

The New Ecclesial Movements in the Magisterium of Benedict XVI ¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

“What is emerging here is a new generation of the Church which I am watching with a great hope. I find it marvelous that the Spirit is once more stronger than our programs and brings himself into play in an altogether different way than we had imagined. In this sense the renewal, in a subdued but effective way, is afoot. Old forms that had run aground in self-contradiction and in the taste for negation are leaving the stage, and the new is making headway. Naturally it does not yet have its full voice in the great debate of dominant ideas. It grows in silence. Our task—the task of the office-holders in the Church and of theologians—is to keep the door open to them, to prepare room for them.”²

These words, written in 1985, belong to someone who is today the Roman Pontiff, and they refer to the new ecclesial movements.

I wish to take as my starting point these words which, read at a distance of almost thirty years, make us understand Cardinal Ratzinger’s long-range sight. It was a profound and prophetic vision at a time when few people could think, using an expression coined by John Paul II, of the new Pentecost at the end of the 20th century. In

1. Updated English version of the *Inaugural Lecture for the Academic year 2008-2009*, at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome.
2. J. RATZINGER-V. MESSORI, *The Ratzinger Report*, San Francisco 1986, p.44.

fact, in the eighties, as Cardinal Ratzinger has recalled, people talked of a "winter of the Church."³

The above-cited words indicate the attitude chosen and the *road map* set by Ratzinger, as Pastor and as Theologian, in regard to the ecclesial movements. In the succeeding decades he has closely monitored and accompanied these realities and has tried, through theological reflection, to make them be understood and loved.⁴ This same approach is found in the addresses, messages, homilies, etc given in special moments of the life of the new ecclesial movements as in the II World Congress held in May 2006⁵, or in the important Seminar organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity and attended by many Bishops in 2008.⁶

Before going on, I wish to make the following point to answer a question that may have crossed the mind of our readers: Do the movements and the Magisterium of the Roman Pontiffs have anything to do with Canon Law? As if Canon Law were not related with life and with the Magisterium! On the contrary, important juridical consequences follow from them, since they have a juridical dimension. Others may have perhaps thought that the reason why I have chosen this topic is simply because I like it. This is true, for it is a topic related to my teaching subject and on which I have showed interest on repeated occasions.⁷ This is in fact one of the reasons for having chosen this topic. But the main reason is because-in my opinion-in the Pope's Magisterium, it is possible to identify a methodology that can contribute to our university work when one has to face new situations and problems. This method may be summarized in two elements: *openness of mind* and *openness of heart*.

3 "Ho avuto la gioia e la grazia, direi, di vedere giovani cristiani toccati dalla forza dello Spirito Santo, vedere che in un momento di fatica della Chiesa, un momento in cui si parlava di "inverno della Chiesa", lo Spirito Santo creava una nuova primavera e che nei giovani si risvegliava la gioia di essere cristiani, una esperienza di fede viva, la gioia di essere cattolici, di vivere nella Chiesa che è il Corpo vivo di Cristo, il popolo di Dio in pellegrinaggio". *Dialogo con il Cardinale Joseph Ratzinger*, in PONTIFICIUM CONSILIIUM PRO LAICIS, *I movimenti ecclesiali nella sollecitudine pastorale dei vescovi*, Vatican City 2000, p.225.

4 Cf. J. CLEMENS, *Papa Ratzinger e i movimenti*, in *Il Regno-Documenti*, 2008/13, pp. 441-449.

5 Cf. *Message to the Participants of the 2nd World Congress on Ecclesial Movements and New Communities*, 22.V.2006; *Pentecost Vigil Homily*, 3.VI.2006; *Regina coeli Discourse*, 4.VI.2006. These texts can be found in PONTIFICIUM CONSILIIUM PRO LAICIS, *The Beauty of being a Christian: Movements in the Church*, Vatican City 2007.

6 *Address* to the participants of a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the pastoral care of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17.V.2008.

7 Cf. L. NAVARRO, *Canonical Dimensions of the New Charisms and Ecclesial Movements*, in *Philippine canonical Forum*, 4 (2002), pp.37-74; *L'incardinazione nei movimenti ecclesiali? Problemi e prospettive*, in *L'istituto dell'incardinazione. Natura e prospettive* (editor L. Navarro), Milan 2006, pp.219-260 (also in *Fidelium iura*, 15 [2005], pp. 63-96); *La incardinacion de los clérigos de los movimientos eclesiales*, in *Ius Canonicum*, 48 (2008), pp.247-276.

The first element consists in the willingness to know reality, and it implies not being closed to whatever is new in society and in the Church. A scholar and a university student can never have a closed attitude, which could be summarized in these words, perhaps not said but certainly thought: "I do not understand it; henceforth I ignore it." Yet, it is not enough to want to know and be satisfied with a superficial knowledge: one must know the reality in depth, which means, in the case of the Church, to examine the diverse phenomena without bias and without forgetting the relation that they have with other ecclesial realities.⁸ From the scientific point of view this is manifested in the need of the ecclesiastical sciences to collaborate among themselves in the search for truth.

The second element, *the openness of heart*, allows us to love, to passionately search for truth. In the case of questions regarding the Church, the openness of heart enables us to see them as something our own, because they form part of the Church to which I also belong. And, besides, it makes it possible to overcome the difficulties in the search for truth; it helps to level the road.

II. The Magisterium of Benedict XVI on Ecclesial Movements

Having made this premise, I shall present first the Magisterium of Benedict XVI on ecclesial movements. I shall divide the exposition in four parts: (1) general characteristics of the papal magisterium; (2) role of the Holy Spirit in the movements; (3) ecclesial value of the movements; and (4) relationship between Pastors and ecclesial movements. At the end I shall point out some relevant conclusions from the canonical point of view that may guide the canonist's work in this sector of the life of the Church.

8 This is clearly shown in the address by Cardinal Ratzinger to the 1st World Congress of Movements, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Ecclesial movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church*, in PONTIFICIUM CONSILIIUM PRO LAICIS, *Movements in the Church*, Vatican City 1999, pp. 23-51. It is the deepest and the most mature theological reflection that so far has been made. On this issue see also A. CATTANEO, *I movimenti ecclesiali: aspetti ecclesiologicali*, in *Annales Theologici*, 11 (1997), pp.407-427, and D. MOGAVERO, *I movimenti ecclesiali tra carisma e istituzione*, in *Impensa adlaboravit. Scritti in onore del Cardinale Salvatore Pappalardo in occasione del suo ottantesimo genetliaco*, F. Armetta and M. Naro (eds), Palermo 1999, pp.515-535.

btcagg 3 1. General Characteristics of the Magisterium

From the teachings of Benedict XVI, since he became Pope, the following characteristics can be noted:

- a) His teachings are in continuity with those of John Paul II. Proofs of this are the explicit references to his predecessor's teachings.⁹
- b) His doctrine on this matter shows that the Pope is aware of the positive and negative reactions caused by the movements and in particular the difficulties of their insertion in particular churches and in parishes. The Pope does not hide that the new forms of Christian life have always been uncomfortable in the beginnings,¹⁰ and that they are not easily understood.¹¹
- c) It is a magisterium characterized by a good balance, by an in-depth vision of the phenomenon in reference to the whole Church, also in reference to her history.¹² This wide vision of ample horizons helps to realize the ecclesial value of the movements.
- d) Finally, as a last characteristic, it is a Magisterium that takes into consideration own personal experiences: the present Pope has had the chance to follow personally and to know well some of these new realities.¹³ It is not a Magisterium based on study or theoretical reflection, based on books or derived from some rigid schemes with no space for the new.

9 Cf. Pentecost Vigil *Homily*, 3.VI.2006; *Regina coeli Message*, 4.VI.2006; *Address* to the Bishop-friends of the Focolare Movement and the Community of St. Egidio, 8.II.2007; *Address* to the participants at the pilgrimage promoted by the *Comunione e Liberazione* fraternity, 24.III.2007; *Address* to participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the Pastoral Care of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17.V.2008.

10 Cf. Meeting with the Clergy of the Rome Diocese, 22.II.2007: "I wish to say only this: Movements have been born in all the centuries. (...) Thus, in our century too, the Lord, the Holy Spirit, has given us new initiatives with new aspects of Christian life. Since they are lived by human people with their limitations, they also create difficulties. So the first rule is: do not extinguish Christian charisms; be grateful even if they are inconvenient." He had already underlined these difficulties before.

11 Cf. *Address* to participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the Pastoral Care of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17.V.2008.

12 *Address* to the parish priests of Rome, 22.II.2007, where he presents the movements in continuous line with the different forms of life in the Church. Among them he mentions the work initiated by St Francis of Assisi and by St Benedict. He had already made this connection with the different forms of spiritual life raised by the Spirit in J. RATZINGER, *The Ecclesial movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church*, *cit.*, pp.36-44.

13 In his writings he refers explicitly to the following ecclesial realities: The Neo-Catechumenal Way, Communion and Liberation, the Charismatic Renewal and the Focolare Movement. "For me personally it was a marvelous experience when, in the early 1970s, I first came into closer contact with movements such as the *Neocatechumenal Way*, *Communion and Liberation*, and the *Focolare Movement*, and so experienced the energy and enthusiasm with which they lived their faith and the joy of their faith which impelled them to share with others the gift they had received." J. RATZINGER, *The Ecclesial movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church*, *cit.*, pp. 23-24. Cf. also *Dialogo con il Cardinale Joseph Ratzinger*, *cit.*, p.223-225.

3. The Role of the Holy spirit in the movements

a) Gifts of the Spirit

The connection between the ecclesial movements and the Holy Spirit is particularly close. On several occasions Benedict XVI has indicated that the movements are *gifts of the Spirit*, a gift to the Church, that they are providential. With an expression simple but rich in content, he would say to the German Bishops on *ad limina* visit: "After the Council, the Holy Spirit endowed us with the 'movements'."¹⁴

The character of being gifts makes the origin of movements unique, although they are normally configured juridically as associations of the faithful: the initiative does not come from the Hierarchy or from the faithful, but from God: "And it is beautiful that without an initiative of the hierarchy but with an initiative from below, as people say, but *which also truly comes from on High*, that is, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, new forms of life are being born in the Church just as, moreover, they were born down the ages."¹⁵

In an encounter with the ecclesial movements and the new communities, during the vigil of Pentecost 2006, alluding to John Paul II, Benedict XVI said: "He described your Associations and Communities on many occasions as 'providential', especially because the Sanctifying Spirit makes use of them to reawaken faith in so many Christian hearts and to reveal to them the vocation they have received with Baptism. He also helps them to be witnesses of hope filled with that fire of love which is bestowed upon us precisely by the Holy Spirit."¹⁶ More recently, the Holy Father stressed that "the Movements and New Communities are like an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in contemporary society."¹⁷

14 *Address* to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of the Federal Republic of Germany during their *ad limina Apostolorum* visit, 18.XI.2006.

15 Meeting with the Clergy of the Rome Diocese, 22.II.2007.

16 *Homily* during the celebration of the 1st Vespers on the vigil of Pentecost, 3.VI.2006.

17 *Address* to participants in the 13th International Conference of the *Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships*, of 31.X.2008.

18 "Whatever their character- sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues-charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n.2003.

btcagg 4 b) The original charism of the movement

The charismatic origin carries the inherent demand of being at the service of the one Body that is the Church¹⁸: “Every gift of the Spirit is found originally and necessarily at the service of the edification of the Body of Christ, offering a witness of the immense charity of God for the life of each person.”¹⁹

A consequence of the charismatic origin is that every movement has its *raison d'être* in the building up of the Church, inasmuch as the same movement is a part of her. The movement is not the Church, since it does not build her up alone, but together with all her institutional and charismatic components. If they are not properly inserted in the universal Church and in the particular Churches, they do not serve, they do not build up. Every movement and each faithful member that is part of her must necessarily be not only aware of it, but also live in the Church.²⁰

The presence of the charism carries with it the right to exist in the Christian community.²¹ The Pope says in this regard: “during a recent encounter with the clergy and the parish priests of Rome, echoing the invitation St Paul addresses in his first letter to the Thessalonians to not wasting the charism, I have said that if the Lord gives us new gifts we must be grateful, even if sometimes they are uncomfortable. At the same time, because the Church is one, if the Movements are truly gifts of the Holy Spirit, they must naturally insert themselves in the ecclesial community and to serve it in such a way that, in patient dialogue with the Pastors, they may become edifying elements for the Church of today and of tomorrow.”²²

19 *Address* to the members of Communion and Liberation movement on the 25th anniversary of its pontifical recognition, 24.III.2007.

20 This aspect was strongly proposed by Card. Ratzinger in the colloquium with the bishops held in 1999. Cf. *Dialogo con il Cardinale Joseph Ratzinger*, *oil*, pp.232-234.

21 “The Movements and New Communities are proud of their associative freedom and faithfulness to their charism.” *Address* to participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the Pastoral Care of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17.V.2008.

22 *Address* to the participant at the pilgrimage promoted by the Fraternity of *Comunione e Liberazione*, 24.III.2007. Also cf. *Address* to the parish priests and the clergy of Rome, 22.II.2007. Cf. likewise the *Address* to participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the pastoral care of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17 May 2008.

c) Places where the Spirit works

Memorable were the two great encounters of the Holy Father with the ecclesial movements in St Peter's square in 1998 and in 2006. Pope Benedict's address was very different from that of John Paul II. In a first reading the homily of 1998 could seem very specific for the new movements; instead the one of 2006 could seem too generic towards these realities, because the Pope developed the meaning of the action of the Spirit, as creator, as carrier of life and of freedom, as giver of unity. Instead, it was not so: Benedict XVI intended to point out some characteristics that must be present in all the movements not only as coming from the Holy Spirit but also inasmuch as in them the Paraclete is constantly at work:

1. The movements are *for life*, but for the true life of man, the life in God, that life we find in the Holy Spirit, *fons vivus*.

2. The movements are *schools of freedom*. The relationship between movements and freedom is very close: in them members are called to live the freedom of the children of God, which implies being involved “in the same responsibility that God has for his world, for the whole of humanity.” The movements are called to be places of “a shared responsibility for the world, for oneself and for others.”

3. The movements live *for and in unity*. The Pope spoke a lot about unity, pointing out that it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. He donates it even though his gifts are multiform, because “in Him multiplicity and unity go hand in hand.” The movements are called to support the action of the Spirit in the Church: “May you take part in the edification of the one body! Pastors must be careful not to extinguish the Spirit (cf. I Thess 5: 19) and you will not cease to bring your gifts to the entire community.”

4. The missionary dimension of the movements. Finally, the Pope in this speech unites *unity and totality* as realities willed by the Spirit: the missionary impulse appears then as an essential element of the movements, because it is typical of the Church through the action of the Spirit: “Dear friends, I ask you to collaborate even more, very much more, in the Pope's universal apostolic ministry, opening doors to Christ.”

A few days earlier, in the message addressed to the 2nd Congress of Ecclesial Movements, Benedict XVI had encouraged: "Bring Christ's light to all the social and cultural milieus in which you live. Missionary zeal is proof of a radical experience of ever renewed fidelity to one's charism that surpasses any kind of weary or selfish withdrawal."²³

4. Importance of the movements in the life of the Church in our times

Very often it is mentioned that many vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life come from the movements, meaning to underline the ecclesial validity of these new irruptions of the Holy Spirit.

Yet before valuing the tree by its fruits, the Pope has pointed some aspects that I consider fundamental and in a certain sense have an innovative character:

a) *They are ways to follow Jesus*: "through the founders and initiators of your Movements and Communities you have glimpsed the Face of Christ shining with special brightness and set out on your way. Christ still continues today to make resound in the hearts of so many that "come, follow me" which can decide their destiny. This normally happens through the witness of those who have had a personal experience of Christ's presence. On the faces and in the words of these "new creatures", his light becomes visible and his invitation audible."²⁴

b) *The movements are part of the living structure of the Church*: "Today, the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities are a luminous sign of the beauty of Christ and of the Church, his Bride. You belong to the living structure of the Church."²⁵ Henceforth, they are not something superfluous. Even Pope Benedict XVI has declared that "the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities are one of the most important innovations inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Church for the implementation of the Second Vatican Council."²⁶

23 *Message* to the participants of the 2nd World Congress on Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 22.V.2006.

24 *Allocution* of 22.V.2006.

25 *Ibid.*

26 *Address* to participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the Pastoral Care of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17.V.2008.

c) *They have a specific mission in the life of the Church in the present world*, a world strongly secularized and relativistic, inasmuch as they are a privileged instrument of evangelization in all the sectors of society. "In the rich Western world, where even though a relativistic culture is present, at the same time a widespread desire for spirituality is not missing, and your Movements witness the joy of the faith and the beauty of being Christian in great ecumenical openness."²⁷

Even for the less developed countries, the movements have a function to develop: "the Ecclesial Movements and new Communities are a providential instrument for a renewed missionary outreach; welcome and promote them in your Dioceses, since the Holy Spirit uses them to awaken and deepen faith in hearts and to proclaim the joy of believing in Jesus Christ."²⁸

Such function they carry out in different ways: some of them through an ample activity of Christian formation that moves the faithful to assume their own responsibilities in the Church and in the world. Thus, speaking in Brazil, the Holy Father reminded all Latin America that "the ecclesial movements have plenty of room here to remind the laity of their responsibility and their mission to bring the light of the Gospel into public life, into culture, economics and politics."²⁹

Among the gifts that the Pope finds in the movements are: "missionary enthusiasm, effective courses of Christian formation, a witness of faithfulness and obedience to the Church, sensitivity to the needs of the poor and a wealth of vocations."³⁰

5. Called to contribute to enliven dioceses and parishes

These gifts of the Spirit are not in contrast or tension with the rest of the Church; rather, the Movements are called to enrich her.

The Pope insists on this aspect with these words addressed to the German Bishops:

"The Church must make the most of these realities, and at the same time she must guide them with pastoral wisdom, so that with the variety of their different gifts they may contribute in the best possible way to building

27 *Address* to the Bishop-friends of the Focolare Movement and the Community of St. Egidio, 8.II.2007.

28 *Address* to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Mozambique on their *ad limina* visit, 26.V.2007.

29 *Address* in the inaugural session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean at the Conference Hall of the Shrine of Aparecida, 13.V.2007.

30 *Address* to the participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the Pastoral Care of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17.V.2008.

up the community without ever entering into competition—each one building, so to speak, its own little church—but respecting one another and working together for the one Church—for the one parish as the local Church—(...) I think that precisely this is another important aspect: this authentic communion on the one hand between the various movements whose forms of exclusivism should be eliminated, and on the other, between the local Churches and the movements, so that the local Churches recognize this particularity, which seems strange to many, and welcome it in itself as a treasure, understanding that in the Church there are many ways and that all together they converge in a symphony of faith. The local Churches and movements are not in opposition to one another, but constitute the living structure of the Church.”³¹

6. Relationship between Pastors and Movements

On different occasions the Pontiff has dwelt on different aspects concerning the indispensable relationship between Pastors and movements, and he has done this in a special way during the encounter with Bishops held in May 2008.

a) The departure point for the understanding of this relationship is that there is no contradiction between the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension in the Church. “In the Church the essential institutions are also charismatic and indeed the charisms must, in one way or another, be institutionalized to have coherency and continuity. Hence, both dimensions originate from the same Holy Spirit for the same Body of Christ, and together they concur to make present the mystery and the salvific work of Christ in the world.”³²

31 *Address* at the Meeting with German Bishops on the occasion of the XX World Youth Day, 21.VIII. 2005.

32 *Address* to the participants in the pilgrimage sponsored by the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of its Pontifical Recognition, 24.III. 2007. On this point vid. Card. Ratzinger’s *Allocution* to the Congress of 1998.

b) One characteristic of this relationship is that it has not always been peaceful, and that there have been many obstacles. Some of them come from the difficulty to comprehend the inherent newness of the movements; a reality that, with the Pope’s words: “is still waiting to be properly understood.”³³ The Holy Father does not hide that there have been “many bias, resistances and tensions” and says that the way to overcome them is dialogue and collaboration.³⁴

c) On the basis of this deep comprehension of the Church and of the difficulties in accepting the movements, the Pope addresses both Bishops and Movements, indicating what behooves each one in this relationship.

—**To the Pastors** he requests a true fatherly attitude, summarizing it in the already popular words: “I ask you to go and meet the movements with great love.”³⁵ This implies “adequately knowing their reality, without superficial impressions or narrow judgments”; seeing them always as “a gift of the Lord, a precious reservoir to enrich with their charism the whole Christian community.” This will result in “a trustworthy welcome that gives them room and appreciates their contribution to the life of the local Churches.” And if by chance memories of difficult movements should reappear in this difficult relationship between Pastors and Movements, the Pope forewarns: “Difficulties or incomprehension on these particular issues do not authorize closing up.”³⁶

33 “How is it possible not to realize at the same time that such newness is still waiting to be properly understood in the light of God’s plan and of the Church’s mission in the context of our time? Precisely because of this numerous interventions, appeals and directions succeeded one another on the part of the Pontiffs, who were fostered an ever deeper dialogue and collaboration with numerous particular Churches. Many prejudices, forms of resistance and tensions were overcome. Still to be achieved is the important task of promoting a more mature communion of all the ecclesial elements, so that all the charisms, with respect for their specificity, may freely and fully contribute to the edification of the one Body of Christ.” *Address* to participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the Pastoral Care of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17.V.2008.

34 *Ibid.*

35 “I could almost say that I have nothing else to add! Love is the distinctive sign of the Good Shepherd: it makes the exercise of the ministry that has been entrusted to us authoritative and effective.” *Ibid.*

36 “To meet the needs of the Movements and New Communities very lovingly, impels us to know their situation well, without superficial impressions or belittling judgements. It also helps us to understand that the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities are not an additional problem or risk that comes to top our already difficult task. No! they are a gift of the Lord, a valuable resource for enriching the entire Christian Community with their charisms. Consequently, trusting acceptance that makes room for them and appreciates their contributions to the life of the local Churches must not be absent. Difficulties or misunderstanding on specific questions do not authorize their closure.” *Ibid.*

It is worth noticing that said welcome and openness is not theoretical, but real: Pastors must closely accompany the movements not only in their first steps but always.³⁷ That is why the Pope asks “that dialogue between Pastors and ecclesial Movements be intensified at all levels: in the parishes, in the dioceses and with the Apostolic See.”

In the role of Pastors the *discernment of charisms* has a privileged place, a task to develop during the first stages of the life of the movements and requires an accompaniment “prudent and vigilant”. “Consecrated and assisted by the Spirit of God, in Christ, Head of the Church, the Bishop will have to examine the charisms and test them, in order to know and evaluate whatever is good, truthful and beautiful, that which contributes to the increasing of the holiness of the individuals and of the communities.” This ecclesial service is particularly difficult and connotes on the part of the Pastor the grave responsibility of not chocking the charisms or attempting a uniformity of them contrary to God’s will.³⁸

In this regard, the Pope has recently underscored the value to be given to the discernment made by the Holy See: Bishops cannot ignore this fact, in welcoming movements approved by the Holy See.³⁹

—To the movements the Holy Father reminds, above all, their absolutely necessary openness to discernment. “The authenticity of new charisms is guaranteed by their readiness to submit to the discernment of the Ecclesiastical Authority.”⁴⁰

37 “We Pastors are asked to accompany the Movements and the New Communities closely, with fatherly concern, cordially and wisely, so that they may generously make available for use by all, in an orderly and fruitful manner, the many gifts they bear, which we have learned to recognize and appreciate: missionary enthusiasm, effective courses of Christian formation, a witness of faithfulness and obedience to the Church, sensitivity to the needs of the poor and a wealth of vocations.” *Ibid.*

38 “Others, in a nascent phase, require the exercise of even more sensitive and watchful guidance by the Pastors of the particular Churches. Those who are called to a service of discernment and guidance should not claim to dominate charisms but rather to guard against the danger of suffocating them (cf. I Thes 5: 19-21), resisting the temptation to standardize what the Holy Spirit desired to be multi-form, to contribute to building and extending the one Body of Christ, which the same Spirit renders firm in unity.” Address to participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the Pastoral Care of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17 May 2008.

39 “From this fact- the recognition or establishment of international associations on the part of the Holy See for the universal Church-Pastors, especially Bishops, cannot fail to take it into account in their dutiful discernment that lies within their competence (cf. CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores*, Chapt. 4, 8).” Address to the participants in the 13th International Conference of the *Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships*, 31.X.2008.

40 Address to the participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the Pastoral Care of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17.V.2008.

In the context of the needed relationship between Pastors and movements, Benedict XVI has not stopped requesting obedience to Pastors: “I trust in your prompt obedience. Over and above the affirmation of the right to life itself, the edification of the Body of Christ among others must always prevail with indisputable priority. Movements must approach each problem with sentiments of deep communion, in a spirit of loyalty to their legitimate Pastors.”⁴¹

7. Canonical orientations

When a canon lawyer deals with new associations in the Church, among the tasks entrusted to him/her is the one of suggesting a juridical configuration and of helping to prepare the statutes. In such duty he/she finds also the help of the pontifical magisterium, because in it, as we have just seen, there are guidelines and criteria of the ecclesiastical authority concerning the life and operation of the movements in the Church.

Among the canonical consequences of what has been presented in these pages, I would like to emphasize the following three:

a) The *right to life* of these new realities in the Church must be recognized. They have the right to exist in accordance with their own charism. The entire Church-Pastors and the rest of the faithful- must respect this right. The movement leaders and members have the right and the obligation to be faithful to their own charism.

b) The movements have the duty *to be always in communion* with the Church, because only in her do they find their *raison d'être*. Such obligation becomes concrete in relation with the Pastors and with the other components of the Church.

In relation to the Pastors communion is shown in the obedience due to them and particularly in subjecting the movements to their discernment. To that end, movements have the grave obligation to make themselves know such as they are in real life. Offering a partial vision of themselves implies giving a false image of their own identity and impeding the ecclesiastical authority from declaring according to truth the ecclesial nature of the entity. Hence the ecclesial recognition of the movements is not simply a formal process, demanding an examination of the statutes or laws of the entity, but an ecclesial event through which it is announced to the entire Christian

41 *Allocution* of 22.V.2006.

community that such an entity is truly in the Church and for the Church. It is the recognition of a reality, not of a piece of paper.⁴²

In relation to the other ecclesial entities, communion is shown in the obligation that all the other movements have of respecting and appreciating them, aware of their contribution to the mission of the Church. Besides, in the fidelity to their own identity, each movement is called to collaborate with other movements. The starting point of this communion is a better knowledge of each other.⁴³

c) The respect for the charism and for the ecclesial identity of the movement demands that the juridical configuration be the most adequate one to such reality. In this regard it is essential to identify whatever is juridical in the life of this reality and before any formalization. In fact in the movements there are demands of justice coming both from the charism and from the condition of the persons and of the groups. For instance, belonging to a movement connotes some rights and obligations concerning formation (both specific and Christian), apostolate and mission. The movement must always respect the canonical condition of its members (celibate or single, married, ordained, consecrated) and of the families that integrate it (the rights and the duties of family relation must be guaranteed and protected). Finally, also those rights of the single must be guaranteed, like the right to privacy, to good name, etc.

From this perspective that regards the law as the dimension of justice of reality⁴⁴, it can be said that the canonist will have to strive so that the Statutes be like the photo of whatever juridical exists already in the movement and in the charism. In this way its formalization will be also at the service of the Spirit and of the charism.⁴⁵ Such task implies a particular

42 Cf. L. NAVARRO, *Persone e soggetti nel diritto della Chiesa*, Roma 2000, pp. 192-194

43 "There is still pending the important task of promoting a more mature communion of all the ecclesial elements, so that all the charisms, with respect for their specificity, may freely and fully contribute to the edification of the one Body of Christ." Address to participants in a Study Seminar convoked by the Pontifical Council for the Laity to reflect on the pastoral care of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, 17 May 2008.

44 Cf. J. HERVADA, *Critical Introduction to Natural Law*, Montreal 2006, e C.J. ERRÁZURIZ M., *Justice in the Church. A Fundamental Theory of Canon Law*, Montreal 2009.

45 The tension between institutionalization and charism can certainly be reduced if the juridical configuration is able to reflect the charism. Cf. *Dialogo con il Cardinale Joseph Ratzinger*, cit., p. 228-229.

effort on the part of the canonists to understand better these realities, and to find the best solutions for each one,⁴⁶ even if in certain cases they may be innovative. The application of standardized models of statutes to these realities would be harmful for the rights of the movements.

8. Conclusion

In the process of writing these pages the words of Jesus cross my mind: "No one pours new wine into old wineskins, for the skins will burst, the wine will pour out, and the skins will be ruined. Instead, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins, and both will keep in good condition" (Mt 9:17). In the case of the movements and the corresponding Magisterium of the Pope we can still pour new wine into fresh wineskins⁴⁷. This will be possible if all of us keep mind and heart open to these gifts of the Spirit to his Church.

46 "I know that opportune ways are being studied to give Pontifical recognition to the New Movements and Ecclesial Communities and many have already received it." Address to participants in the 13th International Conference of the *Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships*, 31 October 2008.

47 I am not implying to create a new juridical configuration for all ecclesial movements and new communities, but to the need to identify the most adequate juridical configuration to each new reality in the Church. In some cases the configuration of private or public association could fit, in other cases a section of the movement can be configured as religious Institute or Society of Apostolic life, while the rest of the movement could be an association of the faithful. On this issue, see G. FELICIANI, *Quale statuto canonico per le nuove comunità?*, in *Informationes SCRIS*, 26 (2000), pp.145-154.