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Vigil of Pentecost and ecumenical prayer with Pope Francis at the Circus Maximus on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Catholic Charismatic Renewal

At 17.30 this afternoon, the Holy Father Francis left the Domus Sanctae Marthae for the Circus Maximus, for the Vigil of Pentecost and ecumenical prayer on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Catholic Charismatic Renewal, to conclude tomorrow with the Mass of Pentecost presided at by Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square.

The Pope was joined by the leaders of Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the representatives of the Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches and other religious confessions.

The encounter was preceded by hymns, readings and testimonies, and introduced by meditations by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M. Cap., preacher of the Papal Household, and Pastor Giovanni Traettino of the evangelical Church of the Reconciliation.

The following is the text of the meditation the Holy Father pronounced during the encounter:

Meditation Holy Father

Brothers and sisters, thank you for your witness today, here: thank you! It is good for all of us, it is good for me, for all!

In the first chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles we read that: "And while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (*Acts 1: 4-5*).

"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (*Acts 2: 1-4*).

Today we are here, as in an open-air Cenacle, because we are not afraid: in the open air, and also with a heart open to the promise of the Father. We are gathered, “all believers”, all those who profess that Jesus is the Lord. Many have come from different parts of the world and the Holy Spirit has gathered us to establish bonds of fraternal friendship that encourage us on the path to unity, unity for the mission: not to be static, no! for the mission, to proclaim that Jesus is the Lord – *Jesús es el Señor* – to announce together the love of the Father for all His children! To announce the Good News to all peoples! To demonstrate that peace is possible. It is not so easy to demonstrate to this, today’s world, that peace is possible, but in the name of Jesus we can show with our witness that peace is possible! But it is possible only if we are at peace among ourselves. If we accentuate our differences, we are at war with each other and we cannot proclaim peace. Peace is possible starting from our confession that Jesus is the Lord and from our evangelization on this road. It is possible. While showing that we have differences – but this is obvious, we have differences – but that we wish to be a *reconciled diversity*. Here, we must not forget this phrase, but say it to everyone: reconciled diversity. And this phrase is not mine, it is not mine. It is from a Lutheran brother. Reconciled diversity.

And now we are here, and there are many of us! We managed to pray together, to ask the coming of the Holy Spirit upon each one of us to go out into the streets of the city and of the world, to proclaim the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The book of the Acts affirms that we are “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians – we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God” (*Acts 2: 9-11*). Speaking in the same language, listening, understanding... There are differences, but the Spirit enables us to understand the message of the resurrection of Jesus in our own language.

We are gathered here, believers from 120 countries in the world, to celebrate the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, that took the initiative fifty years ago and gave rise to ... an institution? No. An organization? No. To a current of grace, to the current of grace of Catholic Charismatic Renewal. A work that was born ... Catholic? No. It was born ecumenical! It was born ecumenical because it is the Holy Spirit that creates unity and the same Holy Spirit that gave the inspiration for it to be thus! It is important to read the works of Cardinal Suenens on this: it is very important!

The coming of the Holy Spirit transforms men wrapped up in fear into courageous witnesses of Jesus. Peter, who had denied Jesus three times, full of the strength of the Holy Spirit proclaims: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus Whom you crucified” (*Acts 2: 36*). And this is the profession of faith of every Christian. God constituted as Lord and Christ that Jesus Whom you have or has been crucified. Do you agree on this profession of faith? [Answer: “yes”]. It is ours, everyone’s, all of us, the same!

The Word continues, saying, “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (*Acts 2: 44-47*). The community was growing, and it was the Spirit that inspired it. I like very much to think of Philip, when the Angel said to him, “Go on the road to Gaza and find the proselyte, minister of economy of the Queen of Ethiopia, Candace. He was a proselyte and was reading Isaiah. And Philip explained the Word to him, proclaimed Jesus, and the man converted. And at a certain point, he said, “But here there is water: I want to be baptized”. It was the Spirit that drove Philip to go there, and from the beginning it was that the Spirit that drove all believers to proclaim the Lord.

Today we have chosen to gather here, in this place – as Pastor Traettino said – because here during the persecutions, Christians were martyred for the enjoyment of those who were watching. Today there are more martyrs than yesteryear! Today there are more martyrs, Christians. Those who kill Christians, before killing them, do not ask, “Are you Orthodox? Are you Catholic? Are you Evangelical? Are you Lutheran? Are you

Calvinist?" No. "Are you Christian?" "Yes" – then your throat is cut, immediately. Today there are more martyrs than in the early times. And this is the ecumenism of blood: we are united by the witness of our martyrs of today. In several parts of the world Christian blood is being shed! Today the unity of Christians, united by the work of the Holy Spirit, in prayer and in action for the weakest, is more urgent than ever. Walk together, work together. Love each other. Love each other. And together seek to explain the differences, agree, but on the path! If we stay still, without walking, we will never, ever agree. This is how it is, because the Holy Spirit wants us to be on the move.

Fifty years of Catholic Charismatic Renewal. A current of grace of the Spirit! And why a current of grace? Because it has neither a founder, nor statutes, nor organs of governance. Clearly in this current multiple expressions have been born that are certainly human works inspired by the Spirit, with various charisms, and all in the service of the Church. But this current cannot be dammed, nor can the Holy Spirit be enclosed in a cage!

Fifty years have passed. When we reach this age, perhaps our strengths begin to decline. It is the halfway point in life – in my homeland we call it "*el cincuentazo*" – wrinkles become deeper – unless you make yourself up, but the wrinkles are there – the grey hairs increase in number and we begin to forget certain things...

Fifty years is a good moment in life to stop and reflect. It is the moment for reflection: halfway through life. And I would say to you: it is the moment to go ahead with greater strength, leaving behind the dust of time that we have allowed to accumulate, being thankful for what we have received and facing the new with trust in the action of the Holy Spirit!

Pentecost enabled the birth of the Church. The Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father announced by Jesus Christ, it is He Who makes the Church: the Bride of the Apocalypse, a single bride! As Pastor Traettino said: the Lord has *one* bride!

The most precious gift that we have all received is baptism. And now the Spirit leads us on the path of conversion that all the Christian world follows, and which is another reason why Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a special place for following the way towards unity!

This current of grace is for all the Church, not just for some, and no-one among us is the "master" and all the others servants. No. We are all servants of this current of grace.

Together with this experience, you continually remind the Church of the power of prayer and praise. Praise which is the prayer of acknowledgment and thanksgiving for the gratuitous love of God. It may be that not everyone likes this form of prayer, but it is certainly fully integrated in the biblical tradition. The Psalms, for example: David who danced before the Ark of the Covenant, full of jubilation ... and please, let us not fall into the trap of the attitude of Christians with the "Michal complex", named after she who was ashamed of how David praised God [dancing before the Ark].

Jubilation, cheer, joy, fruit of the same action of the Holy Spirit! Either the Christian experiences joy in his or her heart, or there is something wrong. The joy of the announcement of the Good News of the Gospel!

Jesus in the Synagogue of Nazareth reads the passage of Isaiah. He reads. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (cf. *Lk* 4:18-19; *Is* 61: 1-2). The good news: do not forget this. The good, the joyful news: the Christian proclamation is always joyful.

The third document of Malines, "Charismatic Renewal and Service to Man", written by Cardinal Suenens and Dom Helder Camara, is clear: charismatic renewal and also service to man.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit, praise, service to man. The three things are indissolubly joined. I can praise

profoundly, but if I do not help those most in need, it is not enough. "There was not a needy person among them" (*Acts* 4: 34), said the Book of the Acts.

We will not be judged for our praise but for how much we have done for Jesus. But Lord, when did we do this for You? "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers" (cf. *Mt.* 25: 39-40).

Dear sisters and dear brothers, I wish you a time of reflection, of remembrance of your origins; a time to leave behind all the things added by the self and transform them into listening and joyful welcome of the action of the Holy Spirit, which breathes where and how He wishes!

I thank the Catholic Fraternity and the ICCRS for organizing this Golden Jubilee, for this Vigil. And I thank each one of the volunteers who have made this possible, many of whom are here. I wanted to greet the members of staff of the office when I arrived, because I know they have worked hard! And without payment! They have worked a lot. The majority are young people from various continents. May the Lord bless you.

I am thankful in particular for the fact that the request I made to you two years ago to give the Charismatic Renewal worldwide a single international service based here has started to take shape in the Constitutive Acts of this new single service. It is the first step; others will follow, but soon unity, the work of the Holy Spirit, will be a reality. "Behold, I am making all things new", says the Lord (*Rev.* 21: 5).

Thank you, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, for what you have given the Church in these fifty years! The Church counts on you, on your fidelity to the Spirit, on your willingness to serve and your witness of lives transformed by the Holy Spirit!

Share with all in the Church the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, praise the Lord ceaselessly, walk together with Christians of different Churches and Christian communities in prayer and in action for those most in need. Serve the poorest and the sick, this is what the Church and the Pope expect of you, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, but from all of you: all, all of you who have entered in this current of grace! Thank you.
