

LAY MOVEMENTS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



By

Fr. Lorenzo Carraro, MCCJ

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2020

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Winds of the Spirit

# **A NEW PENTECOST**

*Many new movements have grown in the Catholic Church around the happening of the Second Vatican Council. They represent the awakening of the laity, the people of God. They came into the open together on Pentecost Day 1998 at the presence of pope John Paul II to the surprise and amazement of the world.*

In the long history of the Church, above all in the moments ecclesiastical crisis or in the defining instances of cultural change, we meet with those that the great theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar used to call “the great gifts of holiness that Christ grants to his Church”: the new orders and movements like the Benedictines, the Mendicants, the Jesuits. Something of this kind is shared by the phenomenon of the contemporary Ecclesial Movements often joined to great figures of initiators and founders.

Together with the permanent form of Church life which is its sacramental and ministerial structure established by Christ himself, we have also a life of the Holy Spirit, which is mirrored in the Spirit’s continuous interventions throughout Church history: the charisms or gifts which give life and vitality to the basic sacramental life.

Our present series “Winds of the Spirit” is meant to help us to read these new realities in the Church, often accompanied by tension and suffering, as a traditional ingredient in the melting pot of the situation of the contemporary Church.

Already in 1987, John Paul II had declared; “The great blossoming of these movements and the manifestations of Church vitality and energy that make them so special must be considered as one of the best fruits of the large and profound spiritual renewal promoted by the last Council”.

## ***1998 World Congress and Symposium***

It was the Pontifical Council for the Laity, during the immediate preparation for the 2000 Great Jubilee Year, that promoted and organized the World Congress of the Church Movements which took place in Rome, immediately

before Pentecost Day 1998. The theme of the Congress was: “The Church Movements: Communion and Mission on the threshold of the Third Millennium”.

This topic was the focus of the Symposium which took place from May 27 to 29, preceding the huge gathering of the more than 500 thousand members of the fifty plus church movements in Saint Peter’s square, on May 30, 1998, Pentecost Day. The climax of the Congress was the solemn Mass, presided over by pope John Paul II in front of the overwhelming crowd which appeared as a New Pentecost.

On that occasion the pope spoke like this: “Suddenly, from heaven there came a noise like a gust of strong wind that filled the house in which they had gathered. There appeared like tongues of fire which parted and rested on each one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (*Acts of the Apostles 2:2-3*). These words of the Acts of the Apostles introduce us into the heart of the Pentecost event, they show us the disciples who, gathered together with Mary in the Upper Room, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In this way, Jesus’ promise becomes a reality and the Church’s time begins. From this moment, the wind of the Holy Spirit will take the disciples of Christ to the ends of the earth, right to martyrdom and to a fearless witness of the Gospel. What happened in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, is as if it is happening again this evening in this square which is the center of the Christian world”.

### ***Like Francis, Philip and Ignatius***

Precisely in the same place, Rome, and to the same leader, the pope, who has the charism and the mission of unity in the Church, in centuries past, there came Saint Francis of Assisi and Philip Neri and Ignatius of Loyola, in the spring-time of their lives. They were looking for guidance and support and for the papal apostolic blessing on their work with the religious and the laity of their time.

After the papal Mass, in that 1998 Pentecost Day, the most prominent leaders of this season of the Spirit spoke to the Holy Father in the name of all the many movements present at that gathering. The world figures Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare, Kiko Arguello of the New Catechumenal Way and Father Luigi Giussani of “Comunione e Liberazione” alternated at the microphone to express their loyalty to the leadership of the Church and their commitment to unity in diversity.



be open, ego-free, and just relentlessly nice. In a time of bitter divisions, Focolare is one of the few outfits with a track record of bringing people together”.

They have the trust of the bishops and of the Vatican -- no mean feat for a lay movement which includes members belonging to other Christian churches and even other religions. Their originality is marked also by the fact that their overall leader is and will always be a woman.

### ***From the war chaos***

In the Northern Italian city of Trent in 1943, in the climate of violence and hatred of the Second World War, the young elementary school teacher Chiara Lubich saw God's love as the only antidote when civil life was crumbling around her. With Bible in hand, in the shelters during air raids, she felt deeply Jesus' desire "that they all may be one." A group sharing her vision joined in helping those in the shelters and in the poorest parts of town, and numbers grew.

Chiara gave the name: “Focolare” to the movement. The word "Focolare" is Italian for "hearth" or "family fireside". It symbolizes the warmth of God's love in action. While Focolare is the common designation given to this organization, its official name is "Work of Mary" and it was approved by Rome as an “International Association of the Faithful”.

In 1948, the journalist Iginio Giordani, a member of Parliament and pioneer of ecumenism, joined the group, bringing his spirituality of social unity. Another co-founder was Fr. Pasquale Foresi who gave theological background to the movement.

### ***Stupendous Growth***

Numbers increased in the yearly encounter of the Focolare and by 1955 this gathering took on the name "Mariapolis", a model settlement for peace under Mother Mary's patronage. In 1964 Loppiano, the first permanent Mariapolis, was built near Florence.

It has grown to include 900 people of worldwide origins and diverse occupations, married and single, priests and religious, who work and study together and strive to live in exemplary Christian charity. Each year an average of 40,000 visitors pass through Loppiano.

Twenty other such towns have sprung up worldwide. In these towns religious and cultural differences are respected, to exemplify Jesus' dream: "Father, may they all be one, as you and I are one".

The tenets of Chiara's charism are two: the words of Jesus who said that when two or three are united in his name, he is in their midst. The second is the devotion to the crucified Christ in his cry: "My God, why have you abandoned me?".

Following the spirituality of communion, the movement has branched out to address a variety of groups including families, youth, and different religions. Special projects have sprung up within the movement, such as the "Abba" school (Young People for a United World), Gen Verde and Gen Rosso (artistic and musical groups) and especially "Economy of Communion" (involving more than 800 companies) and 27 publishing houses.

The Focolare has around 150,000 hard core members in more than 180 countries. People more broadly involved in the movement are estimated at more than four million.

### *School of Saints*

The extraordinary quality of Chiara's charism is exemplified also by the number of would-be saints who are lining up in view of canonization by the authority of the Church. The leader is Chiara Badano, a young lady who died prematurely at 19, who was declared blessed in 2010.

She is the first of an impressive little crowd of saintly Focolare members, comprising 4 "Venerables", including the famous confessor of faith in the Vietnamese prison, Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan and 18 Servants of God and among them the founder Chiara Lubich and the co-founders Igino Giordani and Fr. Pasquale Foresi. An extraordinarily abundant harvest of saints that shows the truth of Jesus' words: "From the fruits you will know the goodness of the tree".

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The winds of the Spirit: Couples for Christ

## **THE PATTERN OF NAZARETH**

*The call to evangelize marks the commitment of many Christian couples who have joined in a now worldwide movement. Born of the Charismatic Renewal, Couples for Christ mean to draw from the example of the Holy Family and make the devotion to Christ' mission a widespread reality in the family.*

Vatican II spoke beautifully of the Christian family and its vocation to holiness and apostolate in *Gaudium et Spes*, in the wake of pope Paul VI iconic speech at Nazaret, during his historic visit to the Holy Land in 1964. Although we have rare examples of holy couples in Church history like saint Isidro Labrador and his wife, Maria de la Cabeza, it is only recent the beatification of a couple, husband and wife, together.

The first couple to be beatified are Luigi and Maria Beltrame-Quattrocchi: he was an engineer and committed in politics and she was a professor and a poet. The second were Saint Therese of Lisieux' parents Louis and Zélie Martin: he was a watchmaker and she an artist in the lace-making trade.

Many other fascinating couples are emerging from the history of our times like Jean and Raissa Maritain: he was the most prominent Christian philosopher of the XX century and she a writer and a mystic: both converted to Catholicism during their university years and died in odor of sanctity.

And how can we forget Leonard Cheshire and baroness Sue Ryder: both from prominent British families and advanced in their career of Christian philanthropists, committed to handicapped, orphans and any type of unhappy humanity. Love caught up with them in the afternoon of their lives: they married, had two daughters and continue their saintly life in the most exemplary way until the Lord called them. They were, however, individual couples.

*Unity is Strength*

The movement of Couples For Christ began in 1981 in Manila, Philippines, when *Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon* (Joy in the Lord), a covenanted Christian charismatic community, realized that to effectively renew society, a conversion of both spouses, and consequently families, to Christ was necessary.

The method used consisted of bringing together a small group of prospective couples in a private home. There they were brought to a living relationship with Jesus Christ and to renewal in the power of the Holy Spirit through a series of weekly informal discussions of the gospel in a social environment.

Those who wanted to join would have to go through a weekly seminar series called the Christian Life Program, which usually spanned several weeks or sessions. The exercise serves as the primary Evangelization approach, a core activity of CFC members.

At the end of the seminar, couple-participants are invited to dedicate themselves to the Lord as CFC members and to commit themselves to participating actively in the life of the community and the Church through regular prayer meetings, attendance in community assemblies and involvement in parish life.

CFC members commit themselves to the Lord and to one another so that they may grow in maturity as men and women of God and fulfill their primary vocation of raising families grounded in Christian values, in the service and love of God.

### ***Family life renewal***

Beginning from the first 16 couples who joined the weekly gathering, the movement became a Christian family life renewal which was later made available to parishes and groups of married couples who wished to live out their Christian life in an active, supportive relationship with one another. The growth of CFC stemmed from its heart for mission and evangelization and its commitment to sharing God's love with others, beginning from the basic unit, the family.

The Christian Life Program is also the point of entry for those who wish to join CFC's Family Ministries: Singles for Christ, for single young professionals; Handmaids of the Lord and Servants of the Lord, for women and men who are widowed, single parents or those whose spouses choose



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The Winds of the Spirit: The Neo-Catechumenal Way

# **REVIVING THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

*The Neo-Catechumenal Way is a worldwide Catholic movement that makes the participants rediscover their baptism. Many conversions and vocations to the ministry are often the cherished result of their demanding formation journey.*

In March 2008, nine cardinals and one hundred and sixty European bishops gathered on the Mount of the Beatitudes, in Palestine, in the center of the Neo-Catechumenal Way. On that occasion, Cardinal Schönborn said: "During the last forty years Europe has said 'no' to its future three times: in 1968 when it rejected '*Humanae Vitae*'; then, twenty years later, with the legalization of abortion; and today with homosexual marriages." He called the Neo-Catechumenal Way an "answer of the Holy Spirit to this situation."

The *Neo-Catechumenal Way*, also known colloquially as *The Way*, is a movement within the Catholic Church dedicated to the Christian formation of adults. Taking its inspiration from the Catechumenate of the early Church by which converts from paganism were prepared for baptism by a thorough instruction, it provides post-baptismal formation to adults who are already members of the Church.

It originated in Spain in 1964 through the inspiration and dedication of two lay persons: Francisco "Kiko" Argüello and Carmen Hernández, with the purpose of evangelizing the slums of Madrid. In 1968, Argüello and Hernández arrived in Rome and started the first community in the parish of the Canadian Martyrs. Since then, the Way has continued to spread to dioceses and mission countries around the world.

The Neo-Catechumenate is implemented in small, parish-based communities of between twenty to fifty people. It is estimated that there are more than 40 thousand such communities throughout the World, with well over a million members. It also runs a hundred seminaries in various locations, and is responsible for hundreds of "families in mission," living in many cities around the World. In June 2008 the Statutes of the Neo-Catechumenal Way received final approval from the Vatican.

### ***God's marvelous work***

On that occasion, Fr. Mario Pezzi, the priest who belongs to the leading team with Kiko and Carmen, said: "I am very happy and grateful to the Lord for this day when the Way is recognized by the ministry of Peter. I also have a story. Before being ordained a priest, I experienced an inner struggle. I was seeing a gap between priests and God's people; their language people did not understand; the liturgy had very little influence in people's lives; there was like a divorce between faith and life".

Searching for an answer to his inner turmoil, the young priest met with the Neo-Catechumenal Way. He was attracted, he joined and found peace. He continued: "Thirty two years have passed and I have witnessed God's marvelous work in the extraordinary expansion of the Way. Today, I see that the Lord is faithful and the Church is mother".

Fr. Mario not only found serenity in the Way, but was called to join Kiko and Carmen as the first presbyter and since then he has belonged to the "International Responsible Team" of the Way and he will be in such position for his whole life.

Pope John Paul II summarized the role of the NC Way's itinerant catechists in December 1985: "They contribute by forming the first Neo-Catechumenal communities of a parish, and are supposed to maintain regular contact with the Bishops of the diocese in which they work".

Approximately every three years, the World Youth Day has been organized by the Roman Catholic Church, during which the Pope summons youths from all over the world to a chosen city. The Way has been an active supporter of these, rallying its young members to attend. For instance, during World Youth Day 2008, 40 thousand youth were from the Neo-Catechumenal Way.

### ***Extraordinary vocational call***

During the event, the youth usually meet with Argüello for a "vocational call." In Sydney, for example, approximately 1,500 men answered the call for the priesthood and 850 young women stood up to show their willingness to enter the consecrated life. The same happened in the other World Youth Days. These young men and women then begin a process of discernment in their own dioceses and communities, which may lead to priesthood or consecrated life.

The spreading of the Neo-Catechumenal Way has not been without controversy and criticism especially because of the length of their formation journey and the fact of separating its members from the rest of the parish communities. On the whole, however, this has been avoided with better dialogue and understanding between the leaders of the Way and the local pastors.

On March 6, 2015, Pope Francis told the "Families in Mission" of the Way: "I confirm your call, I support your mission and I bless your charism. You will go in Christ's name to the whole world to bring his Gospel: Christ precedes you, Christ accompanies you, Christ will bring to fulfillment the salvation of which you are bearers!"

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Winds of the Spirit: The Community of Saint Egidio

## **THE PEACEMAKERS**

*It all started in the turbulent year 1968 when a group of college students took to reading the gospel seriously and got involved with the poor of the suburbs of Rome. The Community of Saint Egidio is now a world event with tens of thousands of members in many countries.*

In February 2009, while visiting Rome, George W. Bush wanted to see everybody who mattered in world affairs: pope Benedict, the political leaders of Italy and, remarkably enough, the members of the Community of Saint Egidio, first of all, the founder Prof. Andrea Riccardi.

This is not surprising since the fame of the Community of Saint Egidio has put it already for several years in the list for the Nobel Prize. In 2004, it was awarded the Balzan Prize for the commitment in reviving the peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups and in promoting, regardless of religious beliefs, humanitarian action, peace and brotherhood among peoples.

### *A fruit of Vatican II*

The Community of Saint Egidio was born in Rome out of the initiative of Andrea Riccardi, then a seventeen years old college student, who, in the climate of renewal promoted by Vatican II, started gathering a group of other college students in order to read and put in practice the Gospel.

In few years their movement spread in different students environments and became concrete in activities on behalf of the poor and marginalized. In the popular quarters of the outskirts of Rome, the work of evangelization started and soon gave origin to the adult community. From 1973, in the church of Saint Egidio at Trastevere, the first church of the community, there originated the tradition of the evening common prayer that since then accompanies all the communities all over the world.

In the second half of the Seventies, the Community began to take root also in other Italian cities and then, in the eighties, to spread throughout Europe, Africa, America and Asia. Since its origin, the Community has cared for all kinds of poverty: the aged, especially if alone and not self-sufficient, the immigrant and vagrant, the terminally ill and Aids patients, the abused and abandoned children, the physically and mental handicapped, drug addicts, the victims of war, prisoners and death row convicts.

On May 18 1986, the Pontifical Council for the Laity decreed the erection of the Community of Saint Egidio as International Lay Association of pontifical right. The leadership of the Community is entrusted to the President with his council and helped by an Assistant who is a priest. The

actual president is Prof. Marco Impagliazzo. The Community of Saint Egidio counts about 60.000 members in more than 70 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and North and South America.

Together with prayer and the communication of the gospel, the life of the community has built up forms of help and friendship, caring for the dignity and the rights of the human person. It is this very friendship with and closeness to the poor that have made the Community of Saint Egidio understand better how war is the mother of all poverties and consequently commit itself openly in favor of pace and peacemaking.

### *Peace and Dialogue*

On October 27, 1986, pope John Paul II, with the inspiration of a prophet, invited the leaders of the world religions to pray and fast for peace at Assisi. What pope John Paul II did on that occasion has become a point of reference for the world also because the Community of Saint Egidio took to itself the heritage of John Paul II and, every year since that date, has conveyed a gathering of representatives of all world religions in different cities of the world like, among other, Warsaw, Bruxelles, Milan, Florence, Bucarest, Padua, Venice, Barcellona.

This commitment has grown contemporarily with the work of mediation for peace, first of all in the troubled continent of Africa. In Mozambique, a country ravaged by more than twenty years of civil war, the Community of Saint Egidio was naturally accepted as a peacemaker.

Thanks to the mediation of the Community of Saint Egidio, after a long and difficult process of meetings among the contenders, with ups and downs of hope and disappointment, the peace agreement was signed in Rome on October 4 1992.

### *Inspired by the Church of the Acts*

The Community of Saint Egidio is a family of communities rooted in different local churches. The term “Community” mirrors, among other things, a demand for friendship and brotherhood that is so much felt since





The Catholic faith has always believed that the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Risen Christ to his Church, is active both in the institutional aspects like the sacraments and in the spontaneous initiatives like the inspirations of the Saints, the extraordinary gifts and the miracles.

The same Spirit operates when consecrating the bread and wine in the Eucharist, infallibly answering the call of the ordained minister, in the deep, reverend silence only enhanced by the ringing of the bell, as well as when firing the special call of the mystics and their extraordinary experiences.

So, it was really nothing new what happened, sometimes after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, in the United States, i.e. the origin of the Charismatic Renewal Movement. The novelty was in the communitarian aspect and the emotional vivacity of the religious expressions that like a gust of healthy wind, gave new life to the traditional Catholic spirituality. It was also remarkable that the protagonists, as in other movements, were mainly lay people. This is how it happened.

### ***In the Pentecost spirit***

In search of a spiritual experience, professors from Duquesne University, a Catholic university in Pittsburgh, USA, attended the Congress of the *Cursillo* movement in August 1966. While visiting, they were introduced to the book entitled *The Cross and the Switchblade*, which emphasized the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's charisms or gifts. This book became the focus of their studies and further led them to pursue the Holy Spirit.

In January 1967, professors Ralph Keifer and Patrick Bourgeois attended a prayer meeting where they ultimately received a deep spiritual experience which they called the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The following week, Keifer laid hands on other Duquesne professors, and they also had an experience with the Spirit.

Then, in February, during a gathering of Duquesne University students, more people asked Keifer to pray over them. This led to the event at the chapel where they too received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, as well as many other students who were present in the chapel. Keifer sent the news of this event to the University of Notre Dame, where a similar happening later occurred, and the Renewal began to spread.

### ***A power beyond all expectations***

This is how Ralph Keifer tries to describe the new experience: “We have found ourselves on a plane of Christian life all the textbooks call normal and all practice and expectation seem to deny. Our faith has come alive, our believing has become a kind of knowing. In brief, Jesus Christ is a real person to us, who is our Lord and who is active in our lives.

Prayer and the sacraments have become truly our daily bread. A love of the Scriptures, a love of the Church I never thought possible, a need and a power to witness beyond all expectation, have all become part of our lives”.

### ***All over the world***

Adherents of the movement formed prayer groups called covenant communities. In these communities, members practiced a stronger commitment to spiritual ideals. In addition to local covenant institutions, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal also experienced international development due to missionaries who experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit while visiting the United States and implemented their own such services when they returned home.

The International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services based in Rome had a significant role in the guidance of this form of expansion. As of now, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal exists in over 230 countries in the world, with over 200 million members. Participants in the Renewal also cooperate with non-Catholic bible communities and other Catholics for ecumenism, as encouraged by the Catholic Church.

Today, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal enjoys support from most of the Church's hierarchy, from the Pope to bishops of dioceses around the world, as a recognized ecclesial movement. Moreover, during Pentecost 1998, pope John Paul II recognized the essential nature of the charismatic dimension:

"The institutional and charismatic aspects are co-essential as it were to the Church's constitution. They contribute, although differently, to the life, renewal and sanctification of God's People. It is therefore providential this rediscovery of the Church's charismatic dimension”.

### ***Being prayed over***



Inspired by his recovery from a heart ailment, in 1978, Mike Velarde started a weekly Bible-quoting radio show. Listeners, he said, began reporting that his voice had cured their afflictions. In 1984, Velarde called his show “El Shaddai” (The Almighty), one of the biblical attributes of God in the Old Testament.

Bro. Mike then held monthly prayer rallies outside the vicinity of his radio station. As the number of attendees kept growing, he made the rallies weekly until the crowd could no longer be accommodated in the area. The rallies were then moved to various location such as a football stadium, and then several times to the Quirino Grandstand at Rizal Park and finally in Amvel Business Park, Paranaque, where the House of Prayer eventually arose.

El Shaddai Movement has grown rapidly in the last decades and has a reported 8 million members worldwide since wherever there are Filipinos, there El Shaddai is represented. This is because it decided to remain within the Catholic Church. Its diocesan bishop is Rev. Jessie Mercado of the Diocese of Paranaque, while its Spiritual Adviser is Rev. bishop Teodoro Bacani.

### ***Appealing to a majority***

Bro. Make is married with four children and remains a layman within the Roman Catholic Church. His preaching style resembles that of the typical prosperity gospel-driven Pentecostal televangelists. It promises God’s financial and physical blessings to all provided that they remain faithful in attendance to gatherings, giving their tithes and offerings, and obedience. This however is integrated in the liturgy of the Mass and the classic Catholic devotions.

Part of Velarde’s practical theology is the use of certain inanimate objects such as handkerchiefs, bankbooks and umbrellas which are held aloft during services. Such practices are not foreign to Filipino devotional and folk religion. Thus, Velarde’s brand of Catholic Charismatic worship is highly accepted to a majority of Filipinos.

### ***A degree of realism***

The El Shaddai Movement, given the huge numerical membership, was one of the religious groups being pursued by candidates for endorsement, during the last May Senatorial and local elections. The group has the fame of playing a major role in Philippine politics. Some people assert that former



Winds of the Spirit: Communion and Liberation

## **CULTURE LOOKING FOR CHRIST**

*This is the incredible accomplishment of a humble Italian priest, Fr. Louis Giussani. Communion and Liberation embodies his superior intelligence and deep love for the person on of Christ encountered in culture: poetry, literature, music and the arts: a challenge for the youth of the years of the students' revolution.*

The largest cultural event in Italy is undoubtedly the Meeting of Rimini which happens every year in summer and brings together persons of importance in every type of discipline in an effort to make the Christian Mystery relevant to the contemporary cultural environment. The Meeting is the pride of Communion and Liberation, the international spirituality movement which originated from the charismatic experience of Fr. Louis Giussani.

### ***That trip by train***

This is how it all started, in his very words: “I was in the train, going from Milan to Rimini. It was there that I came across some young people. There in the train, I started conversing and discussing with them and I discovered that they were almost totally ignorant about religion and Christianity: their skepticism, their derisory attitude, their ostentatious incredulity did not cause anger in me but rather pain because they were obviously affected by an abysmal ignorance...It was this contact that made ardent zeal rise up in me, almost a “rage”, so that they may know what I had encountered myself; so that they may be many who know it.”

It was 1954 and Giussani quit teaching theology in order to dedicate himself full-time to the boys of Berchet College in Milan. He had no idea that he was starting something unprecedented. He simply wanted to make perennial Christianity known in a more effective, coherent, and persuasive manner to the adolescents who came to him. This is how Communion and Liberation (CL) started. Since then tens of thousands of young people all over the world have felt the attraction of CL's proposal.

### ***Communion and Liberation***

CL is an ecclesial movement whose point of origin can be traced to an impulse of the Holy Spirit, and, as Pope Benedict XVI observed, "is thus inserted into that vast flowering of associations, movements and new ecclesial realities providentially raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church after the Second Vatican Council."

In 1975, during a youth pilgrimage to Rome for Palm Sunday, Pope Paul VI encouraged Fr. Giussani in a private conversation with these words: "This is the path, go on like this." In 1982, as it continued to expand, the "*Fraternity of Communion and Liberation*" was declared an "Association of Pontifical Right."

And in 1984 Pope John Paul II received 10,000 CL members in an audience, giving them this challenging mandate: "Go into all the world to bring the truth, beauty, and peace you have encountered in Christ the Redeemer. This is the task that I leave with you today." A new impulse was thus given to the missionary spread of the Movement, which is today present in some seventy countries. Only in Italy, its membership goes above one hundred thousand.

Fr. Giussani reacted to the reduction of Christianity to something in the past. Jesus of Nazareth is not only someone who lived and died. He is alive. "The Christian proclamation is that God has become a human presence, carnal, within history. God is not something far away that man tries to reach by his own effort, but Someone who came to join in man's journey, and became his companion."

### **The "Christian claim"**

The person of Jesus was the intellectual and emotional center of Fr. Luigi Giussani's life. This centrality was the anchor of his existence. In Jesus Christ, Fr. Giussani found the only being who, precisely because of his





“Do you love me? Will you be my friend?” they asked him; and he realized instinctively that what they needed was a loving family, a place of belonging – not an institution which saw them firstly as ill. That was the origin of *L’Arche*.

The central insight of *L’Arche* is that society can ultimately be healed only by those whom it rejects. The disabled are a part of the “poor” with whom God has chosen to identify himself, shaming the wise and the strong in their illusory self-sufficiency. Reaching out to them becomes a means of being led – by God to God.

### ***Out of security and career***

Jean Vanier was a Canadian naval officer who eventually became a professor of theology. At the age of 35, in 1963, he decided to leave security and career and settle in Trosly, France, to live with people with an intellectual disability. He welcomed two such people to be with him and bought a small house.

The original idea was to give the disabled a family environment. His example was soon followed by families who adopted as one of their members a disabled person. The movement spread with the name “*L’Arche*”, the French word for ‘Noah’s Ark’. Today, *L’Arche* is made up of 154 communities spread over 5 continents, with 10,000 members.

In 1971, the organization of a pilgrimage of 12,000 people with developmental disabilities, their friends and families to Lourdes led Jean Vanier to the founding of *Foi et Lumière* (Faith and Light). This movement unites people with an intellectual disability and their family members and friends for regular gatherings and periodic pilgrimages of friendship, prayer and celebration. Nowadays, ‘Faith and Light’ has nearly 1,500 such communities in 81 countries.

### ***“Dare to touch them!”***

The teaching of Jean Vanier is as fascinating as his life witness. He writes: “Sometimes we approach those who suffer but in our hearts there is a rebellion that blinds us and stops us from seeing Jesus’ light in the person who suffers. These few lines want to tell you not to escape or run away from the persons who are suffering and are wounded. Dare to approach them, to touch them. Dare to enter into communion with them. Then you will discover

within yourself and them a source of life, seeds of resurrection. It is the great secret of Jesus and his Gospel. In every person, it doesn't matter if wounded, hardened, authoritarian, cruel, apparently closed to God and steeped in sin, there is a hidden source of living water ready to spring up”.

Vanier's travels, as he went to support his initiatives, covered many of the world hot spots and put him in touch with remarkable people, among them Cardinal Arns of Sao Paulo, John Paul II, Mother Teresa. He was in Honduras when Archbishop Romero was killed in nearby El Salvador in 1980; two years later he was in South Africa, penning a brilliant summary of apartheid; in 1988 he was on the West Bank after the first intifada broke out.

***Pope John Paul's Conversion***

Struck by how societies “continue to be places of suffering, oppression, violence, conflicts and inequalities”, despite social reforms and movements in favor of rights, he noticed how *L'Arche* signals the deeper conversion that needs to take place for authentic social change to occur. As it says in the *L'Arche* charter: “The disabled are living reminder to the world of the essential value of the heart without which knowledge, power and action lose their meaning and purpose”.

Even Pope John Paul II needed converting on this point. At breakfast with the (then fit and healthy) Pope in 1987, Vanier found that John Paul II had difficulty understanding what he meant by a disabled person having a healing presence. Then the Pope got sick and, “a deep bond arose between us”, wrote Vanier who had a leading role in the Pope's 2004 visit to Lourdes. “Our Pope is poor. He is fragile, but he is the glory of God. God manifests himself in him” said Vanier, standing just a few feet from John Paul II, who never took his eyes off Vanier's. It was, he wrote, “an exceptionally moving moment”.

(This article was written before the revelation of J. Vanier's episode of abuse)

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Winds of the Spirit: Worldwide Marriage Encounter

# SCHOOL OF LOVE

***To make a couple, husband and wife, spend a weekend looking at each other, at their love, together with other couples, is the simple yet brilliant idea of the Worldwide Marriage Encounter movement.***

Do you feel lost, alone or bored in your marriage? Are you frustrated, hurt or angry with your spouse? Are you constantly fighting or do you simply shut down? Does talking about it only make it worse? Are you looking for a lifeline for your marriage? These questions reveal the field about which the Marriage Encounter movement come to the rescue.

Marriage Encounter, both a program and a movement, is an opportunity for married couples to explore their lives in the presence of God. Although the term "encounter" may signifies a confrontation or even a clash, Marriage Encounter (a literal translation of the original Spanish *Encuentro Conyugal*) means "to rediscover" or "to meet again."

## ***The Divine Energy of Love***

The program, which usually takes place on a weekend, helps couples to search for and rediscover their vision of love. With this program, God's presence is essential, because the gift of love given by the couple becomes fruitful only in God's presence through the discovery of the place of God within their lives.

This belief, then, underlies Marriage Encounter's conviction of the sacredness of the covenant, the Sacrament of marriage. Fr. Gabriel Calvo, the founder of Marriage Encounter, puts it this way: "There is within each couple a divine energy of love. It has to be released by a deep sharing between husband and wife, through the communication of their feelings and of the whole of their lives together. It cannot be done in just one moment."

The Marriage Encounter weekend provides the first step for this release of the energy of love. During the weekend, the couples have the opportunity to search their own lives for their feelings, dreams, and desires. As they share,

the Lord's presence enables the release of the energies of love. Also, as they share, they come to the discovery of God's vision for marriage, which, simply stated, is a call to become united with each other and with God”.

### ***"Marriage Teams of Pope Pius XII"***

Marriage Encounter had its origins in Spain in 1953 through the combined efforts of Fr. Gabriel Calvo and several married couples. The inspiration of the "Marriage Teams of Pope Pius XII", as it was originally called, came from the weekly talks then being given by Pope Pius XII to newly married couples in Rome.

Fr. Calvo and the couples would first read the pope's talk, along with several verses from Scripture. Then, after searching their own individual life's experience, each couple would meet to share their reflections.

Afterwards, the couples would meet as a group and share these common reflections to deepen their commitment to marriage and the family. The papal talks and the reflections that flowed out of them eventually became the core topics for the presentations that are still given on Marriage Encounter weekends.

In 1962, Fr. Gabriel Calvo brought together twenty eight working class couples for the first “Encuentro Conyugal”. The movement grew within the structure of the Christian Family Movement. In 1966, The Marriage Encounter spread to Latin America through Mexico. The following year, the Marriage Encounter was brought to Miami, Florida, U.S.A.

During the summer of 1969, Luisito & Asuncion Sison were delegates to the convention of the International Confederation of the Christian Family Movement at Southbend Indiana. They attended a Marriage Encounter Weekend a week later. Meanwhile, Fr. Ruben Tanseco, S.J joined another ME Weekend in Michigan, U.S.A. The three of them brought the Marriage Encounter to the Philippines.

Today, it is estimated then more than 5 million couples, in more than 100 countries, have attended a Marriage Encounter weekend.

### ***The Outflow of Love***

Marriage Encounter has had a powerful impact on thousands of couples and enabled them to renew their commitment to marriage as a ministry. Because



*Christian world and appeared in countless adaptations in more than one hundred countries.*

In the Cursillo movement, being "in colors" is to be in God's grace. For that reason, Cursillo participants (cursillistas) greet each other with the phrase "*De Colores*" (in Colors). A story from the early days of the movement in Spain tells of an occasion where a group of men were returning from a Cursillo weekend when their bus broke down. They began to sing *De Colores*, a traditional folk song, to wait for the help that was on the way.

The use of the song in Cursillo took hold, and has held up as the movement has spread outside the Spanish-speaking world and to other denominations. The use of a multi-colored rooster as a symbol for the Cursillo movement is believed to have originated from one of the verses of that song.

### ***The Pilgrim Spirit***

The Cursillo Movement came to birth in the movements of renewal that preceded the second Vatican Council. Vatican II was such a major event in the history of the modern Catholic Church that there is a certain tendency to date everything from the Council. But Vatican II was itself born out of an effort of spiritual and pastoral renewal that had begun years before. The liturgical movement, the scriptural renewal, Catholic Action and other movements of lay apostolate had begun years before the Council.

Everywhere in the Church, people were seeking to find ways of bringing the Church to life in the hearts of men. The Cursillo Movement came from the work of such individuals. The Spanish Civil War had ended in 1939, in the same year WWII began. The years after the Civil War were a time of ferment in the Spanish Church.

Before the war, a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Compostela had been planned. This spiritual Journey to the great Spanish pilgrimage center of the Middle Ages would provide a time for the young men and women of Spain to dedicate themselves in a renewed way to the work of the apostolate. After being postponed several times by the disruption of war, the pilgrimage was finally rescheduled for 1948.

This pilgrim style has marked much of the spirituality of the Cursillo Movement. Preparation for the pilgrimage gave rise to efforts of renewal in the different Catholic Action groups in Spain. The leaders of the young

men's branch, Fr. Juan Capo and the layman Eduardo Bonnin, were the founders of the Cursillo Movement. Together they worked at the task of instructing about Christian life the young people in Majorca. The name Cursillo is Spanish meaning a "Short Course", usually a 3-Day weekend.

The first Cursillo in the United States was held in Waco, Texas, in 1957. The key figures then were Father Gabriel Fernandez and two airmen from Spain, Bernardo Vadell and Agustin Palomino, who were training with the United States Air Force. All weekends were held in Spanish, until 1961. That year the first English-speaking weekend was introduced in San Angelo, Texas.

Today the "Cursillos de Cristiandad" constitute a worldwide movement with centers in more than one hundred countries. The movement is a member of the International Catholic Organizations of the Pontifical Council for the Laity in Rome.

### ***The Explosive Truth***

To explain Cursillo to someone who has never experienced it is not easy. Often, for those who have experienced Cursillo it is still somewhat mystifying. The reason behind the mystery is God. No one can fully explain how God touches each person in his special, unique way throughout the various elements of the Cursillo exercise.

Evangelization is probably the element that comes to mind first. In the Cursillo Movement, they approach evangelization as a very natural act of being Christ-like within each of their daily activities. They realize that while most people would like to live their lives in a Christ-like manner, the pressures of the world often make this difficult.

The Cursillo Movement provides a method and a technique to equip each person with the tools, the mentality, the strength, and the support to make this natural type of evangelization possible.

In 1980 Saint John Paul II addressed the Cursillo members in this way: "You have discovered anew the explosive truth of the evangelical message: God, Father of all, comes to us as we encounter him in Jesus Christ to reunite us through the grace of the Spirit in one family which is the Church. This is the news that all human hearts hope for without realizing it. Therefore dedicate yourselves more and more to being tireless apostles of this in your environments. My apostolic blessing goes with you as a pledge of this divine grace which enables you to live forever."





The Legion of Mary was founded by Frank Duff, a Catholic layman, in 1921 in Dublin, Ireland. His idea was to help Catholic lay people fulfill their baptismal vocation to be apostles of charity in their world.

The Legion first started out by visiting women with cancer in hospitals, but it soon became active among the most destitute, notably among Dublin prostitutes. Duff subsequently laid down the system of the Legion in the *Handbook of the Legion of Mary* in 1928.

The Legion soon spread around the world. Today its members total over 10 million worldwide, making it the largest apostolic organization of lay people in the Catholic Church. In 2014, the Legion was recognized by the Holy See as International Association of the Faithful.

### ***Well structured and formal***

Following the terminology of the Roman Army, the basic unit of the Legion is called a *Praesidium*, which is normally based in a parish. The *Praesidium* is usually a group of 3–20 members. The *Curia* is the next level and it supervises several *Praesidia*; then comes the *Comitium* and eventually the *Senatus* which has the control of the legion in a given country. The *Concilium* is the highest level and has its seat in Dublin. It has control over the whole Legion.

The *Praesidium* normally meets weekly. The meetings are structured and formal. For all sessions, the Altar of the Legion is set up. A statue of the Virgin Mary is placed on a white tablecloth, which has "*Legio Mariae*" written on it. On the two sides of the statue are placed two vases with flowers. On the front ends of the cloth are two candlesticks with burning candles. On the right side of Mary, the *Vexillum Legionis* (the standard of the legion) is placed. It is made out of metal and onyx and shows the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove as well as the Miraculous Medal.

The sessions start out with prayers to the Holy Spirit and to Mary. They include five decades of the Rosary. The next part of the session includes a spiritual reading and administrative matters. The members tell briefly how they fulfilled the tasks assigned to them at the previous session. They also read a chapter from the *Handbook of the Legion*. Then, after a spiritual exhortation, the new tasks for the legionaries are distributed and the meeting comes to an end.

### ***A way of life***

The spirituality of the Legion of Mary is essentially based on the approach of Louis de Montfort, as put forward in his *True Devotion to Mary*. The book promotes a "total dedication" to Christ through devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which later influenced popes such as John Paul II, who mentions it in his apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* ( The Rosary of the Virgin Mary).

The essential aim of the Legion of Mary is the sanctification of its members through prayer, the sacraments and devotion to Mary and the Trinity, and of the whole world through the apostolate of the legion.

Frank Duff maintained that the Legion proposes a way of life more than just the doing of a particular work. It gives a formation that is meant to influence every department of life and every hour of that life.

The legionary who is only a legionary for the duration of the meeting and the work assigned to him/her is not living the spirit of the Legion. They must bring their Legion formation into their daily lives whether it be in the world of politics, finance, art, culture, trade unions, factory, business, teaching or nursing or whatever their particular way of life.

The Legion's purpose is to help its members and all those in contact with them to live out their Christian vocation to the full. That vocation has its source in Baptism. By Baptism one is made another Christ or as St. Augustine puts it: 'We have not only become "other Christs" but Christ himself.'

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Winds of the Spirit: Opus Dei

# LAY JESUITS

Doing with the laypeople what Saint Ignatius of Loyola had done with the Religious, another Spanish priest, Escrivà de Belaguer, with as much genius, forged another original, powerful instrument like the 'Society of Jesus' at the service of the mission of the Catholic Church.

Opus Dei does not have monks or nuns, and only a minority of its members are priests. Opus Dei emphasizes uniting spiritual life with professional, social, and family life. Members of Opus Dei lead ordinary lives, with traditional families and secular careers, and strive to "sanctify ordinary life". Indeed, Pope John Paul II called Fr. Josemaría Escrivá de Belaguer, its founder, "the saint of ordinary life".

What is amazing and the work of a genius is its organization. Opus Dei is a huge formation machine which comprises about 100,000 members in more than 90 countries. Its members are divided into two main categories with the uninspiring names of Supernumeraries and Numeraries.

Supernumeraries, the largest type, currently account for about 70% of the total membership. Typically, supernumeraries are married men and women with careers. They devote a portion of their day to prayer, in addition to attending regular meetings and taking part in formation activities such as retreats.

Numeraries comprise about 20% of total membership. Numeraries are celibate members who give themselves in full availability for the official undertakings of the Prelature. They may be living in community but most of them keep their job or profession in the world. Among them are the more than two thousand member priests.

## *In the Spanish Civil War*

Opus Dei was founded by a Catholic priest, Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, in 1928 in Madrid, Spain. He gave the organization the name "Opus Dei",

which in Latin means "Work of God", in order to underscore the belief that the organization was not his work, but was rather God's work.

The spreading of Fr. Escriva's group was contemporary to the turmoil of the Spanish civil war that obliged Fr. Josemaria to flee from Spain while priests and religious were forced to go into hiding to escape the atrocities of the Communists. After the war, the Opus Dei flourished in Spain and started to be known outside.

In 1939, Escrivá published *The Way*, a collection of 999 maxims concerning spirituality for people involved in secular affairs. The little book was translated in all possible languages and has spread in dozen million copies. It can be compared to Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*.

In 1947, Escrivá moved his headquarters to Rome, and there he stayed until his death in 1975, busy in monitoring the diffusion of his organization throughout the world. Also in this he resembles Saint Ignatius who spent there the last thirty years of his life, honing the Jesuit Constitutions and following his children in the world through correspondence.

Although praised by popes, it was only in 1982 that Opus Dei received its final approval by Pope John Paul II as a personal Prelature and Fr. Escriva's successor, Alvaro del Portillo, became a bishop. A personal prelatore is a diocese only with people, without territory.

### ***An almost invincible prejudice***

Much of the controversial attitude raised in the public by the success of the Opus Dei reminds us of the same feeling that the Jesuits have aroused in some people throughout history to the point that, if you look in the dictionary, the adjective "Jesuitical" is described as "involving deception and dishonesty".

Everything goes back to an almost invincible prejudice: in the popular mentality religious people are expected to be simple, harmless do-gooders, even a bit stupid. The fact that Jesuits and members of the Opus Dei, for that matter, are well educated, clever, often from rich background and cunning, is seen with suspicion and animosity.

### ***The tale of two movies***



*This is how the members of the Lord's Flock Catholic Charismatic Ministry describe themselves. Founded in the Philippines, this apostolate has spread to the many countries of the world where the Filipino workers are present with a foray even into Africa.*

Everything started with a prophetic vision. This is how Sis. Techie Rodriguez tells it: "Recollectos Seminary, Tierra Pura, Tandang Sora, Quezon City, March 1986. At around six o'clock in the evening, the sky is already dark. The rain is pouring. I am on a big white boat tossed about by the waves that seemed to grow bigger and bigger. Then as the mist slowly begins to clear, I saw people trying to get hold of my boat for safety. People... people... everywhere. Some are desperately struggling to stay afloat, swimming around and panic stricken. Many already are drowning.

My face is so wet from crying and from the rain that mercilessly falls down in torrents. I am calling them... and trying to lead them to the safety of my boat. My heart is so filled with pity and I feel confusion and helplessness. So many of them! And in the midst of chaos, I heard a distinctive voice that says, "*Save my people, bring them to safety. They will listen to the voice of the Shepherd and they will recognize the True Voice.*" It was The Lord".

### ***The power of Two***

Sis. Techie Rodriguez is a founder of the Lord's Flock Catholic Charismatic Ministry together with her husband Bro. Bobby. She had been in the Charismatic Renewal since 1980. The Lord's Flock that she founded is in the forefront of the Charismatic Renewal in the Philippines. Bro. Bobby is known as the "Tatay" or Father of the community. A very soft spoken man of deep faith and trust in God. He complements Sis. Techie in her teachings and preaching by doing and accomplishing the temporal things needed by the church.

Thus God used mightily Bro. Bob and Sis. Techie's tandem in proclaiming the word. They were among the pioneers of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church. Sis. Techie's dynamism has brought her to many International Charismatic Congresses all over Asia and the US, giving

keynote addresses, talks, testimonials, and lectures to Catholic as well as other Christian audiences.

He remains the strong silent pillar that serves as inspiration to the members of the flock.

He himself, like Sis. Techie, is a miracle ground of God having gone through several life threatening episodes in his life that make powerful testimonies.

### ***A young army of missionaries***

The community envisions each member to be cared for in an appropriate unit where each one can fit in and have spiritual feeding and guidance. After praying to the Holy Spirit on how the prophetic vision will be concretized, the Lord gave the answer in the book of Numbers 32:24 in the Bible. The corporate vision is “...*Folds for the flock*”: a place for tending the flock, where their bodies may be warm because of being nurtured to a spiritual development, and mentored and trained for evangelization work.

In their anthem they sing: “We are His flock/We are His people/Out of a vision this flock was born/A refuge for the lost...We are victorious/A royal priesthood...The Lord will find us faithful/We are his flock”.

In 2011 while praying in a half-empty Church in Rome, Sis. Techie received an inspiration from the Holy Spirit “to bring back the youths to the Church”. Upon arrival in the Philippines, she started gathering the youths of the community, trained them and build them into a young army of missionaries to bring back the youths through music, band, dances, gospel plays, life testimonies, workshops, games and worship concerts.

Through this inspiration a counter force of youth-led initiative is winning many young souls back to the Catholic Church.

### ***“The best years of my life”***

My Comboni confrere Fr. Moises Dela Cruz Estacio comes from the Lord’s Flock and this is how he describes his experience with them: “It was in my last years of the university when I felt prolonged emptiness within. I was not totally happy with the way my life was going in spite of being actively



involved and holding positions in inter-university extracurricular activities. I was looking for something more . . .

After attending the Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS) with the Lord’s Flock, I continued with a series of on-going formation from the Harvest up to the Disciple classes. The Harvest class was a program where new members were trained and equipped for a life of service in the community. While in the Disciple class, I started to serve in the new Harvest classes, and eventually as a steward of the group of young professionals.

My time with The Lord’s Flock (TLF) Charismatic Community were some of the best years of my young life because it was there that I discovered my passion for mission which led me to my true vocation and prepared me for the life that God wanted for me”.

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Winds of the Spirit: The Third Order Franciscans

**IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SAINT FRANCIS**

*It is the oldest of the movements because it was founded by Francis himself for those who were drawn to his way but felt called to live it out right where they were, in the world.*

Francis of Assisi is one of the most cherished saints in the history of the church. But he lived and died eight centuries ago. What is so attractive about his way that people still want to follow it? Francis had a genius for seeing the face of Christ in everyone he met: bishop or leper, Christian or Muslim, friend or stranger.

Francis faced some of the biggest questions of his day: How to respond to the growing gap between rich and poor? How to make peace between enemies? What is our relationship to the world God made? Where is God when we suffer? Because these are also the questions of our own day, Francis has much to say to the people of our time.

The Members of the Third Order Franciscans are either men and women bound by religious vows in numerous congregations or lay and clergy, married and single, serving God as they are called, in the ordinary occupations of life. In the latter case, they do not live together in community, wear habits, or follow the rule of literal poverty that Francis chose for himself and his friars minor. Being a Franciscan tertiary is one of many ways of responding to God's love in the world, according to Saint Francis' spirit and lifestyle.

### ***An immense, peaceful army***

The Third Order Regular Franciscans developed in the early 13th century from the convergence of groups of penitents, who were inspired by the life of Saint Francis. Sometime between 1209 and 1220, Saint Francis communicated with some of these groups through a series of letters entitled the "Exhortations to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance".

More than 448 congregations profess the "Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis." There are 18 male congregations of Tertiary Franciscans, 370 congregations of Franciscan Sisters and 60 monasteries of cloistered nuns.

The Third Order congregations of men and women number over 200,000 male and female religious. They are founded by different people in different times, but they all wear the Franciscans cord with the three knots representing the vows.

### ***No bearing arms***

More remarkable is the Third Order Secular. Francis came to mirror the love of Christ and the living Gospel so closely that nearly everyone who met him wanted to follow his way. His preaching as well as his example, exercised such a powerful attraction on people that many married men and women wanted to join him.

He realized that not everyone could or should take up a celibate life of poverty and homelessness, yet he recognized that people unable to do this were still drawn to serve God with deeply committed hearts and lives. For them Francis found a middle way and in 1221 gave them a rule animated by the Franciscan spirit.

The rule prescribed simplicity in dress, considerable fasting and abstinence, and the canonical office or other prayers instead. Because of the prohibition of bearing arms, the followers of this rule came into conflict with local authorities, which customarily required men to carry arms for service in militias.

The prohibition against carrying arms dealt a blow to the feudal system and to the ever-fighting factions of Italian municipalities; through the admission of poor and rich, nobles and common people, the social classes were brought nearer each other.

### *From the Gospel to life*

Nowadays, the members of the Third Order Secular share in Francis' charism and are called to make present in the life and mission of the Church the lifestyle and message of the Gospel poverty. The social dimension of the secular order integrates itself in the family, the working place and the civil structures, by means of the safeguard of nature, people and their highest values.

The Brotherhood, as they call themselves, gathers more that 500.000 faithful of every walk of life and is present in some 60 countries. In Western Europe and in the American continent is where the spreading is more extensive.

The formation given in the bosom of the Brotherhood and left to the development of each individual member, leads to the listening of the Word "going from the Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel" and to the reflection about what happens in society and in the Church, helped by the documents of Church's teaching authority.

On the whole, as far as the mission of the Church is concerned, it is necessary to remember the uninterrupted faithfulness and devotion of the Third Order Franciscans throughout the centuries.



huge gratitude for having accompanied them over the years to become a community.

He was called the “street priest”, “the priest of the prostitutes”, the “worn out cassock priest”, “the rebel out of love”: with these titles his sudden death in November 2007 at the age of 82 was commented upon, the vacuum left by his departure unbearable in his followers’ heart and in the place that saw his indefatigable commitment, without counting the cost, at the side of the last and the lost.

### *Love Whirlwind*

Of humble origin, seventh of nine children, Oreste Benzi was born in a small village close to Rimini, famous for its beach resorts in Northern Italy, in 1925. He was ordained a priest in 1949.

At the end of the 1950s, convinced of the importance of being present with the young people to whom he was teaching religion, Fr. Oreste Benzi carried out a number of activities to encourage them to "a friendly meeting with Christ". In 1968, he created the "Pope John XXIII Community" Association with a group of youngsters who were prepared to animate the mountain holidays, and with a few other priests.

The meeting with people who "would never have managed to make it in life on their own" (the disabled, marginalized, excluded, forgotten) and the willingness of a number of youngsters to work with him full time, enabled Fr. Benzi to open the first family hostel in 1972.

Since then, the community has undergone a whirlwind type of development: today over 41,000 people, the world over, sit at the Community’s table, thanks to over 500 places of sharing provided by family homes, canteens for the poor, reception centers, therapeutic communities, Bethlehem Huts for the homeless, open families and prayer homes. There are 1,287 full members and 215 members testing their vocation in 18 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America.

### *Incessant Creativity*

The Community’s work in the vast world of marginalization has led to the establishment of numerous family hostels where individuals or married

couples act as temporary or permanent fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters of disabled people, children in difficulties, former drug addicts, alcoholics, and mentally disturbed people.

Detoxifying centers for addicts; houses of prayer; facilities for street children; centers for teenagers and young adults; social cooperatives providing educational services and businesses providing work for the disadvantaged; facilities for shared holidays; general reception centers; hostels for girls freed from prostitution; fellowship houses, and SOS Centers are the many initiatives of the Community.

Direct sharing with the marginalized, the despised and the rejected is not a comfortable route to travel, it forbids the members from closing their eyes to injustice. Once embarked on their task however, it is a path that captures and entrances them, leading them to the abandonment of all those false myths of the consumers society that only too often bring unhappiness.

On 7 October 1998 the Pontifical Council for the Laity issued the decree recognizing the John XXIII Community as an international association of the faithful of Pontifical Right. The John XXIII Community Association has also a seat at the United Nations since 2006, acting as a mouthpiece for the world's most disadvantaged, where international leaders make decisions about the fate of humanity.

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Winds of the Spirit: Light of Jesus Ministries

## **THE "PREACHER IN BLUE JEANS"**

*Bo Sanchez gave his first talk when he was 13 and has not stopped preaching since. He is the founder of the lay movement Light of Jesus Family and its growing cluster of initiatives about Mission, Media and Mercy.*

Rhea is a young woman who lives at “Grace To Be Born House” in Pampanga province. Rhea recalls how she was raped one night by at least six men under a bridge.

For a long time, she endured the painful memory of strange men pinning her down and forcing themselves on her fragile body. She screamed, resisted and cried in pain to no avail. After a while, she realized that she was pregnant.

Rhea’s mother, also a single mother, came home from abroad and advised her never to consider abortion. So she came to “Grace to be born” to have her baby. She was alone and felt so helpless, Rhea said of that traumatic night. She added: “But my story is less painful than those of other young girls here. I was hurt by strangers. They were violated by their own family,” she said.

Rhea is one among the 296 pregnant women that “Grace To Be Born” has served since its founding on May 8, 2009. The young mothers who finished the program at the shelter have given birth to 246 babies there. Most of the mothers are teenagers, some as young as 12, who are forced to take care of their babies because of the circumstances that brought on their pregnancy.

Giving birth is God’s grace, no matter the circumstances around it. The idea for the center came up in July 2008 when its founders, Rey and Myrna Ortega, went on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine in Mexico City. There Rey learned that Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patroness of the unborn, and he wondered why there was no such shelter for the unborn in the Philippines.

When the couple returned to the Philippines, they discussed with Bo Sanchez their dream of offering a shelter and regular services to prevent abortion. This is how the new ministry for the unborn “Grace to be born” originated. Just one of the many mercy initiatives that cluster around Bo Sanchez’ movement “Light of Jesus Ministries” like the “Jeremiah Home” for abused girls, “He cares” for street children; “LOJ Prison Ministry” and others.

## *An Amazing Story*

Eugenio Reyes Sanchez Jr., widely known as Bo Sanchez, is a best-selling author, entrepreneur, Catholic lay preacher and minister. He is nicknamed the "Preacher in Blue Jeans". He was born in 1966 in Caloocan City to Eugenio and Pilar Sanchez.

On September 9, 1980, the Light of Jesus held their first prayer meeting at the Sanchez home in Quezon City. A week later, at the second prayer meeting of the group, 13-year old Bo Sanchez gave his first talk. He has not stopped preaching since.

His work as a lay preacher has brought him all over the world. He is the founder of one of the largest religious communities in the Philippines, the Light of Jesus Family. The community has around 35,000 members in the Philippines and the rest of the world. Through this, he gave origin to two gatherings, the annual inspirational convention "*Kerygma Conference*" and the weekly fellowship and worship called "*The Feast*" which is at present taking place in more than 200 areas in the country and other parts of the world.

Bo Sanchez is the author of 40 bestselling books and publisher of seven magazines. He also has a weekly TV show; a daily Radio program and a daily internet TV show. He founded many organizations, such as *Anawim*, a special home for the abandoned elderly and the poorest of the poor, and *Shepherd's Voice*, a media group that publishes the widest read inspirational literature in the country.

## *A family man*

Privately, Bo is also a micro-entrepreneur. He engages in small business and real estate not only for his family's needs and for his various projects, but also from his firm belief that one of the most important solutions to his country's economic problems is to raise up more micro-entrepreneurs among his countrymen. He frequently teaches and writes about financial literacy, believing that our poverty is hugely a product of people's low financial knowledge on subjects such as debt-management, saving, investing, and business.

Recently, he has formed the *Kerygma Family*, a borderless, international, non-physical community. All over the world, people are signing up as members of this virtual community, where they receive a great amount of



material for their spiritual and personal growth. In another endeavor he's very passionate about, Bo started the *Catholic Filipino Academy* to help parents who want to teach their children at home. But above all these, Bo believes that his first call is to be a loving husband to his wife Marowe and a devoted father to his sons Benedict and Francis.  
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The Winds of the Spirit: Foyers de Charité (Charity Homes)

## **SURVIVING ON HOLY COMMUNION**

*The French mystic Marthe Robin did not eat anything else for fifty years and re-lived Christ's passion every Friday. Around her housebound existence countless Catholics came to draw inspiration and strength. The Foyers de Charité is the movement she founded.*

The venerable Marthe Robin (1902-1981), a Roman Catholic lay woman mystic , was born into a peasant farming family at Châteauneuf-de-Galaure (France). She became bedridden when she was 21 years old, and remained so until her death. Robin's sickness strengthened her faith and the Lord granted her extraordinary mystic gifts.

In 1925, she wrote an *Act of abandon and love to the will of God*. She desired to consecrate herself to Christ and from then onwards loved the Eucharist more and more. From 1930 onwards, Robin ate no food other than the consecrated host. This unsought fast lasted until her death fifty-one years later.

Her stigmata first appeared in early October 1930. A little later, she started to re-live the Passion of Christ every Friday, and this too lasted until her death in 1981. Many friends, family members and numerous priests witnessed this. Robin herself appealed for discretion concerning these phenomena and encouraged Christians not to focus on them.

Although she was bedridden, Robin met countless people. She participated in the life of her diocese and her village as well as she was able. It is estimated that, in fifty years, she individually met more than 100,000 people, including hundreds of priests and many bishops. She was also a prolific letter writer, which she managed by dictating to a secretary.

Robin received visits from people such as Jean Guitton, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, Sr. Magdeleine, founder of the Little Sisters of Jesus and many other prominent French Catholics.

She died in 1981. Her funeral was a triumph. It took place in the sanctuary at Châteauneuf-de-Galaure, in the presence of four bishops and over 200 priests. Her tomb is in the cemetery of St Bonnet. The number of visitors going to pray at the farmhouse on La Plaine, where Robin lived, doubled between 2001 and 2011, reaching 40,000 a year.

### ***The “Charity Homes”***

In 1936, with the help of Fr. Georges Finet, her spiritual father until her death, she founded the first Foyer de Charité (Charity Home). The foyer organized five-day retreats, and around two thousand retreatants participated annually. Most of them, at the end of the retreat, went to visit Marthe.

Lay people participated in the life of this foyer, under the supervision of a priest. This involvement of lay people was unusual in pre-Vatican II Catholicism. Since then, a total of 75 these communities have been founded in 44 countries, either directly by Marthe herself or inspired by her example.

In 1984, the Foyers de Charité were officially recognized by the Catholic Church as an Association of lay faithful of pontifical right, under the supervision of the Pontifical Council for laypeople.

The main mission of the Foyers de Charité is to participate in the new evangelization through the preaching of spiritual retreats that are open to everyone. They offer 6-day retreats, in silence, during which the participants are welcomed as if they are part of the family and receive teachings that summarize the fundamentals of the Catholic faith.

Each year, the Foyers de Charité welcome more than 50,000 people on a spiritual retreat. All adults are welcome, from the age of 17, whether they are believers or not. Everyone receives the same loving welcome that is respectful of each person as an individual and their own reasons for coming on the retreat.



## **IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DON BOSCO**

*The Salesian Cooperators are Catholics lay people who are living the Gospel message in the spirit of Don Bosco by helping the different activities of a local Salesian school, parish or youth center.*

The story of the Salesian Family begins not with the founding of the Salesian Religious in 1876, but with that of the Cooperators. Don Bosco himself affirms this: “The history of the Cooperators goes back to 1841 when we began gathering poor boys...”.

Turin in Northern Italy was an industrial town at the beginning of the industrial revolution, in the second half of the XIX century. Child labor was common and because of the economic crisis in the agricultural areas of Italy at the time, great numbers of children and young people were leaving the farms to find work in the cities.

The children worked six days a week, but had Sundays off. Don Bosco gathered these street kids in vacant lots for a day of play. He brought them to Church for Mass and a catechism lesson. To help him with the hundreds of boys who came to him, he enlisted the help of several people.

Don Bosco knew he would need the help of other committed people of good will to care for the children. He invited people whom he felt had the talent and the desire to minister to young people. His own mother, Margarita, came to help him. During his years of pastoral work in the three Oratories of Valdocco, Porta Nuova and Vanchiglia – 18 years before the founding of the Salesian Religious– Don Bosco seeks and finds collaborators.

They are diocesan priests, sensitive to the predicament of the youth, the nobility, or simple people who will teach catechism and night classes, will provide for the material needs and seek work for the boys in the city, and women who will do the sewing, mending, and cleaning.

### ***The Salesian Preventing Method***

Later on, with the help of Pope Pius IX, Saint John Bosco formed the Association of Salesian Cooperators. As they were then, even now they are single or married lay men and women, or diocesan clergy, who dedicate themselves to the welfare of young people, and live guided by Don Bosco's Salesian spirit.

Some of the Cooperators work directly in Salesian ministries while others serve in their parishes or other ministries. Some Cooperators do not work directly with any particular ministry, but bring the Salesian spirit to their work place, profession, and family.

The movement was created with the purpose of sharing the ideals of the Salesian Preventive System in the education of young people, especially those who are poorest, without the need to be a priest or a lay religious. At present, there are around 30 thousand people affiliated to this movement around the world, working in eleven countries.

### ***The “Salesian Bulletin”***

Don Bosco linked the development of the “Salesian Bulletin” to the foundation of the Cooperators. He wrote: “Hand in hand with this project, we have decided to publish a bulletin which will pretty much become the Congregation's official publication and include many things we'll need to make known to our cooperators. It will come out regularly and will link Salesians and cooperators.”

So many years have passed but the link between the Collaborators and the “Salesian Bulletin” remains: in it not only the news of the vast Salesian family that can be shared, but the Salesian pedagogical tradition continues to influence all the members, but in a special way the Collaborators for whom it was conceived by Don Bosco himself.

From it the Salesian spirit of pro-active involvement in the life of the youth, to prevent them to fall into bad companies and foul habits continues with its tradition of joy, honesty, industriousness and stubborn fidelity.

### ***Credible Witnesses***

The core of the Salesian Cooperators' commitment is to live his or her life as a Good Christian and a Good Catholic. The Salesian Cooperator embraces a Gospel way of life, sharing in the Church's mission to bring Christ to society, especially the young.

The current world coordinator of the Salesian Cooperators is Mr. Antonio Boccia, elected in 2018. During the world gathering of the Salesian Cooperators, he asked the overall Superior of the Salesian Family, Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime: "What indications can the Rector Major offer us, Salesian Cooperators from different parts of the world?".

Fr. Artime replied: "What I ask of you, Salesian Cooperators, is to live the guidelines you have for your six-year term, but I would like to add a further, topical element. Today, our world needs witnesses and to see credible witnesses. Live your identity as Salesian Cooperators wherever you are, and be authentic witnesses there."

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Winds of the Spirit: The Militia of the Immaculate

## **FOR THE LOVE OF MARY**

*"The Knights of the Immaculate" is possibly the earliest in time, the largest in numbers and the most articulate Catholic movement in the world. Most remarkably, its founder is the Holocaust martyr, Saint Maximilian Kolbe.*

August 14, 1941, in the Nazi Concentration Camp, called Auschwitz (in Poland), the life of Father Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Franciscan Conventual, ended heroically. He voluntarily offered to take the place of another prisoner, a father of a family, condemned to death by starvation and thirst.

This exceptional gesture made Fr. Kolbe the first in the Catholic Church to be recognized as a martyr of charity, a title willed by Pope St. John Paul II and pronounced during the canonization in Rome on October 10, 1982.

Father Maximilian was already known outside of Poland, in Japan, for his missionary zeal and editorial activity. But as a martyr of the Holocaust his fame soared: Saint Maximilian Kolbe is one of ten 20th-century martyrs who are depicted in statues above the Great West Door of Anglican Westminster Abbey, London.

In 1963, Rolf Hochhuth published *The Deputy, a Christian tragedy*, a play significantly influenced by Kolbe's life and dedicated to him. Unfortunately, the play became notorious because the author used the heroism of Maximilian Kolbe to condemn the alleged silence of Pope Pius XII concerning the Holocaust.

But Saint Kolbe's most enduring legacy is the Militia of the Immaculate Mary.

### ***A Peaceful Army***

On October 17, 1917, while a student at the international Franciscan seminary in Rome, Kolbe founded a Christian movement called "Militia of the Immaculate" (abbreviated MI) with the goal of "conquering the world through the devotion to the Immaculate Mary and fighting the forces of evil in all its forms".

The MI association grew and spread to different countries. On October 16, 1997, the Pontifical Council for the Laity decreed the "Militia of the Immaculate" to be an international association of the faithful of pontifical right. M.I. has over 3 million members in 48 countries.

Kolbe greatly influenced his own Order of Conventual Franciscans. This is what the friars affirmed: "Our patron, St. Maximilian Kolbe, inspires us with his unique theology of Mary and apostolic mission, which is to bring all souls to the Sacred Heart of Christ through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

Christ's most pure, efficient, and holy instrument of evangelization – especially of those most estranged from the Church”.

### ***An Exemplary Story***

In recent years new religious and [secular institutes](#) have been founded, inspired by this spiritual way. Among these are the Father Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculate Mary, the Franciscan Friars of Mary Immaculate, and a parallel congregation of [Religious Sisters](#), and others. At their origin we usually find another Franciscan priest in love with the charism of Saint Maximilian.

At the end of World War II, in Bologna (Italy), a Conventual Franciscan, Father Luigi Faccenda, received the obedience to care for the MI Movement locally. He dedicated himself to deepening, living, and spreading the total consecration to Mary, the Immaculate. From within the movement a group of young women quickly asked to be able to live the consecration to God following the Marian and missionary spirituality proper to Father Maximilian Kolbe.

On October 11, 1954, after a period of prayer and discernment, Father Luigi Faccenda founded the Secular Institute of the Father Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculate. The Institute was confirmed definitively by the Church with its pontifical approval in 1992.

### ***Union is Strength***

By its nature, M.I. is a unitary association. The organization comprises the Young Knights, the Youth Movement, and Adults. It is structured into three levels: the first level is the movement, with no strict organizational structure, where the members mostly act individually and spontaneously, according to the Founder's original Project.

The second level is the movement broken down into groups, whose members work according to the official programs of the movement; the third level is the movement at its highest level, at which the Knights choose to fully and unconditionally give themselves to Mary Immaculate, devoted solely to her cause: in the missionary apostolate, in parish service, alone or in active or contemplative life communities. This rank is specific to the City





In 1991, on the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Legion of Christ, an international missionary group originally from Mexico, Pope John Paul II ordained a large group of 60 new priests in St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. At the same time, the first world Regnum Christi event, representing the lay collaborators, was held in Rome, gathering thousands of members.

This extraordinary fruitfulness of the Legion of Christ was strangely joined with something never happened in the century old history of the Catholic Church: the charismatic founder, Fr. Marcial Maciel was under a cloud of suspicion because of rumors of grave misconduct.

Already in 1956 the Holy See had undertaken an apostolic visitation of the Legion of Christ. Fr. Maciel was removed from being general director during that period. Three years later, in 1959, the investigation ended and Fr. Maciel was reinstated. But the rumors continued and increased.

Eventually, he declined re-election in 2005 and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, after investigating the accusations against Fr. Maciel, decided to invite him "to a reserved life of prayer and penance, renouncing all public ministry." After three years Fr. Maciel died.

By then the scandal had been unearthed in all its gravity and the whole Regnum Christy family was put under the supervision of a Delegate appointed by Benedict XVI. Pope Francis proceeded to revolutionize the Legion of Christ. Under the guidance of a Cardinal Visitor, the order's complete restructuring was completed at its Extraordinary General Chapter in Rome in January 2014.

In this way, the Regnum Christy Catholic Movement which has at its core the group of religious priests called Legion of Christ, continues its life and ministry with countless courageous and original initiatives all over the world.

### ***"Impelled by Christ's love"***

Regnum Christi (Latin for "*Kingdom of Christ*") is one Movement within the Catholic Church which comprises four vocations: Legionaries of

Christ (the priestly congregation), Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi, Lay Consecrated Men of Regnum Christi and the Lay Members of Regnum Christi.

Regnum Christi has a Christ-centered spirituality that is lived together in communion with all members (all four vocations), in union with the whole Church, and through the mission of building the kingdom of Christ. Regnum Christi's mission is to reveal Christ's love to people, form them as apostles and launch them in their God-given mission.

Regnum Christi members fulfill their mission through missions, retreats, youth work, schools and universities, small groups, personal accompaniment, parishes, online and radio evangelization and other initiatives.

The personal experience of Christ's love produces in the hearts of Regnum Christi members an interior urgency to give themselves to their mission passionately, so as to make his Kingdom present: "The love of Christ impels us" (2 *Corinthians* 5:14). This passion results in a way of living that they call *Militia Christi* (Christian warfare).

### ***A variety of initiatives***

Regnum Christi was founded out of the Legion of Christ and is directly related to it. Working with lay people is an essential part of the Legion's apostolic methodology. The Legionaries carry out their apostolate above all with *Regnum Christi* members, forming them in human and Christian virtues, serving them with their priestly ministry, launching them in pastoral action, uniting efforts in their shared mission, and thus spurring on a great variety of works at the service of the Church.

This love of the Church leads many in Regnum Christi to speak of being always in step with the Church, neither ahead nor behind: a commitment to Catholic Orthodoxy. It also explains the members' special affection for the Pope, who is supported in his charism of primacy and magisterium.

Each year since 1994, Regnum Christi has organized "Megamissions" in Mexico during Holy Week. In 2014, 18,000 missionaries participated, evangelizing in two thousand rural communities. In the same year, 34



and priests, in the service of the Church. He was a pioneer of the “New Evangelization”.

He was born in Paris, France, in a middle class family in 1914. Pierre’s parents were not a happily married couple. Their worlds were very different from each other. After quite a short time, the couple split up. From childhood, Pierre was deeply wounded by his mother’s suffering and by the absence of his father.

He derived his strength from a deeply contemplative life. Pierre called himself an “adorer” because he spent long hours and even entire nights in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. All the same, Pierre Goursat did not have a saintly aura about him; he had his limitations and weaknesses. He was a film critic and, as a consecrated layman, he decided to serve the Church.

His life was not easy, and he struggled with tuberculosis from the age of 19. Aware of his limitations, he stressed the need of accepting people without judging. There is only one rule in the Emmanuel Community: not to criticize.

Pierre left the leadership of the Community in 1985, and from then until death, the rest of his days were spent before the Blessed Sacrament. He died in 1991.

### *Commitment to Adoration*

In the Emmanuel Community, all members, whether priests, married, single, or consecrated in celibacy, have the same requirements: daily adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of one hour , if possible; daily Mass, if possible; joyful morning praise to start each day with gratitude to our Lord, regular Confession, and praying for one another.

Committed members also tithe, according to their ability, and serve the Community with their time and talent. It basically means they strive to live out their specific vocation (married, single, consecrated or holy orders) to know, love and serve God by serving others.

They can, however, only strive for holiness when they are accompanied on this journey by other like-minded brothers and sisters. So they receive in

abundance through community life (in prayer and sharing) so that, in return, they may go out and be the light of Jesus to others.

### ***Community Companionship***

On the local level they regularly gather in small groups (*households* or “*maisonnee*” from French). Members confidentially share the experiences of their lives by reflecting on how God’s Word has touched them and how they seek to evangelize. Companionship is a form of spiritual guidance that is provided to all members of the community.

To each member is assigned another member to help guide him/her in their community life. Companions do not provide spiritual direction but rather are friends to help and pray with them along life’s journey towards holiness, in the context of their specific vocation.

A part from street or door-to-door evangelization, the followings are some of the social-religious initiatives of the members of the Emmanuel Community: *Mercy Nights*, an evening of music, prayer, and Adoration with testimonies; *Zacchaeus Courses* on the social teaching of the Catholic Church; *Love & Truth Sessions*, a school for married couples to help them discover Christ and the profound meaning of the Sacrament of marriage.

### ***Mission Outreach***

There is also *SOS Prayer*, a service that provides an anonymous place where people can email prayer requests to a group of prayer warriors; *School of Adoration*, a program that teaches adults, youth or children how to adore the Lord, based on Scripture and the teachings of Saints.

The *Emmanuel Schools of Mission* offer a nine-month program devised for students to learn about their faith, live in community, prepare and execute parish and school missions. Currently, the Community runs several schools of mission throughout the world like in France, Germany, Italy and The Philippines, Manila.

Creature of the Emmanuel Community is *Fidesco*, an NGO for international solidarity which sends volunteers to countries in the South to put their professional skills at the service of development projects, to help local populations or humanitarian causes.

