

From the Director

Our Prophetic Charism

A prophetic witness is at the very heart of the Charismatic Renewal—without it we cannot be faithful to our calling. Each ecclesial movement has its own particular service to give; our calling is to bring the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit into the life of the Church everywhere. But we must keep in mind Cardinal Suenens' conviction that to interpret the Renewal as a movement among other movements is to misunderstand its nature; it's a movement of the Spirit offered to the entire Church and destined to rejuvenate every area of her life. We are part of a current of grace that lays the foundations upon which a dynamic and charismatic life of faith can be built. If this is to happen, it's essential that the Renewal retain a prophetic presence in the life of the Church.

The way we live One of the ways God speaks to his Church is very direct. He chooses certain people as his witnesses to communicate something which is on his heart. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, they speak his words to individuals, to groups, to communities—even to nations. Such prophetic words bring comfort and encouragement, they can strengthen, exhort and challenge us; they give direction. But to be prophetic is not just words, it's also the way we live. We may only occasionally speak out prophetically, but our lives are supposed to demonstrate to others what God is like.

Hierarchical and Charismatic Today the Renewal stands humbly at the beating

heart of the Church. Any who doubt this have only to read what Popes Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI have said about the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. I number myself among those who have worked hard for this acceptance, and while I don't regret it for a moment, I know that it presents us with some very real challenges. At the meeting of Pope John Paul II with the new movements and ecclesial communities on the eve of Pentecost 1998, we were publicly assured that the Church is both hierarchical and charismatic. But while these two dimensions are co-essential to the life of the Church, history tells us they are often uncomfortable with each other. This tension is healthy and spiritually life-giving, and we must therefore avoid the temptation to play down our charismatic and prophetic dimension.

Danger of compromise One of the biggest dangers we face today is compromise—trying to make ourselves more acceptable by speaking less about those things that make some people uncomfortable. What are those things? They are the charisms of the Spirit, and in particular tongues and prophecy. I'm often invited to speak at Life in the Spirit Seminars, but sometimes I'm asked to avoid talking about the gift of tongues, about words of knowledge and prophecy. Such restrictions would prevent me from being charismatic and prophetic—I always resist them. It seems that the fruit of the Spirit is very acceptable, but not his gifts. People mistakenly try to stay in control, when what they should really do is to let God take control and do whatever he wants.

Losing the Gifts? A mistake we ourselves sometimes make is to put in

place all kinds of filtering systems for anything prophetic. We do this to protect people against things that are not from God (1 Cor. 14:29), but we risk taking away the impact we feel when God speaks his word spontaneously through an anointed prophet. Let's keep in mind that it is just as wrong to limit the Holy Spirit's freedom to speak as it is to accept everything without any testing and discernment. Is our over-caution and tendency to compromise the reason the charisms are being less and less taught and used in our gatherings? We need to face the fact that if we lose the gifts, the Renewal will lack supernatural power. We must never allow this to happen—we must always be a charismatic and prophetic people.

Staying faithful to our calling It's not easy to be prophets for God in word and deed, but let me exhort all of us to stay faithful to our calling. The power of the Spirit is vital in every part of the Church's life, especially in essential initiatives like the New Evangelization. Let's make sure that the charisms of the Holy Spirit do not fall into disuse again because we're unwilling to step out in faith and take risks. It's our responsibility to preserve the prophetic spirit of the Charismatic Renewal—we are called to be a prophetic people and we must remain faithful to that call. The supernatural power evident when our words and actions are prophetic brings people face to face with God's truth. That's why our charism is so much needed in the Church today. When we do our part, we can safely leave everything else in God's hands.

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Catholic Charismatic Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico

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*Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of
Thy faithful and
enkindle in them
the fire of Thy love.
Send forth Thy Spirit
and they shall be
created and Thou
shall renew the face
of the earth.
AMEN*

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