

**THE CURRENT OF GRACE
OF THE CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL**
Origins and current events

Rome, 11 February 2023

Matteo Calisi

1. Introduction

After almost half a century of history of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Pope Francis felt the need to redefine our ecclesial identity on the occasion of a charismatic ecumenical meeting held in St. Peter's Square in 2015. The Holy Father defined the "Charismatic Renewal, a Pentecostal grace for the whole Church".¹

The reason is obvious. To date, we have not been able to express it clearly. This is how Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa responded to this pontifical call:

"We must recognize that so far we have given the Church different and sometimes contradictory ideas and representations of the Charismatic Renewal. It would be enough to make a little inquiry among the people who live outside it, to realize the confusion that reigns around the identity of the Charismatic Renewal."²

In response to this appeal of the Pope, the Moderators of the Charismatic Communities of the Alliance in Italy, propose with this Conference to reflect carefully on this aspect that is crucial for the life of the CCR:

"If the *Catholic Charismatic Renewal* is a current of grace for the whole Church, we have the duty to explain to ourselves and to the Church what this current of grace consists of and why it is destined and necessary for the whole Church. Explain, in short, what we are and what we offer – better, what God offers – to the Church with this current of grace."³

In that ecumenical meeting, just mentioned, Pope Francis evoked the vision that inspired Cardinal Léon Joseph Suenens, one of the Fathers at the Second Vatican Council and promoter of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, who used to say:

"The Renewal is not a movement [in the usual sociological sense; it has

¹ POPE FRANCIS, Address to the Movement of Renewal in the Spirit: "I remind you: the Charismatic Renewal is a Pentecostal grace for the whole Church. All right? [and the square: "Yes!"]. If anyone disagrees, raise your hand!" Saint Peter's Square, Friday, 3 July 2015.

² R. CANTALAMESSA (CARD.), *The Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a current of grace for the whole Church*. Rome, Paul VI Hall, 8 June 2019.

³ *Ditto*.

neither founder nor Statutes; it is not homogeneous; includes a wide range of events.] It is a *current of grace*, a reviving breath of the Holy Spirit destined for all the members of the Church – laity, religious, priests and bishops. [It is a challenge for all of us]" "What is the common sign of those who have been reborn from this ⁴*current of grace*? To be converted into new men and women, this is Baptism in the Spirit".⁵

Later, on the occasion of the Jubilee celebration at the Circus Maximus in Rome, on the Vigil of Pentecost 2017, Pope Francis will return to the subject, even insistently underlining the identity of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal:

"We are gathered here believers from 120 countries of the world, to celebrate the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, which began 50 years ago and began... to an institution? No. To an organization? No. To a current of grace, to the current of grace of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Work that was born... catholic? She was born ecumenical! It was born ecumenical because it is the Holy Spirit who creates unity and it is the same Holy Spirit who gave the inspiration to make it so! [admonished those present *It is important to read the works of Cardinal Suenens on this: it is very important!*"⁶

The emergence of latent trends in the CCR at the global level demands on the part of all, pastors and faithful, a careful discernment of spirits and a strong sense of responsibility to bring clarity. Otherwise confusion as Cardinal Cantalamessa says.

We too gathered at this Conference, as members of the communities belonging to this *current of grace*, have the task and duty to define objectively and therefore more precisely our identity and to protect it in order to correspond unequivocally, starting from the realities we represent, to the mission that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to us, subtracting it from subjective interpretations that underlie structures and organizations that deny identity and obscuring its mission.

The Pope courageously asks us to "clear" the current of grace:

"50 years of Catholic Charismatic Renewal. A current of grace of the Spirit! And why current of grace? Because it has neither founder, nor statutes, nor governing bodies. Clearly in this current many expressions have been born which, certainly, are human works inspired by the Spirit, with various charisms, and all at the service of the Church. **But the current cannot be dammed, nor can the Holy Spirit be locked in a**

⁴ L. J. SUENENS, *The Hidden Hand of God*, Veritas, Dublin, 1994.

⁵ *Ditto*.

⁶ POPE FRANCIS, Pentecost Prayer Vigil on the occasion of the "Golden Jubilee" of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Circus Maximus, Saturday, 3 June 2017.

cage! ".

In the history of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal here in Italy and in other places it has often seen us forced to attend endless and useless discussions for futile claims to want to grab the claim of a non-existent "primacy" over the *current of grace*, to want to claim its "maximum representativeness". But all this turned out to be a miserable and poorly concealed human attempt to "domesticate" the *current of grace*.

The Holy Father, admonishing us in this regard, uses the metaphor of the "wind" and before him Jesus to Nicodemus, the Holy Spirit is like the wind and

"The *wind* blows where it wants and you hear its voice, you don't know where it comes from and where it goes. Everyone who is born of the Spirit is there" (Joh 3:8).

Can you control the wind, can you ride the wind? "You hear his voice", you can see the effects of his passage and yet he remains elusive and hides. This is the current of grace of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

2. How is the current of grace born?

As recalled by the Holy Father, a retrospective look at history is more appropriate than ever, to understand our origin and where to walk.

The Pope says that the current of grace of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a

"Work that was born... catholic? She was born ecumenical! It was born ecumenical because it is the Holy Spirit who creates unity and it is the same Holy Spirit who gave the inspiration to make it so!"

He will return on other occasions to emphasize the ecumenical origin of the Renewal. In particular, speaking to the Catholic Fraternity of the Charismatic Communities of the Covenant he affirmed:

"Do not forget your origins, do not forget that the Charismatic Renewal is by its very nature ecumenical."

In a sermon to the Pope and the Vatican Curia, Father Raniero Cantalamessa ofm capp., Preacher of the Papal Household, asserted:

"We have been witnessing for some time a change that we can call epochal. All the Churches of the West, or born from them, for over a century, have been crossed by a *current of grace* which is the *Pentecostal movement and the*

various charismatic renewals derived from it in the traditional Churches. It is not, in fact, a movement in the current sense of this term. It does not have a founder, a rule, a spirituality of its own; Nor does it have structures of government, but only of coordination and service. It is, precisely, a *current of grace* that should spread throughout the Church and disperse in it like an electric discharge in the mass, and then, at the limit, disappear as a phenomenon in its own right. It is not possible to ignore longer, or consider marginal, a phenomenon that, in more or less profound ways, has reached hundreds of millions of believers in Christ in all Christian confessions and tens of millions in the Catholic Church alone. Receiving for the first time, on May 19, 1975, the leaders of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in St. Peter's Basilica, Blessed Paul VI [at the time but now canonized, *ed*], in his speech, called it "a chance for the Church and for the world."⁷

So if he was not born Catholic but ecumenical, what are his origins?

Let us establish, then, the historical chronology with the most significant stages that have given rise to this current of grace up to our days. And more precisely what are the "Pentecostal movement and the different charismatic movements derived from it in the traditional Churches" being rightfully belonging to the single and indivisible *current of grace* such as Ecumenism and Charismatic Renewal in accordance also with the thought of Cardinal Suenens described in the homonymous 2nd Document of Mechelen that our history has tried to separate out of fear and ignorance.

First, let's take a brief look at the historical origins of Pentecostal grace and the background to the appearance of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, globally, and then we will pause to observe what emerged in our country at its birth.

Historians place the germs of the Pentecostal current of grace at the beginning of the '900 at the *Bethel Bible School* in Stone Avenue in Topeka, Kansas (Mo), USA by Rev. *Charles Fox Parham* (1873-1929), Methodist minister and *Agnès Özman* (later *Mrs. La Bergère*). The spiritual experience lived in Topeka later became known as the 'Baptism in the Spirit', an expression already in use in the Methodism of brothers John and Charles Wesley and in the ancient "holiness movements".⁸

Today, in the same place as the *Bethel Bible School*, the *Parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary* was built, where the *Glory to God Covenant Community* is based, formerly a member of the *Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships*, the *International Association of Charismatic Covenant Communities* recognized by the Holy See

⁷ R. CANTALAMESSA (CARD.), *East and West before the mystery of salvation*, Fifth sermon of Lent 2015, Apostolic Palace, 27 March 2015.

⁸ L.E. MARTIN, *The Topeka outpouring o 1901*, 100th Anniversary Edition, Cristian Life Books 2000 Joplin, MO, USA; L. DEFENDORF, *It's All in God's Plan*, Glorium Deo Catholic Media, LLC Topeka, KS 2016.

in 1990.⁹ Some would make this awakening of Topeka coincide thanks to the invocation of Pope Leo XIII on January 1, 1901 on the basis of the insistent invitations of Jesus communicated to him by the mystic Blessed Elena Guerra of Lucca.

At a later stage the revival had a new impulse and spread starting from April 14, 1906, when in the building of the Apostolic Faith Mission on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California, a large number of faithful had the spiritual experience of a 'personal Pentecost'.¹⁰

This outpouring of the Holy Spirit descended upon the slums of Los Angeles where God used African-American preacher *William Seymour*, a disciple of *Rev. Charles Fox Parham*. Blacks, whites, Asians, and Hispanics of various Christian denominations came together in bonds of love, unity, and prayer. It was a genuine Christian reconciliation movement¹¹ and a fundamental interracial movement at a time when segregationism was in force.

The Revival of Azusa Street at that time had the merit of actualizing Pentecost and rediscovering three aspects of the first descent of the Holy Spirit described by St. Luke in the Book of Acts in chapter II. First, to manifest the gift of unity in Christ among different peoples and ethnicities (Acts 2:1-11). Second, a renewed expression of praise and worship accompanied by "speaking in tongues" (Acts 2:2-4). Finally, a courageous proclamation of Kerygma and salvation offered to all (Acts 2:37-41), accompanied by the power of signs and miracles. The legacy of Los Angeles was fundamentally: anointing of the Spirit, unity, worship, divine healing, and evangelism. To this historic "revival" are ideally connected most of the classical Pentecostal movements and the derived charismatic movements transversal to all the Christian denominations described by Cardinal Cantalamessa.

As a demonstration that it was a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit beyond any human planning or forecast, parallel and independently of the events that occurred in the United States of America, there was between 1904 and 1905 in Wales a *spiritual renewal* with the conversion of thousands of people; in all aspects of life: from the religious to the family and social. The *Awakening of Wales* is an original movement of the Holy Spirit, typically European, and not from a simple variation or schism with respect to organizations born in the United States. It all began in Ammanford with manifestations of glossolalia and baptism in the Spirit, characteristic of the Pentecostal movement by a young miner named Evan Roberts whom God put a consuming vision for a spiritual awakening. Evan Roberts did not possess great

⁹ Dissolved in 2017 by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life.

¹⁰ Church of South Africa.

¹¹ Known as the "Awakening of Azusa Street", whose name is inspired by the famous site at the Building of the Friendliest Faith Mission, at No. 312 Azusa Street - Los Angeles, California USA, began with the African-American pastor *William Seymour*. The Shepherd *William Seymour* He began his ministry in the house of *Richard and Ruth Asberry*, 216 North Bonnie Brae Street in Los Angeles.

intellect or eloquent speech, but simply a great passion for Jesus. He prayed incessantly day and night, weeping and seeking a great spiritual awakening. From this revival began the Apostolic Movement that gave life to the Pentecostal Apostolic Churches.¹²

The Pentecostal current of grace celebrated its first 110 years in April 2016. Catholics were also invited to celebrate the event and were received as an integral part of the Azusa Street family itself. A little more than a century after these revivals, more than ¹³half a billion Christians have been joined by the Pentecostal stream of grace on the planet, gathered in churches and denominations at the local level and networks at the international level.

From the insignificant beginnings of the Topeka Bible School, Kansas (USA) in 1901 and the African American community of Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California (USA) in 1906, these churches in the meantime have become a mass movement. Also according to the specialist of religious statistics David B. Barrett, out of just under two billion Christians in the world, about six hundred million consider themselves part of the Pentecostal-charismatic current. This is already more than a quarter of Christians in the world: according to the statistical projections of the same author, the faithful of the Pentecostal-charismatic current – whose growth rates are faster than all the other components of the Christian world – will constitute a third of the whole of Christianity in the coming years^{14 15}.

It is a movement born by the power of the Holy Spirit without human founders, little known by specialists and ecumenists, especially here in Italy, while in fact it has

¹² Other people know each other *Awakenings* of the Pentecostal type such as that of the *Apostolic of Wales* in 1904 with the preacher *Evan John Roberts* (1875-1951), from which it originated *The Friendliest Church* and from which, in turn, derived the *Evangelical Apostolic Church*, cf. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, "The Lesson of the Revival", in *The Story of the Welsh Revival Told by Eyewitnesses*, H. Fleming Revell, New York 1905, p. 37. On *Awakening of Wales* cf. JAMES E. WORSFOLD, *The Origins of the Apostolic Church in Great Britain with a Breviate of its Early Missionary Endeavours*, Julian Literature Trust, Wellington (New Zealand) 1991; ELVET H. LEWIS – G. Campbell Morgan – I.V. Neprash, *Glory Filled the Land. A Trilogy on the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905*, International Awakening Press, Wheaton (Illinois) 1989; J. ROGUES DE FURSAC, *A Mouvement Mystique contemporain. The réveil religieux Du Pays de Galles (1904–1905)*, Felix Alcan Editeur, Paris 1907.

¹³ The multi-ethnic, multi-ethnic celebration denominational, multi-generational and ecumenical took place at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on April 9, 2016, where more than 90,000 believers gathered and dedicated the entire day (15 hours) to unity, healing and proclaiming the gospel, in the spirit of Joel 2:12-18. Matteo Calisi, was one of the main speakers (the only Catholic) who addressed a message on the need for reconciliation of Christians accompanied by a gesture of forgiveness: he kissed the feet of the person in charge of the event Lou Engle, who reciprocated the same gesture in a sincere spirit of fraternity

(<http://www.christthereconciler.org/reconciliation-stories/2022/7/3/matteo-calisi-amp-lou-engle>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqBazUpVNDs&t=2683s>). During the Catholic segment, the Auxiliary Bishop and other representatives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles also took part, in accordance with Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples (Gv. 17.21) <https://angelusnews.com/local/california/christians-pack-coliseum-for-revival-catholics-join-thousands-of-believers-to-mark-110th-anniversary-of-pentecostal-azusa-revival>.

¹⁴ Known as the "Awakening of Azusa Street", whose name is inspired by the famous site at the Building of the Friendliest Faith Mission, at No. 312 Azusa Street - Los Angeles, California USA, began with the African American pastor *William Seymour* Disciple of the Rev. *Charles Fox Parham*, in the house of *Richard and Ruth Asberry*, 216 North Bonnie Brae Street.

¹⁵ DAVID B. BARRETT, *The 20th Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal in the Holy Spirit, with its of World Evangelization*, Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut, 1988.

seen in the last century the surprising growth from zero to six hundred million adherents. The Pentecostal current represents the largest spiritual movement in the entire history of the Christian Church, there are no other precedents.

Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox theology for too long has not taken into account the fact that *Pentecostalism* is a rapidly developing spiritual force throughout the world and has contributed to changing the geography of contemporary Christianity. Pentecostalism is not a new Protestant denomination nor is it a derivation or schism from Protestantism. Pentecostalism is a ¹⁶*genus* distinct from the Reformation and is essentially a movement or current of grace that runs through the Christian universe. It develops both through autonomous Pentecostal denominations and non-denominational charismatic churches and transversally within the traditional Churches (Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox), in the so-called Charismatic Renewal or Neo-Pentecostalism, and even in the Messianic-Jewish Movement. This ¹⁷*current of grace* is essentially ecumenical and clearly manifests the dimension of the *Pentecostality* of the Universal Church as already recalled by Pope Francis and Cardinal Cantalamessa and before them by Cardinal Suenens and Saint John Paul II.

¹⁶ HARVEY GALLAGHER COX, *Fire from Heaven. the Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* sky: The rise of spirituality Pentecostal And the Re-training of religiosity of XXI century), Addison-Wesley, Reading (Massachusetts) 1995.

¹⁷ In order to proceed to an adequate understanding of the Charismatic-Pentecostal Movement, it is good to specify the terminology used in the current historical and theological context. In Latin America, unlike in other parts of the world, the term "neo-Pentecostalism" is open to a plurality of meanings: in addition to the neo-Pentecostal and charismatic evangelical denominations. In Brazil, in particular, the term *Neo-Pentecostalism* is used to indicate those *Religious groups* heterodox of "Pentecostal expression" supporters of the so-called 'prosperity theology', including, for example, the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* founded by 'bispo' Edir Macedonia, but which are not properly Pentecostal Evangelical Christian Churches or Communities and which are not considered as such by the latter. The *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* would belong to that category of *Religious groups* of Christian derivation of Pentecostal expression, but with heterodox doctrines and practices based on extra-biblical revelations, to which other religious groups would belong the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Unification Church, the Children of God, Scientology, the Christic "churches", the Rosicrucian Movement, the Santeria and other pseudo-Christian syncretistic groups that have roots in African animist cults and many others. This lack of distinction is a serious lack of interpretation that generates confusion even among pastoral workers in Catholic dioceses, who dismiss the question simplistically by labeling every Pentecostal expression with the offensive term "sect." Therefore, when in Latin America (and in some cases in Africa), unlike the rest of the world, the term 'neo-Pentecostal' is used to indicate a *Religious group* his genealogy and doctrine are not immediately evident and sometimes it is precisely the respectable Pentecostal Evangelical Churches that are confused or considered as the 'seven' (cf in DAVID LEHMANN "*Dissent and Conformity in Religious Movements: Charismatic Renewal versus Pentecostalism*," *Concilium* 3/2003 p. 171, "Movements in the Church" and BRENDA CARRANZA "*Fires of Pentecostalism in Contemporary Brazil*", *Concilium* 3/2002 p. 124, "Brazil Church Laboratory"). Often even some pastoral workers of Catholic dioceses in Latin America do not make the necessary distinctions between ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, which are areas somewhat diluted and interchangeable, creating no little confusion to the detriment of a healthy ecumenism and interreligious dialogue desired by the Catholic Magisterium. In fact, not infrequently, some ecumenical organizations in Brazil maintain relations and dialogue with non-Christian religious groups such as the *Candomblé* and the *Ubanda* and attend their cults and celebrations (see the National Council of Christian Churches [Conic] of *Rio de Janeiro* and the House of Reconciliation in São Paulo, Brazil). In this Brazilian multi-religious scenario, in the face of a search for "interreligious pacifism" pursued by some Christian groups and organizations of "dialogue", many remain deeply confused about the theological foundations on which the true mission of the Church and ecumenism must be based. Therefore, the majority of serious Pentecostal Evangelical Churches prefer to stay out of the dialogue promoted by pacifist, ecumenical and interreligious Christian circles. However, there has been some improvement in relations between Catholics and some Pentecostal and Evangelical Charismatic Churches following the publication of the Final Document of the *5th General Conference of Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean* (CELAM) held in Aparecida, SP in Brazil in May 2007, with particular regard to chapter no. 5 dedicated to Ecumenism. Since 2008, the initiative of dialogue between charismatic and Pentecostal Catholics in Brazil called ENCRISTUS has also been highlighted. (*Encon de Cristão Na Busca from Unidade and Santidade*).

The Pentecostal stream of grace can be divided into at least three currents or waves according to analyst David Barrett. Starting in the 50s, alongside the first wave of *classical Pentecostal* denominations, there was a second wave of groups, movements and communities of Pentecostal expression within the churches and historical Protestant ecclesial communities, in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the so-called *neo-Pentecostalism*. The Charismatic Renewal is part of this stream and in the Catholic Church adherents were referred to as "Catholic Pentecostals" or simply "charismatic". Third wave members define themselves as *non-denominational, neo-charismatic, or independent*. But there is neither an organic unity nor a general, centralized organization that represents them all at the world level. Therefore, faced with a plurality of expressions of contemporary Pentecostalism, the classical definition of "movement" is avoided and the "current of grace" destined to reach the majority of Christian Churches and denominations is preferred.

For Cardinal Kurt Koch¹⁸

"Particularly significant is the rapid growth of Pentecostal communities, which constitute, in numerical terms, the second Christian community in the world, after the Catholic Church. [...] Dialogue with them is all the more important when we are faced with a phenomenon of such wide expansion as to justify the term *Pentecostalization of Christianity*."¹⁹

The Vatican has initiated a promising international theological dialogue with the Pentecostal Churches, distinct from that with the Protestant Reformation and Evangelical Churches, since the Second Vatican Council and is the longest-running of all the dialogues that the Catholic Church conducts with other Christian Churches. The reason for this success lies in the fact that the Pentecostal Churches were born as a movement of reconciliation and revival and not from divisions or schisms of the historic Protestant churches. For this reason, at a global level, Pentecostals do not like to call themselves Protestants except in the broad sense of the term and classical Protestants specify that they do not identify them as such. Qui in Italy and partly in the rest of Europe, since the Pentecostal communities adhere to the classical principles of the Protestant Reformation, hence the meaning of "Pentecostal Evangelical Churches", in their self-consciousness they define themselves fully Protestant.

3. The birth of the Charismatic Renewal

¹⁸ President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

¹⁹ KOCH KURT (CARD.), *The ecumenical situation today*, Conference at the Focolare Centre, 4 June 2012.

Historians consider the Reverend Dennis Bennett (1917-1991), of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, as the father of the "Charismatic Renewal", expression of the current of grace used by the historic Churches and distinct from the first classical Pentecostal wave. The birth is usually dated a Sunday morning in 1959, when Father Dennis Bennett [²⁰† 1991] announced to his congregation in Van Nuys, California, that he had been *baptized with the Holy Spirit and had spoken in tongues*. After 1960, he became vicar of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, Washington, which for a decade, was an important center from which baptism *with the Holy Spirit* would spread throughout the world. The main efforts of Father Dennis Bennett were to integrate the Pentecostal experience into the Church and the Episcopal and marked the entry of the charismatic current into the main Protestant denominations of sacramental type, the so-called neo-Pentecostalism of the historical churches born of the Reformation, outside the classical Pentecostal churches, such as the Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist, Mennonite, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc... He described the birth of the Charismatic Renewal in his book "The Third Hour".²¹²²

During the next seven years, many Catholics in Seattle also attended Friday evening meetings at St. Luke's to receive Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Among these Catholics were nuns, priests and seminarians who received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.²³

This happened three years before the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, inaugurated only on October 11, 1962, seven years after the famous Catholic Awakening of Duquesne University Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania in February 1967 and even before the birth of a so-called "**Catholic** Charismatic Renewal" that a certain literature would later hand down to us. We can therefore say with absolute historical certainty that millions of people have been able to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the globe as a result of the testimony of Father Dennis Bennett.

²⁰ <https://libguides.regent.edu/bennett/bio>

²¹ L. CHRISTENSON, *Bennett, Joseph Dennis (1917–91), and Rita (1934–present)*; C.M. IRISH, *Blessed Trinity Society* (p.435); P.D. HOCKEN, *Charismatic Movement, I. Development in North America, A. Earliest Stirrings (before 1960)* (p. 477); *The Emergence of the Movement (1969–1967)* (p. 479) in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, by BURGESS, STANLEY M AND GARY B. MCGEE, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530 USA.

²² D. BENNETT, *The Third Hour*. Editrice Uomini Nuovi, Varese 1977, Original title *Nine O'clock in the Morning*, introduction of John L. Sherrill, author of *They speak in other languages* and Rita Bennett, wife of Father Dennis Bennett author of *The Holy Spirit and You*.

²³ Some Catholic priests who had this experience, such as the Dominican Father Francis McNutt o.p., he had prayed with some local clergymen and many had received the Holy Spirit. Including Father Joseph John Fulton o.p. (1912-1988) highly esteemed theologian, preacher and ecumenist, who began to speak in tongues (Blessed Sacrament Church, 5041 Ninth Ave. N.E., Seattle, WA 98105). Later Father Francis McNutt and Father Dennis Bennett, began a weekly prayer meeting of about twenty priests at St. Thomas Seminary. It was the first prayer meeting in a Catholic church. As a result of the involvement of the first Catholics in the revival of St. Luke's Episcopal Parish, clergy and nuns of the Church of the Blessed Sacrament on the University of Washington campus held charismatic masses with music of praise and adoration in the early 60s at the initiative of Dominican priest Father Joseph John Fulton o.p. (1912-1988), Cf D. BENNETT, *The third hour* Op. cited pp. 224-226.

<https://www.ccr.org/our-beginnings>

<https://it.findagrave.com/memorial/52669438/john-joseph-fulton>

<https://washingtondigitalnewspapers.org/?a=d&d=CATHNWP19680126.2.20&c=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the birth of the Charismatic Renewal in 1960 in Seattle (WA) an *ecumenical forum* was organized at Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA, in April 2010 with the participation of ²⁴*panelists*, some recently deceased, such as Francis McNutt (Catholic) [† 2020], Vinson Synan (Pentecostal 'holiness') [† 2020], Matteo Calisi (Catholic), Rita Bennett (episcopal and wife of Rev. Dennis Bennett), Patti Gallagher Mansfield (Catholic, 1967 weekend participant at ²⁵Duquesne University in Pittsburgh [speaking in Skype conference call]), Larry Christenson (Lutheran) [† 2017] and Scott Kelso (Methodist).

But the involvement of early Catholics in the Seattle Revival, even before the 1967 Revival of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, which some historians chose as the classic beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, was not an isolated case. There were others known to the public at the time and mentioned by Patty Mansfield in her testimony-book "As from a new Pentecost".²⁶

I would like to recall the Catholic Barbara Shelmon will visit the parish of Father Dennis Bennett in Seattle and after the experience of baptism in the Spirit will later exercise a significant ministry of healing.

Another factor that paved the way for the experience of baptism in the Spirit among Catholics was their participation in the Charismatic and Ecumenical Association of Businessmen of the Full International Gospel founded in 1953 by Armenian Demos Shakarian.²⁷

4. The dawn of a Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church

The impact of the Cursillos de Cristiandad Movement on lay Catholic leaders in the United States has been another key factor in the rapid growth and development of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in North America and around the world. The Charismatic Renewal among Catholics began with a group of lay Catholics who were involved in the Cursillo movement at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana and Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In the summer of 1966, Jim Cavnar (son of Bob Cavnar and co-founder of the Catholic Fraternity of the Alliance Communities of Dallas, TX) lived with Steve

²⁴ cf School of Divinity Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Charismatic Renewal, By Sarah H. Dolan, March 10, 2010 Regent University (cf http://www.regent.edu/news_events/?article_id=626&view=full_article). The Regent University was founded by Rev. Pat Robertson, Pentecostal preacher.

²⁵ Rita Marie Reed (in Bennett) donated her late husband's archives to the Regent University in 2010 at the encouragement of his brother, Dr. William Standish Reed.

²⁶ Editions RnSRome 1 January 2005.

²⁷ JOHN AND ELIZABETH SHERRILL (as told to), *The Happiest People on Earth*, The long-awaited personal story of Demos Shakarian (1913-1993). Stewart Press, Chappaqua, NY USA 1975. Italian translation *From Armenia – via California – to the world*, The extraordinary story of Demos Shakarian narrated by John and Elisabeth Sherrill. Editrice Uomini Nuovi, Marchirolo Varese 1975.

Clark and Ralph Martin in East Lansing, Michigan. Steve and Ralph were members of the staff of the National Cursillo Secretariat based nearby.

Jim knew them both through the Cursillode Cristianidad Movement at the University of Notre Dame and hoped to work with them after graduating from Notre Dame in the spring of 1967.

They were joined by another student and cursillist of Notre Dame, Peter Collins, who described his extraordinary meeting that summer of 1966 with a small Pentecostal church in Toronto, "The Stone Church Assemblies of God". He enthusiastically witnessed his visits to this Pentecostal community where he had witnessed lively adoration and heard stories of miraculous healings. Peter Collins gave Jim Cavnar a copy of an influential book at the time, "They Speak in Other Tongues" by journalist John Sherrill. Jim was impressed by Peter Collins' visit and reading the book.

At the National Cursillo Convention in August 1966, Steve and Ralph gave copies of the book to two professors at Duquesne University, Ralph Keifer and Patrick Bourgeois, two young lay professors in the theology department at the University of Duquesne, a Catholic institution run by the Fathers of the Holy Spirit. Their interest in the Pentecostal movement was stimulated by reading two books: "The Cross and the Dagger" by David Wilkerson and "They Speak in Other Tongues" by John Sherrill.

Desiring to experience for themselves the renewed spiritual fervor described by Wilkerson and Sherrill as the effect of baptism in the *Spirit*, and having learned of the existence of a Pentecostal prayer group in the Pittsburgh area, they solicited, and received, an invitation to attend group meetings held in the home of a lay Presbyterian woman. They were actually neo-Pentecostal Protestants.

It is significant that it was precisely this prayer group, made up of people from the main Protestant churches, that acted as a bridge between Catholics and classical Pentecostals; which certainly would not have happened to the two professors of the University of Notre Dame and their Catholic friends, if they had attended religious services in a classical Pentecostal church. In the second meeting they attended, they prayed for prayers to be baptized in the Spirit and had the typical Pentecostal experience, including the gift of tongues.

In the weeks that followed, they informed some of their closest friends of their experience and prayed with them for baptism *in the Spirit*. In mid-February 1967, at the Ark and Dove retreat home in Pittsburgh, together with a group of about thirty of their students who had also read "The Cross and the Dagger," they decided to spend a weekend reflecting on the first four chapters of the Acts of the Apostles and seeking God's will for their lives. During that weekend, at different times and in

different ways, all those young people experienced a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, where the gifts and fruits of the Spirit characteristic of the Pentecostal stream of grace were manifested.

5. Ecumenical dimension of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Early Catholics interested in the Charismatic Renewal received encouragement and friendly advice from members of Pentecostal churches in South Bend. The first of these was Ray Bullard, then president of the South Bend chapter of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI) and deacon of the local Assembly of God. He was a sort of "spiritual godfather" for the charismatic community that was beginning to form at Notre Dame. Bullard was one of the typical Pentecostals, active members of the FGBMFI, who having seen for many years that the Pentecostal experience was accepted by Protestants (such as Father Dennis Bennett in Seattle), were now open to the idea that Catholics could also receive baptism in the Spirit and charismatic gifts without having to leave their church. However, it was not only some members of this association, but also other ministers and lay people of the Assemblies of God in the South Bend area, who gave support and encouragement to the Catholic charismatic group of Notre Dame. Some Pentecostals and charismatic Protestants influenced the leaders of the Catholic Renewal during those early years.

Among others was Ray Bringham of the Inter-Church Team Ministry, an interdenominational group of ministers, who had spread the Pentecostal movement among Protestants and now similarly encouraged its Catholic version. Other pastors of that group spoke at the conference held at Notre Dame in the summer of 1967, such as Lloyd Weber, a pastor of the United Church of Christ and leader of a charismatic community in a Chicago neighborhood. Other people in those early years, such as Agnes Sanford, Tommy Tyson, Derek Prince, Harald Bredesen, Bob Mumford, worked to introduce Catholics to baptism in the Spirit.

Some have described Duquesne Weekend as a Catholic devotional experience – a group of Catholics praying to renew their Baptism and Confirmation or a group of Catholics praying before the Blessed Sacrament and experiencing grace.

However, those present make it clear that Duquesne Weekend would not have happened without the contribution of various Pentecostals, and the Pentecostal movement as a whole, and without the message of baptism in the *Spirit*, in whatever terminology was presented.

Among the "classical" Pentecostals who had a considerable influence on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Rev. David DuPlessis, nicknamed Mister Pentecost, at the time secretary general of the Assemblies of God in the USA, deserves special

mention. He contributed to the spread of *Baptism in the Spirit* among Catholics. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal owes much to the wise counsel of David DuPlessis. During the Second Vatican Council, John XXIII invited Rev. David DuPlessis as an official guest. And it was the latter who co-chaired, together with the Benedictine Kilian McDonnell, the first mixed international Catholic-Pentecostal theological commission, sponsored by the then Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity.

The number of Pentecostals and Protestants involved in the charismatic movement who have been invited to speak, both at the conferences of Notre Dame and at other important meetings of the Catholic Renewal, is further evidence of the recognition by the early leaders of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of being part of a common movement and of learning from those who have had wider experience of it.

In addition to the historical links between the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the earliest Pentecostal movements, an even more valid reason for recognizing this renewal as "Catholic Pentecostalism" or "Catholic Pentecostal Renewal" (Cardinal Suenens) is to be found in the fundamental identity of experiences that Catholics have found themselves sharing with others in this movement, namely, baptism in the Spirit and the consequent typical charisms. The fact that Catholics may prefer a theological interpretation of *baptism in the Spirit* different from Pentecostal does not negate the identity of the experience as such.

Catholics have learned from Pentecostals to be open to this new outpouring of the Spirit, to seek it, to prepare themselves as best they can and to pray for it, especially with the help of others who have already received it. Along with or as a result of the transforming gift, Catholics, like Pentecostals, have experienced some new gift of the Spirit, most often the gift of tongues. They have equally learned to pray for physical and spiritual healing, trusting in the healing power of the Lord, and have had tangible evidence that the Lord works mightily in answer to trusting prayers.

A constant feature of all major conferences of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has been the participation of prominent leaders of the Pentecostal stream of grace in other churches. Likewise, Catholics have regularly participated in interdenominational meetings and conferences sponsored by other communities.

From all these elements in common, there is a solid basis for considering the Catholic Charismatic Renewal as a genuine manifestation of the Pentecostal movement.

The manifestation of the Pentecostal stream of grace in the Catholic Church was also the direct consequence of the efficacy of the prayer of Pope John XXIII who, convoking the Vatican Ecumenical Council, invoked a New Pentecost in the Church to the Holy Spirit.

However, the participation of Catholics in the Pentecostal movement would hardly have been approved by the Bishops and the Pope had it not been for the positive attitude they expressed at the Second Vatican Council towards Christian values existing in other Churches. They recognized that "all that is done by the grace of the Holy Spirit in separated brethren can also contribute to our edification. All that is truly Christian is never contrary to the various benefits of faith, indeed it can always ensure that the very mystery of Christ and of the Church is more perfectly attained" (Decree on Ecumenism, 4 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Documents of the Second Vatican Council).

Considering the hitherto negative attitude of the Catholic Church towards what other churches might have to offer, this positive assessment of Christian values existing among the "separated brethren" was certainly an important factor in getting people to accept the idea that Pentecostalism could contribute something to the spiritual renewal of the Catholic Church. This decision of the Second Vatican Council opened the way to the acceptance of a Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church.

But if it is true that Catholic ecumenism was a priority condition for the favorable reception of Catholic Pentecostalism, the latter has influenced to a greater extent than any forecast advanced at the time of the Council. In fact, if a ranking of the other churches had been made then according to their proximity or distance from the Catholic Church, certainly the Pentecostal Churches would have been counted among the most distant. Instead, the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue has become over the years the longest dialogue that the Vatican conducts with other Christian churches.

Perhaps the most sensational manifestation of the ecumenical nature of the Charismatic Renewal has been the Conference that took place in Kansas City in July 1977. The Conference was organized by a committee called NARSC (North American Renewal Services Committee) chaired by Catholic leader Kevin Ranagan (now from Vinson Synan, Pentecostal Church of Holiness) and composed of charismatics of various denominations: Catholics, Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Anglicans, Mennonites, Methodists, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, Orthodox, and Messianic Jews. It was attended by Cardinal Léon Joseph Suenens and then Father Raniero Cantalamessa (Card.).

Europe also witnessed a remarkable demonstration of the ecumenical spread of the Charismatic Renewal at the conference held in Strasbourg in 1982 which took place at the Meinau stadium, with about twenty thousand participants, organized by a committee of leaders representing the Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Evangelical Churches and chaired by the late Pastor Thomas Roberts (1902–1983), Welsh, of the Apostolic Church, with the participation of Cardinal Léon Joseph Suenens. Pastor Roberts was later the initiator of the "Monté a Jerusalem",

charismatic ecumenical pilgrimages to which our dear Sister Ancilla Beretta [† 2022], foundress of the Nocetum Community of Milan, joined in the organization.

6. Leadership in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Some have said that the Charismatic Renewal did not have a founder like other movements. But in the beginning he had a group of animators who provided the leadership and vision for the beginnings of the Charismatic Renewal, including Duquesne Weekend and it is right to honor and respect them.

The Charismatic Renewal before and after the Duquesne Weekend did not come about randomly and humanly from nothing, they began with a group of people trying to serve the Lord and working together to evangelize and bring renewal to the church.

That group was born from the Cursillo Movement, at that time quite new in the United States. Its origin was at Notre Dame University in the early sixties and many of those who participated worked on the Antioch Weekend movement, an offshoot of the Cursillo. The first Antioch Weekend held in Duquesne was something of a precursor to Duquesne's weekend. The group that worked on Antioch Weekend and Cursillo Movement was not a formal organization, but there was an intentional bond of collaboration between them.

Steve Clark's role was instrumental in developing a close network of relationships between lay Catholic leaders in the Cursillo movement at Notre Dame, Duquesne and other universities. In the fall of 1963, Steve decided to earn a doctorate from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. There, he immediately connected with the Cursillos Movement.

Steve and the other young leaders of the Cursillo were also curious about the spiritual strength they found in Pentecostalism. They decided to read "The Cross and the Dagger" by Pastor David Wilkerson and "They Speak in Other Tongues" by John Sherrill, and so they were prepared by the Lord for what He was about to do by pouring out His Spirit again in the so-called Charismatic Renewal that would soon be born in the Catholic Church.

Steve described in his own words both the impact of the Cursillo movement and the impact of reading Pentecostals who were involved in evangelism and social action in New York City. This has led some lay animators of the Cursillos to make direct contact with the Pentecostals to understand the *baptism in the Holy Spirit* and the exercise of the charismatic gifts of the Spirit.

Ralph Martin was also one of the first Catholics to be baptized in the Holy Spirit in 1966 and was a key leader of the Cursillo. He participated with the professors of the University of Duquesne in the famous retreat in 1967 that marked the birth of the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church. It was there that he met some who became lifelong friends and companions, Patti Mansfield and Dave Mangan. He also followed the development of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal at the University of Notre Dame. Since its inception, Ralph has been a key leader in the development of Catholic charismatic renewal nationally and internationally. He was the founding editor of New Covenant Magazine, as well as the founding director of the International Office for Catholic Charismatic Renewal with Cardinal Suenens first in Brussels and then in Rome.

Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan were actively involved in the Cursillos movement at Notre Dame and are among the first group of Cursillos leaders to be baptized in the Holy Spirit in early 1967.

Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan wrote the book "Catholic Pentecostals" in 1969, the first book detailing the history of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement and articulating its theological implications. Kevin was ordained a deacon in 1973. He is one of the founding leaders of the People of Praise, an ecumenical covenant community in South Bend, Indiana. He joined the United States National Service Committee for Catholic Charismatic Renewal for 15 years and served as its executive director for 11 years. He was one of the main organizers of national and international conferences, notably the 1975 Conference of Catholic Leaders during the Holy Year in Rome and the 1977 Ecumenical Conference in Kansas City.

In the fall of 1967, Steve Clark moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, along with Ralph Martin, Gerry Rauch, and Jim Cavnar, where the University of Michigan was located. It is there that the first community of charismatic Alliance "The Word of God" emerged (from which the international ecumenical network "The Sword of Spirit" was born, of which the President is Jean Barbara). Steve was the author of the Life in the Spirit Seminar, the Handbook for Building Covenant Communities, and the founder of the "Servants of the Word," a fraternity of celibates for the Kingdom of God.

These initiators of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, in most of the Covenant Communities, provided theological and catechetical formation, music and singing, biblical studies, etc. To these men and to their wisdom, goes our gratitude, to them we owe the foundations that allowed an organic development of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and that anticipated the subsequent services offered by the Catholic Fraternity and ICCRS, the two recognized entities from the Holy See, in addition to other networks of communities, National Service Committees, to CHARIS, an institution of the Vatican at the service of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

7. Spread of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Italy

I would now like to mention only the historical beginnings of the current of grace in Italy on the Catholic side. The non-Catholic one started in Italy before the beginning of the last century with the arrival of the first Pentecostal missionaries, our compatriots who first emigrated to the United States and Canada and then returned to our country, but we postpone this study to another occasion.²⁸

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal has its roots in Italy in the early 70s.

Ralph Martin, editor of the prestigious charismatic magazine *New Covenant*, published in his editorial of July 1972 an important letter received from a 14-year-old Italian boy named Cesare Giorgetti whom he met during his trip to Rome in March 1972. This testimony offers with certainty the scientific-historical data on the origins of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Italy. The letter comes from San Mauro Pascoli in Romagna, April 19, 1972. The young man mentions in his letter "weekly meetings of believers" that have been taking place in San Mauro Pascoli and led by Don Giancarlo Moretti for some years (we do not know if they were charismatic meetings). The boy attests to having received the Holy Spirit as a result of the visit of Father Valeriano Gaudet, the Canadian priest of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to San Mauro Pascoli a month after the meeting in Rome with Ralph Martin.

This narrative of the birth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in San Mauro Pascoli would have been plausible if it were not for another statement by the young Giorgetti in his letter, when he makes explicit reference to two of his meetings previously held in Rome that proved decisive for his Christian choice.

This report of the *New Covenant Review* would no longer justify the birthright of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of St. Mauro Pascoli by dropping a myth, in favor of another seat and another place of arrival in Italy: Rome!

In fact, the first group of Renewal in Italy was started by five people (four priests and a nun) who had known the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in America. They were: Father Valeriano Gaudet, OMI, whom we have already mentioned and who worked at the Generalate of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate; the three young Dominican Fathers Paolo O' Connor, Giles Dimock and Terence Keegan, inhabitants of the Angelicum²⁹ (Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas) to begin their studies in

²⁸ G. TRAETTINO, *The Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement in Italy* in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* by Stanley Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, Zonervan, 2002 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530 USA, Pag. 132-141.

²⁹ L'Osservatore Romano, 1 June 2014. Jacqueline Dupuy and The Renewal in Italy

Rome; and Sister Winifred Corrigan, Sister of the Cenacle, who had come to Rome to study spirituality at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

After the three young Dominican Fathers had prayed together for a few weeks in a private room at the Angelicum, made the acquaintance of Father Gaudet and Sister Winifred, together they began a small charismatic prayer group.

After touring several convents, they found a more or less stable place in the convent of the Sisters of the Child Jesus in Via Buoncompagni. The group was English-speaking, which they called "Lumen Christi", and consisted of about fifteen people, mostly priests, seminarians and nuns.

One of the priests, who attended the group at that time, was the Rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, successively Archbishop and Cardinal of Milan, Fr. adre Carlo M. Martini s.j. , who had known the Renewal during the previous summer, when he gave lectures at the University of San Francisco (USA). Accepting the invitation of Fr. Francis Sullivan of the Gregorian University began to attend these prayer meetings, and when, after a few months, the sisters were about to sell the convent in Via Buoncompagni, the Rector of the Gregorian University granted the use of a room at the Frascara Palace of the University, for the prayer group. From May to June 1971, meetings were held in a small hall on the first floor of Frascara, a room that was later transformed into a chapel for students.

During the summer of 1971 several students of the English College were introduced to the Renewal by an American nun visiting Rome. In October many new students arrived in Rome to begin their studies; they had already been part of the Renewal in America or elsewhere. To everyone's surprise, the small group, which in the previous June almost never exceeded the number of fifteen people, found itself with more than fifty, when it met again, in October, at the beginning of the academic year. So he went down to the main hall of Palazzo Frascara, on the ground floor, where he continued to meet for about a decade.

In November and December 1971 the English-speaking group in Rome organized the "Life in the Spirit Seminars". December 19, 1971 was the day of prayer for baptism in the Spirit over all its members. While the English-speaking group remained at the Gregorian University, the others moved to different locations, also in Rome.

The merit of this group "Lumen Christi" was not only that of the birth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Italy, and in the Roman Pontifical Universities in particular, but thanks to the attendance of ecclesiastics from all over the world for studies at the Roman universities, the experience of baptism in the Spirit spread rapidly upon returning to their countries of origin. . Several of them made ecclesiastical careers and became bishops and cardinals. Among these mentions

Cardinal Ivan Diaz, at the time a member of the Vatican Secretary of State and founder of the Portuguese-speaking charismatic group in Rome.

Subsequently, a first Italian-speaking group was started in San Mauro Pascoli, in the province of Forlì, in December 1971. I emphasize that it is customary to date the narration of the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Italy to San Mauro Pascoli for a motive of linguistic origin and not for primogeniture.

Father Francis A. Sullivan s.j., in his article on the origins of the Renewal in Italy (*Gli inizi del Rinnovamento in Italia*, in *Alleluja* 6(1981), 6), provides this historical reconstruction of the fact:

"In the autumn of 1971, one of the many visitors of the group (the one meeting at the Pontifical Gregorian University) was Father Oscar Abayaratne (Sri Lanka), a friend of Father Valeriano Gaudet. After meeting the Renewal in our group, he went to visit another friend of his, Don Giancarlo Moretti, parish priest of San Mauro Pascoli, on the Adriatic. Having heard what Oscar was talking about the Renewal, Don Giancarlo and Alberto Trevisani came to Rome and invited Father Valeriano to San Mauro Pascoli to explain the Renewal to his faithful."

Subsequently, Dr. Fred Ladenius, a Dutch journalist of Vatican Radio and participant in the Association of Businessmen in Full International Gospel, who had lived in Rome for many years, together with Loredana Santini and Fr Valeriano Gaudet, started the first Italian-speaking group in Rome, which held its first meeting in the parish hall of San Saba on the Aventine Hill on February 5, 1972.

In July of the same year Father Valeriano Gaudet, who had been a missionary for many years in Bolivia and therefore spoke Spanish well (in addition to French, English and Italian) founded the Spanish-speaking group in Rome, which they called "Esperanza", which found hospitality in the convent of the Sisters of Maria Riparatrice in Via Lucchesi.

In 1973 the Roman Italian-speaking group, Emmanuele, was formed with headquarters at the Sisters of the Precious Blood, via S. Giovanni Laterano 77, in Rome. In November 1974 the spouses Alfredo Ancillotti and Jacqueline Dupuy broke away from the "Emmanuele" group and founded the "Maria group", which was widespread in our country. Subsequently, the Ancillotti couple will also distance themselves from the "Maria group" and will give rise to the "Maria Community".

Another important initiative was the courses of new life in the Spirit, held in Rome and attended by many dozens of lay people, priests and religious from all over Italy. Meanwhile, small groups arose spontaneously in Veneto, Sicily and Lombardy and throughout the peninsula.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal had great impetus in our country following the audience granted by His Holiness Paul VI in the Vatican Basilica of Saint Peter to the participants of the Third International Congress of the Renewal in 1975, during the Holy Year. In this audience the Pope affirmed that the Renewal represented a "chance" for the Church. From that moment on, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal had citizenship in the Catholic Church.

On that occasion the Pope entrusted to Card. Suenens the task of Episcopal Counselor of the World Charismatic Renewal, who will later be replaced, given his advanced age, by Bishop Paul Josef Cordes, vice-president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and "person in charge ad personam".

In December of the same year the first issue of the magazine "Alleluia" was published, a bimonthly organ for the promotion of the Renewal in Italy.

From 30 April to 2 May 1976 in Triuggio (Milan) took place the meeting called by the Committee of the magazine "Alleluia", in which about 2000 representatives of 65 groups intervened. On this occasion the Committee of the magazine was transformed into the National Committee of Provisional Service, unanimously calling Monsignor Dino Foglio, then director of the Diocesan Office for Vocations of Brescia, to preside over it. The following year the first Conference for Animators was held in Milano Marittima, at the parish "Stella Maris", in April 1977, which brought together about 700 people from the 210 existing groups. On that occasion, like other nations, a National Service Committee (SNC) was formed, composed of lay people, religious and priests, with a ministry of coordination and pastoral care and renamed itself "Renewal in the Spirit" in Italy, at the service of all those who recognized themselves in this expression of the current of grace:

- Msgr. Dino Foglio, national coordinator
- Ermete Ferrari
- Father Robert Faricy, s.j.
- Sr. Ancilla Beretta
- Father Mario Panciera
- Prof. Salvatore Cultrera
- Father Natale Merelli, ofm chap.

Other expressions of the current of grace did not adhere to the initiative of Milano Marittima and continued their ecclesial journey independently of the "Renewal in the Spirit" maintaining the denomination of "Catholic Charismatic Renewal".

Over the years, misunderstandings followed, frictions that have persisted until today but that thanks to the establishment of CHARIS wanted by Pope Francis we hope to overcome with time.

Among the great opportunities that the Charismatic Renewal has had to express its catholicity there were three great retreats for charismatic priests (over 7000), held in the Paul VI Hall in the Vatican and in the Lateran Basilica to which the Pope, the Cardinal, preached, among others. Suenens, Card. Father Raniero Cantalamessa and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The Holy Father John Paul II encouraged the development of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the Papal Audiences granted in the 80s and 90s. His successors Pope Benedict XVI in 2008 and Pope Francis, since the beginning of his pontificate, have also addressed exhortations and support. The experiential experience of the Italian Renewal, its ecclesiology and formation is substantially identical to the whole worldwide Charismatic Renewal.

In 1990 the Holy See officially recognized for the first time the Catholic Charismatic Renewal with the Pontifical Decree of the Catholic Fraternity of the Charismatic Covenant Communities. In 1993 he also followed the Pontifical recognition of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Service (ICCRS).

Over the years, the Charismatic Covenant Communities were also received in various private and special audiences in the Vatican by the Supreme Pontiffs St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, who encouraged and supported them in their specific mission also through chirographs, messages, allocutions and official speeches.³⁰

Some of these Communities existing in various Italian Dioceses and operating both throughout the national territory and abroad, have been recognized in Private Associations of the Faithful, sometimes with the Canonical Juridical Personality, or canonically erected in Public Associations of the Faithful by the respective Ecclesiastical Authority, according to territorial competence both at the diocesan and pontifical levels, through the approval of their respective statutes with the identification of the ecclesial nature of their charism which translates into an authentic witness of faith lived and practiced. For these reasons, the Charismatic Covenant Communities maintain a close bond of filial, docile and obedient communion with the Supreme Pontiff and their respective Bishops.³¹

In addition to the numerous works of apostolate that each individual community carries out in Italy and abroad and the flowering of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, they promote and realize ripe fruits of Christian perfection among their members. Some of these (sometimes young) deceased in the concept of holiness and declared "Servants of God" by Holy Mother Church, have left behind a luminous

³⁰ A selection of the most important interventions of the Papal Magisterium to the Charismatic Communities of the Covenant (associated with the then Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships) is published in *Then Peter Stood Up...* by Oreste Pesare, 1967-2017, ICCRS, Vatican City 1 gennaio 2018, 3rd ENG Edition in 2018.

³¹ Some of these communities have evolved into Institutes of Consecrated Life of Diocesan Right.

trail of spiritual and apostolic fruits that are now being examined by the Congregation for the Cause of Saints for the canonical process of beatification and canonization:

- The Servant of God Alessandro Nottegar, Layman (1943-1986), Founder of the Regina Pacis Community of Verona, declared "Venerable" by Pope Francis with the publication of the Decree on heroic virtues of 4 May 2017
- the Servant of God Simona Tronci, Laywoman (1960-1984), Foundress of the Spring Community of Cagliari;
- the Servant of God Lorena D'Alessandro, Laywoman (1964-1981), Inspirer of the Community of Our Lady of Czestochowa of Rome
- the Servant of God Chiara Corbella, laywoman (1984-2012), Member of the Heart of Jesus Community of Rome.

Others who enjoy the reputation of holiness:

- Father Matteo La Grua, Conventual Franciscan Minor Priest (Spiritual Advisor of the Amen Community of Palermo). The Episcopal Conference of Sicily has approved in recent days the start of the diocesan phase.
- Don Salvatore Tumino, diocesan priest (Founder of the Community "Eccomi Manda me!" of Ragusa).³²

8. Some considerations of Pope Francis

The history of these 56 years of life of the Charismatic Renewal has shown how this vision has sometimes been distorted for political reasons of human control by some "charismatic leaders" and that they have nothing to do with the "movement of the Spirit" and that it obscures the very nature of the *current of grace*. It took the courage of Pope Francis to denounce these abuses and ask us to face them with determination. Let us ask ourselves, have we done it?

The Pope himself, in the exercise of the Petrine charism, has guaranteed safeguarding the nature of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, analyzing its merits and limitations and offering us pastoral operational proposals where they were needed. This is truly a record: never before has a Roman Pontiff taken care of the *current of grace* in these

³² The collection of testimonies for the opening of the diocesan investigation of the beatification process is underway.

terms.

What are the factors that led to the loss of the original vision of the current of grace?

Two of these are underlined in the same pontifical address at the Olympic Stadium in Rome in 2015:

b) The first factor is a misconception of the very nature of the Charismatic Renewal. Pope Francis stated decisively:

"The first mistake that must be avoided is to include the Charismatic Renewal in the category of movement. It is not a specific movement, the Renewal is not a movement in the common sociological sense, it has no founders, it is not homogeneous and includes a great variety of realities, it is a *current of grace*, a renewing breath of the Spirit for all the members of the Church, laity, religious priests and bishops. It is a challenge for us all. One is not part of the Renewal, rather the Renewal becomes a part of us, provided that we accept the grace it offers us."³³

Continuing his address, the Pope quoted Cardinal Suenens, who:

"speaks of the sovereign work of the Spirit, which without human founders raised up the *current of grace* in 1967. Renewed men and women who, after receiving the grace of *Baptism in the Spirit*, as the fruit of this grace gave life to associations, covenant communities, schools of formation, schools of evangelization, religious congregations, ecumenical communities, communities of aid to the poor and needy."³⁴

One of the Pope's main concerns is that the Renewal risks being confused as one of the many apostolic movements that arose immediately after Vatican II:

"You are born of a will of the Holy Spirit as a 'current of grace in the Church and for the Church'. This is your definition: a *current of grace*."³⁵

The title of the book "Una nouvelle Pentecôte?", which Cardinal Suenens wrote in 1975, was followed by a very important question mark. One of the Cardinal's main concerns was that:

"The Renewal risked not being recognized according to its true identity... It was a painful cry so that the leaders of the Church would allow

³³ *Ditto.*

³⁴ *Ditto.*

³⁵ POPE FRANCIS, *Speech* to participants in the 37.ma National Convocation of Renewal in the Holy Spirit, Olympic Stadium, Sunday, 1 June 2014.

themselves to be challenged and not transform the Renewal into a movement among many others." The Cardinal added, "For me that book was like a bottle containing a message thrown into the sea."³⁶

From the experience of these 56 years we cannot hide how some tensions and difficulties created within the Charismatic Renewal and in the ordinary pastoral care of the particular Churches have been caused precisely by this "spiritual myopia" that has guided those who have tried to "domesticate" the Holy Spirit, in structures and organizations, in some cases even creating divisions and even arousing abandonment.

Providentially, Pope Francis thought about it in his speech to the Renewal to "recover" the famous "bottle" of Cardinal Suenens "containing a message launched into the sea" with the "cry for help" not to want to distort the Renewal.

b) A second factor that has clouded the vision of the *current of grace*, again according to Pope Francis, is *leaderism*. We propose again this passage of his speech that needs no comment:

"This current of grace is for the whole Church, not just for some, and none of us is the 'master' and all the other servants. No. We are all servants of this current of grace."

Even at the Olympic Stadium in Rome in 2014 he said the same thing:

"There is another point that is very important to clarify in this *current of grace*: those who lead. There is a great temptation for leaders dear brothers and sisters. And this temptation for servants comes from the devil, the temptation to believe oneself indispensable, whatever the task. The devil leads them to want to be those who command, those who are at the center and so, step by step, they slip into authoritarianism, personalism and do not let communities renewed in the Spirit live."³⁷

In the apostolic solicitude of Pope Francis the concern to protect the Charismatic Renewal from certain dangers is quite evident:

"So, as in an orchestra, no one in the Renewal can think of being more important or greater than the other, please! Because when one of you thinks you are more important than the other or greater than the other, the plague begins! No one can say, "I am the boss." You, like the whole Church, have only one head, one Lord: the Lord Jesus. Repeat with me: who is the head of the Renewal? The Lord Jesus! Who is the head of the

³⁶ CARDINAL L.J. SUENENS, *Memories and hopes*, Edizioni Paoline 1993 Cap. VI, 9 pag. 281.

³⁷ *Ditto*.

Renewal? [the crowd:] the Lord Jesus!"³⁸

c) Another strong point of Pope Francis' addresses to the CCR is the experience of Baptism in the Spirit. Clearly, "Baptism in the Spirit" is an important experience for the Church and for the world and not only for the CCR, to the point of being attentive and even encouraged to spread it with everyone in the Catholic Church by two living contemporary Pontiffs, including Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.³⁹

The Holy Father Francis has even urged the dissemination of "Baptism in the Spirit" on various occasions:

"I expect you to share with everyone, in the Church, the grace of Baptism in the Holy Spirit (an expression that we read in the Acts of the Apostles)",
"Share the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church",
"Convert into new men and women, this is Baptism in the Spirit"^{40 41 42}

He also spoke about it at the III World Retreat of Priests of Catholic Charismatic Innovation:

"Baptism in the Holy Spirit, praise, service to man. The three things are inextricably united."⁴³

d) Finally, the pope insists on the ecumenical nature of the CCR. In fact, in the program of the Jubilee of the 50th anniversary of the CCR, the Pope was attended by some representatives of other Christian communities. This ecumenical celebration has a significance, dare I say, capital for the future of the Charismatic Renewal.

Pope Francis at the Press Conference of the return flight from Sweden had announced:

"... the celebration organized by ICCRS [International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services], the celebration for the 50th anniversary of the Charismatic Renewal, which was born ecumenical, and therefore will be an ecumenical celebration in this sense, and will be held at the Circus Maximus."⁴⁴

³⁸ POPE FRANCIS, *Speech* to participants in the 37.ma National Convocation of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit, Olympic Stadium, Sunday, 1 June 2014.

³⁹ Vatican City, Sunday, 11 May 2008.

⁴⁰ POPE FRANCIS, *Intervention* at the Olympic Stadium in Rome 1 June 2014.

⁴¹ POPE FRANCIS, *Audience* to Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships (Vatican City, 31 October 2014).

⁴² POPE FRANCIS, *ditto*.

⁴³ POPE FRANCIS, Basilica of St John Lateran, 12 June 2005.

⁴⁴ POPE FRANCIS, Papal flight, Tuesday, 1 November 2016.

In all the Holy Father's interventions at the Charismatic Renewal, references to his ecumenical nature and vocation have never been lacking, of which he admits no doubts. A sign of the times also in this Pontificate.

"There is another strong sign of the Spirit in the Charismatic Renewal: the search for the unity of the Body of Christ. You charismatics have a special grace to pray and work for Christian unity, because the *flow of grace* runs through all the Christian Churches. Christian unity is the work of the Holy Spirit and we must pray together. Spiritual ecumenism, the ecumenism of prayer. "But, Father, can I pray with an evangelical, with an Orthodox, with a Lutheran?" — "You must, you must! You have received the same Baptism."⁴⁵

We know that the Charismatic Renewal can help to bring Christians of different confessions closer by offering them a privileged meeting place "communion in the Holy Spirit", a communion that opens them to God and to their brothers and sisters.

The Holy Father wishes to emphasize the immense hope of unity among Christians implicit in the spiritual ecumenism desired by the Second Vatican Council, to which the Charismatic Renewal can provide a new impetus. He recognizes that Providence seems to assign to the Charismatic Renewal a specific role, rich in the future, giving rise to fraternal and profound encounters among Christians. He himself experienced this personally during his long period of episcopate in Argentina.⁴⁶

He stated in his message:

"This *current of grace* runs through all Christian confessions, all of us who believe in Christ. Unity first of all in prayer. Work for Christian unity begins with prayer. Pray together."⁴⁷

And during the Jubilee he concluded:

"To share with everyone in the Church the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, to

⁴⁵ The *dem*; Cf POPE FRANCIS, "Remember that *"the Charismatic Renewal is by its very nature ecumenical... The Catholic Renewal rejoices in what the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the other Churches"* (1 Mechelen 5,3)., POPE FRANCIS, *Speech* to participants in the 37.ma National Convocation of Renewal in the Holy Spirit, Olympic Stadium, Sunday, 1 June 2014 and *"Share the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church. Spiritual ecumenism and ecumenism of blood. The unity of the Body of Christ. Prepare the Bride for the Bridegroom who comes! One Bride! Everybody. (Rev 22:17)"*, POPE FRANCIS, *Audience* to Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships, Paul VI Hall, Vatican City, 31 October 2014.

⁴⁶ DOCUMENTS OF THE SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, *Unitatis Redintegratio*.

⁴⁷ *Ditto*; Cf D.B. BARRETT, *The 20th Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal in the Holy Spirit, with its of World Evangelization*, Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut, 1988. According to this specialist in religious statistics, out of just under two billion Christians in the world, about six hundred million consider themselves part of the Pentecostal-charismatic current. This is already more than a quarter of Christians in the world: according to the statistical projections of the same author, the faithful of the Pentecostal and charismatic current – whose growth rates are faster than all the other components of the Christian world – will constitute a third of the whole of Christianity in the coming years.

praise the Lord without ceasing, to walk together with Christians of different Churches and Christian communities in prayer and action for the most needy".

Unfortunately, we must honestly admit it, over time even the initial ecumenical vision in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in general and in Italy, in particular, has become blurred if not even hindered due to misinformation, fears, superficiality, reticence and prejudices.

Faced with this situation, the Pope responds decisively:

"But there are differences!" Let us leave them aside, let us walk with what we have in common, which is enough: there is the Holy Trinity, there is Baptism. Let us go forward, with the power of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁸

This is why the Pope warns:

"... do not forget your origins, do not forget that the Charismatic Renewal is by its very nature ecumenical."⁴⁹

Also on the level of concrete collaboration, the Pope even goes so far as to suggest how:

"It would be very nice to organize seminars of life in the Spirit, together with other charismatic Christian realities."⁵⁰

Thank God this call of the Pope did not fall on deaf ears. On the horizon it seems that ecumenical conferences and meetings between charismatics of different denominations are multiplying on a worldwide scale.

Here too, at the national level, the 30th Anniversary of the Fraternal Dialogue between Catholics and Pentecostals organized by the Italian Charismatic Consultation and the 20th Anniversary of the International Dialogue between Catholics and Messianic Jews organized by the Community of Jesus were recently celebrated. This too is an integral part of the current of grace in Italy.⁵¹

This statement of the Pope allows us to better redefine to open our borders and geographical limits.

Another example was the recent world meeting in Rome between leaders of 79

⁴⁸ *Ditto*.

⁴⁹ POPE FRANCIS, *Audience* to Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships, Paul VI Hall, Vatican City, 31 October 2014.

⁵⁰ *Ditto*.

⁵¹ G. TRAETTINO, *op cit*.

charismatic and Pentecostal associations from 22 "Global2033" nations, in which a program of common commitment was defined to bring the proclamation of Christ to the world in the next ten years in view of the great Jubilee of the Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in 2033. The Holy Father Francis, in one of his messages, encouraged the initiative. The Dicastery for Evangelization in the Vatican has also sent a Letter of Support.

Therefore, at the end of my reflection, I express my deep hope that soon the vision of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal will shine again to be that *chance* that the Church and the world await.

This is also the hope that Pope Francis has for the future of the Charismatic Renewal: a Pentecostal grace for the whole Church.