

## **A Convocation at the service of communion in the Renewal**

by Salvatore Martinez

Right from the start, when a “Convocation” was proposed in Rome, at the center of Christianity, after 36 years of uninterrupted presence at Rimini, the “desire” was clear in the heart of the National Service Committee and of the National Council of Renewal in the Spirit of Italy to make of this ecclesial gathering a “gift to be shared” with the entire big family of Renewal in the world, lived out in the journey of the Nations and of the recognized Communities.

Awareness that became “responsibility” when – on September 9th, 2013 – the Holy Father Francis received me in a private Audience and confirmed his availability to intervene at our Convocation in Rome.

After verifying all the organizational aspects and having received from the Vatican Secretariat of State the formal confirmation of the presence of the Pope – on the eve of Christmas – this “desire” became reality. And so we willed that this special event be called: **XXXVII Convocation of the Renewal with Pope Francis**.

A decision accepted and shared by the two “bodies of liaison” that the Renewal can boast of in the world: *ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services)* and *CFCCCCF (Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships)* in their two presidents, Michelle Moran and Gilberto Gomes Barbosa respectively, who in the name of their respective Councils have adhered with joy and conviction to the proposal to be “co-responsible” of this historic Convocation.

Therefore, **Convocation**, which means a “people called to be together”; a people who do not auto-convocate themselves, but who recognize “that they are convoked” by the Holy Spirit. *Convocation*, an expression which more than any other (Meeting, Conference, ...) recalls the expression *ecclesia*, which in Greek and in Latin means *assembly of people*.

**XXXVII**, then, is to indicate a history, a journey of Convocations, a reality which has grown in time, in which the “hierarchical-sacramental” and “lay-charismatic” dimension have always wedded and completed themselves, backed by the autographed Letters of Popes John Paul II and of Benedict XVI who have accompanied various previous editions, and this year by the presence of Pope Francis.

The **Renewal**, without specifying denominations, to indicate the “current of grace” which has generated all of us, beyond the different historical affiliations, in the conscience that no “acronym or structure”, present or future, will ever be able to exhaust or contain the gift of the Spirit and His multiform action within the great Catholic Charismatic Movement.

With the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium*, apostolic Exhortation of Francis to which the very Pope Bergoglio assigns a «*programmatic meaning*» for the Pontificate (*cf. n. 25*), the request of a new “anointing of the Holy Spirit” in the Church and for the Church appears unequivocal, which makes it all the more *kerigmatic and charismatic* in words, actions and works; increasingly prepared to be amazed by the joyful experience of the love of God and to be led by the Spirit with a firm, humble and missionary step.

Therefore, Providence has willed that our **XXXVII Convocation of the Renewal with Pope Francis** could be an answer of the intentions of the Pontiff, in continuity with what has already been lived with the “first Pope” of our history, in Rome, in occasion of Pentecost 1975, when Paul VI defined the Renewal «*a chance for the Church* ».

These expectations, these sentiments, this “prophetic vision” we wished to share immediately with the main leaders of the past and recent history of the Renewal in the world, and these readily and joyfully welcomed to be present and intervene at the Convocation, allowing us to put together a “program” truly without precedents to which Cardinals and Bishops who have always accompanied our ecclesial journey and apostolic work unite themselves.

But our joy would not have been “full” if another important step was not realized: the invitation to participate actively and fraternally at the Convocation made to the Communities in Italy and who historically do not recognize themselves within the Renewal in the Holy Spirit, charismatic Communities whose statutes have been approved by one or more Bishops of local Churches or by the Holy See.

In fact the answer was unanimous: great emotion in praying together and simplicity of heart in living together an *agape* at the National Secretariat of *Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo*. With a commitment: not to interrupt the journey begun, to emphasize what unites us and makes us brothers, to look together at the future respecting diversities represented and to be open to the novelty of the Spirit.

Of this we give witness, blessing the Father together, in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. And we do not stop praying and working so that at Rome, at the Olympic Stadium, on June 1st and 2nd it should be truly a *Convocation “at the service of Communion” in the Renewal*.

*Alleluja!*