



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO LEADERS OF RENEWAL IN THE SPIRIT**

Saturday, 4 April 1998

1. I cordially greet you, the leaders of *Renewal in the Spirit* in Italy and, through you, I greet all the Italian charismatic communities, extending an affectionate thought to those who will participate in the solemn convention on the Holy Spirit, organized by you in Rimini from 30 April to 3 May next.

We are meeting in the year that, within the framework of preparation for the Great Jubilee, has been dedicated to the Holy Spirit, to invite Christians to rediscover the presence and wonderful works of the Spirit in the history of salvation, in the life of the Church, in the world and in the life of every disciple of Jesus. It is a year that you members of the *Renewal* are called to live with special intensity and commitment.

The Catholic charismatic movement is one of the many fruits of the Second Vatican Council, which, like a new Pentecost, led to an extraordinary flourishing in the Church's life of groups and movements particularly sensitive to the action of the Spirit. How can we not give thanks for the precious spiritual fruits that the *Renewal* has produced in the life of the Church and in the lives of so many people? How many lay faithful - men, women, young people, adults and the elderly - have been able to experience in their own lives the amazing power of the Spirit and his gifts! How many people have rediscovered the faith, the joy of prayer, the power and beauty of the Word of God, translating all this into generous service in the Church's mission! How many lives have been profoundly changed! For all this today, together with you, I wish to praise and thank the Holy Spirit.

2. You are an ecclesial movement. Therefore, all those criteria of ecclesiality of which I wrote in *Christifideles laici* (cf. n. 30) must be expressed in your lives, especially faithful adherence to the Church's Magisterium, filial obedience to the Bishops and a spirit of service towards local Churches and parishes.

In this regard, I have learned that recently the Permanent Council of the Italian Episcopal Conference approved the Statutes of your movement and wished to present the *Renewal* as "a comforting experience of Christian life, worthy of

being indicated for its fervent encouragement of numerous ecclesial communities". Very eloquent words, which confirm how the path you have chosen is one of communion and close collaboration with the Bishops. And, in today's world, confused by extreme relativism and subjectivism, this is the best guarantee of remaining faithful to the Truth.

One of the Church's most urgent tasks today is the formation of the lay faithful. "The fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfil one's mission" (*Christifideles laici*, n. 58).

Therefore, this must be one of your priorities. In today's secularized world, which offers models of life devoid of spiritual values, it is a task which is ever more urgent. Faith dies when it is reduced to custom, to habit, to a purely emotional experience. It needs to be cultivated, helped to grow, at both the personal and the community level. I know that Renewal in the Spirit does all it can to respond to this need, always seeking new forms and ways that are better suited to the requirements of people today. I thank you for what you do and I ask you to persevere in your commitment.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, welcome the Holy Spirit into your hearts with the docility with which the Virgin Mary welcomed him. Always allow yourselves to be surprised by God and shun complacency with his gifts. May the Spirit, the interior Teacher, strengthen you in faith and make you ever more conformed to Christ. In this world, so often permeated with sadness and uncertainty, may you have the courage to co-operate with the Spirit in a new, great outpouring of love and hope for all mankind.

I hope that your convention in Rimini, in this year dedicated to the Holy Spirit, may become a milestone on your journey towards the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. May the fire of the Spirit be kindled in the hearts of all who will take part in it!

I conclude with the words of St Paul: "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Phil 1:9- 11).

I expect you all in St Peter's Square on 30 May next for my meeting with ecclesial movements and new communities. I am certain that you will not miss such an important gathering!

To the whole *Renewal in the Spirit* in Italy, my affectionate paternal Blessing.