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Message of the Holy Father to bishops, friends of the Focolare Movement, participating in the International Conference to mark the centenary of the birth of the Servant of God Chiara Lubich

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to bishops, friends of the Focolare Movement, participating in the International Conference “A Charism at the Service of Church and Humanity”, promoted and organized to mark the centenary of the birth of the Servant of God Chiara Lubich, and held first in Trento (8 to 9 February) and then in Loppiano, Florence, (10 to 12 February):

Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers!

I warmly welcome the celebration of the International Conference which brings you together, first in Trent and then in Loppiano, on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of the Servant of God Chiara Lubich, with the aim of exploring further the meaning and contribution of the charism of unity at the service today of the Church’s mission as an evangelizing communion.

Charisms are “gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the centre which is Christ and then channelled into an evangelizing impulse” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 130). It is good then, also for the Bishops, to place themselves once again in the school of the Holy Spirit, Who brings them out of the Upper Room – where the Lord Jesus gathered them in unity with Peter and Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church – to walk in the fire of Pentecost with all the People of God along the paths of mission. His light and strength lead them to meet with mercy and tenderness those who live and suffer in the existential and social peripheries, announcing and witnessing with joy, without fear, rich only in faith, hope and love, the Gospel of Jesus.

The charismatic gifts are co-essential, along with the hierarchical gifts, in the mission of the Church [1], and the Pastors are invested with the specific gift of recognizing and promoting the action of the Holy Spirit Who disseminates amid the People of God, among the faithful of every vocation, “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” (*Lumen gentium*, 12). The charism of unity is one of these graces for our time, which experiences an epoch change and invokes a simple and radical spiritual and pastoral reform, to restore the Church to the ever-new and current wellspring of Jesus’ Gospel.

Through the charism of unity, fully attuned to the Magisterium of the Vatican Ecumenical Council II, the Holy Spirit teaches us in a tangible way to live the grace of unity according to the prayer addressed by Jesus to the Father on the eve of his Pasch of death and Resurrection (cf. *Jn* 17: 21). The Spirit invites us to choose as one all of our following, and as the only compass of our ministry, Jesus crucified – Chiara Lubich would add “forsaken” (cf. *Mk* 15: 34; *Mt* 27: 46) – making ourselves one with all, starting with the last, the excluded, the discarded, to bring them light, joy and peace. The Spirit opens us to the dialogue of charity and truth with every man and woman, of all cultures, religious traditions and ideal convictions, in order to build up in encounter the new civilization of love. The Spirit puts us in the school of Mary, where we learn that what has value and remains is love. Like Mary, and with her, we are called to make present and almost tangible together, for the humanity of today, Jesus, the Son of God who in her womb became the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (cf. *Rom* 8: 29) and who lives, Risen, among those who are one in His Name (cf. *Mt* 18: 20).

With you, then, dear brother bishops, I express my gratitude to God for the gift of the charism of unity through the witness and teaching of the Servant of God Chiara Lubich and, with renewed communion and under the maternal gaze of Mary, I “invoke the Holy Spirit. I implore Him to come and renew the Church, to stir and impel her to go forth boldly to evangelize all peoples” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 261).

I bless each one of you and the communities entrusted to you, and I ask you, please, to pray for me.

Rome, from Saint John Lateran, 29 January 2020

FRANCIS

[1] Cf Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* on the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts for the life and the mission of the Church, 15 May 2016.