

FIRST INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF LEADERS OF CHARISMATIC COMMUNITIES

ORGANIZED BY CHARIS

(Recife – Saturday 18 January 2020)

ADDRESS BY CARDINAL K. FARRELL TO THE BISHOPS

“CHARIS: Nature and functions”

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I am pleased to be here with you today to reflect on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, an ecclesial reality so important for the universal Church. I speak to you as Prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, which is the Dicastery of the Roman Curia entrusted with the competence and juridical authority to “accompany the life and development of the aggregations of the faithful and the lay movements” and to “erect those which have an international character and approve or recognize their statutes” (*Statutes of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life*, Art. 7). That is why the Pope has entrusted our Dicastery with the supervision of the process that led to the canonical erection of CHARIS.

1. CHARIS. A brief description

Let me begin by explaining the nature, function, and mode of operation of CHARIS. In order to do this, I will try to answer three basic questions.

First question: What is CHARIS? As the Statutes say in article one: “Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service, also known as CHARIS, is the international service organism for all expressions of Catholic Charismatic Renewal” (*Statutes of CHARIS*, Art. 1 § 1). I’d like to underline two aspects of this definition.

First: CHARIS is a service organism. It is neither a governing body, nor a parliament where laws have to be voted and imposed on all members of the Renewal. That means that it is not indispensable that every group has to be “represented” in CHARIS. It is

not the presence of a representative in CHARIS that gives legitimacy to a group. “Some” members, from different expressions of the Renewal, take turns in working for CHARIS and provide the services that correspond to its mission. The “members” of the International Service of Communion and the “representatives” of the Continental and National Services of Communion receive a mandate to serve for a limited period of time and then they will be replaced by someone else.

The second aspect in the statutory definition is this: CHARIS is at the service of “all realities” within Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Its work is not limited to a specific “category” (communities, prayer groups, etc), or only to bigger associations born from the Renewal. CHARIS is at the service of each and every expression of the Renewal, even the smallest ones. Indeed, one of the first tasks of each National Service of Communion is to identify all the realities that consider themselves as part of the “current of grace” that is Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and then to involve them in the greater “family” of the Renewal, sharing the same communion and offering them the same services.

[The second question] What is CHARIS’s work? CHARIS aims to provide services to Renewal. One of the most important services is “to promote and strengthen communion among all Charismatic realities, fostering a sense of the worldwide family of Catholic Charismatic Renewal” (Art. 1 §1). Through meetings, reciprocal knowledge, cooperation, common prayer and liturgical celebration and in many other ways, all the realities of the Charismatic Renewal should be helped to feel part of one big family. But communion is not the only “service” provided by CHARIS. Some other important services are offered in the area of information, formation and training and advice (Art. 4 § 2). Sharing information is vital in order to build communion; the CHARIS office in Rome runs the CHARIS web site, a CHARIS Magazine and an e-mail address to receive comments and questions. Regarding formation and training: I can mention the CHARIS Leadership Institute (CLI), Youth Formation programs, and formation for ecumenical or charitable activities. Regarding advice, CHARIS can provide doctrinal assistance through its Theological Commission, it can provide canonical assistance for

those communities who need help in writing their Statutes; it can provide pastoral assistance through its Pastoral Commission, for example, suggesting new ways to spread the grace of the baptism in the Holy Spirit throughout the Church. There is also a specific commission, within CHARIS, dedicated to serving communities born in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, called Koinonia; this commission organized the present meeting. One last “service” that I want to mention is the assistance that CHARIS can provide to bishops and priests who request its help (Art. 4 §1). CHARIS is available to assist local clergy to better understand the nature and practice of realities within the Renewal, in case they want to seek pastoral cooperation from the Renewal, or in case they need more elements in order to discern and accompany communities and prayer groups that already exist in their dioceses, etc. One more important note: the services provided by CHARIS are not only “top-down”: they do not come only from commissions or “experts” designated by the International Service of Communion. CHARIS is also to be a place of “exchange” to share information about formation programs, best practices, and successful pastoral activities that have been created by groups or communities in one country and can be adopted by other groups or communities in another country.

[The third question] What authority does CHARIS have? The answer is simple: very little! As the Statutes say in Art. 1 § 3: “As an organism of service, CHARIS exercises no jurisdiction over the Catholic Charismatic Renewal [CCR], since all expressions of CCR are directly under the jurisdiction of the competent ecclesiastical authorities. CHARIS’s role of service does not limit the freedom of individuals or groups within CCR in their contacts with ecclesiastical authorities”. Therefore, communities, prayer groups and all the realities of the CCR can avail themselves of the different services offered by CHARIS, but they cannot be bound by decisions taken by CHARIS. In this regard, I want to mention that CHARIS has set up a registration system for communities. The objective is to know the existence of communities around the world, so that CHARIS can serve them according to their expectations. The registration does not imply any ecclesial recognition. Giving recognition is reserved to the competent

ecclesiastical authorities (Art. 1 §3). By registering, a community simply expresses its desire to make itself known and to work in communion with the whole of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. The different expressions of the Renewal do not become “members” of CHARIS, nor do they establish a juridical “affiliation” with it: they simply want, through CHARIS, to live in communion with all the other charismatic realities.

A further clarification. CHARIS’s structure includes three different levels, all of them forming one single “network”: These levels are the International Service of Communion, the Continental Services of Communion, and the National Services of Communion. These multiple “services of Communion” exist in order to be more effective in their work and to be closer to the different realities of the Charismatic Renewal all over the world, with all their many specific spiritual, cultural and ecclesial characteristics. Since CHARIS is not a governing body, the different Continental or National Services of Communion are not “branches” of CHARIS. They do not receive “delegated power” from the international team. They have to be set up in the same spirit as the International Service of Communion, that is, to assist, to support and to help all the expressions of the Renewal in their respective regions, and to help and assist local Bishops and priests. If, for example here in Brazil, we talk about CHARIS-Brazil, as is beginning to happen in several other countries, this can create misunderstanding. Therefore, we recommend that, instead of speaking about “CHARIS-Brazil”, we simply speak of the *National Service of Communion of the Brazilian Charismatic Renewal*, meaning that we refer to the service body that exists in Brazil for the whole Charismatic Renewal in Brazil.

2. The Pope’s desire

The creation of CHARIS is an initiative of the Holy Father, Pope Francis. In June 2015, he wrote to the presidents of ICCRS and the Catholic Fraternity asking them

to consider a single service.¹ Then he appointed a group of 4 people to carry out this project and asked our Dicastery to accompany the creation of this service.² I can testify that this is very important to him: every time I met with him, he would not fail to ask me about the progress of the work. CHARIS officially began its service on Pentecost Sunday, June 9, 2019. On the same day, at the request of the Holy See, ICCRS and the Catholic Fraternity ceased to exist.

3. Three goals for all the Catholic Charismatic Renewal

The central points that the Pope has asked CHARIS to develop among all the expressions of Charismatic Renewal, are service and communion, with the main objectives of spreading baptism in the Holy Spirit, Christian unity and a life of charity. These are three objectives that we must have clear. These expectations simply reflect a desire of greater fidelity to the Gospel.

- A. First of all, to share baptism in the Holy Spirit with the whole Church. This experience often marks the beginning of the journey of faith for many members of Charismatic Renewal and coincides with a radical turning-point in their existence. The Pope is convinced that this fundamental experience must not remain an “exclusive” one, limited to Charismatic Renewal. He is convinced that God has granted this gift of grace to Charismatic Renewal so that it may help the whole Church to rediscover the gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Charismatic Renewal must become an “instrument” and a “channel” so that what God has awakened in it becomes a common patrimony for all Christians. It is not easy and it will be a great challenge. There will be resistance and preconceptions, but it is what the Pope asks from Charismatic Renewal. I will return to this point later.

¹ Pope Francis, *Letter addressed to Mrs. Moran and Mr. Barbosa*, June 12th, 2015.

² Pope Francis, *Letter addressed to Card. Rylko*, April 27th, 2016.

- B. Secondly, to promote unity. The Charismatic Renewal has been ecumenical since its inception, because the same experience of grace, the same mode of prayer, the same manifestation of charisms, the same life of communion, have been lived, in an identical way, within various Churches and Ecclesial Communities as well as in the Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, the bond of love and unity in the Trinity, is himself the creator of communion. Here then is the special vocation of every group in Catholic Charismatic Renewal: to be at the service of unity in the Catholic Church and at the service of unity among all baptized Christians, of whatever denomination.
- C. Thirdly, to serve the poor. The Holy Spirit is the same divine charity, the Love of God “personified”, we can say. Therefore, He always awakens in those who receive Him, feelings of compassion, mercy and charity for every person, especially for those in need. Hence, the particular commitment that the Pope expects from all the members of the Charismatic Renewal to put themselves concretely at the service of the poor – those in spiritual need and those in physical need – fleeing from the temptation to be locked up in an individualistic and narcissistic spiritual experience.

All these points were emphasized in the various discourses of last Pentecost, in particular in the Pope's own discourse, which I invite you to read.³ I would like now to invite you to enter into the spirit that led to the creation of this unique new service.

4. The Charismatic Renewal as a “current of grace”

The existence of CHARIS as a new and unique service for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is based on the Church's understanding of this reality. Following Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens, who had been commissioned by Saint Paul VI to follow the Renewal in its early stages, the Pope looks at the reality of the Renewal not as an

³ Pope Frances, *Address to participants in the International Conference of Leaders of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service – Charis*, Paul VI Audience Hall, Saturday, 8 June 2019.

association or an ecclesial movement but as a current of grace. Let me elaborate a little on this difference because it is essential in understanding the Holy Father's thought.

Associations or ecclesial movements are bodies within the Church that bring together a certain number of faithful who recognize themselves in a specific shared life and apostolate, and who also recognize a common path of holiness, adapted to their particular situation and their vocation. In this sense, one of the characteristics of associations and ecclesial movements is membership: one is either a member or not. An association or ecclesial movement is not intended to bring together all the baptized: it proposes one path of growth in Christian life among many others.

A current of grace in the Church is very different. Cardinal Suenens, when he spoke of Charismatic Renewal, compared it to an ocean current, such as the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic. It is a warm water current that heats the Atlantic Ocean and gives the temperate climate to northern Europe. For the Pope, the Charismatic Renewal is similar. It is called to warm up the whole Church so that all the baptized are renewed in the Holy Spirit. Why is the Charismatic Renewal such a current? This is due to its very identity. What characterizes the Charismatic Renewal is the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit. This experience can be received by any baptized person because it simply reflects baptism itself. It can be said that to receive baptism in the Holy Spirit is simply to live fully all the graces that are received at one's sacramental baptism. In this sense, the Renewal is a stream of grace from which everyone can benefit. One can be a Jesuit or Capuchin and have received baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is the case, for example, of Father Raniero Cantalamessa, the ecclesiastical assistant of CHARIS. One can be a member of an association or an ecclesial movement and have received baptism in the Holy Spirit. This in no way prevents us from remaining a member of the association to which we belong. One can be a priest or a bishop and have the same experience.

If the Holy Father has repeatedly asked the members of the Renewal - and especially CHARIS - to spread baptism in the Holy Spirit throughout the Church, it is

precisely because he is convinced that baptism in the Holy Spirit is a grace that every baptized person can and should live. It is an experience of a personal Pentecost, an invasion of the Holy Spirit into the life of the baptized person, accompanied by an experience of conversion and an encounter with the living Jesus. All this should be part of the normal life of every baptized person called to holiness. The Charismatic Renewal as a current of grace offers baptism in the Holy Spirit to the whole Church.

5. CHARIS is not the current of grace but it is at its service

In this context, CHARIS must be understood as a service for this current of grace. It would be a terrible misunderstanding to think that CHARIS “is” the current of grace. This is not the case. The current of grace is Catholic Charismatic Renewal as such. CHARIS is at the service of this current. CHARIS has a structure given by the statutes that our Dicastery has approved. This structure does not identify with Charismatic Renewal, but is at its service. It is therefore important that, in all countries, a clear distinction be made between the current of grace and the structure at its service. For example, the statutes of CHARIS require that in every country a National Service of Communion be set up for the whole current of grace, that is, the whole of Charismatic Renewal. However, this National Service of Communion is only a service body, and should not be identified with the whole Charismatic Renewal in that country.

6. Some clarifications

Here, allow me to make four important clarifications.

- A. As a service, the National Service of Communion has a coordinator. This person is in the service of communion, but is not responsible for the current of grace: this person serves, but does not control Renewal. One of the aspects of the Charismatic Renewal as a current of grace is that it was born without a founder. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who guides it, He is

the leader of it. Consequently, the CHARIS Moderator is not responsible for the Charismatic Renewal of the whole world; he or she is only responsible for the service that is made available to the current of grace. The same is true for the coordinator of the National Service of Communion: he or she is a servant and not a leader. This is very clear in the statutes of CHARIS, which state that it is a service without authority (Art. 1 §3). Authority rests with the competent ecclesiastical authorities, as I will point out later.

- B. The statutes of CHARIS provide that the National Services of Communion should be "as inclusive as possible and open to new emerging realities" (Art. 15). Here the word "inclusive" refers to the services provided by CHARIS, not to its constitution. CHARIS must reach out to all the expressions of the Renewal and "include" them in its service, but it cannot "include" everybody in its organism of service. Indeed, we are seeing a great deal of interest and desire from many expressions all over the world to be in contact with their National Service of Communion. I must say that I welcome this. At the same time, it is not always possible for each particular expression of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in a country to directly participate in the National Service of Communion. For example, here in Brazil, richness and diversity make it impossible for everyone to be physically present. For the time being, the Brazilian National Service of Communion is a transitional service with around 40 "representatives". It is clear that it is difficult to work effectively in such a large group. The objective is to reduce the number of "representatives" by 2021: it seems reasonable to have between 15 and 20 "representatives". Regarding the composition, the Statutes say that: «National Services of Communion should consist of representatives from realities and expressions of the current of grace who identify themselves as a part of Catholic Charismatic Renewal ... This may include prayer groups, communities, networks, schools of evangelisation, religious institutes, publishing houses, particular ministries, ecumenical initiatives, youth etc» (Art. 16).

The desire for communion is no less legitimate. I have been told by CHARIS that it recommends for each country holding some sort of national or regional gathering of the responsible persons of all the charismatic realities, in order to allow the participation of all the realities inside a country that consider themselves part of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, without distinction of size, seniority or even ecclesiastical recognition. This would allow each of these realities to send representatives. Let us not forget that the National Service of Communion does not have any power to decide who forms part of Catholic Charismatic Renewal and who does not; it is commissioned with serving in fraternity all the realities who recognize themselves as being part of this current of grace. As we will clarify later on, those who have the mandate of discerning and overseeing all the realities belonging to the Charismatic Renewal are the bishops: it is part of their ministry. The idea of having “national or regional gatherings” of the responsible persons of all the charismatic realities could be useful in order to have a place of communion, a place of exchange and sharing that will allow everyone to get to know each other and help each other. Indeed, the National Service of Communion is a body that is at the service of communion, but is not the only place where communion is built and lived out. Some other places and occasions are necessary to create communion. In some countries, the organization of a “national gathering” of the leaders can also be a way of ensuring that a more inclusive and open National Service of Communion emerges.

- C. In some countries, associations or networks of prayer groups have taken for their name - in one way or another - Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR). That’s the case of the network of prayer groups known as RCC-Brazil. This presents a difficulty, because the Renewal is broader than any single group or network of groups. The Renewal also includes new communities, religious communities, ministries, schools of evangelization, communication networks (television and others), publishing houses, etc. All these realities form part of the current of

grace in a country. With the birth of CHARIS, there is a recognition of this diversity and a call for all its realities to live in communion. In a word: harmony in diversity.

It is therefore important that one “part” does not take the name of the “whole”: *"the whole is more important than the part"* (*Evangelii Gaudium* n. 234). No particular group or network of groups should be called “Catholic Charismatic Renewal” as such. It is preferable that a group in this position chooses for itself another name and then, as a further specification, affirms their belonging to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In other words, we must preserve the identity of the current of grace, that is, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, by avoiding any misunderstanding. It would be important to avoid, in any given country, a structure or association, recognized by the ecclesiastical authority, that takes the title of the current of grace for itself, as a monopoly. If this exists, our Dicastery asks that this structure change its name to avoid these misunderstandings and better serve communion. I am addressing you as bishops and asking you to be as vigilant as possible concerning this point. It is a good pastoral opportunity for you, as shepherds of the local church, to explain, in a positive way, to all members of the Renewal, the nature of this “current of grace” and the purpose and meaning of the changes that are happening, making clear that prayer groups and communities are associated with the current of grace, and are part of the current of grace, but they are not the entire current of grace.

- D. There is also another challenge. In some cases, there is an excessive structuring of the current of grace, and that entails the risk of exclusivity. What I want to say is that for some people, having experienced baptism in the Spirit and being part of one of the many realities which form the Charismatic Renewal is not enough. Sometimes, what gives someone legitimacy to act or to speak as a member of the Renewal is their belonging to a certain specific group. It has happened, in fact, that people have been banned from speaking simply because they are not members of the same group or because they disagree with some of

the leaders. Members of a specific community have been forbidden to speak in a prayer group by the local Renewal, or vice versa. These things cannot continue. For the same reason, neither CHARIS nor the National Service of Communion can become a sort of “superior organism” that decides who is charismatic and who is not. What the Holy Father wanted with the institution of CHARIS is exactly to prevent these types of division and contrast. The Holy Father wishes a profound communion among all the expressions of the Charismatic Renewal.

7. The responsibility and discernment of the Bishops.

We bishops, as shepherds of the local Church that has been entrusted to us, are called to discern what is good for our diocese. Therefore, with regard to the Charismatic Renewal, it is important that we exercise this discernment in a concrete way, without blindly delegating it to structures that can sometimes have very partisan views. In some countries, Bishops have appointed a priest or a lay person, member of a Charismatic group, in charge of overseeing all the realities of the Charismatic Renewal in that country, giving up completely their responsibility to exercise pastoral care for the persons involved of the Renewal. The statutes of CHARIS explicitly refer to the discernment of the bishops. It is up to you to discern the situations that arise in your dioceses. Neither CHARIS, nor the National Service of Communion, nor any other structure of the Renewal can take your place.

Every Bishop has to be very prudent and always walk a fine line, avoiding two opposite mistakes. Firstly, the mistake of completely delegating his authority to some priest or lay leaders or to some groups, to the point of being only a distant “observer”. Secondly, the mistake of holding for himself an excessive authority over the Charismatic Renewal, to the point of denying autonomy and freedom of action and taking the place of the legitimate leaders of the different groups.

Know that CHARIS, as a Church service, is always at your disposition if you need information or help with discernment. I think, in particular, of the theological

commission of CHARIS, which brings together excellent theologians who have studied from within the characteristics of this current of grace.

The fact that the Charismatic Renewal is a current of grace, in the sense I explained, is a little uncomfortable for us bishops. In carrying out our ministry, we find it easier to deal with a well-defined association or ecclesial movement, without the inevitable vagueness associated with a "current of grace". Here, the Holy Father presents us with a real challenge: are we ready to accept that the Charismatic Renewal is a current of grace, a breath of rejuvenation for the Church through the work of the Holy Spirit? One day, the Holy Father, speaking at a congress of the Congregation for Consecrated Life in Rome, said that the Holy Spirit was the master of chaos. Yes, the Holy Spirit always brings forth new, often surprising things. "*He makes all things new*" (Rev. 21:5). Here in Brazil, for example, people talk about more than 800 charismatic communities! At the same time, I continue to quote the Holy Father, that the Holy Spirit is also the master of harmony.

8. Communion with the hierarchy and pastoral care of the bishops

Obviously, it is important that the Renewal be in full harmony with the hierarchy of the Church. I would like to highlight a fundamental point that is implied in CHARIS' statutes. It is clear that each National Service of Communion must be closely linked to the Bishops' Conference of its country. This implies in particular – and this is obvious – that if the Episcopal Conference has appointed one or more reference bishops for the Renewal, they should participate in the meetings of the National Service of Communion and exercise there their pastoral ministry. They are also invited to actively participate in national or regional gatherings for leaders of all the charismatic realities that I have already mentioned. However, the work of these referent bishops goes beyond the simple accompaniment of the National Service of Communion. They are not “bishops for CHARIS” or bishops for the National Service of Communion alone, they are, while respecting the authority of each bishop in his own diocese, “bishops in

the service of Charismatic Renewal”. Therefore, they are called to take pastoral care of the whole Charismatic Renewal of the country and not to interact only with the “representatives” of the National Service of Communion. We find here the distinction I have already made: CHARIS does not identify itself with the current of grace, but is only at its service. It is therefore necessary to continue the good practice of appointing referees for the Charismatic Renewal in each country.

9. The limits of mandates within CHARIS and within the National Service of Communion

It seems important to me to highlight another element: the length of the mandates. The intention that lies behind CHARIS' statutes is to recommend, for all the positions, a 3-year term in office, renewable only once. This is explicitly the case for the Moderator, for the members of the International Service of Communion and for the “representatives” of the Continental Services of Communion (Art. 10 §2 and Art. 14 §5). This is also the case for the “representatives” of each National Service of Communion. This is not explicitly said in the statutes, but it is implied. This is the “mind” (in latin, “*mens*”) of the document. The objective is to ensure a renewal of the leaders within Catholic Charismatic Renewal. As elsewhere in the Church, here it is not good for leaders to serve indefinitely or for too long. It is therefore necessary to renew those leaders who have exercised their leadership for many years so that they can be replaced by new, perhaps less well-known, leaders.

Behind this good practice of mandate renewals is the placement of young people. The statutes of CHARIS give a great importance to young people. If leaders hold very long mandates, the immediate consequence is to marginalize young people. Now, I remind you that in 1967, when the Holy Spirit launched the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church, he chose young university students. To launch his current of grace, the Spirit trusted the young people. As you know, God does not change. Even

today, the Holy Spirit wants to trust young people. It is important that, as pastors, we trust them too.

10. Conclusion: looking forward with hope

In 1975, Pope Paul VI welcomed the Charismatic Renewal to St. Peter's Basilica and said this historical phrase: "*The Renewal is an opportunity for the Church.*" I am convinced that, under the impetus of Pope Francis today, we are entering a favorable time when the Holy Spirit wishes to develop his action on all the baptized. CHARIS was created to accompany this time. I invite you to support, as pastors, this vision of our Pope and to allow, as the Holy Father wishes, that the current of grace that is the Catholic Charismatic Renewal may share the fire of the Holy Spirit with the whole Church.

Thank you very much for listening. May the Lord enlighten you and guide you, so you may accompany with wisdom and love the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Brazil and in the whole world.