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CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

**Letter “*Iuvenescit Ecclesia*”
to the Bishops of the Catholic Church
REGARDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIERARCHICAL AND CHARISMATIC
GIFTS IN THE LIFE AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

INTRODUCTION

The gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church in mission

1. The Church rejuvenates in the power of the Gospel and the Spirit continually renews her, builds her up, and guides her “with hierarchical and charismatic gifts”.¹ The Second Vatican Council has repeatedly highlighted the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit that sanctifies the People of God, guides it, adorns it with virtue, and enriches it with special graces for her edification. As the Fathers love to show, the action of the divine Paraclete in the Church is multiform. John Chrysostom writes: “What gifts that work for our salvation are not given freely by the Holy Spirit? Through Him we are freed from slavery and called to liberty; we are led to adoption as children and, one might say, formed anew, after having laid down the heavy and hateful burden of our sins. Through the Holy Spirit we see assemblies of priests and we possess ranks of doctors; from this source spring forth gifts of revelation, healing graces, and all of the other charisms that adorn the Church of God”.² Thanks to the Church’s life itself, to the numerous Magisterial interventions, and to theological research, happily the awareness has grown of the multiform action of the Holy Spirit in the Church, thus arousing a particular attentiveness to the charismatic gifts by which at all times the People of God are enriched in order to carry out their mission.

The work of effectively proclaiming the Gospel has proven to be particularly urgent in our time. The Holy Father Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, recalls that: “If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life”.³ The invitation to be a Church which “goes forth” leads to a rereading of the whole Christian life in a missionary key.⁴ The work of evangelization touches every dimension of the Church: from ordinary pastoral ministry, to her proclamation to those who have abandoned the Christian faith and, in particular, to those who do not know Jesus Christ or have always rejected Him.⁵ In the essential work of new evangelization, it is now more than ever necessary to recognize and value the numerous charisms capable of reawakening and nourishing the life of faith of the People of God.

The multiform ecclesial groups

2. Both before and after the Second Vatican Council there arose numerous ecclesial groups that constituted a great source of renewal for the Church and for the urgent “pastoral and missionary conversion”⁶ of all ecclesial life. To the value and richness of all the traditional organizations, characterized by particular purposes, as well as the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, are added those more recent realities that can be described as groups of the faithful, ecclesial movements, and new communities. This present document reflects upon these realities. They cannot simply be understood as a voluntary association of persons desiring to pursue a particular social or religious goal. The character of “movement” distinguishes them in the ecclesial landscape in as

¹ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 4.

² JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilia de Pentecoste*, II, 1: PG 50, 464.

³ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 49: AAS 105 (2013), 1040.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 20-24: AAS 105 (2013), 1028-1029.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 14: AAS 105 (2013), 1025.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25: AAS 105 (2013), 1030.

much as they are powerfully dynamic realities. They are capable of provoking a particular attraction to the Gospel and offering a proposal of the Christian life which, basically global in outlook, touches every aspect of human existence. The gathering of the faithful into groups, with an intensely shared common existence in order to strengthen their life of faith, hope, and charity, expresses well the ecclesial dynamic as the mystery of communion for the sake of mission, and manifests itself as a sign of the unity of the Church in Christ. In such a sense, these ecclesial groups arising from a shared charism tend to have as their goal “the broad apostolic purpose of the Church”.⁷ In this perspective, groups of the faithful, ecclesial movements, and new communities propose renewed forms of following Christ in which the *communio cum Deo* and the *communio fidelium* are deepened. Thus the attractiveness of the encounter with the Lord Jesus and the beauty of Christian existence lived in its integrity is brought to new social contexts. A particular form of mission and witness is also expressed in such an entity, encouraging the growth of both a lively awareness of the individual’s Christian vocation as well as stable paths of Christian formation and ways of evangelical perfection. According to their diverse charisms, the faithful can share in this gathered entity in different states of life (lay faithful, ordained ministers and consecrated persons). In this way, they manifest the multiform richness of the ecclesial communion. The strong capacity of such an entity to gather people together constitutes a significant testimony to how the Church does not grow “through proselytism but ‘through attraction’”.⁸

John Paul II addressed the representatives of the movements of the new communities. He recognized in them a “providential answer”⁹ arising from the Holy Spirit to the necessity of communicating in a persuasive manner the Gospel to the whole world, considering the grand processes of change in action at a global level, often marked by a strongly secularized culture. This leaven of the Spirit “has brought to the Church’s life an unexpected newness which is sometimes even disruptive”.¹⁰ The same Pontiff remembered that the time of “ecclesial maturity” has come for all of these ecclesial groups. This implies their full value and insertion “in the local Churches and in the parishes [...] always remaining in communion with the pastors and attentive to their directions”.¹¹ These new realities fill the heart of the Church with joy and gratitude and are called to relate positively with all of the other gifts present in ecclesial life.

Purpose of the present document

3. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with this present document, intends, in the light of the relationship between the “hierarchical and charismatic gifts”, to underline those theological and ecclesiological elements whose comprehension will encourage a fruitful and ordered participation of the new groups in the communion and the mission of the Church. For this purpose, first, some key elements both of the doctrine of charisms found in the New Testament and of Magisterial reflection on these new entities are presented. Successively, based upon certain principles of systematic theology, identifying elements of both the hierarchical and charismatic gifts will be presented alongside some criteria for the discernment of the new ecclesial groups.

I. THE CHARISMS ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

Grace and charism

4. “Charism” is the transcription of the Greek word *chárisma*, which, found frequently in the Pauline letters, also appears in the first letter of Peter. This term has a general sense of “generous gift” and, in the New Testament, is used only in reference to the divine gifts. In some passages, the context offers a more precise meaning (cf. *Rm* 12:6; *I Cor* 12:4-31; *I Pt* 4:10), whose fundamental trait is the differentiated distribution of gifts.¹² In modern languages this is also the prevailing sense of words derived from this Greek term. Unlike the fundamental graces such as sanctifying grace, or the gifts of faith, of hope, and of charity, that are indispensable for every Christian, an individual charism need not be a gift given to all (cf. *I Cor* 12:30). The charisms are particular gifts that the Spirit distributes “as He wishes” (*I Cor* 12:11). In order to give an account of the necessary presence of the diverse

⁷ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 19.

⁸ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 14: AAS 105 (2013), 1026; cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Homily in the Holy Mass of inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin-American Episcopacy and of the Caribbean at “La Aparecida”* (13 May 2007): AAS 99 (2007), 43.

⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse to those belonging to Ecclesial Movements and to the New Communities on the Vigil of Pentecost* (30 May 1998), 7: *Insegnamenti* 21/1 (1998), 1123.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6: *Insegnamenti* 21/1 (1998), 1122.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8: *Insegnamenti* 21/1 (1998), 1124.

¹² “There are different kinds of *charísmata*” (*I Cor* 12:4); “we are in possession of different *charísmata*” (*Rm* 12:6); “Each of us has the proper *chárisma* from God, one of one kind and one of another” (*I Cor* 7:7).

charisms in the Church, the two most explicit texts (*Rm* 12:4-8; *I Cor* 12:12-30) make use of a comparison with the human body: “For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them” (*Rm* 12:4-6). Between the members of the body, this diversity does not constitute an anomaly to avoid, on the contrary, it is both necessary and productive. It makes possible the fulfilment of diverse life-giving functions. “If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is there are many parts but one body” (*I Cor* 12:19-20). A close relationship between the particular charisms (*charismata*) and the grace of God is affirmed by Paul in *Rm* 12:6 and by Peter in *I Pt* 4:10.¹³ The charisms are recognized as a manifestation of the “multiform grace of God” (*I Pt* 4:10). They are not, therefore, simply human capacities. Their divine origin is expressed in different ways: according to some texts they come from God (cf. *Rm* 12:3; *I Cor* 12:28; *2 Tm* 1:6; *I Pt* 4:10); according to *Eph* 4:7, they come from Christ; according to *I Cor* 12:4-11, from the Spirit. As this last passage is the most insistent (it mentions the Spirit seven times), the charisms are usually presented as “manifestations of the Spirit” (*I Cor* 12:7). It is clear, nonetheless, that this attribution is not exclusive and does not contradict the preceding two. The gifts of God always imply the entire Trinitarian horizon, as theology has affirmed from its beginning, both in the West and in the East.¹⁴

Gifts given “for the good of all” and the primacy of charity

5. In *I Cor* 12:7 Paul declares that “To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for *some benefit*”. Many translations add “for the benefit of all” because the majority of charisms mentioned by the Apostle, even if not all, are directly for the benefit of all. This orientation toward the edification of all has been well understood, for example, by St. Basil the Great, when he says: “These gifts are received by each one more for others than for themselves [...]. In the common life it is necessary that the power of the Holy Spirit, given to one, be transmitted to all. The one who lives for oneself, may have a charism, but it remains useless, hidden away inactive, because it remains buried within the self”.¹⁵ Paul, nevertheless, does not deny that a charism may be useful solely for the person who has received it. Such is the case with speaking in tongues, which, in this respect, is different from the gift of prophecy.¹⁶ The charisms that have a common usefulness, be they charisms of the word (of wisdom, of knowledge, of prophecy, of exhortation) or of action (of powers, of ministry, of governance); they also have a personal usefulness, because their service of the common good favors the growth of charity in those who possess them. Paul observes, regarding this, that, if one lacks charity, even the highest charisms do not help their recipient (cf. *I Cor* 13:1-3). A stern passage from the Gospel of Matthew (*Mt* 7:22-23) expresses the same reality: the exercise of the more visible charisms (prophecy, exorcisms, miracles) can unfortunately coexist with the absence of an authentic relationship with the Savior. Consequently, Peter as much as Paul insists on the necessity of directing all of the charisms towards charity. Peter offers a general rule: “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (*I Pt* 4:10). Paul is concerned in particular about the use of the charisms in gatherings of the Christian community and says: “Everything should be done for building up” (*I Cor* 14:26).

The variety of charisms

6. In some texts we find a list of charisms, sometimes summarized (cf. *I Pt* 4:10), other times more detailed (cf. *I Cor* 12:8-10, 28-30; *Rm* 12:6-8). Among those listed there are exceptional gifts (of healing, of mighty deeds, of variety of tongues) and ordinary gifts (of teaching, of service, of beneficence), ministries for the guidance of the community (cf. *Eph* 4:11) and gifts given through the imposition of the hands (cf. *I Tim* 4:14; *2 Tim* 1:6). It is not always clear that these gifts are considered “charisms” in the strict sense of the term. The exceptional gifts mentioned repeatedly in *I Cor* 12-14, disappear from the latter texts: the list of *Rm* 12:6-8 presents only the less visible charisms, that have an ongoing usefulness for the life of the Christian community. None of these lists claims to be exhaustive. Elsewhere, for example, Paul suggests that the choice of celibacy for the love of Christ should be

¹³ In Greek, the two words (*chárisma* and *cháris*) have the same root.

¹⁴ Cf. ORIGEN, *De principiis*, I, 3, 7: PG 11, 153: “What is called the gift of the Spirit is passed on through the work of the Son and produced by the work of the Father”.

¹⁵ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Regulae fusius Tractae*, 7, 2: PG 31, 933-934.

¹⁶ “Whoever speaks in a tongue builds himself up, but whoever prophesies builds up the Church” (*I Cor* 14:4). The Apostle does not reject the gift of glossolalia, a charism of prayer useful for the personal relationship with God, and he recognizes it as an authentic charism, although not directly having a communal benefit: “I give thanks to God that I speak in tongues more than any of you, but in the Church I would rather speak five words with my mind, so as to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (*I Cor* 14:18-19).

understood as the fruit of a charism, as should that of matrimony (cf. *1 Cor 7:7* in the context of the whole chapter). The examples he gives depend on the level of development reached in the Churches of the time and are susceptible, therefore, to further additions. The Church, in fact, always grows over time thanks to the vivifying action of the Spirit.

The proper exercise of the charisms in the ecclesial community

7. From the above observations, it emerges that the Scriptural texts do not present an opposition between the diverse charisms; rather they see a harmonic connection and complementarity between them. The antithesis between an institutional Church of the Judeo-Christian type and a charismatic Church of the Pauline type, affirmed by certain reductive ecclesial interpretations, in reality lacks a foundation in the texts of the New Testament. Far from situating the charisms on one side and the institutional entity on the other, opposing a Church “of charity” and a Church “of the institution,” Paul gathers in one list the recipients of the charisms of authority and teaching, of charisms that are useful to the ordinary life of the community, and of the more striking charisms.¹⁷ Paul himself describes his ministry as an Apostle as a ministry “of the Spirit” (*2 Cor 3:8*). He feels invested with authority (*exousía*), given him by the Lord (cf. *2 Cor 10:8; 13:10*), an authority that extends also towards charismatics. Both he and Peter give the charismatics instructions on the way to exercise their charisms. Their attitude is, above all, one of favorable welcoming; they are convinced of the divine origin of the charisms; they do not, however, consider these gifts as authorizing one to withdraw the obedience owed towards the ecclesial hierarchy, or as bestowing the right to an autonomous ministry. Paul shows himself to be aware of the drawbacks that a disordered exercise of the charisms can provoke in the Christian community.¹⁸ The Apostle, therefore, intervenes, with authority, to establish precise rules for the exercise of charisms “in the Church” (*1 Cor 14:19-28*), that is, in the gatherings of the community (cf. *1 Cor 14:23-26*). He limits, for example, the exercise of glossolalia.¹⁹ Similar rules are also given for the gift of prophecy (cf. *1 Cor 14:29-31*).²⁰

Hierarchical and charismatic gifts

8. In summary, from an examination of the biblical texts regarding the charisms, it emerges that the New Testament, while not offering a complete systematic teaching, presents affirmations of great importance that orientate ecclesial reflection and practice. One must also recognize that we do not find a univocal use of the term “charism”; rather a variety of meanings are observable, which theological reflection and the Magisterium help us to understand in the context of the complete vision of the mystery of the Church. In the present document the attention is placed on the binomial highlighted in paragraph 4 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* which speaks of “hierarchical gifts and charismatic gifts”. The relationship between them appears close and well-articulated. They have the same origin and the same purpose. They are gifts of God, of the Holy Spirit, of Christ, given to contribute, in diverse ways, to the edification of the Church. He who has received the gift to lead in the Church has also the responsibility of keeping watch over the good exercise of the other charisms, in such a manner that all contribute to the good of the Church and to its evangelizing mission, knowing well that the Holy Spirit distributes the charismatic gifts to whomever he desires (cf. *1 Cor 12:11*). The same Spirit gives to the hierarchy of the Church the capacity to discern the authenticity of the charisms, to welcome them with joy and gratitude, to promote them generously, and to accompany them with vigilant paternity. History itself testifies to the multiform action of the Spirit, through which the Church, “built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the capstone” (*Eph 2:20*), lives her mission in the world.

¹⁷ Cf. *1 Cor 12:28*: “Some people God has designated in the Church to be, first, Apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues”.

¹⁸ In the communal gatherings, the overabundance of the charismatic manifestations can create hardships, producing an atmosphere of rivalry, disorder and confusion. Less gifted Christians risk developing an inferiority complex (cf. *1 Cor 12:15-16*); while the great charismatics may be tempted to assume airs of pride and arrogance (cf. *1 Cor 12:21*).

¹⁹ If in the assembly nobody is found capable of interpreting the mysterious words of the one speaking in tongues, Paul instructs the latter to remain silent. If there is an interpreter, Paul allows that two or, at most three, people may speak in tongues (cf. *1 Cor 14:27-28*).

²⁰ Paul does not accept the idea of an uncontrollable prophetic inspiration; he instead affirms that “Indeed, the spirits of prophets are under the prophets’ control, since He is not the God of disorder but of peace” (*1 Cor 14:32-33*). He affirms that “If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or a spiritual person, he should recognize that what I am writing to you is a commandment of the Lord. If anyone does not acknowledge this, he is not acknowledged” (*1 Cor 14:37-39*). He concludes, however, positively by inviting them to strive eagerly for the gift of prophecy and not to prohibit speaking in tongues (cf. *1 Cor 14:39*).

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HIERARCHICAL AND THE CHARISMATIC GIFTS
IN THE RECENT MAGISTERIUM

The Second Vatican Council

9. Although there has never been a shortage of different charisms arising in the temporal course of ecclesial history, nonetheless, only in recent times has a systematic reflection on them been developed. While the doctrine of the charisms occupies a significant space in the Magisterium of Pius XII as expressed in *Mystici Corporis*,²¹ a decisive step forward in the adequate understanding of the relationship between the hierarchical and charismatic gifts is taken with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The relevant passages regarding this theme²² reveal in the life of the Church, in addition to the Word of God, written and transmitted, to the sacraments, and to the ordained hierarchical ministry, the presence of gifts, of special gifts or charisms, distributed by the Spirit among the faithful of every condition. The passage most emblematic in this regard is to be found in *Lumen Gentium* 4: “The Church, which the Spirit guides in the way of all truth (cf. *Jn* 16: 13) and which He unifies in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits (cf. *Eph* 4:11-12, *1 Cor* 12:4, *Gal* 5:22)”.²³ In such a manner, the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, in presenting the gifts mediated through the Spirit, precisely through the distinction between the diverse hierarchical and charismatic gifts, highlights their difference in unity. The affirmations in *Lumen Gentium* 12 regarding charismatic phenomena also appear significant in the context of the participation of the People of God in the prophetic office of Christ. One recognizes that the Holy Spirit does not limit Himself to this as “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: “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”.

Finally, their multiformity and providentiality are described: “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”.²⁴ Analogous reflections are also found in the conciliar Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.²⁵ This same document affirms that such gifts are not to be considered optional in the life of the Church; rather “from the acceptance of these charisms, including those which are more elementary, there arises for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of men and the building up of the Church, in the freedom of the Holy Spirit”.²⁶ The authentic charisms, therefore, come to be considered as gifts of indispensable importance for the life and mission of the Church. Finally, conciliar teaching constantly recognizes the essential role of pastors in the discernment of the charisms and their ordered exercise within the ecclesial communion.²⁷

The post-conciliar Magisterium

10. In the period following the Second Vatican Council, the interventions of the Magisterium on this topic multiplied.²⁸ The growing vitality of the new movements, groups of the faithful, and ecclesial communities,

²¹ PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis* (29 June 1943): AAS 35 (1943), 206-230.

²² Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 4, 7, 11, 12, 25, 30, 50; Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 8; Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3, 4, 30; Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4, 9.

²³ ID., Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁵ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3: “For the exercise of this apostolate, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the People of God through ministry and the sacraments gives the faithful special gifts also (cf. *1 Cor* 12:7), ‘allotting them to everyone according as He wills’ (*1 Cor* 12:11) in order that individuals, administering grace to others just as they have received it, may also be ‘good stewards of the manifold grace of God’ (*1 Pt* 4:10), to build up the whole body in charity (cf. *Eph* 4:16)”.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 12: “judgment as to their genuinity and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good (cf. *1 Ts* 5:12 and 19-21)”. Although this refers immediately to the discernment of extraordinary gifts, by analogy, what is stated here applies generically for every charism.

²⁸ Cf. e.g. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 58: AAS 68 (1976), 46-49; CONGREGATION FOR THE RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES-CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directive Note *Mutuae*

together with the need to specify the place of Consecrated Life within the Church contributed to this.²⁹ John Paul II, in his Magisterium, insists particularly on the principle of the *coessentiality* of these gifts: “I have often had occasion to stress that there is no conflict or opposition in the Church between the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension, of which movements are a significant expression. Both are co-essential to the divine constitution of the Church founded by Jesus, because they both help to make the mystery of Christ and his saving work present in the world”.³⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, in addition to confirming the coessentiality of the gifts, deepened the affirmation of his predecessor, remembering that “in the Church the essential institutions are also charismatic and indeed the charisms must, in one way or another, be institutionalized to have coherency and continuity. Hence, both dimensions originate from the same Holy Spirit for the same Body of Christ, and together they concur to make present the mystery and the salvific work of Christ in the world”.³¹ The hierarchical gifts and the charismatic gifts are thus reciprocally related from their very origins. Finally, the Holy Father Francis, has recalled “the harmony” that the Spirit creates between the diverse gifts and has called the charismatic groups to a missionary openness, to the necessary obedience to pastors, and to maintain ecclesial communion,³² because “it is within the community that the gifts the Father showers upon us bloom and flourish; and it is in the bosom of the community that one learns to recognize them as a sign of his love for all his children.”³³ Summarizing, therefore, it is possible to recognize a convergence in the recent Magisterium on the coessentiality between the hierarchical and charismatic gifts. Their opposition, and equally their juxtaposition, would be symptomatic of an error or insufficient comprehension of the action of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the Church.

III. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HIERARCHICAL AND CHARISMATIC GIFTS

Trinitarian and Christological horizons of the gifts of the Holy Spirit

11. In order to grasp the profound reasons of the relationship between the hierarchical and charismatic gifts, it is opportune to recall their theological foundation. In fact, the necessity of overcoming every sterile contraposition or extrinsic juxtaposition between the hierarchical and charismatic gifts is required by the economy of salvation itself, which embraces the intrinsic relation between the missions of the Word incarnate and of the Holy Spirit. In reality, every gift of the Father implies the reference to the joint and differentiated actions of the divine missions: every gift comes from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit in the Church is bound to the mission of the Son, accomplished definitively in his Paschal Mystery. Jesus Himself connects the fulfilment of his mission to the sending of the Spirit upon the community of believers.³⁴ Through this, the Holy Spirit can in no way inaugurate an economy other than that of the divine incarnate *Logos*, crucified and risen.³⁵ In truth, the whole sacramental economy of the Church is the pneumatological realization of the Incarnation: the Holy Spirit, therefore, comes to be considered by Tradition as the soul of the Church which is the Body of Christ. The action of God in history always implies the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit, who, in Irenaeus of Lyon’s

relationis (14 May 1978), AAS 70 (1978), 473-506; JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988): AAS 81 (1989), 393-521; Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (25 March 1996): AAS 88 (1996), 377-486.

²⁹ The affirmation of the above-mentioned interdicasterial document *Mutuae relationes* is emblematic. It underlines in paragraph 34 that: “It would be a serious mistake to make the two realities –religious life and ecclesial structures– independent one of the other, or to oppose one to the other as if they could subsist as two distant entities, one charismatic, the other institutional. Both elements, namely the spiritual gifts and the ecclesial structures form one, even though complex, reality”.

³⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Message to the participants of the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity* (27 May 1998), 5: *Insegnamenti* 21/1 (1998), 1065; cf. also ID., *The ecclesial movements gathered for an international colloquium* (2 March 1987): *Insegnamenti* 10/1 (1987), 476-479.

³¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Discourse to the participants on the pilgrimage promoted by the fraternity of Communion and Liberation* (24 March 2007): *Insegnamenti* 3/1 (2007), 558.

³² “Journeying together in the Church, under the guidance of her pastors who possess a special charism and ministry, is a sign of the working of the Holy Spirit. Having a sense of the Church is something fundamental for every Christian, every community and every movement”: FRANCIS, *Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost* (19 May 2013): *Insegnamenti* 1 (2013), 208.

³³ ID., *Catechesis* (1 October 2014): *L’Osservatore Romano* (2 October 2014), 8.

³⁴ Cf. *Jn* 7:39; 14:26; 15:26; 20:22.

³⁵ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (6 August 2000), 9-12: AAS 92 (2000), 749-754.

evocative words, are called “the two hands of the Father”.³⁶ In this sense, every gift of the Spirit cannot but be in relationship with the Word made flesh.³⁷

The bond in origin between the hierarchal gifts, conferred with the sacramental grace of Orders, and the charismatic gifts, freely distributed by the Holy Spirit, has its deepest roots, therefore, in the relationship between the divine incarnate *Logos* and the Holy Spirit, who is always the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Precisely to avoid equivocal theological visions that would posit a “Church of the Spirit”, distinct and separate from the hierarchical-institutional Church, it must be repeated that the two divine missions mutually imply each other *in every gift* bestowed freely upon the Church. In reality, the mission of Jesus Christ already implies within itself the action of the Spirit. John Paul II, in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, had shown the decisive importance of the action of the Spirit in the mission of the Son.³⁸ Benedict XVI deepened this insight in his Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, recalling that the Paraclete “already at work in Creation (cf. *Gen* 1:2), is fully present throughout the life of the incarnate Word”. Jesus Christ “is conceived by the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Mt* 1:18; *Lk* 1:35); at the beginning of his public mission, on the banks of the Jordan, He sees the Spirit descend upon Him[self] in the form of a dove (cf. *Mt* 3:16 and parallels); He acts, speaks and rejoices in the Spirit (cf. *Lk* 10:21), and He can offer Himself in the Spirit (cf. *Heb* 9:14). In the so-called ‘farewell discourse’ reported by John, Jesus clearly relates the gift of his life in the Paschal Mystery to the gift of the Spirit to his own (cf. *Jn* 16:7). Once risen, bearing in his flesh the signs of the passion, He can pour out the Spirit upon them (cf. *Jn* 20:22), making them sharers in his own mission (cf. *Jn* 20:21). The Spirit would then teach the disciples all things and bring to their remembrance all that Christ had said (cf. *Jn* 14:26), since it falls to Him, as the Spirit of truth (cf. *Jn* 15:26), to guide the disciples into all truth (cf. *Jn* 16:13). In the account in *Acts*, the Spirit descends on the Apostles gathered in prayer with Mary on the day of Pentecost (cf. 2:1-4) and stirs them to undertake the mission of proclaiming the Good News to all peoples”.³⁹

The action of the Holy Spirit in the hierarchal and charismatic gifts

12. Pointing out the Trinitarian and Christological horizon of the divine gifts also sheds light on the relation between the hierarchal and charismatic gifts. In fact, the relationship to the salvific actions of Christ – for example, the institution of the Eucharist (cf. *Lc* 22:19f; *I Cor* 11:25), the power to forgive sins (cf. *Jn* 20:22f), the apostolic mandate for the work of evangelization and of baptism (*Mc* 16:15f; *Mt* 28:18-20) – primarily appears in the hierarchal gifts, in as much as they pertain to the sacrament of Orders. It is equally manifest that no sacrament can be conferred without the action of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the charismatic gifts, bestowed freely by the Spirit, “who blows where He wills” (*Jn* 3:8) and distributes his gifts “as He wishes” (*I Cor* 12:11), are objectively related to the new life in Christ, in as much as Christians are “individually parts” (*I Cor* 12:27) of his Body. Therefore, the proper comprehension of the charismatic gifts comes only in reference to the presence of Christ and in his service; as John Paul II affirmed, “the true charisms cannot but tend towards the encounter with Christ in the sacraments”.⁴¹ The hierarchal and charismatic gifts, therefore, appear united in reference to the intrinsic relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Paraclete is, contemporaneously, the one who distributes efficaciously, through the sacraments, the salvific grace offered by Christ dead and risen again, and He is the one who bestows the charisms. In the liturgies of the Christian East, especially in the Syriac tradition, the role of the Holy Spirit, represented by the image of fire, helps to make this experience plainly manifest. Indeed the great theologian and poet Ephrem the Syrian said “the fire of compassion descends / and takes the form of bread”,⁴² indicating not only the Spirit’s action relative to transforming the gifts but also relative to the believers who eat the Eucharistic bread. The Eastern perspective, with the efficacy of its images, helps us to understand how, drawing near to the Eucharist, Christ gives us the Spirit. The same Spirit, then, by way of his actions in believers, feeds the life in Christ, leading them anew to a more profound sacramental life, above all in the Eucharist. In such a manner, the free action of the Holy Spirit in history reaches believers with the gift of salvation and at the same time animates them so they may respond freely and fully with the commitment of their lives.

³⁶ IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Adversus haereses*, IV, 7, 4: PG 7, 992-993; V, 1, 3: PG 7, 1123; V, 6, 1: PG 7, 1137; V, 28, 4: PG 7, 1200.

³⁷ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 12: AAS 92 (2000), 752-754.

³⁸ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18 May 1986), 50: AAS 78 (1986), 896-870; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 727-730.

³⁹ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007), 12: AAS 99 (2007), 114.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1104-1107.

⁴¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse to those belonging to Ecclesial Movements and to New Communities on the Vigil of Pentecost* (30 May 1998), 7: *Insegnamenti* 21/1 (1998) 1123.

⁴² EPHREM THE SYRIAN, *Hymns on the faith*, 10, 12: CSCO 154, 50.

IV THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIERARCHICAL AND CHARISMATIC GIFTS
IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In the Church as mystery of communion

13. The Church presents herself as “a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”,⁴³ in which the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts emerges as directed to the full participation of the faithful in her communion and evangelizing mission. We have been gratuitously predestined in Christ to this new life (*Rm* 8:29-31; *Eph* 1:4-5). The Holy Spirit “brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful. He brings them into intimate union with Christ, so that He is the principle of the Church's unity”.⁴⁴ Within the Church, men are called together to become members of Christ⁴⁵ and within the ecclesial communion they are united in Christ, as members of each other. Communion is always “a vital double participation: the incorporation of Christians into the life of Christ, and the diffusion of charity itself amongst the whole faithful in this world and the next. Unity with Christ and in Christ; and unity between Christians in the Church”.⁴⁶ In this sense, the mystery of the Church shines “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”.⁴⁷ From this, one can see that the Church as a mystery of communion has a sacramental root: “Fundamentally this means communion with God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. This communion is effected in the Word of God and in the sacraments. Baptism” –in close union with Confirmation– “is the entrance to and foundation of the communion of the Church. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life”.⁴⁸ These sacraments of initiation are constitutive of Christian life, and the hierarchical and charismatic gifts rest upon them. The life of ecclesial communion, in this way internally ordered, is lived in a continual religious attentiveness to the Word of God and is nourished by the sacraments. The Word of God presents itself to us as profoundly linked to the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist,⁴⁹ within the one sacramental horizon of Revelation. The Eastern tradition looks upon the Church, the body of Christ “animated” by the Holy Spirit and sees her as an ordered unity, which expresses itself also at the level of her gifts. The efficacious presence of the Spirit in the hearts of believers (cf. *Rm* 5:5) is the root cause of this unity even in its charismatic manifestations.⁵⁰ The charismatic gifts given to individuals actually belong to the Church herself and are ordered towards a more intense ecclesial life. This perspective is present also in the writings of Blessed John Henry Newman: “Thus the heart of every Christian ought to represent in miniature the Catholic Church, since one Spirit makes both the whole Church and every member of it to be His Temple”.⁵¹ Thus, the falseness of any contradiction between or mere juxtaposition of the hierarchical and charismatic gifts is rendered more evident.

In short, the relationship between the charismatic gifts and the ecclesial sacramental structure confirms the coessentiality between hierarchical gifts –of their nature stable, permanent, and irrevocable– and the charismatic gifts. Even if the historical forms of the latter are not guaranteed to remain always the same,⁵² nonetheless the charismatic *dimension* will never be lacking in the life and mission of the Church.

Identity of the hierarchical gifts

14. In order to sanctify every member of the People of God and for the mission of the Church in the world, amongst the various gifts, “a special place” is held by “the grace of the Apostles to whose authority the Spirit Himself subjected even those who were endowed with charisms”.⁵³ Jesus Christ Himself willed that there be

⁴³CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE, *De oratione dominica*, 23: *PL* 4, 553; cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 4.

⁴⁴SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2.

⁴⁵Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 16: AAS 92 (2000), 757: “the fullness of Christ's salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord”.

⁴⁶PAUL VI, *Catechesis* (8 June 1966): *Insegnamenti* 4 (1966), 794.

⁴⁷SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

⁴⁸SECOND EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Ecclesia sub Verbo mysteria Christi celebrans pro salute mundi. Relatio finalis* (7 December 1985), II, C, 1: *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 9, 1800; cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Communis Notio* (28 May 1992), 4-5: AAS 85 (1993), 839-841.

⁴⁹Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), 54: AAS 102 (2010), 733-734; FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 174: AAS 105 (2013), 1092-1093.

⁵⁰Cf. BASIL OF CESAREA, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 26: *PG* 32, 181.

⁵¹J.H. NEWMAN, *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, London 1869, 132.

⁵²A paradigmatic affirmation of this matter regarding Consecrated Life can be found in JOHN PAUL II, *Catechesis* (28 September 1994), 5: *Insegnamenti* 17/2 (1994), 404-405.

⁵³SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 7.

hierarchical gifts in order to ensure the continuing presence of his unique salvific mediation: “the Apostles were enriched by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them (cf. *Acts* 1:8; 2: 4; *Jn* 20:22-23), and they passed on this spiritual gift to their helpers by the imposition of hands (cf. *1 Tim* 4:14; *2 Tim* 1:6-7)”.⁵⁴ The conferral of hierarchical gifts, therefore, can be traced back, above all, to the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, given at Episcopal consecration. This “together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the office of teaching and of governing, which, however, of its very nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college”.⁵⁵ For this reason: “In the bishops, therefore, for whom priests are assistants, Our Lord Jesus Christ [...] is present in the midst of those who believe [...] through their excellent service He is preaching the Word of God to all nations, and constantly administering the sacraments of faith to those who believe, by their paternal functioning (cf. *1 Cor* 4:15). He incorporates new members into His Body by a heavenly regeneration, and finally by their wisdom and prudence He directs and guides the People of the New Testament in their pilgrimage toward eternal happiness”.⁵⁶ The Eastern Christian tradition, with its vital link to the Fathers, reads all this through its characteristic notion of *taxis*. According to Basil the Great, it is evident that the ordering of the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit. This same order (*taxis*), within which St. Paul catalogues the charisms (cf. *1 Cor* 12:28), “is according to the distribution of the Spirit’s gifts”,⁵⁷ and locates that of the Apostles in first place. Beginning with Episcopal consecration, one can also understand the hierarchical gifts as referred to the other grades of the sacrament of Orders; above all, as referred to priests, who are “consecrated to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful and to celebrate divine worship”, and who “sanctify and govern under the bishop’s authority, that part of the Lord’s flock entrusted to them”. In their turn they must become “a pattern to the flock”, so they may “lead and serve their local community”.⁵⁸ In the sacrament of Orders bishops and priests, by the priestly anointing, “are conformed to Christ the Priest in such a way that they can act in the person of Christ the Head”.⁵⁹ One must add to these gifts those given to deacons “upon whom hands are imposed ‘not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service’” and who “strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and his group of priests they serve in the diaconate of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity to the People of God”.⁶⁰ In short, the hierarchical gifts proper to the sacrament of Orders, in its diverse grades, are given so that the Church as communion may never fail to make to each member of the faithful an objective offer of grace in the sacraments, and so She may offer both a normative proclamation of the Gospel and pastoral care.

Identity of the charismatic gifts

15. If, in the exercise of the hierarchical gifts, the offer of Christ’s grace, to the whole People of God throughout history, is assured, nonetheless, each individual member of the faithful is called to accept and correspond to this grace personally in the concrete circumstances of their lives. The charismatic gifts, therefore, are freely distributed by the Holy Spirit, so that sacramental grace may be fruitful in Christian life in different ways and at every level. Because these charisms “are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church”,⁶¹ through their diverse richness, the People of God are able fully to live their evangelical mission, discerning the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.⁶² The charismatic gifts, in fact, enable the faithful to respond to the gift of salvation in complete freedom and in a way suited to the times. In this way, they themselves become a gift of love for others and authentic witnesses to the Gospel before all mankind.

The charismatic gifts shared

16. In this context it is important to remember how varied the charismatic gifts may be among themselves, not only because of their specific character, but also on account of their diffusion within the ecclesial communion. The charismatic gifts “are given to individual persons, and can even be shared by others in such ways as to continue in time a precious and effective heritage, serving as a source of a particular spiritual affinity among persons”.⁶³ The relationship between the personal character of the charism and the possibility of sharing it expresses a decisive element in its dynamic, insofar as it touches upon the relationship that, in the ecclesial communion, always links

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ BASIL OF CESAREA, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16, 38: PG 32, 137.

⁵⁸ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 28.

⁵⁹ *Id.*, Decree *Presbyterium Ordinis*, 2.

⁶⁰ *Id.*, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 29.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶² Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 4, 11.

⁶³ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 24: AAS 81 (1989), 434.

person and community.⁶⁴ The charismatic gifts, when exercised, can generate affinities, closeness, and spiritual relationships. Through these the charismatic patrimony, originating in the person of the founder, is shared in and deepened, thereby giving life to true spiritual families. The new ecclesial groups, in their diverse forms present themselves as shared charismatic gifts. Ecclesial movements and new communities show how a determinate founding charism can gather the faithful together and help them to live fully their Christian vocation and proper state of life in service of the ecclesial mission. The concrete historical forms this sharing takes may vary; for this very reason, as the history of spirituality shows, diverse foundations may arise from a single original founding charism.

Recognition by ecclesial authorities

17. Among the charismatic gifts, freely distributed by the Holy Spirit, many are received and lived out by persons within the Christian community who have no need of particular regulations. When, however, a gift presents itself as a “founding” or “originating charism”, this requires a specific recognition so that the richness it contains may be adequately articulated within the ecclesial communion and faithfully transmitted over time. Here emerges the decisive task of discernment that appertains to the ecclesial authorities.⁶⁵ Recognizing the authenticity of a charism is not always an easy task, it is, nonetheless, a dutiful service that pastors are required to fulfill. The faithful have “the right to be informed by their pastors about the authenticity of charisms and the trustworthiness of those who present themselves as recipients thereof”.⁶⁶ These authorities should, to this end, bear in mind the unforeseeable nature of the charisms inspired by the Holy Spirit and evaluate them according to the rule of faith with the intention of building up the Church.⁶⁷ This process is time-consuming. It requires an adequate period to pass in order to authenticate the charisms, which must be submitted to serious discernment until they are recognized as genuine. The reality of the group that arises from the charism must have the proper time to grow and mature. This would extend beyond the period of initial enthusiasm until a stable configuration arises. In this whole itinerary of verification, the authority of the Church must benevolently accompany the new group. The pastor’s accompaniment will never diminish, because, just as the solicitous love of the Good Shepherd always accompanies the flock, so too the paternity of those in the Church called to be vicars of the Good Shepherd never wanes.

Criteria for discerning the charismatic gifts

18. In this context, it is useful to remember certain criteria, as set out by the Church’s Magisterium in recent years, for the discernment of the charismatic gifts with reference to ecclesial groups. These criteria are intended to help the recognition of the authentically ecclesial nature of the charisms.

a) *The Primacy of the vocation of every Christian to holiness.* Every entity that is born from sharing in an authentic charism must always be at the service of holiness in the Church and, therefore, of the increase of charity and an authentic movement towards the perfection of love.⁶⁸

b) *Commitment to spreading the Gospel.* Authentic charisms “are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the center which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse”.⁶⁹ In this way they must be marked by “conformity to and participation in the Church’s apostolic goals” and show “a missionary zeal which will increase their effectiveness as participants in a re-evangelization”.⁷⁰

c) *Profession of the Catholic Faith.* Every charismatic entity must be a place of education in the faith in its fullness “embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church’s Magisterium, as the Church interprets it”;⁷¹ for this reason they must avoid venturing “beyond (*proagon*) the

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 29: AAS 81 (1989), 443-446.

⁶⁵ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 12.

⁶⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Catechesis* (9 March 1994), 6: *Insegnamenti* 17/1 (1994), 641.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 799f; CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE–CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directive Note *Mutuae Relationes*, 51: AAS 70 (1978), 499-500; JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 48: AAS 88 (1996), 421-422; ID., *Catechesis* (24 June 1992), 6: *Insegnamenti* 15/1 (1992), 1935-1936.

⁶⁸ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 39-42; JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30: AAS 81 (1989), 446.

⁶⁹ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 130: AAS 105 (2013), 1074.

⁷⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30: AAS 81 (1989), 447; cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58: AAS 68 (1976), 49.

⁷¹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30: AAS 81 (1989), 446-447.

doctrine and the ecclesial community”. Indeed if “one does not remain within these, one is not united to God and Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Jn 9)”.⁷²

d) *Witness to a real communion with the whole Church.* This requires a “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”.⁷³ This implies a “loyal readiness to embrace the[ir] doctrinal teachings and pastoral initiatives”,⁷⁴ as well as “a readiness to participate in programs and Church activities at the local, national and international levels; a commitment to catechesis and a capacity for teaching and forming Christians”.⁷⁵

e) *Recognition of and esteem for the reciprocal complementarity of other charismatic elements in the Church.* From this arises a readiness for reciprocal cooperation.⁷⁶ Truly: “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”.⁷⁷

f) *Acceptance of moments of trial in the discernment of charisms.* Because a charismatic gift may imply “a certain element of genuine originality and of special initiative for the spiritual life of the Church” and in its surrounding “may appear troublesome”, it follows that one criteria of authenticity manifests itself as “humility in bearing with adversities”, such that: “The true relation between genuine charism, with its perspectives of newness, and interior suffering, carries with it an unvarying history of the connection between charism and cross”.⁷⁸ Any tensions that may arise are a call to the practice of greater charity in view of the more profound ecclesial communion and unity that exists.

g) *Presence of spiritual fruits* such as charity, joy, peace and a certain human maturity (cf. Gal 5:22); the desire “to live the Church’s life more intensely”,⁷⁹ a more intense desire of “listening to and meditating on the Word”;⁸⁰ “the renewed appreciation for prayer, contemplation, liturgical and sacramental life, the reawakening of vocations to Christian marriage, the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life”.⁸¹

h) *The social dimension of evangelization.* It is also necessary to recognize that, as a result of the impulse of charity, “the *kerygma* has a clear social content: at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others”.⁸² This criteria of discernment, which refers not exclusively to lay entities in the Church, underlines the necessity of being “fruitful outlets for participation and solidarity in bringing about conditions that are more just and loving within society”.⁸³ In this regard the “desire to be present as Christians in various settings of social life and the creation and awakening of charitable, cultural and spiritual works; the spirit of detachment and evangelical poverty leading to a greater generosity in charity towards all” are significant.⁸⁴ Reference to the Social Doctrine of the Church is also a decisive factor.⁸⁵ In particular, “Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society’s most neglected members”.⁸⁶ This cannot be lacking in authentic ecclesial entity.

V. THE ECCLESIAL PRACTICE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIERARCHICAL AND CHARISMATIC GIFTS

⁷² FRANCIS, *Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost* (19 May 2013), *Insegnamenti* 1 (2013), 208.

⁷³ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30: AAS 81 (1989), 447; cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58: AAS 68 (1976), 48.

⁷⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30: AAS 81 (1989), 447.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: AAS 81 (1989), 448.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*: AAS 81 (1989), 447.

⁷⁷ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 130: AAS 105 (2013), 1074-1075.

⁷⁸ CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE–CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directive Note *Mutuae Relationes*, 12: AAS 70 (1978), 480-481; cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Speech on the occasion of the meeting with Ecclesial Movements and New communities on the Vigil of Pentecost* (30 May 1998), 6: *Insegnamenti* 21/1 (1998), 1122.

⁷⁹ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58: AAS 68 (1976), 48.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 174-175: AAS 105 (2013), 1092-1093.

⁸¹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30: AAS 81 (1989), 448.

⁸² FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 177: AAS 105 (2013), 1094.

⁸³ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 30: AAS 81 (1989), 448.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 184, 221: AAS 105 (2013), 1097, 1110-1111.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 186: AAS 105 (2013), 1098.

19. Finally, it is necessary to address certain elements in the concrete ecclesial practice regarding the relationship between hierarchical and those charismatic gifts that are configured as charismatic groups within the ecclesial communion.

Reciprocity

20. Above all, the establishment of good relations between the diverse gifts in the Church requires the real integration of the charismatic entity within the pastoral life of the particular Church. This requires that the diverse groups recognize the authority of the pastors in the Church as a reality within Christian life itself, and that sincerely desiring to be recognized, received and eventually purified, they place themselves at the service of the ecclesial mission. On the other hand, those who have been entrusted with hierarchical gifts, carrying out the discernment and accompaniment of the charisms, must cordially receive that which the Spirit inspires within the ecclesial communion, being mindful thereof in pastoral activities and esteeming their contribution as an authentic resource for the good of all.

The charismatic gifts in the universal and particular Church

21. Related to the diffusion and the particularity of charismatic entities one must also consider the constitutive and essential relation between the universal Church and the particular Churches. It is necessary for this reason to clarify that the Church of Christ, as we profess in the Apostolic creed, “is the universal Church, that is, the worldwide community of the disciples of the Lord, which is present and active amid the particular characteristics and the diversity of persons, groups, times and places”.⁸⁷ The particular dimension is, therefore, intrinsic to the universal and vice-versa; there exists a “mutual interiority”⁸⁸ between the particular Churches and the Universal Church. The hierarchical gifts proper to the Successor of Peter are exercised, in this context, to guarantee, and for the benefit of, the universal Church’s immanent presence within local Churches; similarly the Apostolic Office of the individual bishops does not remain confined within their own diocese but is called to flow out to the whole Church, both through the affection proper to collegiality and to its effects, and above all through communion with that *centrum unitatis Ecclesiae* that is the Roman Pontiff. He “as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity of both the bishops and of the faithful. The individual bishops, however, are the visible principle and foundation of unity in their particular Churches, fashioned after the model of the universal Church, in and from which Churches, comes into being the one and only Catholic Church”.⁸⁹ This implies that in every particular Church “the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative”.⁹⁰ Reference to the authority of the Successor of Peter –communion *cum Petro et sub Petro*– is, therefore, constitutive of every local Church.⁹¹

In this way, the foundation is laid for the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts within the relationship between the universal Church and the particular Churches. On the one hand, the charismatic gifts are given to the whole Church; on the other hand, the dynamism of these gifts must actualize itself in the service of a concrete diocese, which is “is a portion of the People of God which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of the presbytery”.⁹² To this end, it may be useful to remember the case of Consecrated Life; this is not a reality external to or independent of the life of the local Church; rather it constitutes a particular way of being in the midst of the local Church, which is marked by the radicalness of the Gospel and which possesses its own specific gifts. The traditional privilege of “exemption” granted to many Institutes of Consecrated Life,⁹³ does not imply a kind of disincarnated dislocation nor a badly understood autonomy; rather it denotes a more profound interaction between the universal and particular dimension of the Church.⁹⁴ Analogously, the new charismatic entities, when they possess a supra-diocesan character, must not consider themselves as completely autonomous from the particular Church; rather, they should enrich and serve her precisely through that particularity which is shared beyond the confines of a single diocese.

The charismatic gifts and the states of life of the Christian

⁸⁷ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Communio Notio*, 7: AAS 85 (1993), 842.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 9: AAS 85 (1993), 843.

⁸⁹ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 23.

⁹⁰ *Id.*, Decree *Christus Dominus*, 11.

⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 2; CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Communio Notio*, 13-14, 16: AAS 85 (1993), 846-848.

⁹² SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Christus Dominus*, 11.

⁹³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 35; *CIC*, canon 591; *CCEO*, canon 412, §2: CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE–CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directive Note *Mutuae Relationes*, 22: AAS 70 (1978), 487.

⁹⁴ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Communio Notio*, 15: AAS 85 (1993), 847.

22. The charismatic gifts bestowed by the Spirit can be related to the entire order of the ecclesial communion both with reference to the sacraments and to the Word of God. These gifts, depending on their different traits, can bear great fruit in the fulfilment of those duties that arise from Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, and Holy Orders. They also make possible a greater spiritual understanding of the Apostolic Tradition, which besides theological study and the preaching of those entrusted with the *charisma veritatis certum*,⁹⁵ may be deepened by those possessing “a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience”.⁹⁶ In this context, it is useful to list the fundamental questions related to the relationship between the charismatic gifts and the different states of life, paying particular attention to the common priesthood of the People of God and the ministerial and hierarchical priesthood which, “though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree [...], are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ”.⁹⁷ In point of fact they constitute “two modes of participation in the one priesthood of Christ, which involves two dimensions which unite in the supreme act of the sacrifice of the Cross”.⁹⁸

a) First, it is necessary to recognize the goodness of the different charisms that give rise to the ecclesial groups between all the faithful, called to make fruitful sacramental grace, under the leadership of their legitimate pastors. They represent an authentic opportunity to live and develop one’s proper Christian vocation.⁹⁹ These charismatic gifts enable the faithful to live the common priesthood of the People of God as part of their day to day existence: as “disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God, (cf. *Acts* 2:42-47) [they] should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (cf. *Rm* 12:1). Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them (cf. *I Pt* 3:15)”.¹⁰⁰ In this category are also found those groups which are particularly significant for Christian married life, and which “should try by their programs of instruction and action to strengthen young people and spouses themselves, particularly those recently wed, and to train them for family, social and apostolic life”.¹⁰¹

b) Ordained ministers also may find through their participation in a charismatic entity both a reminder of the meaning of their own baptism by which they became sons of God and their own specific mission and vocation. An ordained member of the faithful will be able to find in a determined ecclesial group help to live, at a deep level, the challenges of his own specific ministry both in relation to the whole People of God, particularly to that portion that has been entrusted to him, and in relation to the sincere obedience owed to his Ordinary.¹⁰² Analogously, the same thing may be said in the case of candidates for the priesthood belonging to a particular ecclesial group, as affirmed in the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*;¹⁰³ such a relation should express itself in an active docility to one’s own specific formation, enriching this with the charism in question. Finally, the pastoral help that a priest will be able to offer to an ecclesial group, depending on the group’s own proper characteristics, must always be in conformity with the *regimen* foreseen in the ecclesial communion for Holy Orders as related to incardination¹⁰⁴ and the obedience owed to his own Ordinary.¹⁰⁵

c) The contribution of a charismatic gift to the baptismal priesthood and to the ministerial priesthood is illustrated by the Consecrated Life; this, as such, is located within the charismatic dimension of the Church.¹⁰⁶ Such a charism, which manifests a “special conformity to Christ, chaste, poor and obedient”¹⁰⁷ as a stable form of life¹⁰⁸ through the profession of the evangelical counsels, is bestowed in order to render someone “capable of deriving more abundant fruit from [...] baptismal grace”.¹⁰⁹ The spirituality of the Institutes of Consecrated Life can become for both the lay faithful and the priest a significant resource enabling them to live their own proper vocation.

⁹⁵ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 8; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 888-892.

⁹⁶ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 8.

⁹⁷ ID., Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 10.

⁹⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis* (16 October 2003), 10: AAS 96 (2004), 838.

⁹⁹ Cf. ID., Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 29: AAS 81 (1989), 443-446.

¹⁰⁰ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 10.

¹⁰¹ ID., Dogmatic Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 52; cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 72: AAS 74 (1982), 169-170.

¹⁰² Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 68: AAS 84 (1992), 777.

¹⁰³ Cf. *ibid.*, 31, 68: AAS 84 (1992), 708-709, 775-777.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *CIC*, canon 265; *CCEO*, canon 357, §1.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *CIC*, canon 273; *CCEO*, canon 370.

¹⁰⁶ CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE—CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directive Note *Mutuae Relationes*, 19, 34: AAS 70 (1978), 485-486, 493.

¹⁰⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 31: AAS 88 (1996), 404-405.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 43.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 44; cf. Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5; JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 14, 30: AAS 88 (1996), 387-388, 403-404.

Furthermore, not infrequently, members of an Institute of Consecrated Life, with the necessary consent of their proper superiors,¹¹⁰ can find in relation to the new groups an important aid in living their own vocations, and in turn offer “the faithful, joyful and charismatic witness of consecrated life”,¹¹¹ thus bringing about a reciprocal enrichment.

d) Finally, it is significant that the spirit of the evangelical counsels is also commended by the Magisterium to every ordained minister.¹¹² Even celibacy, required of priests in the venerable Latin tradition,¹¹³ is clearly aligned with the charismatic gifts; it is not primarily functional; rather it “is really a special way of conforming oneself to Christ's own way of life”,¹¹⁴ in which the full offering of oneself in relation to the mission conferred by the sacrament of Holy Orders is realized.¹¹⁵

Forms of ecclesial recognition

23. The present document is intended to clarify the theological and ecclesiological place of the new ecclesial groups in the light of the relationship between the hierarchical and charismatic gifts. It is hoped this will contribute to the concrete identification of the most adequate means of their ecclesial recognition. The present *Code of Canon Law* provides different juridical means of recognition for the new ecclesial entities that pertain to the charismatic gifts. These means should be attentively considered,¹¹⁶ avoiding precedents that do not give adequate consideration to both fundamental principles of law and the nature and particularity of the diverse charismatic entities.

From the point of view of the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts, it is necessary to observe two fundamental criteria that must be seen as inseparable: a) respect for the particularity of individual charismatic groups, avoiding juridical straitjackets that deaden the novelty which is born from the specific experience. In such a way, one avoids the danger that the various charisms might be considered as undistinguished resources within the Church; b) respect for the fundamental ecclesial *regimen*, this way favoring the effective insertion of the charismatic gifts into the life of both the particular and universal Church. Thus, any danger that the charismatic entities might be considered in some way as running parallel to the ecclesial life or not ordered in relation to the hierarchical gifts is avoided.

CONCLUSION

24. Awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the first disciples were assiduous and united in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus (cf. *Acts* 1:14). She had perfectly accepted and made fruitful the singular grace with which she had been superabundantly enriched by the most Holy Trinity: most importantly, the grace of being the Mother of God. All of the Church's children can admire her complete docility to the action of the Holy Spirit: faultless docility in faith and transparent humility. Mary, therefore, testifies fully to the obedient and faithful reception of every gift of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, the Virgin Mary, by her maternal charity, “cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and cares, until they are led into the happiness of their true home”.¹¹⁷ Since she “let herself be guided by the Holy Spirit on a journey of faith towards a destiny of service and fruitfulness, today we look to her and ask her to help us proclaim the message of salvation to all and to enable new disciples to become evangelizers in turn”.¹¹⁸ For this reason, Mary is recognized as the Mother of the Church and we, full of confidence, have recourse to her so that, through her efficacious help and powerful intercession, the charisms, abundantly bestowed by the Holy Spirit among the

¹¹⁰ Cf. *CIC*, canon 307, §3; *CCEO*, canon 578, §3.

¹¹¹ CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, Instruction *Ripartire Da Cristo* (19 May 2002), 30; *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 21, 472.

¹¹² Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 27-30: AAS 84 (1992), 700-707.

¹¹³ Cf. PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* (24 June 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 657-697.

¹¹⁴ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 24: AAS 99 (2007), 124.

¹¹⁵ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 29: AAS 84 (1992), 703-705; SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 16.

¹¹⁶ The most simple juridical form for the recognition of ecclesial entities of a charismatic nature at the present time appears to be that of a private association of the Christian faithful (cf. *CIC*, canons 321-326; *CCEO*, canons 573, §2-583). Nonetheless, it is worthwhile considering the other juridical forms with their proper specific characteristics, for example public associations of the Christian faithful (cf. *CIC*, canons 573-730; *CCEO*, canons 573, §1-583), clerical associations of the Christian faithful (cf. *CIC*, canon 302), Institutes of Consecrated Life (cf. *CIC*, canons 573-730; *CCEO*, canons 410-571), Societies of Apostolic Life (cf. *CIC*, canons 731-746; *CCEO*, canon 572) and Personal Prelatures (cf. *CIC*, canons 294-297).

¹¹⁷ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 62.

¹¹⁸ FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 287: AAS 105 (2013), 1136.

faithful, may be received with docility and bear fruit for the life and mission of the Church and for the good of the world.

The Sovereign Pontiff Francis, in the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect on 14 March 2016, approved the present Letter, adopted in the Plenary Session of this Congregation, and ordered its publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 15, 2016, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Gerhard Card. Müller
Prefect

✠ Luis F. Ladaria, S.I.
Titular Archbishop of Thibica
Secretary
