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BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHARISMS DISCUSSED IN ROME

- report on the Colloquium, April 3-6, 2008 -

Kees Slijkerman, Europe

About 150 invited bishops, theologians and leaders in Catholic Charismatic Renewal from all continents gathered together in Rome, April 3-6, 2008, to examine baptism in the Holy Spirit and the charisms. Lectures and testimonies were given from biblical, patristic, theological, and pastoral points of view. Some highlights are in this small report.

APOSTLES OF THE BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT

We have a mission to be 'apostles of the baptism in the Spirit.' This strong statement came from Archbishop Alberto Taveira, who is the liaison between the Brazilian bishops' conference and the new movements in Brazil. 'The gift of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is to bring the whole world into the Upper Room, to bring people into a new intimacy with the Lord,' said the Archbishop, who himself has a background in the Focolare movement. He began his talk with a quotation from Vatican II. Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko, Bishop Joseph Grech, and others also quoted the Council documents that contain Vatican II's theology on charisms: the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*) 12; the Decree on the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) 3; and the Decree on Priests (*Presbyterorum ordinis*) 9.

Prof. Fr. Robert Faricy gave his testimony about being baptized in the Holy Spirit and stated: 'We have to pray with people for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the release of the Holy Spirit, or what ever you call it. We don't do it enough.' He said: 'Baptism in the Spirit is not owned by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR). It can happen any time.' Several other speakers stressed the importance of not institutionalizing the baptism in the Spirit. What we mean by 'baptism in the Spirit' should be explained more clearly in the theological language of the Church. How is it related to sacramental baptism, confirmation, conversion, experience, being born again, the charisms? The doctrinal commission of ICCRS will work on it.

CHARISMS

Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa looked back in history. 'Charisms never disappeared from the Church, but they disappeared from theology,' he said. The Church fathers started to relate the charisms to sanctification and to the gifts of the Spirit in Isaiah 11:1-3. A clericalization of charisms and an institutionalization of the gift of healing began at that time. The original context of charisms as part of the constitution of the Church was lost. Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical letter on the Spirit (1897), spoke about gifts, not about charisms. But now, since Vatican II, charisms are back in the theology and practice of the Church. 'We must fundamentally rethink the doctrine on the seven gifts,' Fr. Raniero said. He sees a vacuum in the theology on charisms.

GOAL OF CHARISMS

Fr. Francis Martin from the USA addressed the charisms from a biblical point of view. He explained the presence of charisms and the charismatic dimension in the lives of Abraham, Moses and the authors of the Old Testament. 'Hebrews 11 describes charismatics of the Old Testament. The good news is manifested by God's actions,' Fr. Martin said. What is the goal of charisms? 'If people start to see the face of God our Father, the charisms have reached their goal.'

APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

Prof. Mary Healy from the USA had an excellent lecture on the whole subject and on discerning. 'Now the CCR is in a second generation. So it is time to reflect, write down and consolidate what we have experienced—just like at the beginning of the Church,' she said. 'The Renewal has normalized the charisms. But we have to avoid reading our own experiences back into the Bible.' She drew attention to the fact that one group of charisms are called by Paul *pneumatika*, spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12). 'These gifts can only be received through a conscious yielding to the Holy Spirit. Perhaps more than other charisms, they require a childlike docility to the Spirit's influence,' said the rather young Prof. Healy, who became a doctor in theology with a thesis on 1 Corinthians 2. The difference between these and the seemingly more ordinary charismata mentioned in Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 7:7 (marriage and celibacy) is not absolute, she said. She added that Paul does not claim to have mentioned

all charisms. Pope John Paul II gave another list during the ad limina visit of the Belgium bishops in 1982.[1] Mary Healy is a member of the doctrinal committee of ICCRS. She stated that charisms should be studied not primarily in spirituality or hagiography, but in ecclesiology. Charisms belong to the constitution of the Church. An interesting detail she gave was: the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, as Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:20. The Church needs not only the apostles, present in the bishops, but also prophets. Responding to a question of Bishop Joe Grech on this point, Mary said that every Christian is included in the prophetic charismatic element that is foundational to the Church.

PUBLICATIONS

This theological colloquium was organized by ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services) and CFCCCF (Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships), in cooperation with the Pontifical Council for the Laity. As ICCRS President Michelle Moran right said, this was an historic meeting. It was the second colloquium of its kind. The first was in 2001 on healing, and its lectures and testimonies have been published in a book, Prayers for Healing (320 pages). There is also a little booklet, Guidelines on Prayers for Healing, by the Doctrinal Commission of ICCRS (53 pages). Both of these can be ordered from info@iccrs.org.

FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

It was an impressive meeting with the Lord in our midst and many interesting details in the testimonies and during breakfast, lunch and dinner every day with people from Africa, Asia, Australia and America. One testimony came from the exorcist of Rome, Fr. Gabriele Amorth. Henry Cappello brought good news about the 15 million Catholics in China. Francis MacNutt expressed his deep concern for wounded people. Prof. Jean Pliya from Benin explained a way of healing, deliverance and care for souls. Fr. Alberto Ibañez from Argentina wrote twenty-five books on the gift of tongues. Brothers from Islamic nations told about the serious lack of religious freedom in their countries. They are oppressed by many unjust limitations; Africans are oppressed by poverty and corruption, but full of joy. In Indonesia hundreds of churches have been burned, but the Church is growing. In Brazil the Renewal is growing rapidly. One quoted the Pope saying something like: when I went to Brazil, I thought, "every month a new sect is born"; now I have the impression that every month a new community is born. South Korea is another miracle. A work of mercy developed into a center called Kkottongnae, which helps thousands of poor and disabled people who are even not able to ask for help. This center includes a training institute of love, with a university and meeting places for up to 10,000 people indoors, with high-tech equipment, and for up to 100,000 people outdoors. See www.flower-vill.com. They will host in June 2009 an ICCRS conference.

AND WHAT ABOUT EUROPE?

Europe is surely not the center of the world nor the center of the CCR. But we also make a good contribution to the whole, for example in developing sound theological studies. Fr. Peter Hocken from Vienna is a key person on the Doctrinal Commission of ICCRS, and the members of the theological commission of the German CCR have produced sound material. (See the article of Fr. Norbert Baumert SJ on baptism in the Holy Spirit, which you can find on <http://www.sankt-georgen.de/leseraum/index.html#baumert>.) And, by the way, at the moment the pope and the presidents of ICCRS, CFCCCF and the Pontifical Council for the Laity all come from Europe.

PRAY AND GIVE

Let's pray for the 15 million Catholics in China waiting for a Bible, and for the one million Catholics in Saudi Arabia, who are not yet allowed to build one church or have priests, as their bishop told us, but are "living their faith in difficult situations in an exemplary way." And don't forget to collect and send money to ICCRS to make it possible to continue its very important work at the center of the Renewal and the Church. There is a great financial need, as Charles Whitehead explained to all of us. But we live by faith and our Lord is faithful forever.

The author, Kees Slijkerman, is secretary of the European subcommittee of ICCRS.

This Info-Letter Eucril is free to everybody who wants it. They can sent to kees@stucom.nl and e-mail with the subject Eucril and this message: yes, put me on the mailing-list of Eucril-English or/and Eucril-Français.

Spanish translations can be requested from Lourdes Martin White effetaes@yahoo.es.
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European web-site, including old ISSUES of Eucril: www.iccrs.org/europe

[1] Pope John Paul II mentioned seven pairs of gifts. The first pair was: 'Some can bring forward ideas, others can deepen these ideas, first alone and secondly with others.' At the end of his list he added: 'The apostle Paul would be happy to encourage you to discover all these gifts and make them active.' (From the ad limina visit of the Belgium bishops in 1982, published in Dutch in 1-2-1, the official Church magazine in the Netherlands, March 25, 1983. A scan can be requested from kees@stucom.nl)