



<b>WORKSHOPS – D3.2</b>	<b>SPEAKER : FATHER WILFRIED BRIEVEN</b>
<b>TITLE : THE LEGACY OF THE MALINES DOCUMENTS</b>	
<b>LANGUAGE : ENGLISH – Video (En / It)</b>	<b>COUNTRY : BELGIUM</b>

The last weeks, quite a few friends in our prayer groups asked me what the Malines Documents are. They seemingly never heard what these groundbreaking documents are for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. I am glad that our Golden Jubilee celebration gives me the opportunity to bring again to live these six documents. Our pope Francis is well aware of their importance. In his address to the Italian Rinovamento nello Spirito Santo on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 he said: *“You have a guide in the documents of Malines , a sure course not to mistake the way!”*. He mentions explicitly the first three documents and he mentions cardinal Suenens as one of the authors.

Cardinal Suenens discovered in the fall of 1972 the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Some friends in the U.S. informed him about a move of the Spirit. Since his motto as bishop was *‘In the Holy Spirit’* he always kept watching for moves of the Spirit in the Church. He saw it during his life in the liturgical renewal, in the Legion of Mary, in the ecumenical movement, especially in the second Vatican Council where he was one of the four moderators. As soon as he heard about the events in the U.S. he asked for more information in order to discern it. Convinced of the authenticity he asked an American priest to pray over him for the baptism in the Spirit and he went twice in 1973 to the States to know from the inside what the Holy Spirit was doing in charismatic communities and prayer groups. He was deeply impressed and he became vividly aware of the chances for the Church as well as some dangers that threatened this move of the Holy Spirit. He decided at once to inform the Holy Father pope Paul VI. A first fruit of this encounter was the fact that the pope invited 15 leaders of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal for a private audience. Another result was the suggestion to create a theological and pastoral commission in order to give some guidance to the Renewal and to assure that it was solidly implanted within the Church. This is the origin of what later became the Malines Documents.

During an encounter in June 1973 in South Bend at the University of Notre Dame he attended the first Charismatic congress in the U.S. There were 20.000 participants and he was impressed by the enthusiasm of the participants and by their spontaneous praise. The cardinal prayed that the Lord should hasten the encounter between the ‘institutional Church’ and the ‘charismatic Church’ and by his presence as the only cardinal he intended to promote the integration of the Charismatic Renewal into the Church. This was always the motive for his participation in the Charismatic Renewal, even when he encountered criticisms from his colleagues.

From then on he set some steps to bring together theologians and leaders of the Renewal. He also wrote a book in 1974 *“A new Pentecost?”* in which he outlined already some guidelines about the road to follow. One of the important themes was the necessity for the Church to be actively present in the Renewal and to discern it. He called the last chapter of the book: *“The Holy Spirit: my hope!”*. It



was translated in many languages and had indeed a great impact on the integration of the Renewal within the Church. In the following years he published in a rather short period six documents, the Malines Documents.

From the 21<sup>st</sup> till the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1974 he brought together at the Archbishop's house in Malines 8 theologians and leaders of the Renewal: father Carlos Aldunate from Chili, father Salvador Carrillo from Mexico, Ralph Martin from the U.S., Father Albert de Montleon, who became later bishop, from France, father Kilian Mc Donnell from the U.S who wrote the first draft and had the responsibility of formulating the final text, Heribert Mühlen from Germany, Veronica O'Brien from Ireland and Kevin Ranaghan from the U.S. There were also six theologians who didn't attend the meeting but were consulted. Among them father Joseph Ratzinger, who became pope Benedict XVI and father Walter Kasper who became cardinal. The meetings. The cardinal presided the meetings and took the risk to present the final document to Rome, to the Holy Father, who was very pleased by the document. They searched the ecclesiastical context of the Renewal as well as the theological basis. They also considered areas of theological concern, especially about the use of the words '*baptism in the Holy Spirit*'. They evaluated in a positive way pastoral orientations about charisms and ecumenical dimensions. In my opinion, after 43 years, this document remains essential for the further growth of the Charismatic Renewal, boosted by the celebration of our Golden Jubilee. It is time to search this document from our shelves and to work again with it. It is really an outstanding legacy left to us by the cardinal and the team he gathered.

He had also in mind to publish other documents in which he looked closely at different aspects of charismatic life. The second document: "*Ecumenism and charismatic Renewal: theological and pastoral orientations*" was published in 1978. The document aimed to show what specific contribution the Charismatic Renewal can make to the ecumenical movement, which is endeavoring to reunite divided Christians. He examines the conditions for authentic ecumenism and authentic Charismatic Renewal and the links between those. He gives concrete pastoral guidelines and opens horizons when he evokes spiritual ecumenism. During his life he had many ecumenical contacts, not only with the Anglican and the Orthodox Church but also with many Protestant Churches and even with the Pentecostals. In this document he links his experience with the developments within the Charismatic community.

A third document is written by Don Helder Camara and the cardinal. "*Charismatic Renewal and social action: a dialogue*". It was published in 1979. They both show in a complementary way to Christians that prayer evangelization, social and political action can and must be integrated in the life of a Christian, guided by the Holy Spirit. They see the tensions between the 'spiritual' man and the 'active' man. How to avoid that the Charismatic Renewal be alienated from the 'real' world is one of their concerns. Don Helder knew how in Latin America the Charismatic Renewal was attacked by groups in the frontline of social action for remaining absent in the combat for justice and peace. For many in the Renewal this document was a helpful guide, especially in Latin America.



The three following documents had lesser influence but were still helpful. The fourth document: *“Renewal and the powers of darkness”* was published in 1982. Cardinal Ratzinger, then the prefect of the Congregation of Faith, wrote the preface. The subject of the document was very delicate. The cardinal was aware that there were excesses in the practice of exorcism in some places within the Renewal. He said that he wrote it with tears, knowing that some people objected that he was speaking of myths that didn’t exist, and at the other hand, that others who practiced at a wide scale prayers for liberation of the devil, said that he lacked pastoral experience. He was convinced that he had the duty to write it quoting the Gospel verse: *“The truth will set you free”* (John 8, 32).

The fifth document *“Nature and grace, a vital unity”* was published in 1985. He examined, reacting to some pedagogical excesses, that in the actual world there is a hypertrophy of the individual person and that the role of grace is minimalized. Some psychological methods insist too much on auto-analysis and promote narcissism. In the education of the Christian we may not ignore that the human being, rich in natural gifts, is also fragile and wounded. The modern man may never forget that grace is an essential part of his healing and his growth.

The last document: *“Resting in the Spirit”* was published in 1986. The phenomenon was very controversial in that period and divided the spirits in the Renewal. The cardinal contacted ICCRO that later became ICCRS to gather reactions in the whole world. He received many answers that went all ways. He examined the phenomenon and his conclusion at that moment was very restrictive. It shows that the cardinal remained always attentive at what was happening within the Charismatic Renewal and that he took seriously the mandate he received from pope Paul VI to be the guardian that the Catholic Charismatic Renewal always remained in the heart of the Church.

It is a joy for me to have the opportunity to remind us during these Golden Jubilee celebrations of the unique role of cardinal Suenens in the growth of this move of the Holy Spirit within the Catholic Church. It is our duty to remain faithful to the heritage of the cardinal and to continue to explore the treasures of the Malines Documents. May Mother Mary, mother of the Church, help and guide us in this process.

Rome, June 1<sup>st</sup> 2017