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Presentation of the Letter to Bishops, "The Church rejuvenates", on the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts for the life and mission of the Church

Vatican City, 14 June 2016 – *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* (The Church rejuvenates) is the title of the Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to bishops of the Catholic Church on the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the life and mission of the Church, published today and presented this morning in the Holy See Press Office by Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, P.S.S., prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, Msgr. Piero Coda, member of the International Theological Commission and Professor Maria del Carmen Aparicio Valls, lecturer in the faculty of theology of the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, and member of the Theresian Institute.

"Indeed, faced with the fact that everything is irremediably destined to age and to come to an end, humanity has always sought something or someone to help remain young", Cardinal Müller began. "And this is the challenge to be faced by every institution that wishes to last in history: to remain young as time passes, that is, to renew itself, remaining itself, without changing or adulterating its identity. The Gospel too indicates, in this respect, a "new wine", that must be stored in "new wineskins". Christian faith, when it is truly welcomed and protected, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, has this unique capacity to bring new humanity and to rejuvenate."

"This is the right perspective for understanding the Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church, *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* (IE) on the relationship between hierarchical gifts and charismatic gifts, which are constitutively placed at the service of the life and the ecclesial mission. Vatican Council II proposed this beautiful truth: 'The Church, which the Spirit guide in way of all truth and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns us with His fruits. By the power of the Gospel He makes the Church keep the freshness of youth. Uninterruptedly He renews it and leads it to perfect union with its Spouse'. The emergence of many new groups, associations and ecclesial movements, as well as many new Institutes of consecrated life, after Vatican Council II, has made us rediscover in a concrete way the ecclesial consequences of this Conciliar affirmation. In this respect, it should be noted that, 'although there has never been a shortage of different charisms arising in the temporal course of ecclesial history', in the post-Conciliar period we have witnessed an unexpected and explosive flowering of such realities, as never before in the history of the Church."

The document presented, which has reached its definitive form after almost fifteen years of re-working, the

cardinal revealed, is intended to form part of such a consideration on charisms, as an point of reference that identifies certain fundamental basic points with the aim of relaunching this reflection in a correct and appropriate way. "In particular", he added, "it appeared necessary to offer to pastors and faithful a sure and encouraging consideration of the relationship between these gifts, which have enlivened the life of the Church, especially with the emergence in the recent past, of movements and new ecclesial communities."

"The purpose of this document is that of favouring, through a deeper awareness of the essential elements relating to hierarchical and charismatic gifts, and going beyond any form of sterile opposition or juxtaposition, their orderly communion, relationship and synergy, with a view to a renewed ecclesial missionary zeal, and that 'pastoral conversion' to which Pope Francis continually calls us."

Cardinal Ouellet went on to recall that the ecclesiology of communion that emerged from Vatican Council II, which "made possible the notable development of episcopal collegiality and synodality, as well as the extraordinary flowering of the new charismatic realities for the service of the evangelising mission of the Church. Ecclesial movements and the new communities are an expression of this. ... Overcoming the mostly conflictual pre-Conciliar relationship, due to the decline of Christian values in modern societies, the Church has become more aware of being sent not to reign in this world, but to serve as a 'sacrament of salvation' a world that, following the transformation of modernity, is now independent of her. However, this more dynamic and constructive perspective, promoted by Conciliar ecclesiology, requires a profound theology of ecclesial communion, of which the Council provided various key concepts such as *koinonía*, sacrament and collegiality, but not yet an overall, systematically integrated vision. The document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that we are presenting today adds some brief considerations in this direction, like precious stones that belong to a larger mosaic to be completed in the future."

The emergence of difference charisms has never faltered during centuries-long ecclesial history, and yet it is only in recent times that a systematic reflection on it has developed", he observed. "However, these charisms, from the most extraordinary to the simplest and most widespread, since they are above all adapted to the needs of the Church and destined to respond to them, must be welcomed with gratitude and consolation."

"The post-Conciliar Magisterium, in the wake of *Lumen Gentium* and to respond to the growing vitality of new movements, groups of faithful and ecclesial communities, along with the need to specify the collocation of consecrated life within the Church, has led to a multiplication of interventions in this regard", continued the prefect for the Congregation for Bishops, recalling that St. John Paul II coined the principle of the 'co-essentiality' of these gifts, which was reaffirmed and explored further by Benedict XVI and by Pope Francis when he reiterated that this gifts have the same origin in the Holy Spirit, which actuates the 'harmony' between them, ensuring their ecclesial integration and their missionary openness."

"Now, if such a principle does not mean 'opposition' or 'juxtaposition' between them, their relationship remains to be clarified with respect tot their own identity and on the basis of the theological foundation that supports them. ... The missions of Christ as the Word incarnate and of the Holy Spirit, as ecclesial extension, are thus complementary and inseparable, just as hierarchical and charismatic gifts are in the edification of the Church, the Body of Christ."

In this context, the document "does not neglect the other constitutive gifts of the Church, such as the sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, in strict union with Confirmation, is the door to and the foundation of communion in the Church. These sacraments are 'constitutive of Christian life, and the hierarchical and charismatic gifts rest upon them. These additional gifts, both hierarchical and charismatic, have as their first function the consolidation of the theological life of faith, hope and charity, as well as the sacramental practice of the faithful. Pastors are ordained precisely to enable the children of God to grow through the Word of God and the sacraments, while charismatic gifts, both major and minor, edify the community, strengthen its witness and broaden its missionary zeal."

Consecrated life illustrates the permanence of the charismatic dimension in its various forms throughout the centuries", he continued. "While the form of life according to the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and

obedience soon emerged under the influence of the Person of Jesus and his Paschal mystery, as a response of love to His personal call, the cultural expressions of this form of life have multiplied and diversified almost infinitely throughout the centuries, giving rise in our times to ecclesial movements and new communities."

The cardinal noted that consecrated life, in its various forms, is generally appreciated all over the world for its functional value, that is for its social service in the community, but "not infrequently its fundamental value of radical witness to God's gratuitous love incarnate in Jesus Christ, and embraced in the spousal form of the profession of vows, is forgotten. Recovering this fundamental relevance of consecrated life, aside from its functional utility, would seem to me one of the urgent tasks of Christian and religious formation, to revive the tension towards holiness and the missionary conversion of the Church."

"Emphasising this privileged expression of the charismatic dimension of the Church does not mean underestimating its many other expressions that manifest themselves in movements, associations, apostolic activities, the witness of the laity in the world and of ministers qualified for specific services in the areas of preaching, charity, education, communication, and so on", he remarked. "For this purpose, the document summarises the criteria for the discernment of charismatic gifts in eight points, among which we note their ecclesial integration, or rather the 'ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God's holy and faithful people for the good of all'."

Cardinal Ouellet reaffirmed that "the ecclesiology of Vatican Council II acknowledged the equality of hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the Church, opening up a new missionary phase, founded on the witness of communion and openness to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. Despite the tensions inherent in this new integration, the fruits are far superior to the difficulties: among these we note the irreversible recognition of the ecclesial meaning of the charisms and, as a result, the promotion of new relations between subjects of hierarchical and charismatic gifts for the life and mission of the Church". He concluded, "If anyone were still to doubt the relevance of the charismatic dimension in the Church, I would invite them to reflect on the fact that fifty years after Vatican Council II, the Holy Spirit and the cardinals chose a supreme pastor who comes from the charismatic area of the Church."
