

ECCLESIAL RENEWAL MOVEMENTS WHAT DO THEY COMMUNICATE?

Jacob Srampickal♦

Introduction

I am taking a perspective more suited to a communicator in analyzing the merits and demerits of the Christian renewal movements. I try to see what these movements are communicating to the world at large though their performances. Obviously, I limit myself to those movements that aim primarily to help the faithful understand and live a life filled with faith. In my search a number of professors from ecclesiastical universities who are familiar with these movements, have been my help, but most of them like to remain unidentified.

Catholic renewal movements may be studied as a continuum in helping the people learn their faith and live it fully – as the tail-end of a continuum that begins with religious monastic orders and moves through apostolic orders and congregations. Although some won't like themselves to be called movements, for convenience sake I am placing (dividing) them in three groups. Strict religious monastic orders, some of which are cloistered too, religious orders and

♦**Jacob Srampickal**, a Patna Jesuit, has a doctorate in Development Communication from the university of Leeds, England and has authored several books including, *Voice to the voiceless, the power of people's theatre; Babel to Babri Masjid and Beyond; Media Education: A text book for teachers; Media Education: Emerging Perspectives; Messages or Massages; Cross Connections: Interdisciplinary communications Studies at the Gregorian University, Communications can Renew the Church*, etc. He is co-founder of NISCORT, a communication college in New Delhi, and is presently Director, Interdisciplinary Centre for Social Communications, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. His latest contribution is *Companion*, a faith education fortnightly for Christian leaders, published from Kochi. E-mail: srampickal@unigre.it

congregations, and movements.¹ The first group lives a strict vowed life and in communities under a superior. If such orders as Benedictines, Cistercians, Augustinians, Trappists, etc., underline the need for prayer and penance beside scholarship for developing deep faith life, more apostolic orders and congregations like Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, Salesians, CMIs, etc., besides scholarship, are keen to engage in apostolic activities and thus be more close to the incarnate Lord who went around doing good to one and all. These are, as Jean Baptiste Henri Lacordaire, O.P. would sum up, “living in the midst of the world without wishing its pleasures; being a member of each family, yet belonging to none; sharing all sufferings; penetrating all secrets; healing all wounds; going from men to God and offering Him their prayers; returning from God to men to bring pardon and hope; having a heart of fire for charity and a heart of bronze for chastity; teaching and pardoning; consoling and blessing always.”²

In the third phase come the ecclesial renewal movements, often moving away from vows and community life, but committed to the vision of Jesus Christ. In the recent years several renewal movements have started, which have pontifical recognition. The members do not

¹Religious orders are the major forms of consecrated life in the Catholic Church. They are mostly organizations of clergy who live a common life following a religious rule under the leadership of a religious superior. Among religious living in communities the most significant distinction is between those who are more contemplative and those who are more active - the balance between prayer and ministry. Some communities place more emphasis on one rather than the other. An example of a primarily contemplative community would be the Trappists, who live in a cloister and spend most of their time in contemplation and prayer. An example of a primarily active community would be the Jesuits, who have more open living arrangements and spend most of their time in some ministry such as teaching or new emerging kinds of mission work. Their intention is to imitate Jesus more closely, mainly, by observing evangelical chastity, poverty and obedience, which are the three evangelical counsels of perfection. They bind themselves to this form of living by taking public vows in accordance with the norms of church law. They may additionally profess to obey certain guidelines for living, since each order has its peculiar charism. Members of religious orders are not part of the hierarchy, unless they are also ordained priests or deacons.

A *congregation* is one of the Catholic religious institutes in which simple vows, not solemn vows, are taken. In the canon law of the Catholic Church, public vows are divided into simple vows and solemn vows. Professed members of monastic and certain other orders (e.g., the Jesuits) take solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (the vows of religion) in which all claims to inheritances are renounced. Countries which recognized canon law as having legal force for the society would automatically enforce this religious practice. Members of religious congregations take simple versions of them, which allow for inheritance.

²JBH Lacordaire OP (1802–1861) discourse *On Priests*.

live stringent lives like those in the religious orders and congregations, not always take public vows, but have a charism of their own. Movements like Catholic Charismatic Movement, Focolare, Catholic Action, Communion and Liberation, Commune di St. Egidio, Neo-catechumenal Way, Legionaries, Opus Dei, are all movements that were born at different times and are playing important roles to help the faithful live a faith-filled life.

1. Positive Contributions

1.1. The Church as the People of God and the Laity Contributing in a Major Way

In *Lumen Gentium*, second Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution on the church, the church has been singled out as the "people of God journeying to God," wherein everyone plays a major role in realizing the finality of the church, not only the higher ups in the hierarchy. Further on, in the decree on the apostolate of the laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Pope Paul VI said,

Christ's redemptive work, while essentially concerned with the salvation of men, includes also the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring the message and grace of Christ to men but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel. In fulfilling this mission of the Church, the Christian laity exercise their apostolate both in the Church and in the world, in both the spiritual and the temporal orders. These orders, although distinct, are so connected in the singular plan of God that He Himself intends to raise up the whole world again in Christ and to make it a new creation, initially on earth and completely on the last day. In both orders the layman, being simultaneously a believer and a citizen, should be continuously led by the same Christian conscience.³

This was an open call to the laity to join intensely in the work of evangelization.

This evangelization seeks the conversion, salvation and sanctification of all people, and their unification into an effective assembly of God's people. People are urged to come to know God as a loving and forgiving Father, and enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour as well as become aware that they have a mission on earth continuously animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Later in 1988 the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Christifidelis Laici*, John Paul VI asserted the role of the laity in the work of new

³Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the apostolate of the laity, no. 5.

and re-evangelization. He argues "Through Baptism the lay faithful are made one body with Christ and are established among the People of God. They are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world."⁴ In fact, ecclesial renewal movements are effective tools to realize this vision proclaimed by the church and in every way these need to be encouraged and respected.

1. 2. Changing Situations Need Renewal Movements

From the beginnings of the Church individuals were inspired by the Gospel of Jesus to become his disciples. But discipleship can be expressed in different ways given the personality and unique circumstances of each person and the needs of the times. The founders of these movements are men and women chosen by God and filled with a special vision and mission. Someone once compared religious communities to a bunch of flowers. These flowers, which represent the teachings of the Gospel, are the same for everyone. But each person, if given these flowers, would arrange them slightly differently, creating different patterns from the same basic materials. It is the same with renewal movements. The differences in these movements complement each other and enrich the Church. They fulfil different functions and needs in a way similar to St. Paul's analogy of the Body of Christ in which the different members all work for the common good, although doing so in varied ways (1 Cor 12:12).

One of the thrusts of the Catholic Church is to be contextually more meaningful. In fact, II Vatican council has several documents that suggest the need to adapt to the various contexts and situations humans find themselves. Often the regular, sacramental life of the Church may not be able to meet the needs of all the people living in specific contexts. Today in the changing situations of post modernism, consumerism and materialism, it is only natural that more and more movements that can cater directly to the modern ways are active to help the people live their faith more meaningfully.

1.3. Charismatic Leaders

Their leaders have a sharp and clear vision, normally called charism, on how to move ahead to realize the Christian vision in particular circumstances. As per our understanding, charism refers to the

⁴*Christifidelis Laici* (1988), post-synodal apostolic exhortation, no. 15.

spiritual graces and qualifications granted to every Christian to perform his or her task in the Church. The Greek word as mentioned in Romans 12:6, means "gift of grace", it is the power whose source is the Holy Spirit. The nature of charism is spiritual ability, endowment and power, and the purpose of charism is service or ministry. Charism is believed to be a freely given gift by the grace of God. In the context of orders/congregations/movements, the charism describes their spiritual orientation and any special characteristic of their mission or values that might be exhibited as a result of the promises/vows that they have taken and the orientation of the movement to which they belong. An example might be the works of a teaching order (Irish Christian Brothers) as compared with that of a missionary order (White Fathers) or one devoted to the care of the poor (Missionaries of Charity) or the sick (Medical Mission Sisters).

In the case of these movements the charisms are more closely related to the times and the context. For example Community of St. Egidio, had a call to the cause of the marginalized and the immigrants in Rome.

1.4. These Tend to Embrace All Equally and Disregard Grades/Hierarchy among Catholics

These movements have as members clergy, religious and laity without any distinction. Elected representatives or leaders can be from any of these groups. Thus lay people are not discriminated against and are given equal opportunities with the clergy to be missionaries. Catholic church, long criticized for gender inequality and hierarchical structures sees (finds) a balancing act in these movements where women, youth, clergy share the same platform in most of their activities.

1.5. The Varied Activities

Most of their services have various wings reaching out to the youth, couples and families, seniors and elders, leaders in society, people in need or those who suffer different forms of marginalization.

These movements initiate and animate times of prayers and reflection; exchanges and meetings; evangelization activities including weekends, teens' camps, youth forums, formation and training sessions, and economic, social and educational development programmes. Each country defines its annual activity programs independently according to its needs and culture.

Thus these movements become a process of maturing in faith that rebuilds the Christian community, which in turn becomes a sign for the world, resisting the process of secularization and materialism which carve the very soul out of religion today.

1.6. Unifying Inter-religious and Ecumenical Concerns

These movements also cross over all barriers of Christian division and include protestants - orthodox, and other break away churches. Some of them include other religious groups and see humanity as a community.

II Vatican document *Nostra Aetate* noted,

... for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men, until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light... The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.⁵

With this strong injunction several renewal movements have taken into inter-religious amity, to areas where even religious congregations have not ventured into.

Again in the area of Ecumenism, many of these groups are much ahead of religious congregations. The ecumenical activities envisaged by II Vatican council include, "every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult; then, "dialogue" between competent experts from different Churches and Communities ... each explains the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. In such dialogue, everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both Communions. In addition, the way is prepared for cooperation between them in the duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience; and, wherever this is allowed, there is prayer in common. Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church

⁵Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, decree on relationship with other religions, no.2-3.

and accordingly to undertake with vigour the task of renewal and reform.⁶ Several of the renewal movements are into such activities.

1.7. Effective Use of Media

Following the call of II Vatican in *Inter Mirifica*, these movements have taken to the right use of the media to proclaim the word of God. While some of them have regular broadcast over Radio Maria the most popular devotional catholic radio station worldwide, others like Opus Dei (Rome Reports) and Regnum Christi (Zenit) have regular religious news services. The use of media by way of singing, music, power point presentations, group interactions, etc in their regular classes and prayers session is also encouraging.

Focolare is a typical example of large scale communication and media use. They emphasize the concept, "communication and unity." This refers to the human family, and when looking at heavenly things, finds its model in the Most Holy Trinity where each of the persons exists for the other. The link of all the members is achieved through the communication of spiritual thoughts or an update of recent events worldwide. By its very nature, the Spirituality of Unity requires the use of the latest technology in communication. For example: the so-called Collegamento CH (bimonthly teleconference), links the people globally in direct communication. This teleconference began in the summer of 1980 and its goal was to grow together as 'one family' in the holy journey. The Focolare group make use of more than 100 websites and blogs.

1.8. Constant Renewal, Updating and Training

Periodical chapters to review the charism in the light of new emerging problems keep the movements relevant to the times. Some of these also have developed very lively professional training modules to animate new members into these movements. Their systematic training modules help the uninitiated to understand the charism and way of working of these movements very clearly.

2. Raising Questions

Here I highlight some questions being asked about these movements. And these questions are not about all the movements. But such questions throw a shadow on these otherwise brilliant efforts at living the faith authentically.

⁶Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, decree on relationship with other sects of Christians, no.4.

2.1. Lack of Canonical Regulations?

Writing in the Italian journal *La Civiltà Cattolica* which is every week approved by Vatican prior to publication, Giuseppe de Rosa comments that the biggest problem with these movements is that there is "the lack of an overarching law." The present code of canon law does not deal explicitly with the ecclesial movements, and this generates confusion. They must be "given canonical systemization": an undertaking "which, however, shows itself to be particularly difficult."⁷ This observation is valid for most of the movements. An important exception is represented by Opus Dei, which, since it became a personal prelature - the only one in the Church today - has enjoyed a solid and untouchable juridical framework.

2.2. Are There Too Many Renewal Movements?

Already there have been too many religious congregations almost all of them repeating the very same charism. In fact, in countries like Spain and Italy almost every diocese has a renewal movement. So a serious question is, is there a need for too many religious renewal movements, making several groups in the church. It has also been noticed that these groups in order to avoid confrontation do not exist together in the same parish. If one group is active in one parish or region, others try not to enter for fear of interfering. Too many renewal movements also show the craze for power and leadership tussle, as everyone wants to be in charge.

The first thing that one notices about all these movements is that they all have same goals, even the way to these goals are not very diverse. They all have the same objective of the whole Church.

One of the 'Fathers' of Charismatic Renewal, Cardinal Suenens wrote: "To interpret the Renewal as a movement among other movements is to misunderstand its nature; it is a movement of the Spirit offered to the entire Church and destined to rejuvenate every part of the Church's life."⁸ Indeed CCR has much to offer to the Church as a whole, primarily by the importance of people's faith becoming alive through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Obviously this fosters a renewed appreciation of the sacraments, a deeper commitment to prayer and the Word of God, a rediscovery of the importance of the charismatic gifts, a desire to grow in fellowship and build

⁷De Rosa, Giuseppe "The Seven Capital Vices of the Movements," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, (editorial), (June 19, 2004).

⁸Discourse by Cardinal Suenenz at the Grottaferata conference, 1973.

community. Importantly, Charismatic Renewal has helped the emergence of a mature and formed lay leadership in the Church. It has also harnessed and mobilized a new zeal for evangelization. Ultimately, this has led to a profound attachment and love of the Institutional Church and faithfulness to the Magisterium.

Their activities range from evangelistic missions to unreached groups, to medical and educational assistances being given to the poorest of the poor in many parts of the world, to dialogues promoting Kingdom values with politicians, and economists, and engaging in works that support and promote the culture of Life.

Which of the renewal movements would not like to say the above about them? In fact, several of the movements claim to be almost like this. Which means they have hardly anything specific to contribute more than what religious congregations are already doing. The major difference may be the lay people are getting seriously interested in faith formation as well as living their faith more authentically through works of charity and genuine selflessness.

2.3. Dual Membership?

Another concern is the presence in some movements of religious men and women belonging to other institutes: this “has provoked an identity crisis for some of them and has induced others to leave their own institutes or to establish a sort of dual membership.”⁹

This phenomenon is observed especially among the Charismatics and members of the Neo-catechumenal Way. It frequently happens, for example, that Jesuits or Franciscans become part of these movements. Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, official preacher of the papal household, is a famous case of dual membership: he is a Franciscan friar, and at the same time he is part of the Charismatic movement Renewal in the Spirit. There are many cases of dual membership among the Charismatics. In the Neo-catechumenal Way, on the other hand, it happens more frequently that a religious abandons his own institute of origin and shifts completely to the movement founded by Kiko Argüello and Carmen Hernández. It is understandable that ancient and glorious religious families would not look with a kindly eye upon the exit of their own consecrated men and women, and the passage of these into new movements.

⁹De Rosa, Giuseppe “The Seven Capital Vices of the Movements,” *La Civiltà Cattolica*, (editorial), (June 19, 2004).

2.4. Non-Catholic Members?

The third challenge “is constituted by the fact that some ecclesial movements admit baptized non-Catholics”: if these “were to become very numerous, they might influence the general assemblies to make substantial statutory changes, putting in danger the Catholic nature of the movement itself.”¹⁰

This brings to mind the Focolare movement founded by Chiara Lubich, which counts among its members thousands of non-Catholics and non-Christians, among whom are many Muslims and Buddhists. It is true that the non-Catholics belonging to Focolare do not enjoy any deliberative power, but the fear is that they might gain influence as a pressure group and weigh upon the public image of the movement and of the Church, in a relativistic sense.

More substantial is the case of the monastic community of Bose, the founder and prior of which is Enzo Bianchi. There are some non-Catholics who have full membership in this community: the Swiss Reformed pastor Daniel Attinger, two other Protestants, and the Orthodox monk Emilianos Timiadis, previously the metropolitan archbishop of Silyvría. And this is enough to make it impossible for Bose to receive canonical approval from the Holy See, not to mention the other obstacle constituted by its being a mixed community, with monks and nuns in the same monastery.

2.5. Priests Torn away from the Dioceses?

Another critical point mentioned by *La Civiltà Cattolica* deserves to be cited in full:

The most delicate challenge is that of the participation of priests in the movements. It must be remembered, in the first place, that some movements have created their own seminaries, in which the students are formed according to the charism of the movement and prepared to be priests at the service of the movement itself. Then there remains the open question of the canonical incardination of these priests: if the movement has as its marks universality and missionary activity, which are recognized and approved by the Holy See in granting the movement the status of a public association, who should incardinate its priests? Generally, recourse is had to an instrumental incardination, in which a bishop well disposed toward the movement incardinate the priest into his diocese, while leaving him available - in general full time and with full freedom of movement - to the

¹⁰De Rosa, Giuseppe “The Seven Capital Vices of the Movements,” *La Civiltà Cattolica*, (editorial), (June 19, 2004).

movement itself, through a written agreement. This means that a priest thus incardinated is at the service of the movement, wherever it may need him. But difficulties can arise if a bishop is succeeded by another who does not agree with this type of incardination, or if urgent and grave pastoral needs require the presence of the priest in the diocese: in this case, it can happen that the bishop tends to restrict the freedom of the priest and ignore the written agreement. Among other issues, such an agreement has more a formal than a juridical value, as it is not provided for in canon law.¹¹

Many movements correspond to this profile. The most visible case is that of the Neo-catechumenal Way, with more than fifty "Redemptoris Mater" seminaries throughout the world, from which thousands of priests have emerged and been juridically incardinated in the dioceses, but are often, in fact, at the exclusive service of the Way.

Analogous cases include the Community of Sant'Egidio, Focolare, the Marian Oases, the Missionary Community of Villaregia, and many more: all with priests at their service, ordained or contributed by "friendly" bishops.

The solution proposed by *La Civiltà Cattolica* is that "the movements that are by nature universal and missionary should obtain the faculty of incardinating their own clergy," as is the case for the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits, and for the institutes of consecrated life in general.¹²

In effect, among the movements that have arisen during the past few decades, some have already obtained the faculty of incardinating their own priests: the Legionaries of Christ, the Lefebvrists who re-entered the Catholic Church, the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo - linked with Communion and Liberation and with superior general Fr. Massimo Camisasca - and, naturally, Opus Dei, as it is a personal prelature.

The Neo-catechumenal Way has tried, in the past, to obtain the status of a personal prelature. But without success. Many of the new movements have characteristics that make them unsuitable for full approval by the Vatican Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life. The Marian Oases, for example, apart from having a woman as superior general, have communities of men and women

¹¹De Rosa, Giuseppe "The Seven Capital Vices of the Movements," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, (editorial), (June 19, 2004).

¹²De Rosa, Giuseppe "The Seven Capital Vices of the Movements," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, (editorial), (June 19, 2004).

together: under these conditions, it is unlikely that they would obtain from the Holy See permission to incardinate their own priests.

2.6. Taking Advantage of the Fall in Numbers of Candidates to Religious and Priestly Lives?

In Europe and America several religious congregations have been shut down. In their fervour to encourage the laity to enter into these movements often vocations to religious life have been played down and the result is now obvious.

The first part of the 20th century was a time of extraordinary vocational abundance to the religious life all over the world. Each year hundreds of young men and women flocked to religious novitiates and diocesan seminaries. All this changed in the early 1960s after the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Some, indeed, have blamed the Council, which brought about significant changes in the Church for the first time in some 400 years, for this drop-off in vocations. The actual reasons for the new scarcity of vocations were, without doubt, far more complex and have to do with changes not simply in the Church but within society and culture.

In trying to understand the decline in religious and priestly vocations in recent years, many have pointed to the erosion of spiritual values and the materialism that seem to characterize our modern world. There is a "practical atheism" abroad in today's world that, if not specifically denying spiritual realities, remains indifferent to them in favour of such things as power, wealth, and status. In a society where self fulfilment, living the good life, and a pragmatic morality ("if it feels good, do it") predominate, there is a decided bias against those professions which formerly were valued, and have now become "counter-cultural." Why become a priest or religious and "give up" all the modern world has to offer?

The so-called "sexual revolution" has also affected attitudes toward religious life and priesthood, since both require a celibate (chaste) lifestyle, forbidding marriage or sexual relations for those who choose to embrace these vocations. If one feels he cannot be an authentic or fulfilled person without being sexually active, he will certainly not consider the celibacy requirements of the religious life or priesthood. Another consequence of the sexual revolution coupled with the advances in reproductive technology has been the decline in the number of children couples have, because of increased use of contraceptive devices including abortion. With smaller families there

are fewer children available to fulfil the variety of family needs and expectations, including the "giving" of a family member for service to the Church.

Vocations to religious communities of women (nuns and sisters) have, no doubt, been negatively affected by another development in the modern world: the gains women have recently made in the work place. Women religious in the past often enjoyed opportunities - in the areas of teaching, hospital work, administration, and other areas - that ordinary women did not, and so the sisterhood became a means of fulfilling women's professional as well as spiritual aspirations. Today, however, there are so many work-related possibilities for women that they might well ask: why limit myself by becoming a religious nun or sister when I can do all those things (and others) right now without the "limitations" of religious life? Thus, vocations to the religious life in women's communities have dropped even more sharply in recent years than those in men's communities.

Finally, the Catholic Church has lost credibility with many of its traditional supporters. The reasons for this are varied. Some people disagree with the Church's moral teachings, which are still quite traditional and demanding. Others have fallen away because of aggressive evangelization efforts from Protestant denominations, which often appear more community and service-minded than Catholics. Most recently the loyalty of many Catholics has been shaken by the ongoing sexual abuse scandal among the clergy and religious all over the world.

This "drying up" of the traditional sources of priestly and religious vocations has had grave consequences for the Church in its evangelization and humanitarian efforts. With fewer young candidates entering the ranks, the clergy are aging; moreover, there are fewer to replace those who have died. There are thus fewer and fewer priests and religious to meet the spiritual needs of more and more people.

Jesus said in the Gospel: "Many are called but few are chosen!" From the beginning of Christianity, then, there was a need for more individuals to take up the challenge of a religious vocation. That need remains greater than ever today. Clearly such situations among the priestly religious groups have promoted the growth of catholic renewal movements. Poor substitutes? One cannot really say. One can also vice versa argue that the proliferation of renewal movements was one of the reasons for the decline of vocations to religious and priestly lives.

2.7. Distancing from the Church and Her Teaching?

There are movements that have had difficulties with the Church's ways of functioning. Although the church may speak out boldly on certain issues, especially in the II Vatican council documents, hardly anything is done by the Church, no concrete actions are forthcoming. But these movements, in their sincerity, venture into these, based on the church's teachings and come into conflict with the Church.

For example, the Focolare Movement working for unity in all spheres of life is a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious movement present in 182 nations of the world. For over sixty years it has drawn together people of all Christian traditions and from many of the world's religions, alongside people with no formal faith, who share the aim of building a united world. But some of their activities in these lines did not go well with the late Pope John Paul II. In its dreams for universal unity it brought together, like a real family, people of different languages, races, cultures, nations and also faiths, because besides being made up of Christians of numerous Churches, there are also followers of various religions and people who do not have a religious faith but who share with the others great human values such as justice, solidarity, peace, human rights. Thus it takes on an image envisioned by Jesus, but may be beyond what the Roman church does.

The secret of this ability to gather in unity people who are so different lies in the timely and modern Gospel spirit that animates the Movement: a spirituality which is both personal and collective. It is a "spirituality of communion" which generates a new lifestyle. This spirituality is not the monopoly of the movement. It is the fruit of a charism, a gift of God, and by its nature a charism is destined to all those who want to receive it.

In the field of inter-religious dialogue, it can be noted that the Muslims, Taoists, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and people belonging to other religions in contact with the Focolare Movement took as their own, the simple word love and through reciprocity of love enhanced their being a family. The Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, whichever religion they belonged to, felt the need to deepen their own faith and doctrines and enrich them through love. On this basis, they share the vision and praxis of Unity in the discovery of God who is Love.

2.8. Not Working Closely with the Local Church?

There are movements that have had difficulty with local churches. For example, the members of Opus Dei are a mixed group of

cardinals, bishops, priests and lay people. In 1982, by decision of Pope John Paul II, the Catholic Church made it into a *personal prelature* that is, the jurisdiction of its own bishop covers the persons in Opus Dei wherever they are, rather than geographical dioceses. Apart from being a semi-controversial group for various reasons, this personal jurisdiction all over the world and their style of functioning in a rather pietistic, traditional manner and their opulent works of mercy have created uneasiness in some places.

Founded in Spain in 1928 by the Catholic priest St. Josemaría Escrivá, Opus Dei was given final approval in 1950 by Pope Pius XII. Members of the Prelature number almost 90,000 with almost 2000 priests today. They are in more than 90 countries. About 70% of Opus Dei members live in their private homes, leading traditional Catholic family lives with secular careers, while the other 30% are celibate, of whom the majority live in Opus Dei centres. Opus Dei organizes training in Catholic spirituality applied to daily life. Aside from personal charity and social work, Opus Dei members are involved in running universities and colleges. The canonization of the founder in 2002 was a controversial issue questioned by all those who knew his friendship with the late Pope.

This has been a general complaint that people tend to give more importance to these movements and little interest to the regular church or sacramental practices. Otherwise with such proliferation of renewal movements how does one explain the heavy drop in church and sacramental practices in countries like Spain and Italy, where there seem to be largest number of renewal movements? Late night vigils on Saturdays, outings on weekends etc have kept them outside Sunday masses in some areas.

There seems to be a tendency in some movements to make a 'system of power' based on silence and obedience. They seem to make absolute their own Christian experience, holding it to be the only valid one, for which reason the 'true' Christians would be those who are part of their group. This follows on from the "my charism is the only charism worth following" argument. The tendency to close themselves off, that is, to follow their own pastoral plans and methods of formation for the members of the movement, to carry out their own apostolic activities, refusing to collaborate with other ecclesial organizations, or seeking to occupy all the territory themselves, leaving scarce resources for the activities of other associations. They may even cut themselves off from the local Church, making reference in their apostolic activity more to the methods of the movement and the directives of its leaders than to the

directives and pastoral programs of the dioceses and parishes. From this arises the sometimes bitter tensions that can destroy all the good that they do.

Members of renewal movements tend to work together and avoid others. In certain parishes where certain renewal groups it has been reported that they work only together with their group members and that without full assistance of their own group, they do not collaborate in parish activities. They also tend to take up certain activities all by themselves.

Some charismatic movements have separated themselves from the Catholic Church, interpreting the Bible literally and challenging the authority of the hierarchy.

It is true that many of these groups engage in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. However, some groups like the Charismatics, tend to take a very negative attitude towards other religions. Some even present them as the work of the Devil and insist on a strict avoidance of any contact with other religions. Any comment on such tendencies? Charismatics even take on to sentimentalism and emphasis on miracles, healing and projecting these alone as the sign of God's presence in them. Groups like Opus Dei and Charismatics seem to have a rather queer approach to body, world, etc insisting on torturing of the body, severe fasting, penance and so on.

It has been observed that in their fervour to be more participative some liturgists take liberties to make subtle changes to important rituals in the Holy Mass and other liturgical celebrations. At times they forget that these are not private group celebrations, where such changes may be allowed, but, public functions where thousands take part.

2.9. How Have the Scandals Affected the Church?

Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado, the founder of the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi has been accused of several sexual scandals some of which were unearthed after his death. In the United States, bishops have barred or severely restricted both these in some dioceses. Recently Pope Benedict XVI ordered a Vatican investigation of the Legionaries. The Legionaries of Christ has acknowledged that its founder fathered a child and is also responding to claims that the founder molested seminarians. The church leaders visited and evaluated the seminaries, schools and other institutions run by the Legionaries. In a statement, the Vatican denounced the Rev. Marcial Maciel for creating a "system of power" built on silence and

obedience that enabled him to lead an “immoral” double life “devoid of scruples and authentic religious sentiment” and allowed him to abuse young boys for decades unchecked.

The Opus Dei has been smeared in several controversies mainly because of the personal prelature and other aspects of sacred secrecy, opulent financial investments, entry to various power corridors through financial transactions and seemingly a very traditional spirituality.

Virtually all religious groups and renewal movements are affected by the recent sex scandals and are taking steps to make sure that those who are entrusted to their spiritual care are not victimized, and that those who have been victimized in the past receive the help they need and deserve to be healed of this terrible form of abuse through various forms of pastoral assistance.

Finally, it must be said, scandals are opportunities when the Church needs to feel humbled and need to re-emerge solidly from these to greater grace.

2.10. Do These Movements Duplicate Governments' Work?

This has been a criticism of active religious congregations too. Normally social works, especially caring for the marginalized is the work of the government. Any duly elected government has a responsibility to help the poorest. Normally when the government does not do their job, members of religious groups come forward with all kinds of help to the deprived. Even at times of disasters, famines etc, when the government is fully involved in relief work these groups also continue their parallel efforts, instead of working with the government and seeking support from the government. Several renewal movements instead of alerting the government and empowering the people through education, put on the Saviour's mantle to gain extra mileage and publicity in the country.

Movements like Opus Dei, Legionaries etc have singled out the richest and traditional Catholics from the US, Europe and Latin America and thus have befriended the Vatican. The huge amount of money that these movements have, project an image of the affluent church and it does not identify with the Nazarene who chose to remain with the poorest and the marginalized. Some religious congregations have already been criticized this way, and hence it is unpardonable that “renewal” groups take to such specious ways.

2.11. Shouldn't These Groups Be Temporary?

One thing which many groups forget is that they were founded to serve a particular need at a particular time and context. If that need has been served, the group needs to fold up. A good example is Better World Movement, a movement very active in the 60s and 70s, but when its works were taken over by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movements, they ceased to exist in many parts of the world. Probably these movements can learn a lesson from the demise of several religious congregations which died out as the purpose for which they were founded no more made relevance.

On the contrary, one may say that the success of any movement will be its ability to adapt to the changing needs of the times, like the Jesuit order, which has a stretchable charism of adapting to the signs of the times, and helping the Church get on with the changing situations at every age.

With the spread of these movements far and wide and lack of proper enlightened personnel who share the vision of the founder there have been cases when the followers have slackened and lived watered down versions of the charism. It has been noticed that people come together in the name of the movement, pray together for some time and then celebrate with snacks, drinks etc. There have been times when mundane celebrations have taken precedence over prayer sessions.

Conclusion

Clearly there is more good done by these groups than bad. The negative elements have been presented as questions rather than as assertions, based on the comments of people who are familiar with the workings of these movements. These comment needs to be taken simply as caution statements, so that they can carry on with the magnificent work of faith education and faith living meaningfully.