



<u>THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM</u> - ThS.1B	<u>SPEAKER</u> : DR. OREST HRYHORCHAK
<u>TITLE</u> : A CURRENT OF GRACE FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL in Response to Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa	
<u>LANGUAGE</u> : ENGLISH	<u>COUNTRY</u> : UKRAINE

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church lives by the spirituality of the Christian East, whose theology has always emphasized the importance of the personhood of the Holy Spirit and his actions in everyone's lives. To verify this, it's enough to look at the texts of the Eastern liturgy, which are full of recourse to the Holy Spirit, or to analyze the work of the Church Fathers of the East, where we always find special emphasis on the personhood of the Holy Spirit and his actions, and a description of a large number of currently known charismatic phenomena (notably they are considered an integral and harmonious part of Christian life). On this basis, it is safe to say that the foundational elements of the "theology of the third article," mentioned by Father Raniero, have always characterized Eastern spirituality (it has rightly been noted that St. Basil of Caesarea is the true initiator of the "theology of the third article"). Therefore it is difficult to argue that the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (hereinafter CCR) brought something substantially new to the spirituality of the East in the field of theology. Moreover, the spirituality of the East is capable of considerably enriching the CCR with its experience.

But despite the great treasures of pneumatic Eastern spirituality, the practical life of the vast majority of Christians, as for me, is far distant from its emphases. This does not mean that spiritual life in the Church is obscure and lifeless. Since coming out in the open the UGCC has done a huge work of revival of spirituality and pastoral work with people: parishes have grown numerically and quantitatively, active catechetical work with children is being done, church structures that work with different groups of people are being established and systematically developed, lay movements are actively developing, there are many vocations to the priesthood and monasticism, etc. The Church has almost the highest level of trust in society, including because of its active participation in defending truth, moral values, and the common good.

The CCR has also taken its place in the Church and develops dynamically. The great achievement was the creation of a coordinating body for charismatic communities, led by Bishop Dmytro (Grygorak), who was appointed by the Synod of Bishops to be in charge of the CCR in UGCC. The first charismatic community emerged in UGCC over 20 years ago. Today, the largest national network of charismatic communities includes 40 Greek and Roman Catholic communities (approximately 4000–5000 people), most of which are spiritually formed in the School of Mary (which has about 60 affiliated branches in 15 countries). We also are very glad to have deep cooperation with the European Network of Communities (ENC) and to enrich one another by our faith and experience.

However, along with many advantages, there are, in my opinion, significant disadvantages, many of which overlap with those Father Raniero mentioned. By overcoming those drawbacks a new, powerful round of development of the Church could come. Among them I would like to name the following:



1. Despite the significant attendance at Sunday liturgy, the daily life of parishioners in the moral aspect differs little from the life of un-churched people, not to mention the practical absence of evidence of an active faith. A close look at their religious life leaves the impression of superficial or even superstitious faith. As proof, the number of people at Sunday liturgy doubles or triples when water, candles, baskets, etc., are blessed. Although the Eastern spirituality of St. Seraphim of Sarov stresses that “the goal of the Christian life is to acquire the Holy Spirit,” the reality is too far from these words.
2. The sermons in Sunday liturgies generally have either a didactic or an intellectual nature; there is almost no kerygma, no proclamation of the Good News directed to a specific person, no evidence of the real action of God in a person’s life, no emphasizing that even today God is alive and real. Teachings lack evangelical joy (a problem emphasized by Father Raniero). The Holy Spirit is rather discussed in theory (occasionally) than in practical steps on how to experience his actions.
3. Everything that concerns the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit, in particular through the charisms, is attributed only to the times of the apostles or those who have attained sainthood. Or it is perceived with suspicion or even hostility. When talking about supernatural action of the Holy Spirit today, especially through the ministry of the laity, it is seen at best as psychic phenomena, and at worst, as manifestations of an evil spirit; therefore there is suspicion and resistance to charismatic ministry.

All this creates an impression that Eastern spirituality is much more practiced in the external aspect, while the internal emphases and moods are abandoned. This gap between the theology of Eastern spirituality and the practical life of Christians today is quite significant. I see the primary mission of the CCR particularly in addressing this gap. It can contribute to the filling of the existing external form with forgotten meaning and become a tool that will help people to enter the rich fullness of Eastern spirituality and rediscover its treasures. This is important for many reasons, but I would like to especially stress the need to share the faith. The younger generation is increasingly in danger because of secularism and the perception of the Church as an archive of rituals and traditions. To start living by faith for young people, they need to see a real example and in all the rites and traditions they should find living water which can quench their spiritual thirst. To implement this mission, in my opinion, some important steps need to be taken:

1. To overcome fear. Everything charismatic is often perceived as Protestant, and thus hostile to the Tradition of the Church and something that threatens it. That’s why you can often hear: why do we need this new evangelization and charisms, everything that we need can be found in Church liturgy and tradition. In such cases I try to explain that the charismatic movement and new evangelization are needed to help people to understand and discover the richness of the tradition and learn how to live it. As experience shows, I am convinced of the efficacy of this approach: people who have taken the evangelistic course “Ruach” and were baptized in the Holy Spirit are active in the Church, begin to live by the Sacraments and discover the richness of the tradition while enjoying their faith (though before for many years they regularly attended Sunday services and thus maintained a formal Christian life). That’s why it is important that priests themselves have experienced a personal encounter with Christ, are baptized with the Holy Spirit and are familiar with the essence of the new evangelization. This, in turn, requires a change in approach to



seminary education.

2. To value both content and form. I believe that form without content is not able to share faith, but also content without form cannot preserve the purity and fullness of faith, avoiding distortions and abuses. The content is water, the form is a jug. Therefore, it is important to take care of both the content and the form, that is tradition and rituals. One important vocation of the CCR is to fill the existing forms with content without destroying them, but rather emphasizing their importance. In Ukraine, we have come a long way toward this goal. Throughout this time we have learned how to clearly speak about the calling of the CCR, and existing problems in the Church, on the one hand, and how to love and honor the tradition of the church and to open its richness, on the other. It brings good results.
3. To find balance. To emphasize the importance of asceticism and suffering for newly converted people is the same as to feed meat to infants. But talking with grownup spiritual people only about the joy of the Christian life is the same as feeding an 18-year-old man with just milk. Neither one nor the other is a good diet. Jesus told his disciples about joy and suffering, but He did it at the right time and it was well balanced. The great merit of the CCR is that it makes great emphasis on the joy of life with God. It is indeed very important, especially for Ukraine, with its post-Soviet past. But the theology of the CCR should also harmoniously balance and integrate the understanding of the role of suffering and asceticism in the life of Christ's disciples, as it did, with speaking of Christian joy; lack of this balance can lead to the "prosperity gospel." At the end of this response, I would like to thank Father Raniero for his words which perfectly reflect the essence of a balanced and mature charismatic ministry, namely, that spiritual renewal should go ahead of charismatic renewal. It is really important, especially in the context of Eastern spirituality.

Salvation comes from the East. Maybe, those are prophetic words for this time. Ukraine and its Church has a long history of struggle for the faith, especially in the twentieth century, which is sown with the blood and bones of martyrs; it has great spiritual potential of people who are not depraved by secularism and who absorbed a sense of God with their mother's milk. Today the Ukrainian people do not find any confidence either in politics or in the economy, or in other realities of the material world. Under such conditions Christian hope, joy and the power of the Gospel can be a reliable support for changes and the formation of a new future. Today we especially need the feeling that Jesus is alive and real and His Spirit continues to make miracles and change history. This confidence, which the CCR emphasizes, combined with the Tradition and history of the Church, by which people live, is able to cause an explosion (as in nuclear bombs) of grace, and give the Church a lot of people of firm faith, saints, missionaries, priests, monks, mature lay leaders, those who will testify and proclaim the Gospel to the North, South, East, and particularly to the WEST.