



Dear brothers!

I warmly welcome the celebration of the international conference which brings you together, first in Trent and then in Loppiano, on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of the Servant of God Chiara Lubich, with the aim of deepening the meaning and contribution of the charism of Unity, at the service today of the mission of the Church as an evangelizing communion.

Charisms are “gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the centre which is Christ and then channelled into an evangelizing impulse.” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 130). It is therefore good, even for Bishops, always to go back to the school of the Holy Spirit, who brings them out of the Upper Room - where the Lord Jesus united them in unity with Peter and with Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church - to walk in the fire of Pentecost with all the People of God along the paths of mission. His light and strength lead us to meet, with mercy and tenderness, those who live and suffer in existential and social peripheries, proclaiming and witnessing with joy, and without fear, filled only with faith, hope and love, to the Gospel of Jesus.

Charismatic gifts are co-essential, together with hierarchical gifts, in the mission of the Church,¹ and Pastors are invested with the specific gift of recognizing and promoting the action of the Holy Spirit who disseminates within the People of God, among the faithful of every vocation, “special graces with which he makes them suitable and ready to take on various tasks and offices useful for the renewal and greater expansion of the Church” (*Lumen Gentium*, 12). The charism of unity is one of these graces for our time, which is experiencing a change of epoch and calls for a simple, radical, spiritual and pastoral reform that brings the Church back to the ever

¹ Cf The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Letter *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* on the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts for the life and mission of the Church, May 15th, 2016.

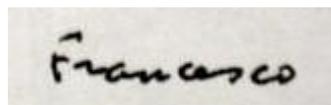
new and relevant source that is the Gospel of Jesus.

Through the charism of unity, fully attuned to the magisterium of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the Holy Spirit concretely teaches how to live the grace of unity according to the prayer addressed by Jesus to the Father just before his Passover of death and resurrection (cf. Jn 17:21). The Spirit invites us to choose Jesus Crucified - Chiara Lubich would add “forsaken” (cf. Mk 15,34; Mt 27,46) - as the only one we wish to follow and as the only compass of our ministry, becoming one with everyone, starting from the least, from the excluded, from the discarded, to bring them light, joy and peace. The Spirit opens us up to a dialogue of charity and truth with every man and every woman, of all cultures, religious traditions, and ideal convictions, to build up, in meeting with them, the new civilization of love. The Spirit brings us to the school of Mary, where we learn that what matters and what remains is love. Like Mary and with her we are called to make present, and almost tangible, for today’s humanity, Jesus, the Son of God who in her womb became the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (cf. Rom 8:29) and who lives Risen among those who are one in his Name (cf. Mt 18:20).

With you, therefore, dear brother Bishops, I express gratitude to God for the gift of the charism of unity through the testimony and the teaching of the Servant of God Chiara Lubich and, with renewed fellowship and under the maternal gaze of Mary, “I (...) invoke the Holy Spirit. I implore him to come and renew the Church, to stir and impel her to go forth boldly to evangelize all peoples”, (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 261).

I bless each of you and the communities entrusted to you, and I ask you please to pray for me.

Rome, St John Lateran, 29th January 2020

A rectangular box containing the handwritten name "Francesco" in black ink.