



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN A MEETING ORGANIZED
BY THE CATHOLIC FRATERNITY
OF CHARISMATIC COVENANT COMMUNITIES AND FELLOWSHIPS***

Hall of Blessings

Friday, 31 October 2008

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am very pleased to address my cordial welcome to all of you and I thank you for paying this visit to me on the occasion of the Second International Meeting of Bishops who accompany the new Communities of the Catholic Charismatic Movement, of the International Council of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships and, lastly, of the 13th International Conference held in Assisi on the theme: *"We preach Christ crucified, power and wisdom of God"* (cf. 1 Cor 1: 23-24), at which the principal Communities of the Charismatic Renewal Movement in the world are taking part. I greet you, dear Brothers in the Episcopate, and all of you who work at the service of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities. I address a special greeting to Prof. Matteo Calisi, President of the Catholic Fraternity, who has been the interpreter of your sentiments.

As I have been able to affirm in other circumstances, the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities which blossomed after the Second Vatican Council, constitute a unique gift of the Lord and a precious resource for the life of the Church. They should be accepted with trust and valued for the various contributions they place at the service of the common benefit in an ordered and fruitful way. Your current reflection on the centrality of Christ in preaching is very interesting as well as on the importance of *"Charisms in the life of the particular Church"*, referring to Pauline theology, the New Testament and the experience of the Charismatic Renewal. What we learn in the New Testament on charism, which appeared as visible signs of the coming of the Holy Spirit, is not a historical event of the past, but a reality ever alive. It is the same divine Spirit, soul of the

Church, that acts in every age and those mysterious and effective interventions of the Spirit are manifest in our time in a providential way. The Movements and New Communities are like an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in contemporary society. We can, therefore, rightly say that one of the positive elements and aspects of the Community of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is precisely their emphasis on the charisms or gifts of the Holy Spirit and their merit lies in having recalled their topicality in the Church.

In various Documents the Second Vatican Council makes reference to the Movements and new Ecclesial Communities, especially in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, where we read: "Whether these charisms be very remarkable or more simple and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation" (n. 12). Later the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also emphasized the value and importance of new charisms in the Church, whose authenticity however is guaranteed by their openness to subject themselves to the discernment of the ecclesiastical authority (cf. n. 2003). Precisely because we are assisting at a promising flowering of Movements and Ecclesial Communities, it is important that Pastors exercise prudent and wise discernment in their regard. I sincerely hope that dialogue between Pastors and Ecclesial Movements intensifies at all levels: parish, diocesan and with the Apostolic See. I know that opportune ways are being studied to give Pontifical recognition to the New Movements and Ecclesial Communities and many have already received it. This fact the recognition or establishment of international associations on the part of the Holy See for the universal Church Pastors, especially Bishops, cannot fail to take it into account in their dutiful discernment that lies within their competence (cf. Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores*, ch. 4, 8).

Dear brothers and sisters, among these new ecclesial realities recognized by the Holy See is listed also your Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships, International Association of the faithful that carries out a specific mission in the heart of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (cf. *Decree of the Pontifical Council for Laity*, 30 November 1990, protocol 1585/5-6/B-50). One of its objectives, conforming to the indications of my venerable Predecessor John Paul ii is to safeguard the Catholic identity of Charismatic Communities and to encourage them to maintain a strict bond with the Bishops and with the Roman Pontiff (cf. *Autograph Letter to the Catholic Fraternity*, 1 June 1998). Also I was pleased to learn that the Constitutions propose to establish a Permanent Formation Centre for the members and leaders of Charismatic Communities. This would allow the Catholic Fraternity to better appreciate its own ecclesial mission oriented to evangelization, to the liturgy, to adoration, to ecumenism, to the family, to youth and to vocations of special consecration. It is a mission that will be further assisted by the transfer of the International Headquarters of the Association to Rome, with the possibility of being in close contact with the Pontifical Council for Laity.

Dear brothers and sisters, safeguarding the fidelity to the Catholic and ecclesial identity on the part of each one of your communities will permit you to render everywhere a living and active witness

of the profound mystery of the Church. And it will be this indeed that promotes the capacity of the various communities to attract new members. I entrust the work of your respective conventions to the protection of Mary, Mother of the Church, living Temple of the Holy Spirit, and to the intercession of Sts Francis and Clare of Assisi, examples of holiness and spiritual renewal, while I affectionately impart to you and to all your communities a special Apostolic Blessing.

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