

For a Future with Hope

WORKING FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH AND PARTICIPATING IN THE NEW EVANGELISATION. THIS IS THE CHARISM OF THE EMMANUEL COMMUNITY IN THE CHURCH TODAY.

Vatican Council II was a new Pentecost for the Church. Fifteen years later in the introduction to his apostolic exhortation on the role of the laity, John Paul II wrote: "In our times, the Church after Vatican II in a renewed outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost has come to a more lively awareness of her missionary nature and has listened again to the voice of her Lord who sends her forth into the world as "the universal sacrament of salvation".... The call is a concern not only of Pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world". (Christifideles Laici, no.2)

During the 20th Century, the Church has frequently used the word 'renewal': liturgical renewal, biblical renewal, ecumenical renewal, theological renewal, charismatic renewal, renewal for the laity, the Council... . These different renewals, distinct and coming one after another have become interdependent and, in our time, work deeply within the Church, revitalising it from within as part of the latest form of renewal, that of apostolate and mission, understood as a New Evangelisation. John Paul II, to whom this last idea is so dear, invites us at the beginning of the Third Millennium to "Go out into the deep" "Duc

in Altum". In effect the Church is progressively rediscovering that not only is it founded in Christ, once and for all, but that it is born time and again as a complete body, animated by the Holy Spirit (cf. *Dominum et vivificantem and Redemptoris missio*).

A New Pentecost for the Church

In this way we rediscover the true meaning of the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit, precisely stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It is the constantly renewed gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, as on the morning of Pentecost, by the Father and the Son. And this gift of the Spirit - within the mystery of the Church as sacrament - merely actualises Baptism as it plunges us into the freeing furnace of Trinitarian love and allows us to pass from death to life, as part of the body of Christ that reveals the Father's love. Outpouring of the Holy Spirit is also a spiritual experience that needs to be desired and welcomed, asked for and received: it allows the sovereign freedom of the Spirit to be discovered as a source of life. Saint Paul wrote already that the Spirit should be our life...

The Emmanuel Community was born from the desire of a few people, around Pierre

Goursat and Martine Laffitte, to make the Pentecost experience something concrete in their lives. No one said: "Let's begin a community!" but some said, "Let's live in community!". In doing this they began to welcome - in a very poor and simple way - the charism of Emmanuel. An encounter took place: an osmosis between God's grace and the cultural and sociological context in which these people lived.

- God's grace: because from the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, we see that the formation of the first Christian community, in Jerusalem, follows on immediately from Pentecost. 'Love one another as I have loved you'; 'May they be one, as you and I, we are one'. The phenomenon of the community is the sign and instrument - that is to say the sacrament - of how the gift of the Spirit takes shape in the personal lives of Christians and in the world.

- The cultural and sociological context in which these people lived. In France, at the beginning of the nineteen sixties, community meant something: from the Community of Lanza del Vasto, Jean Vanier's 'Arche', the 'Foyers de Charité' and some experiences around people like Marcel Légaut on one hand; to the hippy and utopian communities that sprung up in the wake of 1968 on the other. Deciding to live in community was a form of commitment so as to better live one's convictions as



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Living faith, hope and love gives faith hope and love to others

authentically as possible. Today, community existence is a challenge, but also a grace and an advantage.

Ten years after its foundation, the Emmanuel Community received its statutes from the Church. This happened first of all on a diocesan level and then on pontifical level. In the first case the Church recognised the catholic nature of what was being lived, while in the second case the Church recognised that this charism was a gift from God, a manifestation of the Spirit, for the good of the Universal Church.

In living these first years in a charismatic dynamism, but intent on being Catholic first and foremost, Pierre Goursat and those close to him wished to:

- 'incarnate' this renewal, in a community life with a special concern for the poor and for evangelisation.
- 'catholicise' this renewal, in the rediscovery of the Sacraments and the Liturgy, in a true devotion to Mary and in refusing any approach to ecumenism that was without clarity or tending towards fusion;
- 'deepen' this renewal, in a life of prayer and daily sanctification, in a straightforward formation that was at once theological, biblical, spiritual and historical, but still adapted to the condition of laypeople in the world.

Living daily the graces of the Emmanuel charism: adoration, compassion and

evangelisation means living the Mystery of Christ and of the Church. This is true whether one be a layperson, priest or consecrated in celibacy for the Kingdom. Mystery of Christ and of the Church: that means to say living the graces of baptism and confirmation 're-actualised' from within an experience of conversion to Christ and in the grace of a new and personal Pentecost that brings a fire that sets free, renews and sends on mission. It is in this experience of the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit that Emmanuel is a charism in the Church, Body of Christ. Saint Paul defines things thus: "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for the profit of all" (1 Cor. 12:7). For thirty years now, in its body and in its history, Emmanuel lives an astonishing and perhaps even prophetic encounter between the charismatic and institutional dimensions of the Mystery of the Church. One of the signs of its Catholic character is that from its beginnings the Community has been – and remains – a seedbed for the rooting, strengthening and development of many priestly vocations.

“Open your hearts to the gifts of the Spirit!”

CI n the Church, the charism of Emmanuel is to be received and made use of for announcing the Gospel to a world that is wounded and often broken; a world cut off from its points of reference and its roots. It

is in this world that the Church, today as yesterday, is on mission bearing Christ. It is not easy either to be and to remain Christian in an environment that is new and potentially de-structuring! At least in Europe, the Church suffers and grows older, but the Community can bring joy and hope here, simply through what it is and what it lives, in the enthusiasm of faith and in faithfulness to a particular and unique charism. One of the major traits of the Emmanuel charism is to trust in the future of the Church and of Christianity: living faith, hope and love gives faith, hope and love to others.

At Pentecost 2004, John Paul II invited the members of ecclesial movements and new communities to a gathering of prayer, so as to offer the testimony of a diversity of charisms in the Church. The Pope's idea was to renew the experience of Pentecost 1998 when, for the first time, 300,000 people associated with these new movements and communities gathered on St. Peter's Square in Rome. The Pope recalled: "That was an extraordinary Epiphany of Church unity, in the richness and diversity of charisms. The observation I made then, I repeat today: the ecclesial movements and new communities are a providential answer prompted by the Holy Spirit with regards to the current requirements of the New Evangelisation, for which we need Christians who are mature and Christian communities that are fully alive."

The Pope also explicitly greeted the members of Catholic Charismatic Renewal: "Thanks to it, many Christians have rediscovered Pentecost as a living reality, present in their daily lives... May the spirituality of Pentecost spread in the Church in the form of a new dynamism for prayer, holiness, communion and proclamation...I say to you: Open your hearts to the gifts of the Spirit! Welcome with thanks and obedience the charisms that the Spirit never ceases to grant! Do not forget that every charism is given for the common good, that is to say for the good of the Church!"

Playing its small part in the renewal of the Church and the New Evangelisation: this is the charism of the Emmanuel Community in the Church today. It is also its hope and its future.

Charles-Éric Hauguel 🙏