

# A HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC FRATERNITY

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From a personal sharing addressed to covenant  
community leaders at the North American Regional  
Leaders Conference

held in Dallas/Ft. Worth in July 2009

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A History of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities tells the story of one group of Covenant Communities that arose in the early days of Charismatic Renewal. They were lead by the Community of God's Delight. They were recognized in 1990 by the Pontifical Council of the Laity as a private Association of the Christian Faithful of pontifical right. They are the only Charismatic Covenant Communities recognized by the Vatican. This is the story of their journey to that status.

Two other umbrella groups of Charismatic Covenant Communities also arose during the early years of Charismatic Renewal: The People of Praise (South Bend) and the Word of God (Ann Arbor). These two umbrella organizations were comprised of multiple Covenant Communities in submission to the parent Community. They were located in different geographical locations in the US, Canada and Latin America. These felt called to join together as one, 'super' community. There was great fanfare and excitement as the two large communities approached each other and tried to hammer out the details of their new life as one community. Much to the surprise of many however they failed to find enough common ground to unify their communities.

The only known discussion about how and why the two failed at their joining is contained in this document. Hopefully, someday one or both groups of Covenant Communities will offer their own explanations. Until then however we are indebted to Dr Peterman for shedding as much light on the matter as is known.

Besides the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities, a few Covenant Communities from the Word of God (later changing its name to the Sword of the Spirit) have achieved Lay Association status under certain Bishops in the United States. This means they can meet privately among themselves as long as they submit statutes to their local bishop and he approves them. That Bishop can also suppress them for any reason as he would see fit, ie: scandal or failure to comply to the Bishop's leadership. These communities must submit to the leadership of their Bishop and do not have pontifical privilege that the Catholic Fraternity enjoys.

While Sword of the Spirit Covenant Communities may have had their statutes approved by a few local Bishops they have not been approved by Rome. In order to be approved by Rome, these communities would have to break with the non-Catholic Sword of the Spirit organization altogether and then reapply for pontifical right. As of this writing, none have chosen to do so.

Also, while claiming to be under the Bishop's leadership allows them to advertise themselves as Catholic Lay Associations (from which they aggressively recruit new members), they continue to be voluntary members of the non-Catholic Sword of the Spirit, which according to their web pages, has its own 'way of life' and understanding or scripture, with all the theological and pastoral implications that carries. Why and how these communities are part of two separate and individual religious governments is unknown. The same arrangement failed in 1991 in Steubenville Oh. One can only hope that membership in the non –Catholic Sword of the Spirit does not negatively affect Catholics in communities that also enjoy Lay Association status.

Many thanks to the author, David A Peterman PhD for putting together this important piece of the history of Charismatic Renewal and Covenant Communities.

John Flaherty, Grand Island, NE January 21, 2017

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **1. Personal History as Witness**

I was asked to provide a history of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships (CFCCCCF). This is a subject that is dear to my heart, as I have been privileged to be involved from its beginning. What a blessing it's been to experience the development of the Catholic Fraternity under the formation and guidance of leaders like Bobbie Cavnar, Brian Smith and Paul Cardinal Cordes the three men whom God used in the 1980s to lead the Catholic Fraternity into existence.

I have approached this task not as a historian but as a personal reflection on what I experienced and how I interpret the significance of what I observed. It therefore includes potential questionable facts due to my memory fallibility and some errors in judgment due to my personal limitations and perspective. Nevertheless, I offer it as a way of helping those who were not so fortunate to experience this history for themselves and may gain from my feeble attempt to communicate it.

As for non-Catholics who may read this history, I would ask their indulgence as I intend to speak directly to the leaders of the Catholic Fraternity, and through them to all Catholic members of their communities.

## **2. Handing On**

We all realize that studying history and remembering the lessons of the past can help us know where we are and guide us in moving forward. That's the purpose of my talk, to help the Catholic Fraternity grasp its history so we can move forward together – as intended by our founders.

Human knowledge passes from generation to generation. Essentially what we know is based on what has been passed on to us as well as what we personally experience. But even our experiences are interpreted in light of what we have learned from history. Without the discoveries and experiences of others, we would still all live like cave men. So we all owe a great debt to our predecessors – who've put history's "lessons" into our hands and minds.

But receipt of this historical "treasure" has to overcome some basic barriers. The most important is generation-to-generation transfer. Without a strong family faith environment to discipline and enrich our early years AND a willingness to learn from our elders, we can lose the rich "treasure" that history can provide. We all know the consequences, especially in the spiritual and moral formation of our children. But this applies to us as well, as parents and leaders of communities, especially regarding truly knowing, understanding and living our faith as adults. We also need a strong familial faith environment. This is what covenant community can be for each of us. And that is why the Catholic Fraternity is so important. Our communities also need each other as an extended familial faith environment that is in authentic communion with the universal community of the Church. We are together One Family, One Body and One in the Spirit.

Finally, there is the challenge of immaturity's effect on our ability to accept and appreciate what is handed on to us. As a child, I learned about my faith from the Baltimore Catechism and

how to practice it from good parents and the nuns at my Catholic school. But when I went off to college there was little to support my transitioning from the faith and practice of a child to the faith of an adult who now questioned “Why?” My childish sense of what was real was soon challenged by the non-biblical influences of the world around me. Many of you probably had a similar experience.

My child-like knowledge and practice of my faith needed to be augmented by a firm adult conviction and resolve to live accordingly. So, although I went on to receive a Ph.D. in engineering that provided a good livelihood for my family, my faith education remained that of a child. The worst part was that I was generally unaware of this reality. What we don’t know CAN hurt us. The center of my religious life was the large parish “church” where I continued to attend and practice what I had learned as a child, but this fell far short of helping me reach an adult knowledge and understanding of my faith or the opportunity to experience it in a deep spiritual way.

## **II. PRECUSORS**

### **1. Second Vatican Council**

Thus, in the early 1960s my faith situation was like that of most Catholics. We continued to dutifully practice our faith, but our belief in it was very weak and our knowledge of it still simplistic. We had little understanding of its spiritual realities or mystical depth. That all changed for me and many others in the mid-60s with the issuing of the sixteen Documents of the Second Vatican Council. Blessed Pope John XXIII’s famous prayer before this unprecedented Council was a prophetic precursor to what was about to happen. He prayed: “Renew Thy wonders in this our day, as by a new Pentecost...” This was certainly fulfilled in the Council and in subsequent events. It led to what was originally called the Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church and then renamed the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which is also called Renewal in the Spirit. We are all participants and beneficiaries of this movement of the Holy Spirit.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council brought the Church back to the sources or roots of its biblical foundation of the Apostles and early Church Fathers. This emphasis is often referred to as a *Resource mont*, a reclaiming of the ancient resources of Catholic orthodoxy and faith. It flowed from several schools of theology such as *La Nouvelle Theologie*, a French school of theological giants such as Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar and others. The Council also addressed the need to move the Church beyond a counter-reformation “fortress” mentality into an informed dialogue with modernity and other religious streams. This second emphasis was referred to as *Aggiornamento* – the Italian word meaning, “updating or modernizing.”

These changes also brought many struggles, as liberal-minded application of the documents led to extremes, bringing a loss of many of the historical traditions, while an unbridled enthusiasm for experimentation led to many abuses. Ordinary Catholics, and even priests and religious, found it difficult to adapt to this “new” Church. Clearly the Holy Spirit needed a way to renew and empower the Church to carry out its mission to be Christ to the nations – as the

Council intended – while restoring the right balance of growth and participation by modern man in his world of today.

A key that unlocked the “windows” of the Church to such empowerment of the Holy Spirit was the Vatican II Council’s teaching on extraordinary charisms (or spiritual gifts), as St. Paul describes them in 1 Corinthians 12-14 and elsewhere. These gifts are different from the traditional Gifts of the Spirit based on Isaiah 11, which are given as characteristics of our personal “participation” in the Spirit of Christ. The extraordinary charisms that Paul describes had already been evident in Pentecostal and Protestant congregations and prayer groups since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly enough, this outpouring followed soon after Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical on the Holy Spirit in 1897 and his own prayer for a renewal of the Church in the Holy Spirit in 1899.

This outbreak of the Holy Spirit took place almost immediately, but not in the Catholic Church. It began at a 1901 Protestant revival in Topeka, KS, and then fully blossomed at Azusa Street in Los Angeles, CA. This led to a major Pentecostal movement becoming what might be called a third stream of Christianity that somehow “flowed around” the fortress-minded Catholic Church – until after Vatican II. God has a sense of humor. He wanted us to learn that the Holy Spirit is sent to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Like a dam that had burst, however, the effect of Vatican II and its sixteen documents issued in 1965 was almost as immediate. Many students and scholars at Catholic colleges and universities began to study them and quickly realized the importance of their teachings. They realized that *Lumen Gentium*’s particular teaching on the extraordinary charisms actually was a validation of their own experience from attending Pentecostal prayer meetings and personally experiencing the Holy Spirit’s action in their lives – what is called the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” (BHS) in Scripture passages like Matt 3:11 & Acts 1:5.

### **Cursillo**

Meanwhile, the Spirit had been at work in another older movement of the Holy Spirit. Many Catholic laymen and women (like myself and some of the academics spoken of above) had been finding a new life in Christ through the Cursillo movement, founded in Spain by Eduardo Bonnín in 1944, and brought to the U.S. by our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters who attended the 75<sup>th</sup> Cursillo in Dallas in late 1965 and found there an awakening of my adult Catholic faith that took me from mere practice to a real personal experience of its truths. Although I had lived a good life without major sin, I was shocked to hear the personal conversions that were witnessed to and that even took place before my eyes. I saw men totally changed, their hearts turned to Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit visible to all. There was no doubt that our Triune God was real and active in our midst. Acts 2 was suddenly very real and believable.

With this awakening, I began to truly embrace the mysteries of our Church: the Trinity, the Incarnation, the True Presence, a Jesus that was alive and wanted to relate to me personally, and so forth. This awakening of an adult faith prepared me to grow, but it failed to satisfy my desire to live my life accordingly. After becoming a leader and teacher in the Cursillo retreats, I still felt something was missing in my life. The Cursillo’s “fourth day” of ongoing Christian life wasn’t

happening. We tried with weekly group meetings and attending Cursillo closing ceremonies, but something was missing.

### **Catholic Charismatic Renewal**

Meanwhile, something was happening with those students and professors from many Catholic and non-Catholic campuses in places like Duquesne, South Bend and Ann Arbor. These young men and women with good Catholic educations, many of whom also had Cursillo experience, were now studying the Vatican II documents and trying to understand their own experiences of the Baptism in the Spirit and its consequences. This led them to become immersed in scripture and the teachings of the Church. The combination of Vatican II's encouragement for the laity to seek holiness and the inspiration from Biblical immersion through their Protestant friends likewise led to a deep desire to live the Christian life in its authentic fullness. Thus they came to the same hunger that I had experienced after my Cursillo. But now they had the inspiration and power source to actually begin doing it. They had the Holy Spirit empowering their fourth day!

They had also discovered the origins of adult faith in the scriptures, especially in the Acts of the Apostles and in St. Paul's letters. They also saw the gifts and fruit of the "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" (BHS) operating in many Protestant groups and ecclesial communities. This naturally led them to explore the rich treasure of practical Christian teachings and wisdom that had developed in these Protestant communities and broader Pentecostal Renewal, and to use them in pursuing this new "Life in the Spirit" (LSS), but as Catholics. The Christian faith became alive and real to them as they began to "walk in the Spirit" together.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of these early leaders' immersion in the scriptures, the Word of God. The BHS had produced in them a great hunger for reading and studying scripture that produced radical changes in their way of thinking about their faith. They were quickly brought to a "biblical world view" rather than a secular worldview. This change resulted in a whole new way of looking at Christianity, and especially in how to live it out. The result was a deep desire to live out the gospel in Christian communities like those described in the New Testament.

Meanwhile these energetic young people were busy sharing their experiences with a host of other Catholics and Protestants who had awakened to the same realities. Their natural reaction was to come together in praise and worship of God. These "assemblies" (*ecclesia* in Greek = churches – in N.T. sense) were of several types: prayer groups, covenant communities, leader's conferences and general conferences attended by people who traveled thousands of miles to be together in the Spirit.

The newly formed covenant community "Word of God" in Ann Arbor, MI, quickly assumed the lead in teaching basic tenants of the Christian life while the "People of Praise" covenant community in South Bend, IN, began sponsoring annual conferences in South Bend and providing information sources such as music, books and tapes. During the decade of the 1970s, these two communities worked closely together, forming an explosive leadership powerhouse

that served the emerging “Pentecostal Renewal in the Catholic Church” and propelled the new movement of the Spirit out into the whole world as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR).

### **III. FOUNDATIONS**

#### **CCR Leaders Meetings in Ann Arbor**

In May of 1970, Bobbie Cavnar was baptized in the Holy Spirit during a trip for the wedding of his daughter Mary in Ann Arbor. He came back to Dallas, TX, and began attending a small prayer group. Two weeks later he was asked to be their leader. Thus began a new thrust of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Dallas. Two months later I was invited to attend this prayer meeting of around 20 people that met in the Cavnar home. It was a wild and glorious time with new experiences and discoveries every week.

As we experienced new things that we had not imagined, Bobbie stayed in constant communications with his son Jim Cavnar and other leaders of the Word of God Community. We, too, experienced the process of immersion in God’s Word and conversion to a biblical worldview. In early 1971, the Word of God Community sent us an outline of their new Life in the Spirit Seminar, which we quickly adopted. In late 1971, God sovereignly moved our prayer meetings to Bishop Lynch High School on Sunday evenings to accommodate the dynamic growth in attendees. This growth continued in the 1970s with up to a thousand attendees and hundreds of people attending four simultaneous LSS classes feeding into two Foundations courses, along with active healing, youth and children’s ministries.

The service team for this large prayer meeting met at Bobbie’s home on Tuesday nights, and was quickly led to a desire for a deeper covenant life together. God prophetically indicated (through Isaiah 62:4) that the name of our covenant community should be “The Christian Community of God’s Delight” (CCGD), and “the rest is history,” as they say. During this time, the early covenant communities such as the Word of God became powerful witnesses and servants to the smaller prayer groups and communities that God was raising up across our country and to others that soon began in other countries. Both the South Bend conferences and the Ann Arbor leaders meetings not only provided valuable teachings that helped us to progress towards covenant Christian life, but they also facilitated the growth of personal relationships among the leaders from around the country and the world.

These regular leaders’ gatherings were foundational in helping the CCR produce much fruit. They also were most significant later in the formation of the Catholic Fraternity. There was a growing sense of unity that began to form among those who attended the early leaders conferences in Ann Arbor. We truly began to experience a brotherhood and sisterhood with many like-minded leaders from throughout the U.S. and other parts of the world. These relationships actually eclipsed our daily circumstances and gave us a worldwide familial identity that would become key to responding to what the Holy Spirit was about to do.

#### **Elders Conferences**

As many covenant communities were being formed within the broader CCR, the Word of God and People of Praise communities in (Ann Arbor, MI, and South Bend, IN) formed an association of communities in 1975 that had several names during its existence up to 1983, such

## **as Association of Communities, Conference of Communities and later Federation of Communities.**

This initially informal association brought together the community leaders or elders each year for fellowship and formation. Soon “Elders Conferences” were co-hosted by the Word of God and People of Praise. They gathered overall community leaders and were of particular importance in the further formation and development of familial relationships among communities. Each year we gathered as leaders from the many covenant communities that had formed from the witness of these two pioneer communities. This provided an opportunity to play together (e.g. basketball), listen to each other’s witness, hear the Lord speak to us and ponder in our hearts how to respond with the love of Christ for each other. In our case (Christian Community of God’s Delight in Dallas), it also provided a chance to travel together (to/from Ann Arbor, South Bend, etc.) for 18 hours in a van with sharing and fellowship as brothers in Christ.

We were drawn in these meetings to a common form of Christian community life drawn from Acts of the Apostles and the biblical concept of being a covenant people. We were able to address common challenges to living the Christian life together by sharing each other’s specific experiences and the results of our particular approaches to grow deeper in living a truly Christian life together as a local faith community. This was a very big help to us as we returned to our task of leading our own communities.

This familial bond among the leaders of covenant communities soon extended beyond the U.S. to include communities from Oceania and Europe. This brought the participation of many strong leaders such as Brian Smith, a founder of the Emmanuel Community in Brisbane Australia and Fr. (now Bishop) Albert-Marie de Monleon of the Emmanuel community in Paris. This extended brotherhood was experienced within the general context of a call to serve the Lord by being all that God was calling us to be. It also gave us a real experience of the universal dimension of our Church.

## **Federation of Communities**

The relationship between leaders of covenant communities and recognition of common experiences and needs naturally led to a growing desire for a more definitive relationship between the covenant communities themselves. This brought attempts to organize a more formal organization of communities that was implicitly hierarchical, since the newer communities like ours generally looked for guidance to either the older Word of God or People of Praise communities. Thus, in the late 1970s we were all invited to be part of a new association these two communities had formed called the “Federation of Covenant Communities.” Several elders’ conferences then pursued its development. There was also an effort to foster a common prophetic office with official “prophets” that came together annually for Prophet’s Guild meetings. I participated in two of these meetings in 1981 and 1982 but felt that this was tending to put the spiritual gift of prophecy into a straight jacket or worse use it to manipulate the communities.

So as sincere as these efforts were, several issues arose that led to a growing tension – especially between the overall leaders of the two main communities, the Word of God and the

People of Praise. Their differences concerned several principles that were contextual, rather than a direct result of the original common bonding and desire to support one another. These issues have not been discussed publically (that I know of). I was partly aware of them, as I was asked by Bobbie to attend Federation council meetings representing our community. I believe it is important to recognize these issues -- at least in general terms -- so that we don't repeat some of their failings.

A key difference that emerged between the leaders of the two overall communities was over the degree of formality, centrality and control that should exist; and, by inference, how the association of communities should relate to the various ecclesial communions -- including the Catholic Church and its pastors. This would turn out to be not only problematic, but also disastrous for many of the communities that took a path of becoming part of this independent association that tended to transcend its member's denominational identities.

### **International Brotherhood of Communities (IBOC)**

In the early 1980s this growing conflict came to a head, and the leaders of South Bend and Ann Arbor communities were no longer able to function together in serving the Renewal and its communities, due to basic disagreements on their objectives and how an association of communities should function. The result was a tragic split in 1982 that had dire consequences -- not only for the affected covenant communities, but also for the entire Charismatic Renewal that had depended on the essential service and support they had provided. Much of this support rapidly disappeared, leaving the non-community renewal with a void that has yet to be filled.

Like a family divorce, this separation led to the immediate formation of two new familial associations of communities around the Word of God and People of Praise. But in this case, the children of the broader renewal were left to fend for themselves. This caused considerable bitterness and condemnation of the idea of covenant community itself in some parts of the broader Renewal.

In 1982 the Word of God Community and some of its affiliate communities formed a new, worldwide, non-denominational association of communities named the Sword of the Spirit. Since the Word of God Community had been a primary relationship for us in Dallas, we were confronted with the issue of becoming a part of their new association -- or not.

I am less familiar with the parallel more informal association that continued around the People of Praise (Fellowship of Communities). Dennis McBride's Alleluia and Bob Carmody's City of the Lord communities had some contact with them and indicate that it remained informal and non-denominational. Therefore it was much less problematic for Catholic members of its communities who remained free to associate without conflict. The Sword of the Spirit, however, had become a single international association that put the faith life of its Catholic members under the guidance of a non-Catholic entity that transcended diocesan oversight. This was a whole other matter.

We in Dallas were approached by our Ann Arbor brothers at that time and invited to become a part of the Sword of the Spirit. Despite the pain and great sense of loss that followed, the conditions that were required for us to join them forced us to decline their invitation. Similar

responses were made by several of our sister communities in the U.S. and Oceania. Following a dialogue meeting in Ann Arbor, Brian Smith and several other leaders from Oceania came to Dallas in 1983 to discuss this situation. We were in universal agreement that what we all really wanted was to continue to associate as autonomous communities, and that we were not being called to be part of the Sword of the Spirit. We decided to continue our dialog seeking a way of relating as autonomous communities.

As a result we met again in Dallas in 1984 to explore how we could continue to relate to each other as we had before. At this meeting, the group of around fourteen leaders concluded that we really wanted a way that our communities could relate like adult brothers rather than as siblings under a father's authority. This led to a decision to form a new association called the International Brotherhood of Communities (IBOC). This new association would welcome other covenant communities, but each would remain autonomous, with local governance and financial responsibility. This was essentially a continuation of the relationship the Lord had already led us to pursue. It also had the important ability to enable its Catholic members to remain under their local Bishop's authority and guidance.

#### **IV.RECOGNITION**

##### **John Paul II's Intervention**

These developments and their fallout in the broader Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR), along with growing complaints by many affected diocesan bishops, led to serious concerns within the Holy See for the CCR and the faith life of the Catholics involved. Although the Popes had each supported it, the CCR was still not popular with some in the Holy See or with many diocesan bishops. It was now floundering.

To deal with the situation, Pope John Paul II acted. He appointed his friend Bishop (now Cardinal) Paul Cordes as his Episcopal Advisor – or personal envoy – to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, to take up the work of another friend, Leo Jozef Cardinal Suenens. Cardinal Suenens had been one of the major forces of Vatican II and had shepherded the Charismatic Renewal throughout the 1970s. Bishop Cordes was already aware of the importance of the Renewal after his appointment as Vice-President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, which was involved in fostering many lay movements in the Church. This brilliant, young, frank-speaking German bishop energetically undertook the task of “righting the Renewal's ship.”

The first thing Bishop Cordes did was to travel around the world meeting with all expressions of the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church, including many covenant communities. As he went, he also met with local bishops. Thus he came to Dallas in 1984 and visited with Bobbie Cavnar and our Bishop Thomas Tschoepe to discuss how faithful communities like ours could relate more closely to and serve the CCR and the Church. They discussed, as a possible tool, the new 1983 Code of Canon Law (CIC) that had just opened the door for official recognition of lay associations. Bobbie reported to us his astonishment at this revelation and its possibility. A seed had been planted.

##### **Invitation to Seek Recognition**

Bishop Cordes completed his world tour of the CCR and came back to Dallas in 1985 to attend the second leaders meeting of the newly formed IBOC at Mount St. Michael, the campus where our Christian Community of God's Delight is based. There were about twenty of us gathered there when he arrived. He quickly got down to business. He told us that he had just completed his year-long survey of the CCR, and had spoken with leaders from all its elements before going back to Rome to discuss his findings with Pope John Paul II. His conclusion was that the historical leadership groups that had now split were no longer able to serve as an interface to the Church in support of the Charismatic Renewal and its covenant communities.

He did not beat around the bush, but said that they (presumably he and the Holy Father) had decided to ask us, the Catholic leaders of IBOC, to become their primary interface to assist the Church in relating to the Charismatic Renewal and to its covenant communities in particular. Needless to say, this hit us like the proverbial "ton of bricks." We really did not fully understand, but we were receptive to this request.

Bishop Cordes went on to explain that this could only happen by our becoming an authentic Catholic entity or "private association of the faithful." He said we would have to make a decision to form such a group and then seek formal canonical recognition according to the new 1983 Code of Canon Law, which for the first time contained provisions for the laity to form independent private associations. Bishop Cordes went on to explain that this new association could not be the existing non-denominational IBOC, but had to be a new Catholic association that was authentically Roman Catholic. Except for Brian Smith – who had had some foundation in these matters from his close relationship with his archbishop in Brisbane – the rest of us were suddenly thrust into a whole new dimension of our Catholicity. With little choice but to embrace this Papal request, we embarked on a five-year process of establishing the Catholic Fraternity and seeking its formal canonical recognition as a "Private Association of the Faithful of Papal Right."

This led to a process of learning, dialogue and mutual cooperation between us and Bishop Cordes along with the staff at the Council for the Laity. They worked directly with Brian and Bobbie, assisted respectively by Shayne Bennett and myself as facilitators, to develop a suitable set of statutes for the new association. Formal approval of statutes by a decree is the basic step in official canonical recognition. We had to do a crash course on the new Code of Canon Law and find ways of expressing what God had been doing in our communities in words that were acceptable to the experts at the Vatican. I don't know how many drafts went back and forth between us and the Council for the Laity. (Remember, this was in the days of Faxes, before e-mail!)

During this period, we met frequently with Bishop Cordes as he attended our annual leaders' conferences and met privately with us before and after them. We discussed how to proceed with the process of both defining ourselves as a private association of Catholics and obtaining recognition as such. There were many dialogues that extended our understanding of the Church and its official rules and ways of operating. Most importantly, Bishop Cordes explained in detail why some of his requests were so important theologically and canonically. We learned about

why the other forms of association like the Sword of the Spirit were problematic from the Church's standpoint. The most important aspect for associations that involved the faith and lives of Catholics was grasping the proper relationship that had to exist with the Papacy and with our local Bishops.

### **Overcoming Canon Law Limitations**

Bishop Cordes wanted to find a way to allow charismatic covenant communities to come under the protection and guidance of the Holy See without denying the prerogatives of local bishops. He did this creatively by making the Catholic Fraternity a unique type of "private association." The 1983 Code of Canon Law allowed the laity to form associations without having to have the approval of their local bishop. But such local private associations were similarly free to associate with others from around the world. The creative step was to recognize the association of such local associations as an international private association that could obtain Papal recognition. This international association was not an association of individual Catholics but of such communities or associations of their Catholic members. This new international association was directly consistent with our earlier inspiration to form a brotherhood of communities in the first place. The difference was that this one would be authentically Catholic.

Such a Catholic association of autonomous communities could validly receive Papal approval without necessarily having to have formal diocesan recognition since it involved communities that were in many different dioceses, thus necessarily needing to be a Papal association. That was another basic principle of Catholic Canon Law that Bishop Cordes had taught us: the Papacy has the exclusive authority to oversee all associations of Catholics that transcend diocesan boundaries. This had long been recognized for Institutes or Religious Orders and was naturally carried over to lay covenant communities.

The key criteria that Bishop Cordes required was that the resultant international association of communities and fellowships would be under the competence of the Holy See and at the same time its member communities and fellowships would remain autonomous thus assuring that their Catholic members remained fully under the ecclesial authority of their local bishops. This arrangement was forging new ground, as the prior use of private associations generally operated within parishes or dioceses, and thus never challenged the bishop's prerogative or oversight of the faith lives of an association's members. That was not the case with the actual fraternal relationship among charismatic covenant communities from around the world.

With this key unlocking a way to valid canonical recognition, we were able to finalize our statutes. They were informally approved during the summer of 1990. You should have copies of the latest Fraternity Statutes in your packets. I hope that all of you will take the time to familiarize yourselves with them, as they clearly spell out our identity, aims and mission as received from the Church. A recent version is available on the Catholic Fraternity's website.

### **1. Challenge to be Catholic**

At the time this was happening most of our communities still had a number of non-Catholic members. More problematic, we as a community had never really addressed the question of our Catholic identity. In the case of CCGD, our leaders were all Catholic and we respected the

denominational identities of our non-Catholic members. Most of us thought of the community and our parish church as separate things, rather than as different expressions of our common unity (communion) in Christ. To us, the community involved what we did on Sunday afternoon, and the Church and its parishes involved what we did on Sunday morning. We had grown up in the 1970s within a non-denominational milieu and had never questioned or thought about how our community identity was actually part of our Catholic identity, not vice versa.

At the time many of our communities also had a non-denominational or non-Catholic character due to a formation that was influenced by our propensity to embrace biblical self-interpretation and leading (Protestant) teachers and associations. Some communities, especially in the U.S. and Mexico that lacked a close relationship with their bishop, and thus did not have access to his counsel, were misled into an attitude or way of thinking (a philosophy) that resulted in direct confrontations with their bishops. This sometimes resulted in dissolution of some otherwise vibrant communities by their alarmed bishops who were responsible for the Catholics involved.

Most of this trauma was due to the unfortunate separation of individual charismatic vs. Catholic identity by many otherwise strong Catholic Christians. This identity separation was a result of limited formation in and understanding of their Catholicity. In depending more on common biblical sources, Protestant influences and focus on spiritual gifts, they had failed to integrate these teachings and experiences into a Catholic understanding that reflected the subsequent history and development of the Church and the faith.

Due to their unfamiliarity and misunderstandings, many bishops had grown very suspicious or even antagonistic towards the Renewal in general, and to covenant communities in particular. Some of this was justified, as there were some Catholics who had left the Church due to their confusion between their experience of Christianity in the broad Renewal and in non-denominational communities as compared with what was perceived as a lesser authenticity in their parish life. That is a story for another talk.

## **2. Time to Choose**

Bishop Cordes challenged us to face this identity issue head on for the first time in 1988. He also explained that the Catholic Church could guide us only if we were a Catholic association. They could not assume any authority over non-Catholics or work through an association that was not itself fully Catholic. The fact that our communities included non-Catholic members was also a question that had to be addressed. Bishop Cordes explained that each member association belonging to the new Catholic private association had to be wholly and authentically Catholic in its identity, but not necessarily in its membership. He came to Dallas and explained all this to us and said that each of our communities had to decide about its Catholic identity. He explained that a Catholic association could have non-Catholic members as long as all its members' denominational identities were mutually respected.

Thus, either we were a Catholic community or we must now be an ecumenical community and form a new Catholic association of its Catholic members. But it is important to realize that the latter could only be an acceptable Catholic association if the overall community was

authentically ecumenical in a Catholic sense. Such a fellowship of Catholic members within an ecumenical community would thus be eligible to become a member of the new Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships.

As a result of these discussions, CCGD and most of the other IBOC communities chose to define themselves as Catholic communities, while some – like the Alleluia community in Augusta for example – decided to define themselves as ecumenical communities and establish a Catholic fellowship for their Catholic members.

These decisions by our community leaders, however, did not immediately change the way we thought of ourselves – as either Catholics or as members of our communities and fellowships. In reality, we are still moving towards that fullness of “ecclesial maturity” that John Paul II described it in his 1998 letter to us and then Bishop Stanislaw (now Cardinal) Rylko explained in detail in his 1996 talk in Phoenix. It is one thing to make the right decision on how you should see yourself, but it can be a different matter to actually think and live that way. Our communities still need to grow in our sacramental expression of the richness of our Catholic ecclesial identity such that we have, for example, our own sacraments of initiation, matrimony, reconciliation, ordination, etc. as expression of our ecclesial maturity as fully integrated into the life of our Church.

This issue of authentic Catholicity is one of the key challenges that still face us today as we examine where we are as communities and as an association of communities in a formal relationship with the Catholic Church. It is quite a challenge, as I will try to outline further after I finish tracing our history.

### **3. 1990 Inauguration**

Having received the recommendation from the Council for the Laity for our approval, we anxiously awaited the opportunity to gather in Rome in late November of 1990 to be officially recognized and hold our first international conference at *Villa Cavalletti*, a religious retreat center in the south of Rome near the Pope’s summer home at Castel Gandolfo. It was the first international conference of the new Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships.

The high point for all of us was the experience of getting up before 5:00 a.m. for a bus ride to the Papal Palace to celebrate mass with John Paul II in his private chapel to inaugurate the new Association. I sat at arm’s length from the Pope as he continued his morning prayers after we were seated. I was totally awed by what was happening. Celebration of the Eucharist was followed by an audience in his private office in the Papal Palace in the Vatican. This experience was beyond surreal. Thus, this small group of 26 leaders and a few family members who came from around the world began our journey together to fulfill the call and mission that God had now given us: to serve His Church and its Renewal.

### **4. Personal *Metanoia***

During this late 1990 experience in the Papal residence, I was profoundly touched by the Pope’s words to us. He said something like: “I want you to bring the graces of the Renewal fully into the Heart of the Church.” Without really understanding their full meaning, even today I can

truly say that these words continue to ring in my ears. As I returned to Dallas and floated through the holidays, I wondered what this experience would mean for me personally. The answer was soon revealed.

On returning to my secular job at Texas Instruments (TI) in January of 1991, I was approached by my supervisor who told me that TI was downsizing and my job had been eliminated. He said I could either take a lesser position or accept an early retirement offer with significant benefits. Instead of being deflated, I was elated. So at age 56, after 30 years as an R&D engineer and manager, I knew without doubt that God had given me a new vocation and set my life on a new path. During the prior twenty years since I began attending prayer meetings at the Cavnar home, my heart had gradually been converted from a secular focus on my family and full-time job to a spiritual yearning to serve God full time through my service in our community and now the Catholic Fraternity and the Church. With my children grown and well educated, it was time to “step out into the deep” to focus fully on God’s call to serve not only our community but the whole Church.

With this realization, I embarked on a year-long discernment process that led to a clear call to be – not a prophet – but an “interpreter” or facilitator. As I had come to do for Bobbie and Brian with the Church’s canonical dialogue process in the 1980s, I felt that somehow I was to continue to interpret the Renewal to the Church and the Church to the Renewal. I consulted several priests and pastoral guides who confirmed this call to devote myself to full-time service while trusting God to provide for our temporal needs. It was a leap of faith to trust Him to sustain us for the rest of our lives, but so far He has more than done it. But these advisors also told me that if I was to be accepted in this role I first must go back to graduate school and earn a M.A. in Theology at the University of Dallas (UD). UD had a Catholic theology curriculum second to none in the U.S. due to the European system adopted by the Cistercian monks who support the theology department.

So I took the re-education funds from my severance package and spent almost three years in full-time theology studies with an emphasis on understanding how charismatic covenant communities (CCCs) should be viewed within the mystery of the Catholic Church. (My MA Thesis on this topic is available on request.)

## **V. AFFIRMATION**

### **1. Papal Messages to Renewal and International Conferences**

Many of you may be familiar with some of the strong affirmations that the three most recent Popes have given to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (or Renewal in the Spirit as many Bishops prefer to call it). But you may not be familiar with just how significant the early support was, or that it was not universally favored within the Holy See – at least not until the historic events of the Year of the Holy Spirit in 1998. From the beginning of the Renewal, many bishops and especially the Popes were generally supportive. But they also cautioned Renewal leaders to take care to preserve the “ecclesial identity” of its Catholic followers.

Thanks to the intervention of Cardinal Suenens, Pope Paul VI was an early if cautious supporter of the Charismatic Renewal. He gave clear encouragement to its 25,000 followers who

gathered in Rome for the first international conference in 1975 on the Feast of Pentecost. Our Community was able to videotape the Pope's associated meeting with CCR leaders in the Vatican gardens. A few years later in 1978 my eldest son David Jr., who is now the Overall Coordinator of our community, was privileged to attend a special meeting in Rome for youth leaders involved in the Charismatic Renewal. This gathering was an early sign of things to come with World Youth Days.

## **2. Church Understood as Communion clarifies Laity's Role**

At the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vatican II, this communion (= *communio* = *koinonia*) ecclesiology (understanding of the Church) was made much more explicit and its connections to the major themes of Vatican II drawn out in a clear way. This led to a full study and development of this communion ecclesiology at the Seventh Ordinary Council of the Synod of Bishops in 1987 where the issues and implications for the laity were discussed in detail. This Synod was the definitive turning point in the Hierarchy's full understanding and acceptance of the role and importance of the laity as co-participants with the clergy in the communion of the priestly, prophetic and kingly *munus* of Jesus Christ as co-members of his mystical body. This fuller understanding of Vatican II was fully expressed in John Paul II's Dec. 30, 1988, post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (or Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People).

This 1988 Papal Exhortation could be called the "*Magna Carta* of the Laity." It clearly spelled out the universal vocation of the lay faithful in the Church as taught by Vatican II and also outlined the conditions for valid lay participation in the Church's mission. With these documents, bishops and priests began to better understand and accept this emerging reality of the laity as well as their responsibility to shepherd this new dynamic force of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. At the same time, lay associations were given clear guidelines on how to assure their ecclesial identity and maturity.

We live in extraordinary times! In my 75-year lifetime I have witnessed unprecedented progress in awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit and to the involvement of the laity in the Church. Vatican II has truly "opened the windows" to allow a full rediscovery of the "common priesthood of the faithful" (cf. 1 Pt. 2:5). The role of the laity in serving the Church has become critically important, especially at a time that in many places clerical vocations are limited. But at the same time, a clear necessity for the complementary role of the clergy has also been clarified. The full potential of the Church to carry out Christ's mission has emerged in our time.

But this transition is still in its infancy. This was well recognized by recent Popes, and has now come to be almost universally appreciated today by the Church's Hierarchy. But it did not happen without a great struggle, as the Church is like a very big "ship" that does not change direction without a strong rudder and considerable time. The thing that made it possible and believable was not only the work of great Popes like Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI; but also the leadership and example of the many lay leaders of movements and new communities like our own Bobbie Cavnar, Brian Smith and many others. They were our "pioneers," who brought us to a "land" that we are only now settling. I was privileged to serve them as a servant

and facilitator and as a witness to their vision and faithfulness. I encourage each of you to take up this banner.

### **3. Role of Holy See's Pontifical Council for the Laity**

The Pontifical Council for the Laity has its origin from Vatican II's Decree on the Lay Apostolate. This new department of the Holy See was established in January 1967 by Pope Paul VI's *motu proprio Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam*. In December 1976, John Paul II made the council a permanent fixture of the Roman Curia. Since then it has risen greatly in status and importance.

Since the beginning of his Papacy, John Paul II had encouraged the Council for the Laity's efforts to encourage lay participation in the work of the Church. From the mid-1980s through the mid-1990s, John Paul acted with his two German friends, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Benedict XVI) then Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), and Bishop (now Cardinal) Cordes, who was then Vice-President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity (PCL). Together, they worked within the Holy See to both explain the importance of what the Holy Spirit was doing in the Church through the lay movements and new communities and to build a theological foundation on the concept of *communio* or *koinonia* implicit from the Second Vatican Council teachings, which would become the basis for a fuller ecclesiology (understanding the Church).

Throughout this 20+ year period of transition of the Church's hierarchy from cautious openness to common encouragement, the Council for the Laity has been a prime moving force, impelled initially by Cardinal Cordes and later by Cardinal Rylko who is now its President. These two brothers in Christ have provided a constant source of continuing support to the lay leaders of the Catholic Fraternity and those of many other movements. Highlights for us include then-Bishop Cordes' profound teaching on *Communio* at the 1989 IBOC Conference in Kansas City, and then-Bishop Rylko's addresses at the 1996 Conference in Tempe, and again at the 2006 Conference in Bogotá. (Copies are available on request.)

During the early days of the Fraternity both these Princes of the Church were active at our leaders meetings and worked with the other departments or Dicasteries of the Holy See to bring greater understanding and appreciation of Movements such as the Charismatic Renewal and of the "New Communities," especially the Covenant Communities of the Catholic Fraternity. They also set up visits for the Fraternity leaders to meet with important officials whenever they were in Rome. But I believe their most important work was their direct communications with the Popes who were then their strong advocates with the various other officials of the Holy See.

### **4. Local Bishops Grow More Informed and Supportive**

This support by the Popes and the Council for the Laity, the witness of Charismatic Renewal and the Catholic Fraternity in particular combined with the understanding and clarifications of *Christifideles Laici* began to have a broad impact on the local Bishops. We could be sure that any bishop who complained about the Renewal or a covenant community would spark an exchange with the Holy See or their peers that would put the Renewal and the Catholic Fraternity in a better light and often led to much greater appreciation and support at the local level. I have

heard of heated discussions with certain bishops during their *ad limina* visits with the Holy Father. When we met with our new Dallas Bishop Kevin Farrell who came to us from Washington D.C., he told us that he was familiar with both the “problem communities” that were not associated with the Fraternity and with us – as a well respected Catholic community in Dallas. But there are still situations for some of our communities that have not yet been transformed. These present challenges for us as leaders of the Catholic Fraternity as we move forward. Helping covenant communities work through relationship differences with their bishop has been and should continue to be a key role of the Catholic Fraternity leadership. And the Holy See stands behind us in this challenge.

The key to progress in this area is the development of personal relationships of mutual respect between the community’s moderator or overall coordinator (OC) and their Bishop. In the case of communities with branches in other dioceses, this can involve several bishops. It is important that every moderator or OC first come to a clear understanding of how to relate to a Catholic bishop. To do this requires them to gain a general understanding of the canonical responsibilities of a local bishop and respect his position in regard to any Catholics involved in their community. It also requires a Catholic way of understanding of their community or fellowship’s Catholic identity and relationship to the Church. Having established a good relationship between the mother community and its bishop, bishops of branch locations can be approached with letters of communion from the primary bishop to help form similar relationships. This allows development of trans-diocesan communities without premature recognition by the Holy See.

Collectively, we as a Fraternity have many experiences of working well and not so well with our own bishops. These experiences can provide both lessons for other communities and opportunities for us to improve our own relationships. There are also several documents that can help us become educated in “the way we should go.” We must realize that we don’t exist in isolation, but are members of the one Body of Christ that “subsists in the Catholic Church,” as Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium* No. 8 explained. This does not exclude partial communion with all Christians, but does require Catholics to identify or see themselves and their private associations in proper relation to the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. A common participation by all Christians in the one faith expressed in the Nicene/Constantinople Creed as well as a clear ecclesial identity are foundations for all ecumenical relationships.

This Catholic principle of ecclesial identity creates a hierarchy of Catholic associations – distinguishing first of all between those having received official Canonical recognition from the Holy See, then those with canonical recognition of their diocesan bishop, and then associations that are not yet officially recognized. This “hierarchy of truth” in the sense of Catholic lay association is not how we understood things in the beginning of the Charismatic Renewal or even the Catholic Fraternity. We were still heavily influenced by the rich teachings we had received from our Protestant brothers and sisters in Christ. We were just unprepared to recognize the distortions this had made in our way of thinking. Unfortunately, we often absorbed a Protestant philosophy along with their wisdom and rich experiences of Christian life in the Spirit.

This was finally hammered into my head in 1993 by my theology professors at UD, who were Hungarian Cistercian priests. I then realized that I didn't have a Catholic "dogma" problem, but I did have a Catholic "philosophy" problem. So I understand how hard it is for most Catholic lay men and women in the Renewal to "get it" regarding this complex situation.

This early formation in a non-denominational type of Christianity comes naturally from a *sola scriptura* bias and a resultant tendency to neglect balancing this primitive scriptural worldview with the wholeness provided by also embracing the full Catholic tradition that is embodied in a proper ecclesial history and maturity of the faith dependent on a Catholic receptivity of a teaching Magisterium. This is in large part responsible for the problems that many covenant communities had relating to the official Church and the reason some were unsuccessful in establishing good relationships with their bishops.

In my opinion, this situation was one of the reasons that the Church has helped establish and supports the Catholic Fraternity – as a way to help form (or reform) Catholic members of charismatic covenant communities so as to overcome this limited perspective. These and many related areas are what John Paul II referred to in 1998 when he said: "Today a new stage is unfolding before you: that of *ecclesial maturity*. This does not mean that all problems have been solved. Rather, it is a challenge..."

Cardinal Rylko has given us much to digest in this regard. For example, he explained the importance of this ongoing growth in ecclesial maturity in his comments prior to the meeting with Benedict XVI in 2006 commemorating the 1998 event. Although we have progressed in this area of ecclesial maturity in the ensuing decade, there is still much for the Catholic Fraternity and our communities to do to reach a level of ecclesial maturity that will allow our charisms to be "fully in the heart of the Church."

## **VI. CHALLENGES**

### **1. International Growth**

So there are still many challenges that face the Catholic Fraternity and our covenant communities and fellowships. These challenges are both local, as we try to grow to full stature and maturity as individual communities and fellowships; and internationally, as we strive together to overcome the vast differences in culture, language, experience, ways of expression, etc. that limit our ability to experience our unity in the one Body of Christ. I believe Regional Leaders Conferences are a good first step to lead us towards this desired maturity.

### **2. Authentic Catholic Ecumenism**

Another challenge involves realizing our Catholic identity and achieving its fruit in authentic ecumenism, which requires a growing recognition of the communion of our various denominations, not simply individual or local relationships. Experts in Catholic ecumenism tell us that we cannot be united with our non-Catholic brethren until we are truly Catholic ourselves. Recognition of our denominational identities is a prerequisite for proper participation in the Church's ecumenical efforts for all Christians to be one. Nevertheless, we can assist this effort by contributing our experiences of unity in the Spirit while recognizing the truth that we are still not in full communion.

As strong Catholic and non-Catholic Christians are brought together by the Charismatic Renewal and the Catholic Fraternity, we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives and realize a resultant yearning for unity that Christ prayed for in John 17:11. Thus the Catholic Fraternity can give witness to the Christian life – as we work together to grow in understanding and service to our own denominations in their ecumenical efforts. But as Catholics, we must do this within that unity that we already have in the universal Catholic Church. We cannot just “follow the Spirit” on our own authority without the guidance and discernment of the competent authority of the Church in a specific situation. To do so is a denial of our Catholicity and a disservice to our separated brethren.

### **3. Ongoing Progression in Ecclesial Maturity**

Therefore, we as Catholic leaders need a proper understanding of the Church's faith and life as an essential guide as we progress in “ecclesial maturity.” That is one of the major reasons why the Catholic Fraternity is such a primary source of strength for our communities and fellowships – as we go forward in accomplishing God's plan for us individually and collectively. Pope John Paul II clearly outlines this path in his 1998 address to our Eighth International Meeting in Rome, following the Pentecost gathering of all movements and new communities. He reminded us of our special mission:

“Within the Charismatic Renewal, the Catholic Fraternity has a specific mission, recognized by the Holy See. One of the objectives stated in your statutes is to safeguard the Catholic identity of the charismatic communities and to encourage them always to maintain a close link with the Bishops and the Roman Pontiff. To help people to have a strong sense of their membership in the Church is especially important in times such as ours, when confusion and relativism abound.”

He goes on to insist on the necessity of ongoing formation and ecclesial maturity:

“You belong to an ecclesial movement. The word ‘ecclesial’ here is more than merely decorative. It implies a precise task of Christian formation, and involves a deep conversion of faith and life. The enthusiastic faith which enlivens your communities is a great enrichment, but it is not enough. It must be accompanied by a Christian formation which is solid, comprehensive and faithful to the Church’s Magisterium...To mature in faith, we have to grow in knowledge of its truths...Again and again, you must assess yourselves in light of the “criteria of ecclesial character” which I set out in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (No. 30).”

#### **4. Overcoming our Diversity**

Thus the work we have to do as we go forward as leaders of the Catholic Fraternity is both essential and difficult. Besides this clear need to form and continually evaluate our faithfulness to the Church, we also have to overcome practical challenges due to our diversity. When we gather together we are acutely aware of the barriers that language and culture can be in maintaining our unity and overcoming our myopic tendency to see reality only from our own limited perspective.

We must work hard to overcome these barriers, not only at the regional but also at the international level. To do this successfully we need each other. Without being confronted by the gifts of my brothers and sisters of diverse cultures, I can’t see my own prejudice and poverty of heart. Regional Leaders Conferences like this one (2009 NA Leaders Conf.) are essential to provide opportunities to forge the familial bonds that allow us to grow and relate to other parts of God’s family in other regions of the world. We all need to see ourselves as part of the whole of the Catholic Fraternity family of communities and fellowships.

#### **5. Reaching Out to Other Communities and the Charismatic Renewal**

Another challenge for the Catholic Fraternity is to “broaden our tent pegs” to attract the many other covenant communities brought into being by the Charismatic Renewal movement. This can only happen if we recommit ourselves to evangelization, not just locally or individually, but more importantly reaching out to leaders of the many groups, large and small, that the Holy Spirit is moving in that should be future members of the Catholic Fraternity. The lesson from the past is to focus on establishing relationships with the leaders of these groups, bringing them into fellowship with us and helping them in their own tasks in the vineyard of the Lord. The Catholic Fraternity is called to serve the Catholic members of all charismatic groups.

The brothers and sisters in Mexico have been doing this for some time. They have hosted leaders’ gatherings twice a year since the early 1980s by bringing the leaders of such potential groups into contact with the leaders of their own association. Due to their efforts since we reached out to them in 1992, most of these communities are now members of the Catholic Fraternity. Similarly, the Alleluia and City of the Lord Communities have worked to establish an association of communities in the United States to reach out in a similar way. I believe such efforts should become an official integral part of the outreach ministry of the Catholic Fraternity rather than separate initiatives. Such efforts can then lead us to a broader interaction and service to the overall Catholic Charismatic Renewal, filling the void left in 1982. It is time to start anew

together – empowered by our anointing and calling from the Church – to reach out and encourage other Fraternal Communities and Fellowships.

## **6. Responding to Our Call**

Professor Carriquiry addressed many of these issues when he visited the Catholic Fraternity leaders gathered at Matteo's request in Gaithersburg, MA, in February 2009. He came to us as the highest-ranking lay official of the Pontifical Council for the Laity at Matteo's invitation to really call us on. His address awakened our hearts to the Church's need for the Catholic Fraternity in the United States and spoke very candidly about our situation. I strongly encourage you to read through it carefully so you will be more aware of his important message to us from the Church. **A copy of an official transcript of his address is available on God's Delight website.**

In the United States, there are different reasons that many well-established communities are not part of the Catholic Fraternity. **Many are still part of the Sword of the Spirit.** Others are still associated with the People of Praise. And many others are independent or have withered on the vine for lack of support. It is time for us to "rise up O men of God" and grasp the situation and take steps to restore unity and Catholicity for all Catholics involved in the Charismatic Renewal and resultant covenant communities.

## **7. Generational Transition**

Another set of challenges we face is internal. Our communities are aging. In many cases we have passed from first to second generation leadership and are struggling to hand on the history and traditions that allow us to maintain our original charism and hand on our mission to our younger members. It is already crucial that we find better ways of "passing the baton" to our third generation youth. Probably the most difficult challenge that the Church faces in our time is passing on the authentic faith in a way that is suitable for today's young people in the world they face. That is why we have World Youth Days that many of our communities have supported. Our many other local youth and young adult efforts are helping, but they seem to be bucking a very strong current of disassociation. We need ways to synergize these efforts such as regional youth conferences.

We don't stop being concerned for this when our children are grown. I'm even more acutely aware today of the challenge my six children and their spouses face raising our 25 grandchildren in our secular relativistic world. Old ways, even with covenant community, are not working as well. We need to "storm heaven" in prayer to learn how God wants us to guide our youth in hearing His call to live authentic Christian lives. This is a good example of ways we might learn from one another. We need opportunities to dialog about such common challenges.

## **8. Prioritizing Leader Interactions**

Another challenge we face is the difficulty in developing and maintaining leadership relationships. It is not enough to see each other every couple of years or so for a few days. Next week you will go back to your homes and communities to be quickly absorbed in the "tyranny of the urgent" and likely not have or take the time to respond to convictions reached over this weekend. We must do a better job of managing our time to focus on the things that matter, especially the eternal lives of our families and communities. I believe our relationships as

community leaders is a foundational base that God can use to make us one and allow us to be more than the sum of our individual parts. We have to find ways to meet more often to take up substantial subjects that really make it worthwhile coming together and then return home to apply our collective experience in our own families and communities with ongoing interaction between us. Seeing positive results from meetings is the only way to assure they continue. We need ways to serve this common need at the regional level.

It seems to me, from my 40 years in the Charismatic Renewal and 20 years in the Catholic Fraternity, that the first step is to commit to solidifying our unity and relationships as regional leaders so we can respond to the call that God and His Church has placed on our lives. This will require us to meet regularly and do the work between meetings to assure that our work as the Catholic Fraternity in North America truly goes forward successfully, thus doing our part to contribute to the work of the entire Catholic Fraternity throughout the world. We also need to explore ways to balance our need for unity with the realities of language, economics, distance, etc.

## **VII. CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, I want to go back to Pope John XXIII's prayer. "Renew Thy wonders in this our day, as by a new Pentecost..."

I have traced our history from this perspective and we should all be aware that the Holy Spirit has been and still is doing His wonders in our day. Scripture and the Church's teachings tell us that God is always with us and stands ready to empower us – if we are doing His will.

We should come away from this gathering with a clear understanding that the Catholic Fraternity is one of God's providential instruments for renewing His Church. The Charismatic Renewal is a movement, but the Catholic Fraternity is an officially recognized and organized body (or army of soldiers) prepared and ready for this battle. Therefore, we should realize that the Catholic Fraternity is for our communities a bond of communion that the Holy Spirit can use to unite us in responding to the call that God has placed on our shoulders through the Scriptures AND the Magisterial teachings and instructions available in the many documents we have discussed (and many others that are available).

But the Catholic Fraternity needs strong communities and strong leaders to carry out the mission and aims described in its Statutes. For this we need to meet the challenges I have outlined above. Each of our communities is like a special squad of soldiers that is critical to God's army. But we are dependent on each other to carry out our mission and need unity of communications and command. United we stand, divided we fall. The spiritual health and strength of every community member should be our concern. We are not simply autonomous, we are interdependently related and part of a whole that is meant to accomplish an overall mission.

But without a vision God's people perish. So we all need to have the same vision, mission, aims and tasks that we carry out in harmony with each other. The Fraternity's statutes, the documents from the Popes, the teachings of our Church, the experiences we share and the fellowship we have are our weapons. We have many challenges as we contemplate where we go from here.

To do this, we need to collectively respond in some basic ways. I suggest that we:

- 1) Make our communities and fellowships strong prophetic witnesses to how Christianity can be lived out in today's world, perhaps as prophetic guides for the Church's future structure
- 2) Form a stronger network through our fellowship as leaders – encouraging and supporting one another in addressing our challenges and opportunities
- 3) Promote brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ – across the all cultures, nations, denominations, etc.
- 4) Evangelize and make disciples in our own areas and throughout the world, helping others to evangelize and make disciples...
- 5) Grow in ecclesial maturity, individually, as communities and as fellowships – through ongoing formation and dialogue
- 6) Hand on the fullness of the Catholic faith and vision to new generations
- 7) Recognize that each one of us has a part to play in God's plan for our individual and communal lives – no matter where we have been or where we are now.

I firmly believe that the Church's direct call on us in the Catholic Fraternity is a confirmation that God has a plan for each one of us. It is not a matter of another good idea or thing to do. We are part of God's plan and it is the highest priority of our life. We need to collectively discern what that plan is and work together in harmony with Leaders from the other Catholic Fraternity Regions to collectively carry it out. This service is within and to the overall body of Christ and at His command, like servants watching their master's hand. But we need to discern how this hand can be seen in each of our situations. Clearly for us as Catholics this means paying close attention to the guidance of our Magisterium's message and instructions to us.

Our efforts will involve many activities, many types of witnessing both local and global, many efforts to grow ourselves and our community members, etc. The result may not be clear to us. But I believe it will be successful beyond our expectations, if we are faithful.

Let us pay special attention to God's Word to us as a group of leaders during this weekend – both through our meetings and through our interactions with our brothers and sisters, so we will be prepared to go forth in a fresh enthusiasm and conviction that God wants to do a mighty work in and through us as his servants.

Thank you for your attention. May God bless and guide your ministry in Christ's name.



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
PRO LAICIS

Vaticano, November 30, 1990

The Pontifical Council for the Laity hereby declares that

*The Christian Community of God's Delight*, whose moderator is Mr. Bobbie Cavnar (PO Box 225008, Dallas, Texas 75222, USA)

is a member of the *Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships*, recognised in Rome, November 30, 1990, as a private association of the Christian faithful of pontifical right.



+ P. Cordes

Paul Josef Cordes  
Vice-President



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
PRO LAICIS

Vaticano, November 30, 1990

The Pontifical Council for the Laity hereby declares that the *Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships* was recognised – in Rome, November 30, 1990 on the feast of Saint Andrew – as a private association of the Christian faithful of pontifical right. The following communities and fellowships are the foundation members of this *Fraternity*.

- *The Christian Community of God's Delight*, Dallas, Texas, USA.
- *Bread of Life Covenant Community*, Saskatoon, Canada.
- *Bread of Life Fellowship*, Sydney, Australia.
- *City of the Lord Covenant Community*, Arizona & California, USA.
- *Emmanuel Covenant Community*, Brisbane, Australia.
- *Bethel Covenant Community*, Perth, Australia.
- *Emmanuel Community*, Paris, France.
- *Glory to God Covenant Community*, Topeka, Kansas, USA.
- *Hephzibah Covenant Community*, Canberra, Australia.
- *Hephzibah Covenant Community*, Melbourne, Australia.
- *Light of Jesus Christ Covenant Community*, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.
- *Servants of Jesus Fellowship*, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- *Servants of Yahweh Covenant Community*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

During the inaugural meeting of the *Fraternity* held at «Villa Cavalletti» near Rome, the following were chosen to form the Executive;

Office bearers;

President: Brian Smith (Oceania)  
Vice-president: Bobbie Cavnar (North America)  
Secretary: Dan Pope (IBOC)  
Treasurer: Kevin Horgan (Oceania)

Other members;

Hervé-Marie Catta (Europe)  
James R. Jones (North America)  
Joseph Chee (South East Asia)  
Benedict Lye (South East Asia)  
Fr. Denis Phaneuf (IBOC).



+ P. J. Cordes  
Paul Josef Cordes  
Vice-President



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
PRO LAICIS

1585/90/S-61/B-50

D E C R E E

The communities of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships, motivated by the desire both to assure greater dialogue and collaboration among themselves and to deepen their communion with the Successor of Peter as an essential element of their Catholic identity, have requested the Pontifical Council for the Laity that they be recognized as a private association of the Christian faithful.

After careful examination of the statutes and having heard the views of the Ordinaries of the dioceses in which the communities are found, the Pontifical Council for the laity, considering the need to consolidate and promote the Catholic expression of the charismatic movement, decrees

the recognition of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships as a private association of the Christian faithful, of pontifical right and endowed with juridic personality, in accordance with the norms of canons 298-300, 304-311 and 321-329, and approves the statutes *ad experimentum* for a period of five years.

It is the hope of the Pontifical Council for the Laity that such recognition may increase the spiritual fruits of the charismatic movement, which, in the period following the Second Vatican Council, has undoubtedly contributed, to a fuller awareness and acceptance, at all levels in the Church, of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. This same Pontifical Council encourages all members of the communities belonging to the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships to commit themselves to giving renewed vigor to the Catholic expression of the renewal in the Spirit. Moreover, the Council expresses its great hope that the recognition of this Catholic Fraternity will intensify the apostolic activities and the response of its member communities to the appeal of the Holy Father for a new evangelization of the world on the threshold of the third millennium.

Given in Rome, November 30, 1990, feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle.

*+ Paul J. Cordes*  
Paul J. Cordes  
Vice-President



*E. Card. Pironio*

Eduardo F. Card. Pironio  
President