

RECONCILIATION OF THE DIVERSITY

What is Pope Francis asking for?

By Matteo Calisi

On several occasions Pope Francis has urged Christians to seek unity with the expression *reconciled diversity*. We find this exhortation, or more rightly appeal, in several of his speeches, as if it were the *leit-motiv*, the central theme of his Pontificate. What is he asking of all Christians and in particular to us Catholics of the Charismatic Renewal?

With the gesture of forgiveness during his visit to the Evangelical Church of Reconciliation in Caserta, South Italy in July of 2014, Pope Francis inaugurated a new way to *reconcile the diversity among Christians*. Pope Francis has laid the foundations of a great bridge towards Pentecostalism giving honor to these Christian brothers and sisters of ours, who were persecuted by a totalitarian system (the fascist dictatorship of Benito Mussolini) which also included the responsibility of the baptized of the Catholic Church to collaborate in the repression of the Pentecostals, as it has been very sadly documented. Here below is the request of forgiveness of Pope Francis:

“... these laws were sanctioned by baptized people! *Some of those who made this law and some of those who persecuted, denounced Pentecostal brothers and sisters because they were ‘excited’, almost ‘crazy’,*

that ruin the race, some were Catholics ... I am the Pastor of Catholics: I ask your forgiveness for this! I ask your forgiveness for those Catholic brothers and sisters who did not understand and were tempted by the devil and they did the same thing as the brothers of Joseph. I ask the Lord that he give us the grace to recognize and to forgive... Thank you!”

On that same occasion Pope Francis indicated in the *reconciled diversity* the feasible (practical) way for an authentic ecumenism:

“What does the Holy Spirit do? ... The Holy Spirit creates ‘diversity’ in the Church. The first Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12. He creates diversity! And truly this *diversity* is very rich, very beautiful. But then, the same Holy Spirit creates unity, and in this way the Church is one in diversity. And, to use a beautiful word

of an evangelical whom I love very much, a ‘reconciled diversity’ of the Holy Spirit. He does both these things: he creates diversity of charisms and then makes harmony of the charisms...”

In this *new method* of ecumenical dialogue Pope Francis invites Christians to overcome *diffidence*, to come close to each other, to have mutual esteem, to forgive each other, to collaborate, to recognize the existence of the *diversities* and to celebrate them, to welcome the gift of unity: “With this objective we need to entrust the heart to our fellow traveler without suspicion, without *diffidence*, first of all looking for that for which we are seeking: peace in the face of the one God.” I think that for the future of the unity of Christians, the words of Pope Francis can truly help us; he invites the churches and Christians to live the *differences in a reconciled way* and to love each other despite the *differences*, to love each other with the *differences*.

The Pope proposes the search for an understanding among the various Christian confessions: *diversity of the churches seen as gift of the Spirit* not to be lost in a general *unification* which would end up nullifying that spiritual riches:

“We are in the age of globalization, and let us think what is globalization – with an illustration - and what would be *unity* in the Church:

Prayer Card



Ministry Leading to Unity

“And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ ...”

Ephesians 4:11-13

“The Charismatic Renewal has a fundamental role to promote reconciled diversity.”

maybe a globe, where all the points are equidistant from the center, all of them equal? No! This is *uniformity*. And the Holy Spirit does not create *uniformity*! What illustration can we consider? Let's consider the polyhedron: the polyhedron is a unit, but all its parts are *different*, each one has its own peculiarity, its charism. This is *unity in diversity*. And along this road, we Christians do that which has the theological name of Ecumenism: we try to ensure that this *diversity* is more harmonized by the Holy Spirit and it becomes *unity*.”

Besides it is necessary to welcome the *diversity* as *kenosis* (emptying), accepting it as grace for communion. To look at the *diversity* in a healed, reconciled way, not as an obstacle, but as a necessary process that goes through purification and suffering. Christ died to reconcile us to the Father. This is the paradox of the Cross of Christ.

We must learn to accept the other in his or her *diversity*. Not all *diversities* are necessarily divisions! We must see a church as a gift for the other churches. True ecumenism is an exchange of

gifts. For Pope Francis “Many are the precious things that unite us! And if we truly believe in the free and generous action of the Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! And it is not a question of receiving only information about the others to get to know them better, but to reap that which the *Spirit has sown in them as a gift also for us...* Through an *exchange of gifts*, the Spirit can lead us all the more to the truth and to good.”

The Charismatic Renewal has a fundamental role to promote *reconciled diversity*. On various occasions Pope Francis has defined it as a *current of pentecostal grace* present in most of Christianity: “This *current of grace* is present in all Christian confessions, all of us who believe in Christ.”

Pope Francis asked, “Which is the *common sign* of those who are reborn by this *current of grace*?” To be changed into new men and women, this is the Baptism in the Spirit.” The common sign of baptism in the Spirit experienced in the majority of the Christian denominations worldwide is for Pope Francis, evidently, an effective and particular ‘ecumenical



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