



*Wiosna Kościoła. Odnowa Charyzmatyczna
w dokumentach episkopatów i komisji teologicznych
różnych krajów świata*

[Spring of the Church. Charismatic Renewal
in the Documents of the Episcopal Commissions
for Theology around the World]. Eds. J. SALAMON,
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During its more than fifty years of history, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal has been raising all sorts of controversy. Allegations of making the Catholic faith Protestant and favouring the so-called Pentecostalisation are still being used as arguments against the presence of charismatics in the life and mission of the Church. This matter causes all sorts of discussions among the laity, pastors, and theologians.¹ Unfortunately, it often lacks factual biblical and theological arguments, especially those presented by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. Such nature of the dispute does not serve the unity of Catholics. Therefore, proper formation of the faithful and a responsible understanding of the signs of the times,

¹ Cf. A. KOBYLINSKI: „Etyczne aspekty współczesnej pentekostalizacji chrześcijaństwa.” *Studies Philosophiae Christianae CSWU* 50, no. 3 (2014), pp. 93—130; IDEM: „Hermeneutyka nieciągłości i pentekostalizacja. Współczesne metamorfozy religii chrześcijańskiej.” *Teologia i Moralność* 11, no. 1(20) (2016), pp. 245—261; P. SAWA: “Is That a Really New Spirituality? Basics and Signs of the Spirituality of the New Evangelization — the Case of Poland.” *Ecumeny and Law* (2017), pp. 95—123; IDEM: “Spór o pentekostalizację Kościoła.” *Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne* 51,1 (2018), pp. 100—119.

including the charismatic spring in the Church, still remains a challenge.² Taking the foregoing into account, the book entitled *Wiosna Kościoła. Odnowa Charyzmatyczna w dokumentach episkopatów i komisji teologicznych różnych krajów świata* (Spring of the Church. Charismatic Renewal in the Documents of the Episcopal Commissions for Theology around the World), published by Wydawnictwo Zacheusz is an important publication which inspires to properly embrace the widely understood Charismatic Renewal. It includes a selection of texts by episcopal conferences of Latin America, Canada, USA, The Antilles, Senegal and France and by the Theological Committee of the German Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church, which describe various aspects of charismatic spirituality and Renewal groups' activism.

The publication includes seven chapters containing separate documents. Each document is preceded by a commentary. This makes the book not just an anthology, but a guide to the most important areas of the Catholic charismatic spirituality. This is indicated in the book's Preface entitled "The Culture of the Holy Spirit — the Eight Blessings of Charismatic Renewal" (pp. 9—14) by Fr. Artur Sepioło, the director of the School of New Evangelisation of Jesus Resurrected in Gliwice. Statements by selected episcopal conferences and by the Committee of the German Charismatic Renewal are what makes the book especially valuable. All these bodies understand the Catholic dimension of charisms and their indispensability for the Church to be alive. The rich experience of Charismatic Renewal still brings very real blessings to the entire Church: consciousness and personal decision of faith, calling for the Holy Spirit, reading and meditation on the Word of God, zeal for Evangelisation, the role of the lay persons in the mission of the Church, community life in small groups, charismatic ministry and lively worship. At the same time, new pastoral phenomena are also important, for instance, the redefinition of the role of the priest and of secular leaders, the identification of char-

² Francis during a meeting with the Charismatic Renewal 2014, June 1, said: "Your movement's birth was willed by the Holy Spirit to be *a current of grace in the Church and for the Church*. This is your identity: to be a current of grace. [...] I expect you to share with everyone in the Church the grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit (a phrase we find in the Acts of the Apostles). I expect you to evangelise with the word of God, which proclaims that Jesus lives and that he loves all men and women. To give a witness of spiritual ecumenism to all our brothers and sisters of other Churches and Christian communities who believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. To remain united in the love that the Lord Jesus asks us to have for all people, and in prayer to the Holy Spirit for the attainment of this unity...". *Address of Pope Francis to participants in the 37th National Convocation of The Renewal in the Holy Spirit*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/june/documents/papa-francesco_20140601_rinnovamento-spirito-santo.html (accessed: 21.12.2019).

ismatic gifts and practices (such as baptism in the Spirit, resting in the Spirit, laying on of hands, charisms of healing) and true devotion to Mary.

The first chapter contains the *Declaration of Bishops of Latin America in La Ceja (Colombia) — September 1987*; pp. 15—48). It is preceded by the “Introduction to the Polish edition” (pp. 17—19) by Fr. Wit Chlondowski OFM, who draws attention to the fact the background of the document is the will of the bishops to avoid dangers and to include the Charismatic Renewal in the general pastorate (in the service towards groups, parishes, and dioceses).³ The document by the Latin American bishops itself describes the theological foundation of the Renewal and the nature of charisms, the meaning of prayer groups and the very fruits of the Renewal (the discovery of personal relationship with Jesus Christ, love of personal and communal prayer, recognition of the liturgy, love of the Word of God, one’s own conversion and sanctification of the faithful, brotherly dedication, changing of a man, raising numbers of priestly vocations, proper worship of Mary, appreciation of the sacraments and evangelisation). Simultaneously, the document mentions the dangers like the lack of awareness of how much the Renewal has to offer, people transferring to non-Catholic communities, groups not being led by pastors, elitism and false ecumenism. The bishops also call the members of the Renewal to serve the community of the faithful and to grow spiritually.

The second chapter focuses on the statement of the Bishops of Canada entitled *The Charismatic Renewal in Canada* (pp. 54—70). Fr. Artur Sepioło wrote the “Introduction to the Polish edition” (pp. 51—53) where he points to the 35th Anniversary of the Charismatic Renewal being the background of the document. The Bishops’ Conference of Canada lists the real yields of the Charismatic Renewal: the experience of the Holy Spirit, prayer, new evangelisation, selfless service towards others and the service of healing. Where it comes to the future, it also describes its challenges such as ceasing to limit the healings only to the charismatic dimension and following the liturgical order during the prayers for healing, support and engagement of the presbyters, correct formation and choice of leaders and finally permanent formation of the Renewal groups.

The third chapter presents the statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops about the Charismatic Renewal entitled *Grace for the New Springtime* (pp. 75—83). “Introduction to the Polish edition” (pp. 73—74) has been written by Fr. Artur Sepioło who drew attention to the importance of the Renewal for the new evangelisation and ecumen-

³ It is worth referring to the words of Pope Francis, who expressed the desire that members of charismatic communities should share their experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit with the entire Church.

ism. In turn, American bishops note how important the influence of the Renewal on the Church is, especially in evangelisation and in emphasising of Mary's relationship with the Holy Spirit. They also appreciate the ecumenic power of the Renewal groups. Particularly valuable is the emphasis on the role of baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience of personal connection with the Holy Trinity. This affects all dimensions of a Christian's life, and thus renews various aspects of Church life.

The fourth chapter includes the *Statement on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal* issued by The Antilles' Episcopal Conference (Belize, 1976; pp. 89—104). "Introduction to the Polish edition" (pp. 87—88) has been prepared by Fr. Wit Chlondowski OFM. Bishops of the Caribbean point to the value of the Renewal groups' prayer which leads to a lifestyle that shouts "Glory the to the Lord!" In this context, they list the meaning of the new approach towards worship, the love towards the Word of God, the appreciation of asceticism, consciousness of the Church being People of God, ownership of the local Church, living in the Church as in the community and the unity with the hierarchy. Simultaneously, the bishops give some more important indications: care for healthy preaching, avoiding there being churches within the Church, correct understanding of the *glossolalia*, proper treatment of prophesying, understanding of the gesture of laying on of hands, humility, observance of Catholic rules for ecumenism, keeping emotionality under control, keeping the representation of evil spirits Catholic and discernment of charisms. At last, it is important for the members of the Renewal to actively participate in the life of the Church.

The fifth chapter is *Indications for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Senegal* by the Conference of Bishops of Senegal, Mauritania, Cape Verde, and Guinea Bissau (pp. 109—112). "Introduction to the Polish edition" (pp. 107—108) has been written by Fr. Sławomir Płusa. It is a very interesting text containing very specific guidelines. Apart from the ones approved by the bishops in 1991 (focusing on the prayers for healing, emphasis on the Word of God, communities being schools of prayer and participation in parishes and dioceses), thirteen new are given: personal participation in the ecclesial life on all levels, appreciation of the meaning of a parish, the need to recognise the Life Communities, designing of formation framework, introduction to the Renewal for the seminarians, appointment, verification and licensing of preachers, prayer for healing by the lay with the limitation of exorcisms performance to selected priests, care that the leaders who accompany others are not seen as confessors, availability of priests, exclusive rights for putting of hands on one's head for the religious (the lay persons can put their hands on one's arm while praying for them) and enjoying of sacramentals in a proper way.

The sixth chapter contains two documents by French bishops; “Introduction to the Polish edition” was written by Fr. Adam Strojny (pp. 115—117, 129—131). The first document is a *Pastoral Note of French Bishops on New Charismatic Movements* (pp. 118—126), containing the guidelines for ecumenic contacts, combining of pastoral and prophetic charisms, care for appropriate music, reasonable leadership of prayers for healing, reasonable discernment of the resting in the Spirit, preservation of a high competence level of those praying for deliverance. Thus, formation is really needed.

Then, the other French document published by the General Secretary’s Office of the Episcopal Conference and entitled *Elements of Discernment for the Charismatic Renewal* (pp. 133—152), emphasises the meaning of personal experience in harmony with the “ecclesiastical maturity” and the discernment between the authentic actions of Holy Spirit and what is a mere sign of emotionality. Correct discernment of results, treating manifestations as secondary and observance of verification criteria accepted by the Church are equally important.

The seventh chapter includes the documents by the Theological Committee of the German Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church. The first was approved by German bishops in the spring of 1987: *Theological and pastoral foundations of the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church of Germany* (pp. 157—210); the author of the “Introduction to the Polish edition” is Fr. Ireneusz Toczydłowski OFM. The publication describes the nature of the Renewal, the reality of Holy Spirit’s actions and a set of criteria for the discernment of charismatic phenomena. As important is the description of the gifts of the Spirit and of charisms and pastoral forms in which the gifts are seen (biblical and prayer groups, courses in faith, communities, renewals of parishes, ecumenism, healthy Mariology). Simultaneously, it is necessary to be conscious of dangers such as overemphasis of emotions, false straightforwardness, fundamentalism, religious complacency and escaping from reality.


The other German document *On Supernatural Physical Phenomena Relating to Spiritual Experiences* (pp. 215—260) with the “Introduction to the Polish edition” by Fr. Tomasz Szalanda (pp. 213—214). The article sets out guidelines on proper discernment of what is on the border of the spiritual and of what can be described by psychology and medicine. Respect for the Bible and Tradition and the observance of healthy Catholic doctrine are necessary to give opinions on various phenomena. Thus, all experiences should be subordinate to them. So, a proper discernment is needed. A trial to answer some questions about the “Toronto Blessing” makes another valuable part of the document.

The third text is entitled *A House of Prayer (Mark 11,17)*. *Prayer Initiatives and Houses of Prayer* (pp. 267—333) and is accompanied by an appendix published in 2013 (p. 334); “Introduction to the Polish Edition” (pp. 263—265) has been written by Bishop Andrzej Siemieniewski and Maciej Wolski. The document presents various forms of prayer such as incessant prayer, blessing, worship, prayer in need, intercession, thanksgiving, glorification and adoration, spontaneous prayer, communal prayer, Eucharist and veneration. Catholic, Protestant and ecumenical initiatives of prayer and houses of prayers are also very interesting. The third part includes a few hints for the functioning of Catholic Houses of Prayer. A lot of attention was also paid to the description and evaluation of the International House of Prayer in Kansas City and the eschatological direction of prayer groups.

In conclusion, the publication *Wiosna Kościoła...* (Spring of the Church...) is a valuable digest of multiple arguments that allow for a correct assessment of spirituality, practices and charismatic phenomena in the modern Church. Very specific statements of chosen Episcopal Conferences are the value of the book as they are a sign of pastoral care and the discernment performed by bishops. So, it is also an important source of information in the search of theological answers to questions about the charismatic spirituality. It is striking that in very different cultures of the world, the Church assesses this reality in a similar way which allows for even more profound evaluation of the matter.

Wiosna Kościoła... is a must-read for theologians, pastors, community leaders and faithful that seek to understand the widely understood charismatic renewal. It is not only about the groups of the Renewal in the Holy Spirit, but also about multiple other communities that refer to the charismatic experiences such as the baptism in the Spirit, prayer for healing and prophesying. It can also make a perfect element of formation for the teams that take responsibility for various communities and evangelisation events.

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