

ECCLESIAL MATURITY

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Mother of God Prayer Meeting
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FOUNDATIONAL TEXT

By their nature, charisms are communicative and give rise to that "spiritual affinity" among persons" (CL#24) and to that friendship in Christ which is the origin of "movements." The passage from the original charism to the movement happens through the mysterious attraction that the founder holds for all those who become involved in his spiritual experience. In this way movements officially recognized by ecclesiastical authority offer themselves as forms of self-fulfillment and as facets of the one Church.

Their birth and spread has brought to the Church's life an unexpected newness which is sometimes even disruptive. This has given rise to questions, uneasiness and tensions; at times it has led to presumptions and excesses on the one hand, and on the other, to numerous prejudices and reservations. It was a testing period for the movements' fidelity, and important occasion for verifying the authenticity of their charisms.

Today a new stage is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity. This does not mean that all problems have been solved. Rather, it is a challenge. A road to take. The Church expects from you the "mature" fruits of communion and commitment.¹

¹ Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II), "Address of His Holiness John Paul II on the occasion of the Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and the New Communities. Rome, 30 May 1998," in *Movements in the Church. Proceedings of the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, Rome, 27-29 May 1998, The Laity Today* (Vatican City: Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, 1999), 222. **COMMUNION IN AND WITH THE CHURCH**

SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL MATURITY

A. The Trinity, Foundation of Communion

B. Some Biblical Principles

Eph 2:18 "Because through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."

1 Jn 1:3-4 "What we have seen and have heard we proclaim as well to you, so that you to may have communion with us and our communion (is) with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we write these things to you so that our joy may be complete."

Thus, the Church stands forth as "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." (*Lumen Gentium*, #4, quoting St. Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer* 23)

After being lifted up on the cross and glorified, the Lord Jesus poured forth His Spirit as He had promised, and through the Spirit He has called and gathered together the people of the New Covenant, who are the Church, into a unity of faith, hope and charity, as the Apostle teaches us: "There is one

body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism."(6) For "all you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus."(7) It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the Church as a whole, who 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. The distribution of graces and offices is His work too,(8) enriching the Church of Jesus Christ with different functions "in order to equip the saints for the work of service, so as to build up the body of Christ." (9) (Unitatis Redintegratio, #2,2)

C. Application of these Principles in Recent Church Teaching (Development of Doctrine)

Canon Law (#204, 208, 231)

Lumen Gentium (#30-31, 33)

Apostolicam Actuositatem (#2, 6, 9-14)

Catechism of the Catholic Church (#813-822)

813: The Church is one because of her source: 'the highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.' The Church is one because of her founder: for 'the Word made flesh, the prince of peace, reconciled all men to God by the cross,... restoring the unity of all in one people and one body.' The Church is one because of her 'soul': 'It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity.' Unity is of the essence of the Church: 'What an astonishing mystery! There is one Father of the universe, one Logos of the universe, and also one Holy Spirit, everywhere one and the same; there is also one virgin become mother, and I should like to call her "Church."' (CCC, 813)

Christifideles Laici (Part II, "All Branches of a Single Vine: The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Life of the Church as Communion")

Precisely with this in mind the Synod Fathers said: "The secular character of the lay faithful is not therefore to be defined only in a sociological sense, but most especially in a theological sense. The term secular must be understood in light of the act of God the creator and redeemer, who has handed over the world to women and men, so that they may participate in the work of creation, free from the influence of sin and sanctify themselves in marriage or the celibate life, in a family, in a profession, and in the various activities of society." (#15)

Addresses of John Paul II to World Congress of Ecclesial Movements, Rome May 27-29, 1998

Novo Millennio Ineunte

(#20) Only the experience of silence and prayer offers the proper setting for the growth and development of a true, faithful and consistent knowledge of that mystery which finds its culminating expression in the solemn proclamation by the Evangelist Saint John: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (1:14).

(#32) This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer. The Jubilee Year has been a year of more intense prayer, both personal and communal. But we well know that prayer cannot be taken for granted. We have to learn to pray: as it were learning this art ever anew from the lips of the Divine Master himself, like the first disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray!" (Lk 11:1). Prayer develops that conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends: "Abide in me and I in you" (Jn 15:4). This reciprocity is the very substance and soul of the Christian life, and the condition of all true pastoral life. Wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, this reciprocity opens us, through Christ and in Christ, to contemplation of the Father's face. Learning this Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer and living it fully, above all in the liturgy, the summit and source of the Church's life,¹⁷ but also in personal experience, is the secret of a truly vital Christianity, which has no reason to fear the future, because it returns continually to the sources and finds in them new life.

(#38) If in the planning that awaits us we commit ourselves more confidently to a pastoral activity that gives personal and communal prayer its proper place, we shall be observing an essential principle of the Christian view of life: the primacy of grace. There is a temptation which perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with his grace, and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the Kingdom. But it is fatal to forget that "without Christ we can do nothing" (cf. Jn 15:5).

COMMITMENT IN AND WITH THE CHURCH PASTORAL COMMITMENT

A. Intellectual Efforts at Self-Understanding and Communication

The basic principle: understand what God is doing (spiritual experience and knowledge of the Tradition)

The theology of the movements ²

Joseph Ratzinger: Movements share in the universal apostolic responsibility of the successor of Peter.

Angelo Scola: Movements are a particular realization of Church, which is itself a "movement." "Movement" means mission, apostolate, and identity is in mission; the particular and the universal are aspects of the same Church.

Albert de Monléon: The movements are places of a transfigured humanity which is founded on a personal encounter with the Living Christ revivifying the grace of baptism.

The theology of the laity and its mission ³

Dionysius and the threefold hierarchy (OT - NT - Heaven)

Giovanni Magnani: The whole Church has a "lay character":

[W]e feel the "layperson" absorbs the whole theological significance of the christifidelis, seeing the term "layperson" not as something more or something less than the ratio of the christifidelis but as the only practical area (distinguished by its own specific charisms and ministries) where his relationship to the world and to the lay condition indicated in it can come to complete fulfillment. It is a permanent, practical and stable way that we see indicated in the conciliar affirmation of a proprium (or "distinctive character," "although not an exclusive one") of the laity which finds its full justification here. ⁴

CL #55: The lay state of life has its distinctive feature in its secular character. It fulfils an ecclesial service in bearing witness to, and in its own way recalling for priests, women and men religious, the significance of the earthly and temporal realities in the salvific plan of God. In turn, the ministerial priesthood represents in different times and places, the permanent guarantee of the sacramental presence of Christ, the Redeemer. The religious state bears witness to the eschatological character of the Church, that is, the straining toward the Kingdom of God that is prefigured and in some way anticipated and experienced even now through the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

All the states of life, whether taken collectively or individually in relation to the others, are at the service of the Church's growth. While different in expression, they are deeply united in the Church's "mystery of communion" and are dynamically coordinated in its unique mission.

B. Practical Efforts at Mediating the Lay Vocation and the Mission of the Movements

Cooperation with other lay movements and with the bishop

Developing a theoretical understanding and practical implementation of Christian marriage as the place where, pre-eminently, the domains of creation and redemption meet

Show forth the fruits of communal living for families and celibates

The grace of the "encounter with Christ" must animate: liturgy, family life, theology, social concerns, inculturation

²See the studies in Pontifical Council for the Laity, ed., *Movements in the Church, Laity Today* (Vatican City: Pontifical Council for the Laity, 1999).

³Giovanni Magnani, "Does the So-Called Theology of the Laity Posses a Theological Status?" in *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives. Twenty-five Years Later (1962-1987)*, ed. René Latourelle (New York: Paulist, 1988).

⁴Magnani, p.621-22.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to me, personally, to be "committed to the Church"?
2. Why does the Pope insist that the movements and communities in the Church serve the Church best by being faithful to their founding grace and sharing with the Church from this grace.?
3. How can we at Mother of God Community enter more deeply into this grace and learn to share it?
4. What are the principles that should guide us in learning how to balance:
 - a. Care for the family and care for the Community
 - b. Participating in an active way in the life of the Community and sharing in the life of the Church at large?
5. What are the obstacles to finding this balance? List the following in the order in which you think they are significant and add others that you consider important.
 1. A sense of betrayal (by the former leadership, by the community in general, by friends, by the Church, by God)
 2. A sense of fatigue, a lack of hope, a lack of zeal for holiness.
 3. A growing concern for other aspects of life: the family, the parish, friends, work, etc.
 4. A lack of focus: not enough prayer and Scripture, too much time on distractions, etc.