

# The teaching of Pope Francis to Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR)

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## Content

### 1. Introduction

### 2. CCR two years preparation to the Golden Jubilee

### 3. The teaching of Pope Francis to CCR

1<sup>st</sup> – The *conversion to Jesus' love* changes a Christian's life and makes of him/her a witness of God's love.

2<sup>nd</sup> – *Share with everybody* in the Church the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

3<sup>rd</sup> – *Evangelizing using the Word of God*, that announces that Jesus is alive, lives within us, and loves us.

4<sup>th</sup> – The *evangelization* the Pope and the Church expects from the multiple expressions of CCR is the witness of spiritual ecumenism you are called to live with members of other Churches and ecclesial communities who believe Jesus to be Lord and Saviour of humanity.

5<sup>th</sup> – *Getting close to poor and needy people* to touch their body which is the wounded body of Christ.

6<sup>th</sup> – *The search for unity* in CCR, stems from the unity in the Trinity, and reaches us through the Holy Spirit.

7<sup>th</sup> – *Authority* in the church has always *to be at the service* of brothers and sisters.

8<sup>th</sup> – *Avoid the danger of excessive organization*, as it might become a danger to the unity of the body.

9<sup>th</sup> – *Knowing the Malines' documents\**. They constitute an excellent guide for CCR.

10<sup>th</sup> – Establish bonds of trust and collaboration with the bishops of the places where the various expressions of CCR are operating.

### 4. Conclusion: A Jubilee is a gift and a challenge for the future

\*Malines' documents: [www.stucom.nl/document/0238uk.pdf](http://www.stucom.nl/document/0238uk.pdf)

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## **Towards the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Golden Jubilee (2017)**

«*Charismatic Renewal is a Pentecostal grace for the whole Church*» (Pope Francis)

European CCR-Conference

Warsaw, 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> October 2015

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### **1. Introduction**

First of all, I wish to thank Deacon Christof Hemberger, Chair of the European Subcommittee of ICCRS (ESCI) for inviting me to this important continental meeting of the great family of the European Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR). Keeping in mind the great commitment you have in the preparation of this important anniversary in the history of CCR, I have chosen as the title of my contribution “Towards the CCR Golden Jubilee (2017)”, and as the subtitle the words of Pope Francis: «Charismatic Renewal is a Pentecostal grace for the whole Church»<sup>1</sup>. Preparing for a jubilee – in your case the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary from the moment in which this “current of grace” started for all the Church – means recalling with gratitude the abundant fruits of CCR, and the past great wonders the Holy Spirit worked in the souls of thousands of people from all over the world.

As every anniversary, besides sentiments of joy and thankfulness this moment encourages you all to make a sincere examination of conscience before God, in His light,

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<sup>1</sup> FRANCIS, Address to the Association “Renewal in the Holy Spirit”, Saint Peter’s Square, Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150703\\_movimento-rinnovamento-spirito.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150703_movimento-rinnovamento-spirito.html).

asking Him forgiveness for personal faults, and looking to the future with confidence in Him, who worked and will continue to work so many wonders in you.

In two years you will celebrate the CCR Jubilee, that you will celebrate in a special way at Pentecost 2017. Pope Francis remembered it explicitly last 3<sup>rd</sup> July during his address to the members of the association of lay faithful *Renewal in the Holy Spirit* convened in Saint Peter's Square<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, we have to keep in mind during the present stage of preparation for the Jubilee event, the inseparable link between CCR and the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council. It recurs the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its closing, and we can surely affirm that CCR is a fruit of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, closed on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1965 (tenth public session), Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A set of messages to humanity (to rulers, to men of thoughts and science, to artists, to women, to workers, to the poor, the sick and the suffering, to young men and women) expressed the universality of such event. Three years of Conciliar works (1962-1965) were lived under the sign of the Holy Spirit. We remember when Saint John XXIII in the concluding part of the Apostolic Constitution *Humanae salutis*, convoking the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (25<sup>th</sup> December 1961), cited some words of a prayer to the Holy Spirit calling for a good outcome of the Conciliar assembly: «Renew your wonders in our time, as by a new Pentecost»<sup>3</sup>. On his part blessed Pope Paul VI closed the Council with an Apostolic Letter entitled *In Spiritu Sancto* (8<sup>th</sup> December 1965), which opens: «The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, assembled in the Holy Spirit and under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary...»<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> AAS 54 (1962) 13. The exact words in Latin of this prayer, composed by the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary (September 23, 1959), said: *Renova aetate hac nostra per novam veluti Pentecostem mirabilia tua*: AAS 51 (1959) 832.

<sup>4</sup> In Latin: *In Spiritu Sancto congregatum et obiectum praesidio Beatae Mariae Virginis, quam Matrem Ecclesiae renuntiavimus, Sancti Ioseph eius incliti Sponsi nec non Sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli, Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum Secundum sine dubio maximis Ecclesiae eventis est accensendum (...)*: AAS 58 (1966) 18-19.

The Second Vatican Council contributed greatly to the rediscovering of the role of the Holy Spirit in theology, and for the whole Church. One of the most evident traits of the Conciliar documents consists in the important role exercised by the Holy Spirit in the distribution of charisms for the structure and for the life of the Church. After the Council there was a great flourishing of ecclesial realities having as a base an original charism aroused by the Holy Spirit. A Conciliar Father very close to CCR, Cardinal and Archbishop of Malines-Bruxelles, Léon-Joseph Suenens (1904-1996), during the sessions of the Council insisted on affirming that the charisms in the Church are not a secondary and unusual phenomenon, instead lay faithful might receive always various charisms necessary for catechesis, evangelization, social work, charity and so on; in this way they contribute to the building up of the entire ecclesial body<sup>5</sup>.

## **2. CCR two years preparation to the Golden Jubilee**

In view of the Golden Jubilee of Charismatic Renewal, ICCRS has developed all over the world an itinerary in stages to motivate an appropriate preparation. It comprises reflection on the word of God and some objectives and initiatives, distributed in the years before 2017, to be kept in mind, as the International Consultation in Jerusalem (2013) and the World Priests' Retreat held last June in Rome, in which the Holy Father and an extraordinary number of priests took part. Through this preparatory journey, the entire people of Charismatic Renewal are invited to focus the attention on his/her own identity being renewed by the Holy Spirit, and as witness and evangelizer sent to enkindle the fire of the Spirit ; each person is also called to verify his/her own maturity and communion, to "fanning the flame" of the gift of God as He did not give you a "spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power and love and self-control" (2Tim 1:7). The last stage of preparation asks all

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. L.J. SUENENS, *Acta synodalia sacrosancti Concilii œcumenici Vaticani II*, vol. 2 - pt. 3, Civitate Vaticana 1972, pp. 175-178.

of you to be engaged in serving the people of God and to transform society from within. To say it in two words: evangelization and mission.

Preparing yourself so well to the CCR Golden Jubilee will make you very good helpers of Pope Francis. It seems to me fundamental that you deeply study the words the Pope addressed to CCR in 2014 and 2015. In my opinion, they constitute a body of precious teaching where you can get material not only for the upcoming jubilee, but for your future life. I have to admit sincerely that I myself have learned a lot through reading the papal addresses to you. In fact, reading Pope Francis' words one is deeply touched by the in depth knowledge he has of CCR, surely a fruit of his diocesan pastoral experience in Buenos Aires. Read attentively those talks by Pope Francis. I will be very happy and satisfied if my coming to Warsaw would have had only this result, that each one of you immerse himself/herself in what he said to you in various occasions, and will encourage other people to do the same.

I'd like to remind you that the teachings of Pope Francis are essentially included in four talks of 2014 and 2015:

1.- The address to participants, coming from all over the world, in the 37<sup>th</sup> Convocation of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit, Rome, Olympic Stadium, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014<sup>6</sup>.

2.- The address to the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships, convoked in Rome on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014<sup>7</sup>.

3.- The lecture given to priests gathered in Saint John Lateran, on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, on June 12<sup>th</sup> last, on occasion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Worldwide Priests' Retreat<sup>8</sup>.

4.- The address, already cited, to the members of Renewal in the Holy Spirit in Saint Peter's square on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *The Holy Spirit cannot be caged*, address to participants in the 37<sup>th</sup> Convocation of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit, Rome, Olympic Stadium, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014, in: "L'Osservatore Romano" weekly edition in English, no. 23, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2014, p. 8-10.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. ID., *Breathing with the Spirit*, address to members of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships, Paul VI Audience Hall, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014, in: "L'Osservatore Romano" weekly edition in English, no. 45, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> To be translated. Video at: [http://www.radiovaticana.va/player/index\\_fb.asp?language=it&tic=VA\\_GR5S83A8](http://www.radiovaticana.va/player/index_fb.asp?language=it&tic=VA_GR5S83A8).

### 3. The teaching of Pope Francis to CCR

Which are the key messages of Pope Francis' teaching? In my opinion we can list the following:

1<sup>st</sup> – The *conversion to Jesus' love* changes a Christian's life and makes of him/her a witness of God's love. All Christians need a constant personal conversion to the Lord in order to orient to Him their entire life. Christ transforms our life. It's a transformation performed by God making of a Christian a witness of the Good News, that Christ brought to us, and the Holy Spirit who helps us to live out.

Moreover, let us remember that Pope Francis exhorts the whole church to realize a sort of «pastoral and missionary conversion», to become a «Church which 'goes forth», to be «permanently in a state of mission»<sup>10</sup>. Conversion should not be intended only as personal conversion, but also as communitarian: a conversion meant to renew pastoral plans of an ecclesial community, her projects, her initiatives in order to witness as a 'body'.

2<sup>nd</sup> – *Share with everybody* in the Church the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit. We all know that the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit has been beneficial to many persons all over the world, who have renewed their Christian lives, and might reach many more people if you put yourself in the attitude of serving the neighbour approaching those who are in search, or have lost the faith, or have never encountered it. Let God use you to be "dispenser" of this grace that characterizes you, without thinking you are its owner. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a grace for all. «Do not act like a tollhouse for the Holy Spirit!», said Pope Francis<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, Address to the Association "Renewal in the Holy Spirit", Saint Peter's Square, Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015, cit.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. ID., Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24-25.

<sup>11</sup> FRANCIS, *The Holy Spirit cannot be caged*, cit., p. 9.

Pope Francis explained to the representatives of Catholic Fraternity last October 31<sup>st</sup> that, in order to share this grace, you have to live it and to be a witness of it.

3<sup>rd</sup> – *Evangelizing using the Word of God*, that announces that Jesus is alive, lives within us, and loves us. This presumes that we should read daily the Word of God and to meditate on it, as Pope Francis calls us constantly to do. If we listen to the Word of God, if we let it penetrate and act in us in our soul and in our life, we will notice how much it can change our hearts and the hearts of our family and friends. I am positive among you this message will find open doors. I am positive many of you would have experiences to share on the transformation wrought by the Word of God in your own lives, and even in those moments of tiredness and of laziness when the taste of the Scripture appears to be less attractive. Also during those times do not let yourselves be deceived and persevere. The word of God is «a surprise, since our God is the God of surprises»<sup>12</sup>, as Pope Francis reminded us in one of his homilies in Santa Marta's chapel.

4<sup>th</sup> – The *evangelization* the Pope and the Church expects from the multiple expressions of CCR is the witness of spiritual ecumenism you are called to live with members of other Churches and ecclesial communities who believe Jesus to be Lord and Saviour of humanity. Particularly nowadays, as the Pope stressed on October 31<sup>st</sup> of last year, «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»<sup>13</sup>. We should look for unity especially when Christ himself is persecuted indiscriminately in Lutheran, Orthodox, Evangelical, or Catholic... The shed blood of Christ calls upon us! «This is the ecumenism of blood that we experience today»,<sup>14</sup> said the Holy Father.

It is true! Unity of all Christians is something that overcomes our human capacities. Nevertheless, each baptized is called to give his/her own contribution to the great cause of

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<sup>12</sup> ID., *The God of surprises*, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014, in: *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English, nr. 4, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> ID., *Breathing with the Spirit*, cit.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; see also: FRANCIS, Address to the Association "Renewal in the Holy Spirit", Saint Peter's Square, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015, cit.

unity of the followers of Christ, living spiritual ecumenism. First of all, through our prayer, in sympathy with the priestly prayer of Jesus to His Father when he prayed so that all believers may be one, so that the world may believe (*John 17:21*). This is the petition of Jesus for his Church to be one, as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one. The Second Vatican Council defined prayer as “the soul of all ecumenical movement” (*UR*, 8).

5<sup>th</sup> – *Getting close to poor and needy people* to touch their body which is the wounded body of Christ. Those materially needy, but also those who are spiritually in need, who are many and live in our cities as in a desert, without any future. As the Holy Father said, they too need baptism in the Holy Spirit<sup>15</sup>.

6<sup>th</sup> – *The search for unity* in CCR, stems from the unity in the Trinity, and reaches us through the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis very clearly affirms: «Division comes from the devil. Flee from all infighting, please! Let there be none of this among you!».<sup>16</sup> The words pronounced by Saint Paul to the Corinthians come in our help in times of discord among believers: «For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you. I mean that each of you is saying, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Kephas," or "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?» (*1Cor 1:12-13*). Those are words that clearly attest that the Church has only one faith, one sacramental life, one common hope and the same charity.

However, unity has to be unity «in diversity», because as the Holy Father explained in his address to *Catholic Fraternity*: «Uniformity is not Catholic!» While «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»<sup>17</sup> is necessary.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. ID., Address to the Association “Renewal in the Holy Spirit”, Saint Peter's Square, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015, cit.

<sup>16</sup> ID., *The Holy Spirit cannot be caged*, cit., p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> ID., *Breathing with the Spirit*, cit.

7<sup>th</sup> – *Authority* in the church has always *to be at the service* of brothers and sisters. This is not a new topic for the Church: it is the teaching of Christ, who said He has not come to be served, but to serve.<sup>18</sup> Servants –as you know Pope Francis does not like the expression ‘leaders’<sup>19</sup> – are humble dispensers of God’s grace and should put themselves at the service of the community’s members. This expectation recalls somehow what has been previously said with regard to the search for unity. When leaders are true servants, when they are at the community members’ disposal with humility and spirit of service, division, that division against which Pope Francis puts us continually on guard as the work of the Devil, is fought, dismissed, and defeated. It is beautiful, and at the same time demanding, that in the denomination of ICCRS appears the word “services”, and exactly in a plural form: this is a program for your life and for your action.

On this regard, the single offices in the various ecclesial expressions, sprout from this current of grace which is CCR, should necessarily last for a limited period of time. Justly, Pope Francis reminded, «the only irreplaceable one in the Church is the Holy Spirit, and Jesus is the only Lord»<sup>20</sup>. Each servant must be able to leave to others when a mandate comes to its end, in order to offer one’s contribution in other fields. There is no lack of work to be done in the Church, thanks be to God!

8<sup>th</sup> – *Avoid the danger of excessive organization*, as it might become a danger to the unity of the body. Pay attention to the fact that Pope Francis does not stigmatize the due organization useful to the functioning of any aggregation, rather he puts on guard from the danger of becoming excessive, with some useless structures that might endanger the charism. When at the Olympic Stadium, last year, the Pope urged Renewal not to cage the Holy Spirit, but to let Him act freely. On this regard, we recall what the then Cardinal

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Lk 22:27; cf. J. DALARUN, *Gouverner c’est servir: essai de démocratie médiéval*, Paris 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *The Holy Spirit cannot be caged*, cit.; see also: ID., *Address to the Association “Renewal in the Holy Spirit”*, St. Peter’s Square, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015, cit.

<sup>20</sup> ID., *Address to the Association “Renewal in the Holy Spirit”*, Saint Peter’s Square, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015, cit.

Joseph Ratzinger used to say: «Not everything should be fitted into the straight jacket of a single uniform organization; what is needed is less organization, and more Spirit!»<sup>21</sup>.

9<sup>th</sup> – *Knowing the Malines' documents*. They constitute an excellent guide for CCR. For this reason it is very important to study in depth its content, along with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The six texts prepared between 1974 and 1986 as a follow up to the Colloquium promoted by Cardinal Suenens deal with various aspects of the Charismatic reality – from the nature of this 'current of grace' to the gifts and charisms exercised, from ecumenism to charity and solidarity– they are, a patrimony to be guarded and transmitted. The Pope spoke about these documents as “a guide, a sure route to be walked for not taking the wrong way”. Their content will be useful to reinforce your own identity, and to connect it firmly to the grace of the origin. In this way, like every reality born at the heart of the Church, you will be able to go back to the grace of the origin all the time you need to be together and to find new strength.

10<sup>th</sup> – Another important point in Pope Francis' thought is the establishing of bonds of trust and collaboration with the bishops of the places where the various expressions of CCR are operating. It is also important to remember here that they «succeed the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who is given to them»<sup>22</sup>.

#### **4. Conclusion: A Jubilee is a gift and a challenge for the future**

A Jubilee is always a great gift, and at the same time constitutes a challenge for the future. In fact, the upcoming Jubilee might give you, with the help of the Holy Spirit, a renewed impulse to stir up *new synergies for a common service* to all Catholic Charismatic

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<sup>21</sup> J. RATZINGER, «Ecclesial Movements: a Theological Reflection on their theological place in the Church», in: ID., *Nuovi irruzioni dello Spirito. Movements in the Church*, Cinisello Balsamo 2006, 48. Benedict XVI reaffirmed the same idea during the catechesis at the General Audience of 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 (cf. “Insegnamenti” II [2], 2006, pp. 659-662).

<sup>22</sup> CIC, can. 375 § 1.

expressions spread all over the world (associations, covenant communities, formation schools, evangelization schools, religious congregations, ecumenical communities, communities helping the poor and needy people) so that none of them would feel excluded or isolated.

Fundamental for all of the above is Adoration, as Pope Francis said to the participants to the Olympic Stadium: «Worship the Lord your God!». If the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit – of effusion of the Holy Spirit – has helped your faith, in Jesus Christ Lord and Savior, to born again; if through that experience you have recognized Him as the only God of your life, persevere in this faith and give witness to it: «In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls to account for the hope that is in you » (1Pt 3:15).

«The Charismatic Renewal has reminded the Church of the necessity and importance of the prayer of praise»,<sup>23</sup> affirmed Pope Francis to the representatives of *Catholic Fraternity*. Keep alive this commitment, live in spirit of praise confessing Jesus as the only Lord, a Lord who «wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence»!<sup>24</sup>

I thank you heartily for your attentive listening!

Warsaw, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2015

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<sup>23</sup> FRANCIS, *Breathing with the Spirit*, cit.

<sup>24</sup> ID., Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 259.