



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 8th INTERNATIONAL
MEETING OF THE CATHOLIC FRATERNITY
OF CHARISMATIC COVENANT COMMUNITIES AND FELLOWSHIPS**

Dear Friends,¹ "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!" (2 Cor 13:13). This is my greeting to the participants in the Eighth International Meeting of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships which is taking place in Rome at this time. The beginning of your meeting coincided with a most significant moment for the whole Church, but in a particular way for the Charismatic Renewal: the Feast of Pentecost in this year which, in our preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, is dedicated to the Holy Spirit - a year in which you are involved with special intensity. In *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* I wrote: "The primary tasks of the preparation for the Jubilee include a renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Spirit, who acts within the Church both in the Sacraments, especially in Confirmation, and in the variety of charisms, roles and ministries which he inspires for the good of the Church" (No. 45). Certainly, your own charism leads you to direct your life towards a special "intimacy" with the Holy Spirit. And a survey of the thirty years of the history of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal shows that you have helped many people to rediscover the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, in the life of the Church and in the life of the world - a rediscovery which in many of them has led to a faith in Christ filled with joy and enthusiasm, a great love of the Church and a generous dedication to her mission. In this special year, therefore, I join you in a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for these precious fruits which God has wished to bring to maturity in your communities and, through them, in the Church.² In a sense, your meeting is part of the great gathering of ecclesial movements and new communities which took place in Saint Peter's Square on 30 May, the Vigil of Pentecost. I very much wanted this gathering and looked forward to it - a gathering of "shared witness". And I must say today that I was deeply touched by the spirit of recollection and prayer, the atmosphere of joy and celebration in the Lord which marked that event, a true gift of the Holy Spirit in the year dedicated to him. It was an intense moment of ecclesial communion and a demonstration of the unity of the many different charisms which distinguish the ecclesial movements and new communities. I realize that many representatives of the communities of the Renewal from all over the world took part, and I am grateful to you for that. From the very beginning of my ministry as the Successor of Peter, I have considered the movements as a great spiritual resource for the Church and for humanity, a gift of the Holy Spirit for our time, a sign of hope for all people. From Saint Peter's Square on 30 May, there went forth an important message, a powerful word which the Spirit wished to say not only to the movements, but to the whole Church. The movements

wanted to testify to their communion with the Church and to their complete dedication to her mission, under the guidance of her Pastors. They wanted to reconfirm their desire to place their charisms at the service of the universal Church, of the local Churches and the parish communities. I am sure that this unforgettable event will be a source of rich inspiration for your meeting.³ Within the Charismatic Renewal, the Catholic Fraternity has a specific mission, recognized by the Holy See. One of the objectives stated in your statutes is to safeguard the Catholic identity of the charismatic communities and to encourage them always to maintain a close link with the Bishops and the Roman Pontiff. To help people to have a strong sense of their membership in the Church is especially important in times such as ours, when confusion and relativism abound. You belong to an ecclesial movement. The word "ecclesial" here is more than merely decorative. It implies a precise task of Christian formation, and involves a deep convergence of faith and life. The enthusiastic faith which enlivens your communities is a great enrichment, but it is not enough. It must be accompanied by a Christian formation which is solid, comprehensive and faithful to the Church's Magisterium: a formation based upon a life of prayer, upon listening to the Word of God, and upon worthy reception of the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist. To mature in faith, we have to grow in knowledge of its truths. If this does not happen, there is a danger of superficiality, extreme subjectivism and illusion. The new Catechism of the Catholic Church should become for every Christian - and therefore for every community of the Renewal - a constant reference-point. Again and again, you must also assess yourselves in the light of the "criteria of ecclesial character" which I set out in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (No. 30). As an ecclesial movement, one of your distinguishing marks should be to *sentire cum Ecclesia*, to live, that is, in filial obedience to the Church's Magisterium, to the Pastors and to the Successor of Peter, and with them to build the communion of the whole body.⁴ The motto of the Eighth International Meeting of the Catholic Fraternity looks to the words of Christ: "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Lk 12:49). In the context of the Great Jubilee of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world, these words resound with all their force. The Son of God made man has brought to us the fire of love and the truth which saves. At the approach of the new Millennium, the Church hears the call, the urgent summons of the Master to an ever greater commitment to mission: "the grain is ripe, the harvest has come" (Mk 4:29). You will doubtless discuss this during your meeting. Allow yourselves therefore to be guided by the Holy Spirit, who is always the prime agent of evangelization and of mission. I accompany your undertakings with my prayers, and I sincerely hope that this Meeting, being held in circumstances so charged with meaning, will bear abundant spiritual fruit for the entire Catholic Charismatic Renewal. May it be a milestone on the journey of your spiritual preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. To all of you, to your communities and to your loved ones, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing. *From the Vatican, 1 June 1998* **IOANNES PAULUS PP. II** ©

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