



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Audience with participants in the meeting organized by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service (CHARIS)

This afternoon, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the meeting organized by the *Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service (CHARIS)*, to whom he addressed the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good day!

I am happy to have this meeting with you as we approach the five year mark of your activity as an “international service organism for all expressions of Catholic Charismatic Renewal” (CHARIS Statutes, Art. 1 §1).

I know that you are engaged in a process of review, and so it is appropriate to ask you a few questions. How is the work of CHARIS going? How are the local Services of Communion progressing? What information are they sending us? Is the Catholic Charismatic Renewal worldwide in a healthy state? Is it growing in ecclesial maturity? That, of course, is the primary purpose of your service, and it should always be kept in mind, especially in prayer. Growing in ecclesial maturity.

Attentive to recent developments of that “current of grace” – we should call it this: a current of grace – which is the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, CHARIS is called to accompany and guide all charismatic communities, in communion, on the path ahead. CHARIS is in some sense a “window” on the vast and varied world of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Those involved in its work have an extraordinary opportunity to look out this window, to peer into the distance, beyond local experiences, and to appreciate the rich gifts that the Holy Spirit is bestowing in cultural, social and ecclesial contexts very different from their own. By discerning this awareness and sharing these manifold experiences, CHARIS, in carrying out its service, can assist individual groups to move beyond certain limited horizons and offer them a broader charismatic and ecclesial perspective. With regard to limited horizons, a holy sister once told me that some Catholics are like horses, who have blinders on

and are unable to look one way or the other. Thanks be to God, you have overcome limited horizons and you struggle against them, and I am pleased by that.

One goal that you are proposing, and which I myself have encouraged, is to expand the “Life in the Spirit Seminars” in all places and for everyone. These are truly kerygmatic moments, opportunities for the “initial proclamation” of the Gospel. They make it possible for people to encounter the living Jesus, in his word and his Spirit, and at the same time to experience his Church as a welcoming environment, a place of grace, reconciliation and rebirth. That is why I have encouraged you to make these Seminars more widely available. Today I would ask you: are the Life in the Spirit Seminars being offered in a variety of ecclesial contexts, in small and more remote places, and among the poor and on the peripheries? Each of you can answer this in your hearts. One obstacle to this might be the idea that these Seminars can only be held in large venues and with well-known leaders, whereas in reality even small parish groups and local leaders can organize them and present them to people in their area.

The Life in the Spirit Seminars are often an engaging and transformative experience that becomes a turning point in people’s lives. A turning point: after a Seminar, people change course! Nonetheless, they are only a beginning, like a fire that burns very intensely but risks dying out unless it is continually fed. Precisely for this reason, the Seminars need to be followed up by suitable methods of continuing formation that can fan into flame the graces received and encourage ongoing growth in faith and prayer, the moral and sacramental life, the practice of charity and cooperation in the Church’s mission.

Here I would mention two elements present in the CHARIS Statutes.

First: the importance of “promoting the exercise of charisms not only in Catholic Charismatic Renewal but also in the whole Church” (Art. 3 §b). The particular service CHARIS can perform is that of promoting charisms and encouraging them to be put at the service of the whole Church. *Promoting*, not *controlling*, charisms. And for this to happen, to promote charisms, we must follow the one who is the Teacher in promoting charisms: the Holy Spirit. Let us think of the morning of Pentecost: there was great disorder, no one understood anything; yet the Holy Spirit himself brought harmony to that great diversity. And he is the Teacher who teaches us how to promote charisms. This is especially the case for charisms that serve evangelization and missionary activity aimed above all at those who do not yet know Christ.

Second: “encouraging the spiritual deepening and holiness of people who live the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit” (Art. 3 §c). It should not be taken for granted that once someone has received baptism in the Spirit that he or she is already fully Christian. The path to holiness always involves growth in personal conversion and in the generous gift of oneself, a gift to Christ and to others, not merely in a sense of spiritual consolation.

Dear friends, I thank you for your service. Never forget that your task is not to judge who is or is not an “authentic charismatic”, this is not your task. This is a temptation in the Church, from the beginning: “I belong to Paul” – “I belong to Apollos” – “I belong to Peter” (cf. *1 Cor* 1:12). No, this is not right. Rather, you are called to provide support and advice to bishops and priests by accompanying all groups and the varied realities that make up the Charismatic Renewal. If someone were to ask me: “Give me a sign: what makes the life of renewal in a person genuine?”, what comes to mind is that people who experience renewal thoroughly know how to smile. They know how to smile. And this smile will help you stay on guard against the temptation to exercise power and influence, or to be competitive or overbearing. The real task is to serve. It is important to make room for the new generation of leaders. This calls for constant attention to the formation of the young, from whose ranks those future leaders will come.

During our first meeting, in June 2019 – how the years have passed! – we had a moment of silence to pray for peace, at the time of the meeting of the Presidents of Palestine and Israel here in the Vatican. Brothers and sisters, war can also destroy the memory of past steps towards peace. Let us look at this orchestra that is making a great effort for peace. Let us look at this olive tree, here, a sign of peace. War destroys everything, everything. It takes away humanity. The other day, 2 November, I went to celebrate Holy Mass at the Rome War Cemetery. On entering, I saw on the gravestones the ages of the fallen: all young, between 20 and 30 years old.

War destroys youth, it does not know how to say anything else but *destroy*. Please, let us fight for peace. May we never allow ourselves to be robbed of that memory of peace! And now, I invite you to pray in silence for peace.

Thank you. May Our Lady protect and keep you always joyful in the service you render. Thank you.
