

Prayers for healing

An international colloquium on “Prayers for healing and Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church” was held in the Pilgrim’s Home at the sanctuary of Our Lady of Divine Love in Rome from 10 to 13 November 2001. The colloquium was promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in collaboration with International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), the body that coordinates the activities of the communities of Catholic Charismatic Renewal at the world level.

The aim of the meeting was to examine, in a spirit of dialogue with the complex and variegated reality of Catholic charismatic communities, the *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on 14 September 2000. The document’s main features were described by the secretary of the Congregation, Bishop Tarcisio Bertone. The question of prayer for healing was then tackled by a series of reports that examined it from different points of view. The biblical aspect of healing in the life of Jesus and in the early Church was discussed by Father Albert Vanhoye, SJ, and the historical aspect of healing in the tradition of the Church by Father Fidel Gonzales, MCCI. Msgr. Jacques Perrier, bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, emphasized the actuality of this question in the life of the Church, while the link between healing and sacraments was discussed by Msgr. Francesco Pio Tamburino, OSB, secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The theme was examined in an ecumenical perspective by Mr. Charles Whitehead, member of ICCRS. The canonical aspects of the ministry of healing linked to the role of the laity were tackled by Prof. Libero Gerosa. The possible “risks, abuses and deviations” of healing were analyzed by Father Mihaly Szentmartoni, SJ, while Msgr. Albert de Monléon, OP, made a number of observations about the ministry of healing within Catholic charismatic communities.

A series of personal testimonies illustrated the experience of healing within the Catholic charismatic communities, in the context of the evangelization of the various geographical cultures and areas. A round table followed, at which discussion focused on the practice of exorcism and the spiritual, physical and psychological aspects of healing. The colloquium’s intensive programme also provided slots for debate, work groups, moments of common prayer.

The colloquium was opened and closed by the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Cardinal James Francis Stafford, and by Mr. Allan Panozza, president of International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services. Various representatives of the offices of the Roman Curia, some bishops, a select group of theologians, laity, priests, men and women religious, as well as exponents of the Catholic charismatic communities, participated in the colloquium. Some Lutheran pastors and Anglican priests were also present as ecumenical observers.

The historic leaders of the Catholic charismatic communities, who were meeting together after an interval of thirty years, gave proof of their willingness to listen and engage in dialogue; their participation was cordial and they took a close interest in the proceedings. Points of discussion, and some critical objections about the canon-law provisions of the *Instruction*, were also raised. But a position of sterile dialectic and opposition never prevailed.

The publication of the proceedings of the colloquium will be handled by the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services.