelize those persons of greatest influence in the different spheres of society, in order that they will put their talents at the service of the Kingdom of God.<sup>80</sup> “If we evangelize and form people deeply, we also help them to evangelize their surroundings and society, putting their leadership at the service of the Church.”<sup>81</sup>

Insofar as its spirituality, the Movement is based “on the contemplation of Christ, who with his incarnation, came into the world to announce and bring about the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), and lives in communion with his Father (John 17:22), glorifying him and saving men with his life, death and resurrection(cf.

Ephesians 2:6-11);”<sup>82</sup> also, “it surrounds itself with apostles, reveals to them the love of his heart, forms them and sends them to cooperate in the restoration of his Kingdom in the hearts of all men and women and in society.”<sup>83</sup> Jesus has shown us his love and enthralled us with it. As a result, Regnum Christi “presents itself as a way of life that is profoundly contemplative and at the same time decidedly apostolic, in which members live with charity, joy and authenticity, as well as a sense of time and eternity.”<sup>84</sup> In their desire to respond to the love of Christ, the members find in the Movement the ideal to live and revive Christianity in its fullness. Life in the Kingdom of Christ is a life of grace, of real freedom and of love. The awareness of the infinite love of Christ for each person has to lead us to nourish a great appreciation for all, working so that respect, trust, openness, acceptance, joy, mutual help, common prayer, and missionary cooperation will

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Regnum Christi Member Handbook (2009), 371.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 4; *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement*, 3, and *Statutes of the Consecrated Lay Men of Regnum Christi*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado y decretos, “Identidad carismática de la Legión de Cristo”*, Rome 2014, n. 11.

<sup>82</sup> *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 2a.

<sup>83</sup> Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado y decretos, "Identidad carismática de la Legión de Cristo"*, Rome 2014, n. 6.

<sup>84</sup> *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 2c

always direct our relationships.<sup>85</sup> In the Kingdom of Christ we should always spread the joy of the faith, the courage of hope and the enthusiasm of charity.

#### D. Historically, how was the Regnum Christi Movement born?<sup>86</sup>

Nowadays, we use the term “Regnum Christi Movement” to refer to our entire spiritual family that is comprised of the Legionaries of Christ, the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi, the Consecrated Lay Men of Regnum Christi and the lay members and the priests of first and second degree. Of this family, the first to appear historically was the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ. Since then, as we will see, the Regnum Christi Movement was born; which in its first moments was conceived as a lay movement – made up only of lay people, consecrated lay people and secular clergy – although directed by the Legionaries of Christ. It was in the summer of 1971 when the Legionaries of Christ were integrated into the Movement as members of the third degree. The internal statutes of Regnum Christi of 1979 and 1988 presented the Legionaries as members of the Movement, in spite of the Constitutions of the Legion (1983) failing to mention their belonging. Since 2004, the relationship between the Legionaries and the Movement has been confused, given that the Regnum Christi statutes approved by the Holy See do not include the Legionaries as members. Currently, the Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legion of Christ of 2014 has affirmed that the congregation understands itself as part of the Regnum Christi Movement, although the juridical form remains to be worked out. In that sense, the actual process of renewal of the statutes of the Movement is directed toward preparing a proposal for the whole family of Regnum Christi, with all its different branches; to find an adequate legal framework. In this brief historical glance, we will not speak about the foundation of the Legion of Christ, but we will focus on how the associative reality of the Movement, with the name Regnum Christi, that is, how the lay group of our spiritual family came about.

The first constitutions of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of Sorrows (1948)<sup>87</sup> indicated as its specific goal of the congregation to create “special battalions of lay people, according to specific professional categories that work together vigorously in the restoration of the Kingdom of Christ according to

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement*, 40 and 44.

<sup>86</sup> This is only a preliminary historical sketch, not trying to be authoritative, only trying to clarify a little the beginnings of the Movement in order to better understand what the original inspiration behind the Movement

was.

<sup>87</sup> This was the name of the Legion of Christ at that time.

the demands of Christian justice and charity.” (n.2), and proposed various general means of organized apostolate in secular surroundings in order to “make Christ rule in international society,” not only in individuals, but also in society. Fr.

Marcial Maciel<sup>88</sup> considered that for the religious congregation to act in accord with this goal, it would be necessary for it to complete itself with an international

organization of lay persons, giving rise in about 1949 to the idea that in the future the Regnum Christi Movement would come into being. Now he was thinking of the idea of a single organization and not just in the different groups he had been thinking of before. Together, the members of the religious congregation and those of the lay organization would have to dedicate themselves to constitute those “battalions” or groups of committed lay apostles with the spread of the Kingdom of Christ in the different sectors of society. When Fr. Maciel conceived the idea of the lay organization, he considered it as a clarification of how the Legion would have to fulfill its specific apostolic mission. “Regnum Christi has a particular link to the religious congregation of the Legionaries of Christ in having the same founder and sharing the same spirituality and mission in the Church.”<sup>89</sup>

Although the first apostolic works of the Legion would be educational – the Cumbres Institute (1954), the Anahuac University (1964), Mano Amiga (1965), the Irish Institute (1966) – the congregation never thought of itself as a congregation oriented toward education. These works were conceived as a means to make contact with families, with lay people, in order to evangelize and then send them out in apostolates. In the fifties and the beginning of the sixties, that is, before the existence of the lay group of Regnum Christi, the novices were told that the apostolate of the Legion of Christ should be the formation of groups of lay apostles who would dedicate themselves in an organized way to the evangelization of the different fields of society on the national and international levels.<sup>90</sup> According to the mentality of those years of the Cold War and the spread of ideological and political groups, the thinking was to win over for Christ especially those who could exercise a positive influence on the orientation of culture and on the direction of society, so that they would collaborate with the spread of the Kingdom of Christ in the world according to the demands of Christian charity. In order to build those groups, the Legion would turn to a “central international organization” yet to be

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<sup>88</sup> On the person and behavior of Fr. Marcial Maciel (1920 – 2008), cf. Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado sobre el camino de renovacion que estamos recorriendo* (January 20, 2014).<sup>89</sup> *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 50.

<sup>90</sup> In the General Historical Archives are copies of the notes of the *Spirit of the Legion* classes (classes on the

constitutions of the congregation that the instructor of novices taught to the novices) of two novices, given by Fr. Maciel in 1954 and by Fr. Rafael Arumi in the 1961--62 school year. From these notes come the ideas that follow.

created of lay people and with it accomplish its specific apostolate. The idea was to help people live christianly as much in private as socially and publically. There was the firm idea that evangelizing the individual was not enough, but that society also had to be evangelized. There would be a special effort to evangelize the unchurched.

Consistent with this, the constitutions of 1965 said “The specific goal of the Congregation is the restoration of the Kingdom of Christ in society.”<sup>91</sup> The evangelization of society must be done through the evangelization of temporal realities, which is a mission principally of the laity.<sup>92</sup> The mission that the Legion (a clerical religious institute) foresaw was a mission that it would share with the yet to be founded international organization of laity. Therefore, thinking of the mission, Fr. Maciel insisted that for him, the Legion without the Movement would be incomplete and that the Movement was united inseparably to the Legion<sup>93</sup> in our days, the latest General Chapter of the Legion of Christ said: “The laity, by means of their lay state, make the Kingdom of Christ present in the family, social and professional environment. For our part, the Legionaries esteem the lay vocation and want to fulfill together with them the mission that God has entrusted to Regnum Christi for the good of the Church.”<sup>94</sup>

In the fifties and into the early sixties, Fr. Maciel spoke of a “Second Legion” formed of laypeople.<sup>95</sup> 1949 was when he settled on the name “Legionaries of Christ” for the congregation. Both institutions would be “Legion”, underlining the principle of unity. Nevertheless, fearing that arguments would arise considering whether the first should be considered more important than the second, he ended up discarding this terminology since in the relationships between the members of each branch he wanted there to be a principle of equality. Therefore, from the

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<sup>91</sup> The following versions of the constitutions of the Legion of Christ maintained the goal that Christ reign “in society”. This is also true of the version resulting from the General Chapter of 2014 (cf. CLC, 2)

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Theme of reflection number 2, on the lay apostolate within the mission of the Church. Cf. Second Vatican

Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*, 31, and John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 9 (where it is recalled the Pius XII said that the laity “The Faithful, more precisely the lay faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church's life; for them the Church is the animating principle for human society.”: Pius XII Discourse to the new Cardinals, February 20, 1946).

<sup>93</sup> For example, in the Christmas seminar at Cotija at Christmas 1968, as stated in the community dossier of the

Interamerican Cultural Center of Tlalpan, DF, July and August, 1969.

<sup>94</sup> Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado y decretos, "La Legion de Cristo en el Regnum Christi"*, Rome 2014, number 9.

<sup>95</sup> He spoke of a first and second Legion. The first was the one that existed, that of the religious. The second would

be that of the laypeople. Some Legionaries even say that the founder said that for him, the laity would be the "first" Legion for being in the vanguard of the apostolate, while the priests would be the "second Legion".

beginnings of the sixties, while trying to clarify the organization of the lay group, he sought a different name, that would not lend itself to these kinds of problems: first, *Milites Christi* (Soldiers of Christ) and afterwards, from the end of 1963, *Regnum Christi*. The use of the term “movement” for the organization dates from 1964 or 65, perhaps influenced by Vatican II.

It is interesting that by April of 1963, Fr. Maciel already had a first draft of statutes for *Milites Christi* thanks to the help of some religious.<sup>96</sup> The text was already complete and detailed, already presenting the distribution of members in “three degrees”. The lay organization was established in a very detailed way on paper before having groups of laypeople to take part in the project.<sup>97</sup> Afterwards, laypeople were sought out and invited to join. Thus, in Holy Week, 1963, there was a Triduum of spiritual exercises with young men in the Interamerican Cultural Center in Mexico City (founded that same year) and with these youths, there was an attempt to begin the *Milites Christi*. Nevertheless, it failed and the group was dissolved within a few months.

In February, 1965, Fr. Maciel sent Fr. Alfredo Torres to Madrid to look for vocations and begin *Regnum Christi*.<sup>98</sup> He arrived in Madrid February 8, 1965. He visited schools and universities. He had meetings with young people. These, under the guidance of Legionaries, did Gospel reflections in groups, received

formation and tried to attract other young men; they did Eucharistic hour together. On January 3, 1968, eight young men from Madrid incorporated into the *Regnum Christi* Movement in Zaragoza (Spain) at the feet of the Blessed Virgin in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar (Pilar). Four more joined them in Madrid and they formed the first team of the Movement with twelve members. In July, 1968, they had the first seminar of the Movement, in Rome, on ecclesiology, together with other youths from Barcelona. That same summer, in Dublin, Fr. Maciel and seven other Legionaries organized the structure and dynamics of the *Regnum Christi* Movement. In Christmas, 1968, there was a seminar on *Regnum Christi* in Cotija with some twenty Legionaries and five young men from the Anahuac University. The fruit was the naming of the first Legionary community composed of directors of *Regnum Christi* who would live in the Interamerican Cultural Center in Tlalpan. There still exists a handbook developed by that community in

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<sup>96</sup> This is preserved in the General Historical Archive.

<sup>97</sup> The founder for years had been establishing contacts with laypeople, but without success.



<sup>98</sup> This is written in the Diary of the Community of Rome, kept in the General Historical Archive of the Movement.

1969 with notes from the seminar in Cotija and various other materials.<sup>99</sup> Beginning in January, 1969, those Legionaries started to work in Mexico to put together lay groups of Regnum Christi from the foundations laid in earlier years in schools. In the Cumbres Institute in Mexico City, for example, Fr. Carlos Mora and others were organizing groups of adolescents starting in 1963. Between February and March, 1969, five youths from the Cotija seminar incorporated into the third degree and went to live with the Legionaries, but in November, they were sent home, abandoning this first attempt to start the men's third degree. In July 1969, twelve youths incorporated in Regnum Christi in Mexico City. At the extraordinary Chapter of the Legion of 1968-1969, the Regnum Christi Movement was presented to the chapter fathers. A first Regnum Christi Handbook was put together in 1969 in Salamanca. The ECYD, a group experience for catholic adolescents based on the spirit of Regnum Christi, started in 1970, with Mexican youngsters. In the summer of 1971, there was a seminar about Regnum Christi for Legionaries and some lay people in Monticchio (Massa Lubrense, Naples, Italy), where Fr. Maciel announced that from that point on, the Legionaries would also be members of the third degree of Regnum Christi.<sup>100</sup> That same summer, in Ontaneda (Santander, Spain) there was the first international seminar of the Movement. Besides Spanish members four Mexican and two Irish young men attended. In December of the same year, the second Handbook of Regnum Christi was put together. It would remain in use until replaced by the next edition in 1990. In the structure of the Movement, knowledge – sometimes superficial – of other groups influenced to a greater or lesser degree. These groups included *Opus Dei*, Catholic Action, Christian Worker Youth, the Christophers, the Cursillo Movement and the Italian *Comitati Civici*.

On December 8, 1969, in the Interamerican Cultural Center (Tlalpan, Mexico City), the incorporation of the first consecrated women to the third degree took place, who, the preceding August 15 had incorporated to Regnum Christi. On February 25, 1970 they established themselves in Dublin, and were joined by some Irish women. On January 25, 1972 the first two members of the Men's third degree were incorporated at Cobas de la Sagra (Madrid), who with others incorporated in December, began to live as a team in January 1973 in an apartment on Conde la Cimera Street in Madrid. Also that January 25, 1972, in the same ceremony, took place the first incorporations to the men's and women's second

<sup>99</sup> Kept in the General Historical Archive of the Movement.

<sup>100</sup> The contents of the Monticchio seminar, gathered in two binders of loose pages under the title of *Vocabulario del Regnum Christi*, was distributed to Legionary centers and centers of the third degree.

degree. In July 1974, an International Seminar of Regnum Christi took place in Reajo del Roble (Navacerrada, Madrid), with the participation of laymen and Legionaries. Some of the Mexicans that roomed with the Spanish consecrated men there would afterwards become first Mexican consecrated men, incorporated April 13, 1975.

In conclusion, Regnum Christi originated historically from the foundational intuition of Fr. Maciel, from the formation of groups that some Legionaries started to work with and from the attraction felt by the first young laypeople who began to give it life. Very soon, older adults also joined. The laypeople themselves, together with their religious directors invited others to this experience. The Movement took form through the laypeople who, united in teams and directed by Legionaries, reflected on the Gospel to apply it in their personal lives and read in its light the social reality that surrounded them to find apostolic initiatives oriented to make Christ reign in their surroundings – that he would be known, loved and followed more and more by more people who in their turn would become apostles for their classmates and peers. They were motivated by Christian authenticity and fidelity to their baptismal promises, including apostolate. As a consequence, Regnum Christi historically has taken shape as a gathering of teams of persons with social links, who, Gospel in hand, analyze the reality surrounding them from a Christian perspective in order to live their lives more and more as Christians and apostles, stimulating each other to give their best in the thinking out and fulfillment of evangelizing initiatives that will transform social reality for Christ and make it a place where people meet the Lord and the environment of apostolate for those who encounter the Lord.

With the passing of the years, multiple apostolic works have been the fruit of the apostolic initiative of the laypeople of Regnum Christi, some of which have been institutionalized and replicated in different places, like *Gente Nueva*, Youth for the Third Millennium and *Sonar Despierto*. The Movement aspires to form zealous apostles capable to imagining and putting in march apostolic initiatives adapted to the changing needs of times and places.

In the light of its early history, we can see that in summary, Regnum Christi was lived by its first members as:

-A means to respond to the vocation of holiness an apostolate demanded by their own baptism. To deeply live the baptismal commitments to be new men and women, objectively developing a friendship with Christ in the life of grace and

assuming the mission of Jesus Christ and the Church with conviction and responsibility. The Gospel, the Eucharist, spiritual direction and apostolate as pillars of their Christian life.

-A community experience. Through his or her own team, the person is integrated into the mystery of the missionary Church with availability and enthusiasm, receiving encouragement and help for their spiritual and apostolic life.

-A mission to transform the world for Christ. A mission of friendship with Christ and to gather groups of Christians from one's own surroundings, to give them a Christian formation and send them out to evangelize according to the needs of the Church in order that Christ will be all things for all people. A mission to fulfill together with the Legionaries of Christ.

#### Assimilation Questions for Team Reflection

1. What attracted you to incorporate in *Regnum Christi*?
2. What has *Regnum Christi* contributed to your Christian life?
3. Do you feel your participation in the Movement as a vocation and gift of God that commits you and helps you in all the aspects of your life, or rather as a help that you receive and collaboration limited to certain activities.
4. What needs does the charism of *Regnum Christi* respond to?
5. What attitudes should characterize a member of *Regnum Christi* in his or her relationships with other persons?
6. What characteristics does the apostolic action of *Regnum Christi* need to have?

## Recommended Reading

*Principles of the Charism of the Regnum Christi Movement*

*Estatutos del Movimiento Regnum Christi* (2004) [No English translation]

Fr. Owen Kearns, LC & Fr. Patrick Langan, LC, *The Quest for the Core of the Regnum Christi Charism*, Chesire (Connecticut) 2014 (ISBN978-1491237861)

