

Press release – January 15, 2018

Charism and Institution in Ecclesial Movements and Communities

A Study Day on today's theological and canonical aspects of Ecclesial Movements and Communities will be held in Rome, on January 18, 2018. It is being organized by the Evangelii Gaudium Centre of the Sophia University Institute, under the patronage of the Italian Canonistic Association.

“Charism and Institution in Ecclesial Movements and Communities” is the title for the Study Day to be held on January 18, 2018 at the Sala dei Cento Giorni in Palazzo della Cancelleria, situated in Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, Rome. Maria Voce will open the day's programme with a word of welcome on behalf of the Movements and Communities¹ organizing the event, while Card. Kevin Farrell will do the introduction. During the morning session, Mgr. Piero Coda, Mgr. Luis Navarro, Fr. Gianfranco Ghirlanda S.J. and Bishop Christoph Hegge will deliver talks. Card. Francesco Coccopalmerio will be the moderator. The afternoon session will be dedicated to questions made by the Movements and Communities promoting the Study Day and to views shared by Prof. J.M. Bahns and Prof. E. Di Bernardo, “confronting canonists”.

In a speech on September 17, 1973 during the Second International Congress on Canon Law, Pope Paul VI invited the participants to “*go deeper into the work of the Spirit that must also be expressed in the Law of the Church*”. Ten years later, Pope John Paul II promulgated the new code of Canon Law, and seven years after he promulgated the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. The new charismatic realities, generically called “*ecclesial movements and communities*” tried to seek their place in this changed normative situation of the Catholic Church.

The expression “*ecclesial movements and communities*” defines contemporary groups that present themselves to the Church with characteristics that are not all common and well known. This provokes new canonical problems that must be confronted. Furthermore, as this term is not recognized by the two current Codes, these ecclesial groups are juridically incorporated with associations of the faithful. But will the norms for these associations be able to sustain the complex relational dynamics that arise from the very nature of ecclesial movements and communities? This canonical problem continues to widen when one considers the diversity of these groups, that originates from their specific charisms and the number of non-homogenous personal vocations that arise from the collective charism of each group.

During this study day, these and other topics in the life of ecclesial movements and communities will be studied and discussed in line with the Letter *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* sent to the Bishops of the Catholic Church. This Letter recalls that “*in the light of the relationship between the “hierarchical and charismatic*

¹ Nuovi Orizzonti, Famiglia della Speranza, Comunità Cattolica Shalom, Comunità dell'Emmanuele, Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, Movimento dei Focolari.

gifts”, it intends *“to underline those theological and ecclesiological elements whose comprehension will encourage a fruitful and ordered participation of the new groups in the communion and the mission of the Church”*. From a canonical point of view, it makes one hope in the identification of new and more adequate means by which ecclesial movements and communities can express better their charismatic gifts.

This space for study and debate stems also from the commitment to strengthen communion between ecclesial movements and communities, thus contributing towards communion in the Church. *“We must never forget that the most precious good, the seal of the Holy Spirit is communion”* – these inspiring words were said by Pope Francis during the Third World Conference of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, in November 2014, when he also insisted that real communion cannot exist in Movements or Communities unless these are integrated within the greater communion of the Church. On that same occasion he reminded us that *“even if a certain institutionalization of the charism is necessary for its survival, we ought not delude ourselves into thinking that external structures can guarantee the working of the Holy Spirit”*.

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