

ON BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, CHARIS AND BECOMING A SYNODAL CHURCH

CONTINENTAL SERVICE OF COMMUNION EUROPE

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In short: *How the CHARIS National Services of Communion (CNSC) can be a tool to promote, foster and strengthen communion and unity among all the realities of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR). What should they do? "How" to fulfil the threefold mandate to share the baptism in the Holy Spirit* with everyone in the church, to work for Christian unity and to serve the poor? In communion with all the realities of the current of grace. Seeing how the other expressions do it, listening, asking, talking, creating synergy, collaborating, walking together. Adopt the synodal method. Go for a missionary Church, with the variety of gifts, charisms, and ministries**, "whose doors are open". This includes the call to deepen relationships with other Churches and Christian communities. And embraces all humankind.*

Kees Slijkerman November 3rd, 2022

Dear friends,

First of all, I would like to thank you for this invitation to speak to the coordinators of the various National Services of Communion of CHARIS in this meeting promoted for the Continental Service of European Communion, the first to be established after the creation of CHARIS. I thank you for your concern and willingness to place yourselves at the service of this current of grace which is intended to be an impulse of vitality, a breath of the Spirit for the whole universal Church.

You know well that our Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life has been entrusted by the Holy Father with the task of accompanying the gestation, birth and development of CHARIS. These processes have not always been easy. Like all changes, this too was complex and met with resistance. We can think of the current reform underway in the Roman curia and the resistance it encounters. This is normal: it takes time for mentalities to change, paradigms ...

Likewise, at other times there are different people and groups who immediately grasp the spirit of change and collaborate in its implementation.

I am sure that you, coordinators of the various National Services of Communion, are among those who have grasped - or at least try to grasp - the spirit that the Holy Father wanted to give to CHARIS and are committed to ensuring that the same spirit is present in the National Services. The spontaneous use of the expression "CHARIS + the name of the country" to refer to the National Service of Communion of each country (CHARIS-France, CHARIS-Italy, CHARIS-Spain, etc.) is a beautiful expression of how each National Service carries the same spirit of CHARIS International. "The same spirit" in the double sense of the word: the same principles, the same objectives, the same mentality, but also the same Holy Spirit (with a capital letter), which is the engine of the whole current of grace of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

I asked Paolo Maino what title I could give to this simple and brief introductory speech. Thinking about the audience of this meeting, he suggested that I focus on how the National Services of Communion can be a tool to promote, foster and strengthen communion and unity among all the realities of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of one's country

from a perspective of service and not of government.

I liked this approach which focuses on what a CNS needs to do, a more practical approach. After more than three years from the creation of CHARIS I believe that, at least to you who are leaders within the CCR current of grace, it is not necessary to keep repeating what CHARIS is, its nature and identity, etc. We know "who we are": a service of communion for all expressions of the CCR. But it is equally important to ask ourselves "what should we do", how we should carry out our mission.

"What should we do" is precisely the question that the crowd asks the Apostles on the morning of Pentecost, after Peter's preaching (Acts 2, 37-39). Let's hear this Word for a moment:

On hearing these things they felt their hearts pierce and they said to Peter and the other apostles: "What must we do, brothers?". And Peter said to them: «Get converted and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For you, in fact, it is the promise and for your children and for all those who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call.

In fact, they do not ask "how can we define what happened to us" or "who are you", but "what should we do". And Peter's response is very suitable for the CCR and its mission: convert, be baptized and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And this promise is for everyone. It is a response also in line with the words (of Pope Francis) chosen as the motto for this meeting: "Share the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church".

In fact, as we well know, CHARIS received a triple mandate from the Pope:

- Share the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church. Offer everyone the experience of a personal Pentecost through

the outpouring of the Spirit for an encounter with the living Jesus.

- Working for Christian unity. Promote the ecumenical dimension through a relational, practical ecumenism. This work of unity begins in the first place in the respective realities, to respond to the invitation of Jesus that "all may be one so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21).

- Encourage human promotion in the service of the needy, because "in the heart of God there is a preferential place for the poor" (EG 197) and because through charity "everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another others" (Jn 13:35).

It seems to me that today's meeting will focus more on the first term. While considering that all three mandates are connected and should not be thought of separately, I imagine that in the next meetings we can face the challenges of the other two mandates, sometimes less present in different charismatic realities around the world.

Share "Baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church. It is the grace that you have received. Share it! Don't keep it to yourself! ", Said the Pope in the audience on June 8, 2019, when CHARIS officially began its services.

But returning to what Paolo Maino asked me, I would like to encourage you as coordinators of the various CNSCs to "promote, encourage and strengthen communion and unity among all the realities of the CCR in your country". Communion is part of "how" to fulfill the threefold mandate. So: How, for example, to share Baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church? In unity, in communion with all the realities of the current of grace. Seeing how the other expressions do it, listening, asking, talking, creating synergy, collaborating, walking together... synodally.

We recall the Pope's words to CHARIS (8 June 2019): *'Communion. With hearts as one, turned to the Father, and testifying to unity in diversity: a diversity of charisms that the Spirit has raised up in these last fifty-two years. "Enlarge the site of your tent", we read in the prophecy of Isaiah (54:2), so that all can dwell there as members of one family. A family where there is only one God and Father, one Lord Jesus Christ and one Spirit of life. A family in which no one member is more important than another, neither in virtue of age, intelligence or ability, for all are beloved children of the same Father. In this regard, Saint Paul's example of the body and its members speaks eloquently to all of us (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-26). Each member of the body needs all the others. All together.'*

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For CHARIS to carry out his threefold mandate, he must be able to generate communion among all the realities of the "current of grace" of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Therefore in each country a CHARIS National Service of Communion (CNSC) has been formed, in which all the realities of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the country participate or are represented, according to a dynamic of inclusion in which "one member is no more important than the other, neither by age, nor by intelligence, nor by his abilities, because they are all beloved children of the same Father".

Communion is precisely what the "synodal journey" we are doing as a Church indicates to us. And promoting communion is precisely what CHARIS and the CNSC want to achieve. "How" to do it, then? With what attitudes? Walking together, listening, talking, discerning together, and all this in the light of the Holy Spirit. He promotes synodality.

"The path of synodality is the path that God expects from the Church of the third millennium": this is the programmatic commitment already proposed by Pope

Francis in the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Synod of Bishops. Synodality, in fact, Francis affirms, "is a constitutive dimension of the Church", so that **"what the Lord asks, in a certain sense, is already all contained in the word synod"**. "

The true agent of synodality is the Holy Spirit, and the outpouring of this Spirit is what we desire for the whole Church, starting from the experience of the CCR. **Synodality and baptism in the Holy Spirit belong together**. In this sense, I would like to recall n. 15 of the [preparatory document](#) of the Synod on synodality. **I invite you to meditate on these words** thinking about the service you offer in the CNSC of each of the European countries.

*15. The meaning of the journey to which we are all called is **above all that of discovering the face and form of a synodal Church, in which "everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth' (Jn 14:17), in order to know what He 'says to the Churches' (Rev 2:7)."** [19 FRANCIS, Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops.]*

Let us think of the different charismatic realities present in your countries: each reality has something to teach and something to learn. None can be excluded. Therefore we must meet (practice the culture of encounter, as opposed to the culture of waste), we must listen to each other, dialogue, discern the journey in the light of the Spirit. All listening to the Holy Spirit to know what He is saying to the Churches.

And the text continues (Preparatory Doc. N. 15): *'In this "journeying together," we ask the Spirit to help us discover how communion, which brings together in unity the variety of gifts, charisms, and ministries, is for the mission: a synodal Church is a Church "going forth," a missionary Church "whose doors are*

open" (EG, no. 46). This includes the call to deepen relationships with other Churches and Christian communities, with which we are united by the one Baptism. The perspective of "journeying together," then, is even broader, and embraces all humankind, whose "joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties" we share (GS, no. 1).'

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It seems to me that the text speaks directly to the CCR, to CHARIS. Talk about Baptism, Christian unity, embrace the brothers. And he concludes:

'A synodal Church is a prophetic sign, above all for a community of nations incapable of proposing a shared project, through which to pursue the good of all: practicing synodality is today for the Church the most evident way to be "the universal sacrament of salvation" (LG, no. 48), "a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (LG, no. 1).'

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In a nutshell, **I propose to the CNSC to adopt the synodal method.** It seems to me highly convenient for a CNSC, fixed on service and not on government, fixed not on "how to promote the CNSC" but on "how to promote the CCR and its many expressions in the country", on how to promote the mission, the "Church outgoing", to adopt the synodal method. Even more clearly: since it is not a government service, the method of CHARIS (and of the CNSC) can only be synodal.

The preparatory document for the next Synod (n. 30) speaks of a "lived synodality" starting from ten nuclei or central ideas. It seems to me that these ideas help us to understand the synodal method, a method of listening and ecclesial discernment that the Synod wishes to propose to the Church. They can also help us make an "examination of conscience" on how we are cultivating synodality in our charismatic groups (locally, nationally and internationally).

I. THE JOURNEYING COMPANIONS In the Church and in society, we are side by side on the same road. (Apply to the different charismatic realities ...)

II. LISTENING Listening is the first step, but it requires having an open mind and heart, without prejudices.

III. SPEAKING OUT All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, integrating freedom, truth, and charity.

IV. CELEBRATING "Journeying together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.

V. CO-RESPONSIBLE IN THE MISSION Synodality is at the service of the Church's mission, in which all her members are called to participate.

VI. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY Dialogue is a path of perseverance that also includes silences and sufferings, but which is capable of gathering the experience of persons and peoples.

VII. WITH THE OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one Baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.

VIII. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION
A synodal Church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.

IX. DISCERNING AND DECIDING *In a synodal style, decisions are made through discernment, based on a consensus that flows from the common obedience to the Spirit.*

X. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY *The spirituality of journeying together is called to become an educational principle for the formation of the human person and of the Christian, of the families, and of the communities.*

In these more than 50 years it has been highlighted how the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, with its many various realities, is an

opportunity for the Church and for the world. Pope Francis hopes that the Catholic Charismatic Renewal will promote renewal in the Church and in society, as well as always being at the forefront of evangelization, especially of young people.

A continuous goal for the realities of this "current of grace" is the ever greater growth in ecclesial maturity, aware of one's own dignity, identity and mission. To this maturity belongs essentially a "lived synodality", a synodal spirituality, a style of synodal work that should be the "trademark" of the CNSC and of the International CHARIS. This is what I wish for you in this meeting: true synodal work, guided by the Holy Spirit, at the service of the Church and society. Thanks for your attention.

Original text is in Italian. This English translation was first created with Google translate, and secondly checked with official translations by Kees Slijkerman (member of European CHARIS Service of Communion) of the quoted documents <https://stucom.nl/document/0458uk.pdf> and the *Preparatory Document for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 07.09.2021 <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/09/07/210907a.html>

More on the synod: <https://www.synod.va/en.html> and <https://www.synod.va/en/resources.html>

***Baptism in the Holy Spirit =**

"... an outpouring of spiritual gifts called baptism in the Holy Spirit, involving a personal encounter with Jesus Christ as Saviour, an openness to the Word of God, to exercising the charisms and to evangelization in faithful service of the Church." From article 1, [statutes of Charis](#).

"Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a life-transforming experience of the love of God the Father poured into one's heart by the Holy Spirit, received through a surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ. It brings alive sacramental baptism and confirmation, deepens communion with God and with fellow Christians, enkindles evangelistic fervor and equips a person with charisms for service and mission" definition in [Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Jubilee Anniversary Edition](#), Doctrinal Commission of ICCRS, part I p.15, quoted in [Guidelines for the creation of a CHARIS national service of communion](#) (CNSC).

Cardinal R. Cantalamessa explains 'what the new life in the Spirit consists in' and what baptism in the Holy Spirit means in his speech *The Catholic Charismatic Renewal: A Current of [Grace for the whole Church](#)*, June 8th, 2019

Baptism in the Holy Spirit - [Two Catholic Schools of Theological Interpretation](#) in the Catholic – Pentecostal dialogue report '*On becoming a Christian*'.

****Ministries** See the letter of Pope Francis on baptismal, individual, instituted, extraordinary and de facto ministries, August 15, 2022: [0484uk](#) on www.stucom.nl.

This is document 0483uk on www.stucom.nl