



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THOSE TAKING PART IN THE CONVENTION OF MOVEMENTS

AND NEW ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES Dear Brothers and Sisters,¹ May the love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all! With these words I greet all of you who are taking part in the International Convention of Movements and New Ecclesial Communities which is being held in Speyer. I extend a special greeting to Archbishop Anton Schlembach, who has generously welcomed you to his Diocese, to Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, and to the other Bishops and priests, friends of the movements, who are accompanying you during these days. I extend warm greetings to the convention's organizers: Chiara Lubich, Andrea Riccardi and Salvatore Martinez. You have wanted to meet as representatives of various movements and new communities a year after the meeting organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in St Peter's Square on the eve of Pentecost, 1998. That event was a great gift for the whole Church. We were able to experience the Holy Spirit's presence in an atmosphere of fervent prayer; a presence made tangible by the "common witness" of the movements to deep understanding and unity with respect for the diversity of each one. It was a significant epiphany of the Church, rich in the charisms and gifts that the Spirit never ceases to lavish upon her.² Every gift of the Lord, as you know well, challenges our responsibility and must be transformed into commitment to a task which must be faithfully observed. Moreover, it is precisely this that is the basic reason for the Speyer Convention. Listening to what the Spirit says to the Churches (cf. Rv 2:7) on the eve of the Great Jubilee of the Redemption, you would also like to assume responsibility, directly and together with the other movements, for the gift received on that 30 May 1998. The seed, scattered in abundance, cannot fall by the wayside, but must bear fruit within your communities, in the parishes and Dioceses. It is beautiful and gives us joy to see how the movements and new communities feel the need to come together in ecclesial communion, and try with concrete acts to share the gifts they have received, support one another in difficulty and cooperate to face the challenges of the new evangelization together. These are eloquent signs of that ecclesial maturity which I hope will always and increasingly mark every element and expression of the ecclesial community.³ During these years I have been able to see the importance of the fruits of conversion, spiritual rebirth and holiness which the movements bring to the life of the local Churches. Thanks to the dynamism of these new ecclesial gatherings, many Christians have rediscovered their vocation rooted in Baptism and have devoted themselves with extraordinary generosity to the Church's evangelizing mission. For many people this has been an opportunity to rediscover the value of prayer, while the Word of God has become their daily bread and, the Eucharist, the heart of their existence. In the Encyclical *Redemptoris missio* I recalled as something new which had emerged in many Churches in recent times, the great development of the "ecclesial movements" endowed with missionary dynamism: "When these movements humbly seek to become part of the life of local Churches and are welcomed by Bishops and priests within diocesan and parish structures", I wrote, "they represent a true gift of God both

for new evangelization and for missionary activity properly so-called. I therefore recommend that they be spread, and that they be used to give fresh energy, especially among young people, to the Christian life and to evangelization, within a pluralistic view of the ways in which Christians can associate and express themselves" (n. 72).

I warmly hope that the Speyer Convention will be for each of you and for all your movements an opportunity for growing in the love of Christ and of his Church in accordance with the teaching of the Apostle Paul who urges us to aspire to "the higher gifts" (1 Cor 12:31).

I entrust the work of your meeting to Mary, Mother of the Church, and accompany you with my prayers, as I impart a special Blessing to each of you and your families.

From the Vatican, 3 June 1999.

JOHN PAUL II

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