

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC FRATERNITY

■ Paul VI Audience Hall · 31 October 2014

“The Charismatic Renewal has reminded the Church of the necessity and importance of the prayer of praise.”



Dear brothers and sisters,

Welcome! I thank you for your warm welcome and I greet you all with affection. I know that the Catholic Fraternity has already met with the executive and the council and that this afternoon you will open the Sixteenth International Conference with our beloved Father Raniero. You have been kind enough to provide me with a programme and I see that each meeting begins with the words which I addressed to the Charismatic Renewal on the occasion of our meeting at the Olympic Stadium last June.

I wish first of all to congratulate each of you for having embarked upon something which was expressed as a desire at that meeting. For the last two months the Catholic Fraternity and the ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services) have worked together and shared office space in the Palazzo San Calisto, “Noah’s Ark”. I am aware that it may not have been easy to make this decision and I thank you sincerely for this witness to unity and grace which you offer to the entire world.

I would like now to reflect upon some themes which I consider important. The first is unity in diversity. Uniformity is not Catholic, it is not Christian. Rather, unity in diversity. Catholic unity is different but it is one: this is curious! The cause of diversity is also the cause of unity: the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does two things: he creates unity in diversity. Unity does not imply uniformity; it does not necessarily mean doing everything together or thinking in the same way. Nor does it signify a loss of identity. Unity in diversity is actually the opposite: it involves the joyful recognition and acceptance of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one and the placing of these gifts at the service of all members of the Church. It means knowing how to listen, to accept differences, and having the freedom to think differently and express oneself with complete respect towards the other who is my brother or sister. Do not be afraid of differences! As I wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “Our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point

is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness” (n. 236), but they form a unity.

I can see from the programme, where the names of the Communities are mentioned, that at the introduction you have inserted the phrase, “...to share the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the whole Church”. The Church needs the Holy Spirit, how could it be otherwise! Every Christian in his or her life requires a heart open to the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, promised by the Father, is he who reveals Jesus Christ to us, who gives us the possibility of saying: Jesus! Without the Holy Spirit we cannot say this. The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus Christ, he leads us to a personal encounter with him, and in so doing, changes our life. A question for you: is this your experience? Share it with others! In order to share this experience, you must live it and witness to it!

The theme which you have chosen for the Congress is “Praise and Worship for a New Evangelization”. Fr Raniero, a masterful guide in the ways of prayer, will speak on this theme. Praise is the “breath” which gives us life, because it is intimacy with God, an intimacy that grows through daily praise. Some time ago I heard an example of this which seems very appropriate: the way that people breathe. Breathing is made up of two stages: inhaling, the intake of air, and exhaling, the letting out of this air. The spiritual life is fed, nourished, by prayer and is expressed outwardly through mission: inhaling - prayer - and then exhaling. When we inhale, by prayer, we receive the fresh air of the Holy Spirit. When exhaling this air, we announce Jesus Christ risen by the same Spirit. No one can live without breathing. It is the same for the Christian: without praise and mission there is no Christian life. Praise, adoration are needed. When speaking of adoration, little is said. What do we do when praying? We ask something from God, we thank him,



we intercede. But adoration, adoring God is part of a Christian's breathing: praise and adoration.

The Charismatic Renewal has reminded the Church of the necessity and importance of the prayer of praise. When we speak of the prayer of praise in the Church, Charismatics come to mind. When I spoke of the prayer of praise during a homily at Mass in Santa Martha, I said it is not only the prayer of Charismatics but of the entire Church! It is the recognition of the Lordship of God over us and over all creation expressed through dance, music and song. I would like to revisit with you a few passages from that homily: "The prayer of praise is a Christian prayer, for all of us. In the Mass, every day, when we sing the

'Holy, Holy, Holy', this is a prayer of praise: we praise God for his greatness because he is great. And we address him with beautiful words because it pleases us to do this. The prayer of praise bears fruit in us. Sarah danced as she celebrated her fertility – at the age of ninety! This fruitfulness gives praise to God. Men and women who praise the Lord, who pray praising the Lord – and who are happy to do so – rejoice in singing the Sanctus at Mass and they bear fruit. Let us consider how beautiful it is to offer the prayer of praise to God. This should be our prayer and, as we offer it up to God, we ought to say to ourselves, "Arise, O heart, because you are standing before the King of Glory" (Holy Mass at Domus Sanctae Marthae, 28 January 2014).

Together with the prayer of praise, the prayer of intercession is, in these days, a cry to the Father for our Christian brothers and sisters who are persecuted and murdered, and for the cause of peace in our turbulent world. Praise the Lord at all times, never cease to do so, praise him more and more, unceasingly. I have been told of Charismatic prayer groups in which they pray the Rosary. Prayer to the Mother of God must never be excluded, never! But when you assemble for prayer, praise the Lord!

I see that you have among you a very dear friend, Pastor Giovanni Traettino, whom I visited recently. Catholic Fraternity, do not forget your origins, do not forget that the Charismatic Renewal is, by its very nature, ecumenical. Blessed Paul VI commented on this in

the magnificent Apostolic Exhortation on evangelization which is highly relevant in our own day: "The power of evangelization will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways. Is this not perhaps one of the great sicknesses of evangelization today? The Lord's spiritual testament tells us that unity among his followers is not only the proof that we are his but also the proof that he is sent by the Father. It is the test of the credibility of Christians and of Christ himself. Yes, the destiny of evangelization is certainly bound up with the witness of unity given by the Church. This is a source of responsibility and also of comfort" (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 77). These words are of Blessed Paul VI.



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Spiritual ecumenism is praying and proclaiming together that Jesus is Lord, and coming together to help the poor in all their poverty. This must be done while never forgetting in our day that the blood of Jesus, poured out by many Christian martyrs in various parts of the world, calls us and compels us towards the goal of unity. For persecutors, we are not divided, we are not Lutherans, Orthodox, Evangelicals,

Catholics... No! We are one in their eyes! For persecutors we are Christians! They are not interested in anything else. This is the ecumenism of blood that we experience today.

Remember: seek the unity which is the work of the Holy Spirit and do not be afraid of diversity. The breathing of Christians draws in the new air of the Holy Spirit and then exhales it upon the world: it is the prayer of praise and missionary outreach. Share baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church. Spiritual ecumenism and the ecumenism of blood. The unity of the Body of Christ. Prepare the Bride for the Bridegroom who comes! One Bride only! All (Rev 22: 17).

Finally, in addition to my thanks, I would especially like to mention these young musicians from northern Brazil who have played at the beginning; I hope they play a little more. They have welcomed me with much affection, singing "Long live Jesus my Saviour". I know that you have prepared something else and so I invite everyone to listen to them before I say farewell. Thank you! 🇺🇲



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