



# IUVENESCIT ECCLESIA (THE CHURCH REJUVENATES)

STUDY

# OVERVIEW

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## *Iuvenescit Ecclesia (The Church Rejuvenates)*

### INTRODUCTION

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This Study Circle Guide is designed to assist in the study of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's May 15th, 2016, Letter (entitled "Iuvenescit Ecclesia", *The Church Rejuvenates*) to the Bishops of the Catholic Church regarding the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the life and the mission of the Church. This letter is of special interest to Regnum Christi members, since the Regnum Christi Movement would qualify as one of the charismatic gifts to which the letter refers.

### ABBREVIATIONS

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We will use "IE" (*Iuvenescit Ecclesia*) when quoting from the letter followed by the number where the text can be found.

### SUMMARY

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This Study Circle Guide provides reflections on how the Holy Spirit works and continually builds up the Church by way of new charisms and in particular the phenomena of the new ecclesial movements. It is precisely these new charisms that are proving capable of awakening and nourishing inside and outside the Church a new life of faith proclaiming with confidence the message of the Gospel. (IE, 1) The Church's pastors have a responsibility in guiding the maturation process of these new charisms and guiding the communities of lay faithful called to live them while at the same time respecting what the Holy Spirit has inspired them to be and do within the life of the Church.

### CATEGORIES OF INTEREST

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Leadership Development; Human Formation; Apostolic Formation; Service Leadership; General.

### RECOMMENDED SESSIONS

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The Study Circle Guide contains 6 sessions. Session #1 corresponds to the Exhortation's introduction, while each subsequent session corresponds to each of the five chapters of the Exhortation.

Like most Church documents it can be on the more dense side. Your group may want to take more than 6 sessions to

go through it. The Study Circle Guide has enough material to spread over more than just 6 sessions.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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The letter *The Church Rejuvenates* ("*Iuvenescit Ecclesia*") was published by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith on May 15th, 2016, and was its first major document since the March 2013 election of Pope Francis. The document reflects on the relationship between the Church's bishops and the so-called "charismatic movements"—maybe better known as ecclesial movements, which emphasize new styles of evangelization. They are part of a wave of new communities which sprung up for the most part after Vatican II, though some were founded before the Council. They tend to place a strong emphasis on lay leadership and missionary zeal.

In the announcement of the new document, German Cardinal Gerhard Müller, the head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, said that it comes after "many years of elaboration," with his office first beginning a study of the subject in the year 2000. This is not the first document the Vatican has put out on the new movements. Other documents have been written by other Vatican Congregations, for example, the 2006 letter by the Congregation of the Laity called "Ecclesial Movements and New Communities: The Response of the Holy Spirit to Today's Challenge of Evangelization." Cardinal Mueller said it seemed necessary to offer pastors and the faithful a sure and encouraging consideration of the relationship between these gifts that have enlivened the life of the Church. There have been some problems with some of the lay movement groups setting themselves up as a sort of "counter-power to the bishops." Müller also stated, however, that the "bishops are not the commandants of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is." The Congregation's document is addressed to the world's Catholic bishops. It has five brief chapters and concludes with a note saying its contents were approved by Pope Francis on March 14th and formally signed on May 15th, 2016, by Cardinal Müller and Archbishop Luis Ladaria, a Jesuit who serves as the secretary of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. For more on the public announcement of the document: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/vaticans-doctrinal-congregation-calls-bishops-lay-movements-respect-each-other>



## PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

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1. To clarify the place of new charisms in the life of the Church, particularly expressed through the new ecclesial movements and associations.
2. To explain by way of Scripture and the teachings of the Magisterium how the hierarchical (institutional) gifts and charismatic (spiritual) gifts relate to each other and work together in the Church.
3. To help Church leaders identify the most adequate means for ecclesial recognition of these new charisms.
4. To offer specific criteria regarding how the two realities in the Church—hierarchical and charismatic—are to be seen, not in opposition, but in communion with the essential mission of Christ and His Church.

## NOTES

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# INTRODUCTION

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## *Iuvenescit Ecclesia (The Church Rejuvenates)*

### VOCABULARY

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**MULTIFORM ECCLESIAL GROUPS:** the new ecclesial movements take many forms and may include clergy, laity, and consecrated persons in their membership.

### CONSIDERATIONS

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Reiterating the spirit of Vatican II, *The Church Rejuvenates* begins by marveling at the work of the Holy Spirit in the edification of the Church. One could say that God has wished to grant to his Church at different times over its 2000+ year history, particular gifts to help strengthen and rejuvenate her community and life, centering her ever more on the task of being the leaven of charity in the world. For example, in the 4th century, the monastic movement began the rebuilding of Europe after the fall of Rome; the mendicant orders began in the 13th century in response to the decay and corruption of the Church; and the Counter Reformation movement of the 16th century was led by new religious communities like the Jesuits. All of these are clear signs of the action of the Holy Spirit in building up the Church.

In *Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis began his pontificate highlighting the great need in these times for an effective proclamation of the Gospel. The ecclesial movement's new charisms for the Church are awakening many to a renewed faith life, while answering the call for a new evangelization. And it is with gratitude to the Holy Spirit that this letter recognizes this. Going beyond the more traditional groups in the Church, the letter seeks to reflect on the new movements not just as voluntary associations but as "powerful dynamic realities" in the Church (IE, 2). They express well the ecclesial dynamic as the mystery of communion for the sake of mission and propose renewed forms of following Christ. According to their diverse charisms, the faithful can share in this experience in different states of life (lay faithful, ordained ministers, and consecrated persons). In this way, they manifest the multiform richness of the ecclesial communion. The strong capacity of such a spiritual family to gather people together constitutes a significant testimony to how the Church—as Pope Francis says—does not grow "through proselytism but through attraction." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 14).

St. John Paul II recognized that these new spiritual families

are a providential answer to modern challenges. The Holy Spirit is the impetus behind these new families and is capable of communicating in a persuasive manner the Gospel to the whole world. These new realities fill the heart of the Church with joy and gratitude and are called to relate positively with all of the other gifts present in ecclesial life.

The purpose of the document is spelled out in the concluding paragraph of the introduction saying that through this theological and ecclesiastical reflection, the letter wishes to examine the "proper exercise" of the different groups' charisms, or specific identities, in the wider ecclesial community. (IE, 3) Like St Paul in the early Church, the competent authorities need to establish precise rules for the exercise of charisms in the Church. He who has received the gift to lead in the Church has also the responsibility of keeping watch over the good exercise of the other charisms, in such a manner that all contribute to the good of the Church and to its evangelizing mission.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do we need to be thankful to the Holy Spirit for the new movements?
2. Why are the new movements more than just "voluntary associations"? (IE, 2)
3. How do the new movements answer a crucial need in the Church expressed by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*?
4. What are some of the motivations that the Church might have for writing this document, especially via the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith?

### GOING DEEPER IN THE REGNUM CHRISTI CHARISM

1. **DRAFT STATUTE #13:** "The lay members of the Regnum Christi Movement are Catholics who personally accept and live a divine vocation to live their baptismal commitments in the midst of temporal realities according to the Charism of Regnum Christi." (C.f. SRC 6, RCMH 57)
  - How would I explain that number to someone being exposed for the first time to Regnum Christi?



**NOTES**

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# CHAPTER I

## The Charisms According to the New Testament

### VOCABULARY

**HIERARCHICAL GIFTS:** the gifts granted by the Holy Spirit to ordained ministers of the Church that have to do with teaching and governance. It can also refer to the institutional dimension of Church structures.

**CHARISMATIC GIFTS:** the gifts granted by the Holy Spirit to certain individuals. These spiritual gifts belong to the Church herself and are ordered towards a more intense ecclesial life and unity (IE, 4). It refers more to the spiritual dimension of the working of the Holy Spirit in each person.

### CONSIDERATIONS

The word “Charism” is the transcription of the Greek word *chárisma*, which is found frequently in the Pauline letters. This term has a general sense of “generous gift” and is used in the New Testament only in reference to the divine gifts. However, in some passages of the New Testament, a more precise meaning is given, that is, the different distribution of gifts. For example, “There are different kinds of *charísmata*” (1 Cor 12:4); “we are in possession of different *charísmata*” (Rm 12:6); “Each of us has the proper *chárisma* from God, one of one kind and one of another” (1 Cor 7:7). These particular gifts are not like sanctifying grace—given to all Christians—but are individual gifts that the Spirit gives “as He wishes” (1 Cor 12:11). The charisms are recognized as a manifestation of the “multiform grace of God” (1 Pt 4:10). They are not, therefore, simply human capacities but truly manifestations of the Spirit” (IE, 4).

Most of the translations express the charisms as given for the benefit of all and this is also confirmed by the Fathers of the Church. They have a common usefulness, be they charisms of the word (of wisdom, of knowledge, of prophecy, of exhortation) or of action (of powers, of ministry, of governance). They also have a personal usefulness because their service of the common good favors the growth of charity in those who possess them. Yet if one lacks charity, even the highest charisms do not help their recipient (cf. 1 Cor 13:1–3). The primacy of charity is crucial to understanding why the Spirit grants the charism. It is always to build the community up in love (IE, 5).

Different lists of charisms appear as well ranging from ordinary gifts like teaching to exceptional gifts like healing but none of the lists are exhaustive. The Scriptural texts

do not present an opposition between the diverse charisms, for example, opposing a Church “of charity” and a Church “of the institution,” but rather they see a harmonic connection and complementarity between them. The Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* distinguishes the gifts as the *hierarchical* gifts and the *charismatic* gifts. Both have the same origin and the same purpose. They are gifts of God, of the Holy Spirit, of Christ, given to contribute, in diverse ways, to the edification of the Church. The same Spirit gives to the hierarchy of the Church the capacity to discern the authenticity of the charisms, to welcome them with joy and gratitude, to promote them generously, and to accompany them with vigilant paternity.

Such was the example of two pillars in the early Church, St Paul and St Peter. Their attitude is, above all, one of favorable welcoming; they are convinced of the divine origin of the charisms; they do not, however, consider these gifts as authorizing one to withdraw the obedience owed towards the ecclesial hierarchy, or as bestowing the right to an autonomous ministry. Paul shows himself to be aware of the drawbacks that a disordered exercise of the charisms can bring (1 Cor 14:19–28). In summary, from an examination of the Biblical texts regarding the charisms, it emerges that the New Testament presents affirmations of great importance that can help orient Church leadership and practice in light of the new movements.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does Charism mean and where do we find an explanation of the word in the New Testament?
2. To what end does the Holy Spirit grant new charisms to the Church?
3. What are the two categories of charismatic gifts that *Lumen Gentium* distinguishes? How would you explain the difference between them? How would you explain the relationship between them?
4. Why might there be conflict between these gifts and those who are granted them?
5. What was the experience of the early Church in dealing with new charisms?





## CHAPTER 2

### *The Relationship between the Hierarchical and the Charismatic Gifts in the Recent Magisterium*

#### VOCABULARY

**COESSENTIALITY OF GIFTS:** both the hierarchical and the charismatic gifts are equally essential to the life and mission of the Church. (IE, 10)

#### CONSIDERATIONS

There has never been a shortage of charisms in the Church to help enrich and renew her life throughout history. Yet a systematic reflection on those charisms has taken place only in the last century beginning with Pope Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis* (1943) and then later in the Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium* (1964). In presenting the gifts mediated through the Spirit, *Lumen Gentium* highlights their difference in unity precisely through the distinction between the diverse hierarchical and charismatic gifts. One recognizes that the Holy Spirit does not limit Himself to this as "it is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the People of God and enriches it with virtues," but, "He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church". (LG, 12) Even more striking is the emphasis the Council documents give to the providential character of these charisms affirming that such gifts are not to be considered "optional in the life of the Church; rather from the acceptance of these charisms, including those which are more elementary, there arises for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of men and the building up of the Church, in the freedom of the Holy Spirit" (*Decree Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3 (1965)). The authentic charisms, therefore, come to be considered as gifts of indispensable importance for the life and mission of the Church. Of course judgment as to their authenticity and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good" (cf. 1 Ts 5:12 and 19–21).

After the Second Vatican Council, one witnesses the growing vitality of the new movements, groups of the faithful, and ecclesial communities, together with the need to specify the place of consecrated life within the Church. The phenomena invited more dialogue, discussion, and

clarification from Church leaders in multiple forms and specifically from the Magisterium. For example, St. John Paul II, in his Magisterium, insisted particularly on the principle of the coessentiality of these gifts, between the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension. More recently, Pope Francis recalled "the harmony" that the Spirit creates between the diverse gifts and has called the new movements to a missionary openness, to the necessary obedience to pastors, and to maintain ecclesial communion, because it is within the community that the gifts the Father showers upon us bloom and flourish.

To conclude, it would be a serious mistake lacking comprehension of the action of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the Church to make the two realities— institutional and charismatic— independent one of the other, or to oppose one to the other as if they could subsist as two distant entities. Both elements, namely the institutional and the charismatic form one, even though complex, reality.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why would the Church see the new movements as providential? How has the Regnum Christi Movement been providential in your life?
2. What was the purpose of so many ecclesial documents on the new communities coming out after Vatican II?
3. Why should there be no opposition between the hierarchical gifts and the charismatic gifts in the Church?
4. Is there any real foundation for the idea that in the early Church there was an institutional Church of the Judeo-Christian type and a separate, charismatic Church of the Pauline type?

#### FURTHER READING

Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis*, 206–230. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 4, 7, 11, 12, 25, 30, 50; Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 8; *Decree Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3, 4, 30; *Decree Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4, 9.)

**ON NEW MOVEMENTS:** John Paul II, Message to the participants of the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements





## CHAPTER 3

### *Theological Foundation of the Relationship between the Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts*

#### VOCABULARY

**PNEUMATOLOGICAL REALIZATION OF THE INCARNATION:** (“pneuma” from the Greek means “Spirit”). It is the action and role of the Holy Spirit in the mystery of God becoming man. (IE, II)

#### CONSIDERATIONS

To fully understand the co-essential relationship between the institutional (hierarchical) and spiritual (charismatic) gifts in the Church, a review of the theology of the Trinity is necessary. The Church teaches that every gift of the Father comes from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit in the Church is bound to the mission of the Son, accomplished definitively in his Paschal Mystery. Jesus Himself connects the fulfilment of His mission to the sending of the Spirit upon the community of believers. (Cf. Jn 7:39) The action of God in history always implies the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit, who, in the words of St. Irenaeus are called “the two hands of the Father.” The bond between the institutional dimension, conferred with the sacramental grace of priestly Orders, and the charismatic dimension, freely distributed by the Holy Spirit, has its deepest roots, therefore, in the relationship between Christ, the incarnate Word, and the Holy Spirit, who is always the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. It must be repeated that the two divine missions mutually imply each other in every gift bestowed freely upon the Church; the mission of Jesus Christ already implies within itself the action of the Spirit.

This unity can also be seen in other ways, for example, with the sacraments. No sacrament can be conferred without the action of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the spiritual gifts, bestowed freely by the Spirit, “who blows where He wills” (Jn 3:8) and distributes his gifts “as He wishes” (1 Cor 12:11), are objectively related to the new life in Christ. St John Paul II affirmed that the true charisms cannot but tend towards the encounter with Christ in the sacraments. Drawing near to the Eucharist, Christ gives us the Spirit. The same Spirit, then, by way of his actions in believers, feeds the life in Christ, leading them anew to a more profound sacramental life, above all in the Eucharist. The hierarchical and charismatic gifts, therefore, appear united in reference to the intrinsic relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does our understanding of the Trinity lend to the discussion between the hierarchical gifts and the charismatic gifts in the Church?
2. How does the mission of Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit mutually imply the other? (IE, II)
3. The Holy Spirit leads us to a deeper relationship with Christ. In what way does a charism like Regnum Christi’s embody the action of the Spirit?
4. Discuss the words of John Paul II on the new charisms in light of your own experience in Regnum Christi: “the true charisms cannot but tend towards the encounter with Christ in the sacraments.”

#### FURTHER READING

St. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18 May 1986), 50, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 727–730, Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007), 12.

#### GOING DEEPER IN THE REGNUM CHRISTI CHARISM

1. How does this number of the RC statutes express some of the key points of Chapter 3 of the letter?

**DRAFT STATUTE #19:** “The lay members of the movement understand the spiritual life as a progressive configuration with Christ through the development of the life of the Blessed Trinity in them. Therefore, they live it as a dynamic relationship of love with God, and nurture it through the sacraments, the Word of God, the liturgy, prayer and the exercise of the moral and theological virtues. Their spiritual life permeates and harmonizes the other aspects of their lives.”

#### NOTES

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## CHAPTER 4

### *The Relationship between Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts in the Life and Mission of the Church*

#### VOCABULARY

**CHARISMATIC ENTITY:** a spiritual family that has been called to live a particular charism. A new ecclesial movement would qualify as one such entity.

#### CONSIDERATIONS

The unity between these two dimensions of gifts in the Church are also seen in the Church as a mystery of communion. It is the Holy Spirit that brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful. He brings them into intimate union with Christ, so that He is the principle of the Church's unity. Baptism—in close union with Confirmation—is the entrance to and foundation of the communion of the Church. Together with the Eucharist, these sacraments of initiation call each person to become members of Christ and within the ecclesial communion they are united in Christ, as members of each other. Communion is always a vital double participation: the incorporation of Christians into the life of Christ and the diffusion of charity itself amongst the whole faithful in this world and the next. Unity with Christ and in Christ and unity between Christians in the Church. The charismatic gifts given to individuals actually belong to the Church herself and are ordered towards a more intense ecclesial life and unity.

We read in the conciliar documents that among the various gifts given to the Church to sanctify her members and to fulfill her mission in the world, “a special place” is held by “the grace of the Apostles to whose authority the Spirit Himself subjected even those who were endowed with charisms.” (LG, 7) Jesus Christ Himself willed that there be hierarchical gifts in order to ensure the continuing presence of His unique salvific mediation: “the Apostles were enriched by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them (cf. Acts 1:8; 2: 4; Jn 20:22–23), and they passed on this spiritual gift to their helpers by the imposition of hands (cf. 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6–7)”. (LG, 7) For example, it is the responsibility of the Bishop and priests, who act in *persona Christi*, to incorporate new members into the Body of Christ by a heavenly regeneration through baptism and later the other sacraments. Finally, by their wisdom and prudence Christ directs and guides the people of the New Testament in their pilgrimage toward eternal happiness. In short, the hierarchical gifts proper to the sacrament of Holy Orders, in its diverse grades, are

given so that the Church as communion may never fail to offer grace in the sacraments, proclaim the truth of the Gospel, and properly guide the flock.

If the hierarchical gifts give us access to sacramental grace, the charismatic or spiritual gifts are freely distributed by the Holy Spirit, so that sacramental grace may be fruitful in Christian life in different ways and at every level. Because these charisms are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church, through their diverse richness, the people of God are able fully to live their evangelical mission, discerning the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. In this way, they themselves become a gift of love for others and authentic witnesses to the Gospel before all mankind.

The charismatic gifts are given to individual persons and can even be shared by others in such ways as to continue in time a precious and effective heritage, serving as a source of a particular spiritual affinity among persons. We see this clearly in the history of the Church through so many religious communities and associations of every kind and more recently the new ecclesial movements. These new communities show how a determinate founding charism can gather the faithful together and help them to live fully their Christian vocation and proper state of life in service of the mission of the Church.

It is important to distinguish among the spiritual gifts freely distributed by the Holy Spirit that many are received and lived out by persons within the Christian community who have no need of particular regulations. When, however, a gift presents itself as a “founding” or “originating charism,” this requires a specific recognition so that the richness it contains may be adequately articulated within the ecclesial communion and faithfully transmitted over time. Here emerges the decisive task of discernment that belongs to the ecclesial authorities. Recognizing the authenticity of a charism is not always an easy task. Nonetheless, it is a dutiful service that pastors are required to fulfill. The faithful have the right to be informed by their pastors about the authenticity of charisms and the trustworthiness of those who present themselves as recipients thereof. These authorities should, to this end, bear in mind the unforeseeable nature of the charisms inspired by the Holy Spirit and evaluate them according to the rule of faith with the intention of building up the Church. This process is time-consuming and requires an adequate



period to pass in order to authenticate the charisms, which must be submitted to serious discernment until they are recognized as genuine. In this whole itinerary of verification, the authority of the Church must benevolently accompany the new spiritual family.

In this context, it is useful to remember certain criteria, as set out by the Church's Magisterium in recent years, for the discernment of the charismatic gifts with reference to ecclesial groups. These criteria are intended to help the recognition of the authentically ecclesial nature of the charisms.

1. The Primacy of the vocation of every Christian to holiness. Every spiritual family that is born from sharing in an authentic charism must always be at the service of holiness in the Church.
2. Commitment to spreading the Gospel. Authentic charisms must be marked by conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals.
3. Profession of the Catholic Faith. Every spiritual family must be a place of education in the faith in its fullness and obedience to the Church's Magisterium.
4. Witness to a real communion with the whole Church. This requires an adherence to the Pope and with the local Bishop embracing their doctrinal teachings and pastoral initiatives.
5. Recognition of and esteem for the reciprocal complementarity of other charismatic elements in the Church that is the reciprocal cooperation with others in the life of the Church.
6. Acceptance of moments of trial in the discernment of charisms. To expect and embrace a period of purification in authenticating the charism.
7. Presence of spiritual fruits such as charity, joy, peace, and a certain human maturity among its members and the desire to live the Church's life more intensely.
8. The social dimension of evangelization needs to be present. Engaging the community in the service of others bringing about conditions that are more just and loving within society.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Explain how a new Movement like Regnum Christi supports communion as (a) the incorporation of Christians into the life of Christ, and (b) the diffusion

of charity itself amongst the whole faithful in this world and the next.

2. What are the specific charisms that the ordained ministers of the Church receive?
3. If the hierarchical gifts of the Spirit give us access to sacramental grace, what do the charismatic or spiritual gifts give for us? (IE, 15) How have you experienced that in your own life?
4. How might Regnum Christi fulfill the 8 criteria for an authentic charism in the Church? (IE, 18)

### FURTHER READING

Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 1, 7, 12, 21, 28, 39–42. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 24 and 30; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 130 and 174–175.

### GOING DEEPER IN THE REGNUM CHRISTI CHARISM

1. Some might guess that obedience would be the first criteria of discernment of authenticity of a new charism; however, rather, the first criteria is holiness of life. *The Church Rejuvenates* makes it clear that the primacy of the vocation of every Christian is to holiness. "Every entity that is born from sharing in an authentic charism must always be at the service of holiness in the Church and, therefore, of the increase of charity and an authentic movement towards the perfection of love." (IE, 18) The recognition of the abundant fruits of holiness of life found in these movements is well known in many Church circles, but perhaps it is best expressed by the Pontifical Council for the Laity:

"How we marvel at the quantity and quality of the fruits produced in the Church by the new charisms! The gospel principle 'you shall know them by their fruits' (Mt 7:16) remains true today. Thanks to these charisms, many people have met Christ for the first time and believed in him or have returned to the Church and the sacraments after years of being away. So many people have gone from being Christians in name only to believers who are convinced and committed. How many fruits of authentic holiness of life! How many families that have been reconstituted in mutual love and fidelity! How many vocations to the priesthood, consecrated life, and new expressions of lay life according to the evangelical counsels! These new





## CHAPTER 5

### *The Ecclesial Practice of the Relationship between Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts*

#### CONSIDERATIONS

For proper ecclesial practice in the establishment of good relations between the diverse gifts in the Church, a real spirit of reciprocity is required. First, the integration of the new spiritual family within the pastoral life of the particular Church is essential. This requires that the diverse groups recognize the authority of the pastors in the Church as a reality within Christian life itself, and that sincerely desiring to be recognized, received, and eventually purified, they place themselves at the service of the ecclesial mission. On the other hand, Church leaders who are entrusted with the discernment process of the charism need to be open to what the Holy Spirit is inspiring in the given spiritual family and recognize its contribution as an authentic resource for the good of all.

On the one hand, the new charisms are given to the whole Church and need to come through a process of discernment and final approval by the proper ecclesiastical authority. On the other hand, the dynamism of these gifts must actualize itself in the service of a concrete diocese, which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of his priests. The new spiritual families must not consider themselves as completely autonomous from the particular Church; rather, they should enrich and serve her precisely through the gifts given and that may even go beyond the confines of a single diocese.

The fruitfulness of the new charisms in the Church can be seen in the fulfilment of those duties that arise from Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, and Holy Orders. This fruitfulness can be seen in the different states of the Christian life.

- First, it is necessary to recognize the goodness of the different charisms that give rise to the ecclesial movements between all the faithful, called to make fruitful the sacramental grace, under the leadership of their legitimate pastors. The charisms represent an authentic opportunity to live and develop one's proper Christian vocation. These charismatic gifts enable the faithful to live the common priesthood of the people of God. Among those that are particularly significant are those that strengthen marriage and family life.
- Ordained ministers may also find through their participation in a given charism support for their own vocation and mission. The same could be said for

seminarians studying for the priesthood. Finally, the pastoral help that a priest will be able to offer to any ecclesial family, depending on the group's own proper characteristics, must always be in conformity with his own work and in obedience to his Bishop.

- Consecrated life is a prime example of how a charism can help both the lay faithful and the priest live their own proper vocation. The consecrated person is called in a unique way to a special conformity to Christ, chaste, poor, and obedient as a stable form of life through the profession of the evangelical counsels. The faithful, joyful, and charismatic witness of consecrated life thus brings about a reciprocal enrichment for the entire Church.
- Finally, celibacy, particularly for priests, is clearly aligned with the charismatic gifts and more than just something "functional" it is really a special way of conforming oneself to Christ's own way of life in which the full offering of oneself in relation to the mission conferred by the sacrament of Holy Orders is realized.

*The Church Rejuvenates* is intended to clarify the place of the new ecclesial movements in the light of the relationship between the institutional and spiritual gifts granted to the Church by the Holy Spirit. It is hoped this document will contribute to the concrete identification of the most adequate means of their ecclesial recognition. From the point of view of the relationship between charismatic and institutional dimensions, it is necessary to observe two fundamental criteria that must be seen as inseparable:

1. To respect the particular charism of the specific ecclesial movement or group, "avoiding juridical straitjackets that deaden the novelty which is born from the specific experience." (IE, 23) In such a way, one avoids the danger that the various charisms might be considered as unimportant to the life of the Church.
2. To respect for the fundamental ecclesial regimen so as to favor the effective insertion of the charismatic gifts into the life of both the particular and universal Church. Thus, any danger that these new spiritual families might be considered in some way as running parallel to the ecclesial life or not ordered in relation to the hierarchical gifts is avoided.



**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. 1. In order for the Church family to “get along” what is required on the side of the Church leaders and what is required on the side of the new movements?
2. 2. What are some of the ways the members of Regnum Christi can be more aware of our need to be present in the local life of the Church and avoiding perhaps a spirit of independence?
3. 3. Name some particular ways that charisms can be fruitful in the life of the Church.
4. 4. Discuss your own experience in the Regnum Christi movement of engaging with different vocations in one spiritual family: lay, priestly, and consecrated.

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**FURTHER READING:**

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 888–892; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution; *Lumen Gentium*, 10, 23, 43, 62. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 27–30, 68.

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**GOING DEEPER IN THE REGNUM CHRISTI CHARISM**

1. Read and Discuss RC Handbook 11–12: “The only justification of the Movement’s existence lies in serving the Church and her shepherds and in serving people in the Church....Regnum Christi in all simplicity wants to contribute its energy, spirituality, and methodology which bear the ever new seal of the Holy Spirit. It wishes to make its contribution to the great mission of the Church in deep communion and a cooperative spirit with the other living forces in the Church....it is a gift the Church has examined and accepted in its bosom as an authentic charism.”

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