**Charism and Institution: Issues and Horizons**

**Archbishop Kevin McDonald**

**Oscott College July 2nd 2019**

First of all let me say that it is a pleasure for me to be at Oscott this week where I spent 12 years of my life, first as a lecturer in Moral theology and later as Rector. I think in the context of this gathering it is also relevant to mention that after my first spell at Oscott I worked at the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity in Rome where I was especially responsible for relations with Anglicans and Methodists. That was from 1985-1993. Those years when I was in Rome saw the fall of communism which of course had huge implications both for Europe and for ecumenism, triggering for example the revival of the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches. I remember well the great KEK-CCEE gathering in Basle in Switzerland which was a kind of celebration of European reunification. There was also the Synod on Europe and both events were in different ways responses to the changed situation in Europe. It all seems a long time ago now.

Todays’ topic - the relation of the hierarchical and charismatic dimension of the Church - is a very broad one and there are a number of ways in which one could approach it. I won’t focus very explicitly on Europe even though I am European - I have an Irish passport as well as a British one. Nonetheless the European context will inevitably shape what I say and how we discuss the topic. I will talk about the document Iuvenescit Ecclesia and do so with particular reference to the Second Vatican Council - which the document quotes extensively - since the Council really framed this topic both in terms of the connection and potential tension between the hierarchical and charismatic. I shall also look at some essays written in the decade after the Council which I think pick up on the spirit of the Council and in that sense create something by way of background and context. They also raise questions which are still live today even though we now live in rather different times.

I want though as a kind of prelude to refer to what I think may have been Fr Chris’s

reason for suggesting that I speak at this Conference. I continue to have certain responsibilities within our Bishops’ Conference. One is relations with the Jews - which is itself relevant to this conference - and another is liaison bishop for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. It was in that capacity that I attended last November’s Plenary meeting of the Bishops’ Conference and presented to the Bishops the document Charis - the new Statutes for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal which were promulgated by Pope Francis at Pentecost. This is not the place to speak in detail about those Statutes but, I want to refer to some of the things Pope Francis has said about Charismatic Renewal since they inevitably open up some theological and cultural perspectives which are relevant to the topic this paper seeks to address.

Pope Francis had personal and direct experience of Charismatic Renewal from his time as Archbishop of Buenos Aires and that context significantly shaped his perception of the Renewal. He has described the Renewal as “an ecumenical current of grace.” That is crucial. For him the Charismatic Renewal is an inherently ecumenical reality and gift and I mention this not least to signal from the outset that our topic has a clear ecumenical dimension.

Here are two quotations from Pope Francis. The context is the 50th anniversary celebrations of Charismatic Renewal which at the Pope’s request was very ecumenical in character and clearly assumes the common source of the gifts we share:

“It is not easy to show the world today that peace is possible, but in the name of Jesus we can show by our testimony that peace is possible. It is possible if we are at peace with one another. If we emphasise our differences, we are at war among ourselves and we cannot proclaim peace. Peace is possible based on our confession that Jesus is Lord and our evangelisation along this path.It is possible. Even by showing that we have differences - this is obvious, we have differences- but that we desire to be a *reconciled diversity.* We should not forget that phrase but say it to everyone - reconciled diversity. “(Address at Vigil of Pentecost in Circus Maximus, 3rd of June 2017)

So reconciliation between separated Christian Communions which he sees as an integral dimension of Charismatic Renewal is about recognising each other’s gifts and precisely because of that is a dimension of progress toward peace in the world. And that, of course,is as true in Europe as anywhere in the world.

The other short quotation is from the same event:

“Fifty years of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. A flood of grace of the Spirit. Why a flood of grace? Because it has no founder, no bye-laws and no structure of governance “

Comments like these do seem to me to draw us into some of the key questions raised by the topic of this paper. This is not merely an” in house” Catholic issue. It must be seen in a very broad cultural, historical and ecumenical context. The Pope’s comments about Charismatic Renewal clearly illustrated that but the topic is also much wider than the Charismatic Renewal.

So having said that let us consider Iuvenescit Ecclesia for a moment and see what issues the document raises. Iuvenescit Ecclesia is generic in nature and is really a statement of certain theological principles or, more particularly ecclesiological principles. It is organically connected to and rooted in Lumen Gentium so let me just reference the principles and perspectives we are talking about.

Section 9 of Iuvenescit Ecclesia says that key passages in Vatican II reveal that in the Church we see ”in addition to the Word of God, written and transmitted, to the sacraments, and to the ordained hierarchical ministry, the presence of gifts, of special gifts or charisms distributed by the Spirit among the faithful of every condition. The passage most emblematic in this regard is to be found in Lumen Gentium 4 ‘The Church which the Spirit guides in the way of all truth and which He unifies in communion and ministry, he both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with his fruits. ‘ “

So gifts are integral and vital to the life and reality of the Church. The quotation from Lumen Gentium concludes by referencing three passages from the letters of St Paul which I think are worth quoting because together they seem to me to both ground and open up the different dimensions of this matter. They also, of course, talk about realities which were vital to the Church in Corinth and elsewhere, but which were widely forgotten in the history of the Church and are largely ignored or unacknowledged in many parts of contemporary Christianity including contemporary Catholicism.

The Council’s reference to Ephesians 4, 11-13 is important because it makes clear that when we talk about the gifts we are talking about *people* and about their role and calling in the Church, be they teachers prophets pastors, those who speak in tongues, those who interpret tongues and so on, and this all raises questions about how we see and perceive the significance of the laity in the Church. So gifts are all about people and I Corinthians 12,4, which is also cited, explores that point with what is really a charismatic theological anthropology. The Holy Spirit is at work in different ways in different people to develop and deepen the life of the Church. Galatians 5,22 talks about the fruits the Spirit - love joy, peace and so on, all of which make a real and specific contribution to the life of the Body which is the Church. The Church depends on them.

So these are some of the key perspectives about charisms which are referenced in Iuvenescit Ecclesia.

I will come back to Iuvenescit Ecclesia shortly but I want to stay with Vatican II itself for a moment which the document clearly sees as crucial for understanding charismatic gifts in relation to the institution. I would like to invoke the ideas of a theologian who was around at the time of the Council and whose personal and theological sensibilities are I think very helpful in getting a sense of the flavour of this teaching as it was experienced at that time. I am talking about Fr Rene Laurentin.

I came across an edition of Concilium from the 1970s (Charisms in the Church ed. Duquoc and Floristan, 1978) which is dedicated to the whole question of charisms and in his article Laurentin warmly welcomes the Council’s teaching on charisms and notes that this theme might never have been opened up and explored in the way it was. At the Council Cardinal Ruffini was concerned about talk about charisms since he saw “a danger of disorder” in pursuing it. Laurentin does see the Council text as shaped to some extent by the perception that there is always potential for conflict or opposition between the hierarchical and charismatic dimensions of the Church. He stresses that the charisms are integral to the life of the Body which is the Church and finds in the Decree on the Laity a good articulation of the balance between the hierarchical and the charismatic. It affirms my point that charism is all about people and It is worth quoting some key parts of it:

“The Holy Spirit sanctifies the People of God through the ministry and the sacraments. However for the exercise of the apostolate he gives the faithful special gifts…so that each and all, putting at the service of others the grace received may be ‘as good stewards of God’s varied gifts’…for the building up of the whole body in charity. From the reception of these charisms, even the most ordinary ones, there arises for each of the faithful the right and duty of exercising them in the Church and in the world for the good of men and the development of the Church, of exercising them in the freedom of the Holy Spirit who ’breathes where he wills’ (John 3,8) and at the same time in communion with his brothers in Christ and with his pastors especially . It is for the pastors to pass judgment on the authenticity and good use of the gift , not certainly with a view to quenching the Spirit but to testing everything and keeping what is good “ (Decree on Laity 3,3)

That quote is a very strong statement of the vital and integral nature of the gifts bestowed on the faithful in the Church. It is also clearly conscious of the possibility and indeed the reality of gifts as an occasion of tension and conflict. Laurentin says that it was because of sin that conflict and disorder emerged in the Church. He says moreover, that the creative exercise of the charisms was not the prerogative of the early church but is part of the life of the Church even though the word “charism” has suffered something of an eclipse. Interestingly he plays down the idea that gifts be seen as ”extraordinary” including glossolalia and healing. Interestingly also, given the Council’s more open attitude toward the ”world” he cautions against the use of the word supernatural and I do find echoes of both Rahner and de Lubac here in the mindset he has in relation to the Council. He says

“If the charisms may be said to be ‘supernatural’ in that they are free gifts of the Spirit, it is only on the condition that ’supernatural’ is not understood as superadded to nature like a kind of superstructure, a metal crown on a bodily head. The charism sets free natural gifts according to the diversity of people and of human communities. Hence charisms touch the whole of human reality,individually and collectively, the body and the psychical features, according to the diversity of commitment or involvement” (pp7-8 of Concilium)

In particular I find echoes here of de Lubac’s idea of the Church already existing in an inchoate way in the natural order.

As a working definition of charism Laurentin suggests

“Charisms are free gifts of the Spirit intended for the building up of the Church, the Body of Christ”. The sacraments are defining gifts but

“the gratuitous gifts proceed from the Spirit operating within the freedom of the individual. More important still is that their value is not measured by the intensity of the inspiration nor by the striking features of what they produce but by the charity (1 Cor 13,1-30) which is their measure and their strength through the one Spirit which works all in all. Lastly it is important that they are thus integrated in an organic (and therefore dynamic and ordered) way in the Church, body of Christ “(p 10)

So he is talking in a very open and also integrated way about apostolic ministry, the sacraments, the gift and call of vocation including marriage, celibacy and religious life as well as the very particular charisms mentioned in the New Testament.

What I took away from the article by Laurentin was a very strong sense of **givenness -** the givenness of everything in the Church and in creation - seeing, understanding and interpreting everything within the paradigm of gift. That seems to me to be profoundly and rather specifically Christian. I found myself thinking about the last words of Bernanos’s great book Journal d’un Cure de Campagne”. Having lived through so much suffering the priest concludes “toute est grace.” Crucially when we speak of the gifts, we are not talking about things people own or possess. The gifts are for love and for service.

I have referred to Laurentin partly because his thinking is redolent of a particular moment in the Church’s life - the time just after the Council. Today the Council has become something of a bone of contention. Some see it as the cause of all the ills in the Church. Others see our problems as being caused by the fact that we have not adopted the spirit of the Council sufficiently radically.

Going back now to Iuvenescit Ecclesia which is of course a document of our times, I think it is fair to say that the way in which the issues are presented is in some ways a response to contemporary concerns contemporary anxieties. It is very clear also that a key part of the background to this text is the growth of new movements and communities in the Church which were so much a feature of the papacy of Pope John Paul II. For all its celebration of the charisms there is a clear dynamic of containment and management. That observation may not necessarily be interpreted as a criticism of the document. If the document is discreetly striking a critical note, then my guess is that the criticism is directed to particular groups and particular practices and not to particular charisms and certainly not to the principles laid down by the Council.

Certainly Charismatic Renewal is not the focus of this document nor the focus of concern. Some concerns are about issues that could arise in any group, including charismatic ones. So now - turning again to the document - I find two quotes from Popes which set out the key parameters and perspectives of the text.

Speaking in 1998 in a message to participants in the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements, Pope John Paul explains the key principle of ”co-essentiality”:

“I have often had occasion to stress that there is no conflict or opposition in the Church between the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension, of which movements are a significant expression. Both are coessential to the divine constitution of the Church founded by Jesus, because both help to make the mystery of Christ and his saving work present in the world.”

This quote is complemented by words of Pope Benedict to participants in a pilgrimage promoted by Communione et Liberazione :

“in the Church the essential institutions are also charismatic and the the charisms must, in one way or another be institutionalised to have coherency and continuity”

That quotation chimes well with the thinking of Fr Laurentin but it is articulated in a way which clearly expresses characteristic concerns the CDF may have had in relation to some groups. Pope Benedict concludes “The hierarchical gifts and the charismatic gifts are thus reciprocally related from their origins.” It is a statement which suggests that he reads the issues relating to the charisms primarily in ecclesiological rather than anthropological terms. What is also clear is the importance within that ecclesiological framework of the language of gift, givenness, gratuitousness and the related concepts of source, origin and inspiration.

The gifts are all related and the key concept in the document’s explanation of this interconnectedness is the concept of sacrament. Through the sacraments of initiation and especially through the eucharist we receive the gift of communion in the fullest and deepest sense of that word - shared participation in a reality that is given -that is the root meaning of koinonia or communion. It seems to me that both the moments of enthusiasm and the notes of concern in this document need to be heard and read in terms of openness and receptivity to all that is given and to all the ways in which God’s gifts are bestowed. The vision of Church we have here is one in which the ideas of gift and belonging are inextricably connected. Our use of the gifts is a sign of our belonging within the Church.

A couple of further points about the document. In a paragraph about the discernment of charisms there is what I think is a quite significant quotation from Pope Paul VI’s Evangelii Nuntiandi:

“the true relation between the genuine charism, with its perspectives of newness and interior suffering, carries with it an unvarying history of the connections between charism and the cross “

The document could I think have explored more fully the more profound significance of this statement - the whole question of the cost of discipleship and the cost of being a recipient and a channel of gifts.

You are familiar with this document and in these comments I have not tried to summarize or synthesize the document but simply to share some of my own thoughts and observations. But before leaving the text of the document I want to draw attention to something that strikes me as very important. It makes the point that ecclesial communities should be esteemed because of their “contribution as an authentic resource for the good of all’.

I hope I am right in taking this to be an indication that the communities should not just exist for their own benefit and not just be concerned about recruiting new members. When I give retreats to priests I always make the point that they must reach out and minister to those who are not Christian or Catholics and who are never going to be Christians or Catholics. One thinks for example of the Church in Algeria before the war which saw many French return to France. The gifts bestowed in the Catholic community were seen by the priests and Religious who stayed in Algeria as being for love and dialogue and sacred hospitality. If our focus is on Europe then we surely need to share that perspective.

Those then are some comments on Iuvenescit Ecclesia. I want to return to the edition of Concilium that published the article by Fr Laurentin to which I have referred. I also read some of the other articles in that edition. Some of the concerns are very much of that particular era but several, it seems to me, have stood the test of time well and enabled me to see this document in a wider cultural, ecumenical and political perspective. Some are a bit controversial, but I would like to share some issues and perspectives that seem to meet to widen the horizon of our topic - the horizons of the charisms

One is the relationship between Catholic and Protestant Christianity and within that framework the contemporary issue of ecumenism. I said at the beginning that Pope Francis speaks of the Charismatic Renewal as an ecumenical grace - a gift poured out on all Christians and therefore a grace that should bring Christians together. But it is interesting to note how essays written in the 1970s addressed this issue. I was particularly struck by an article by Paul Gerest about charismatic movements.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were developments in the Protestant world that have come to be called the Pentecostal movement - the experience of charismatic gifts - the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, glossolalia, prophecy and the gifts of healing. These all went hand in hand with strong convictions about the coming of the Lord. The principal focus of this was California and out of it grew the Pentecostal Churches. The same experiences took place subsequently within the mainline protestant Churches and then eventually in the Catholic Church in the 1960s. It was this development which in the Catholic Church came to be called the Charismatic Renewal.

During the time I worked at the Pontifical Council in Rome there were significant contacts and dialogue meetings between Catholic theologians - some of whom were charismatic - and Pentecostals, although I was not involved with them myself. Not all Pentecostals were open to such dialogues, but some were and are. The participants see this dialogue as being based on the reception of the same gifts of the Spirit. But if we look at the Reformation, the crisis that divided the Christian world one could say - and this is the point made by Gerest - that it was precisely the experience of gift that caused the Reformation. Luther’s experience of the direct and unmediated grace of justification - without sacraments and without indulgences - was the turning point. Similar experiences were reported by others and they rejected the Catholic Church, insisting that Christianity is pure grace, pure gift - sola gratia, sola fides, sola scriptura. So, according to Gerest, the principle of gift became the principle of division.

The Reformation did not produce one united Protestant church but many churches, thus - one might argue, from a Catholic point of view, - demonstrating the importance of the hierarchical principle in the Church for preserving order and unity. I mention this simply to make the point that the issue of the relationship between the the charismatic and hierarchical dimensions of the Church is complex and is much wider than the paradigms and internal tensions within the Catholic Church. Issues and tensions within the Catholic church have a wider context and are part of a bigger story.

It should be noted too that the Pentecostal movement in the Protestant world, as well as being about the gifts also became protest against the liberalization of Christianity in the Protestant world, and especially against the pure subjectivism we find in people like Schleiermacher. It was likewise a rejection of the atheism and agnosticism that grew out of Protestant culture, especially in Germany which reached its high point in the philosophy of Hegel. In his thought the transcendent and the supernatural were effectively collapsed into the idea of Geist or Spirit so that effectively theology “matures” into philosophy. Crucially this intellectual trajectory also effectively excludes the idea of gift since the whole emphasis is on man considered in and of himself, man as the creator and manufacturer of goods - man come of age. The Pentecostal world rejected the secular culture and language that was emerging and became a counter culture with its own language and lifestyle - very much articulated in terms of gifts.

That essay opened up the issue of charism and institution in an interesting way. I would like if I may to flag up one other essay in that volume which raises another dimension of the tension between institution and charism which is still current and still sensitive. It is an essay by the Dominican Christian Duquoc who points to what he sees as a fundamental problem or contradiction in Christianity which is all to do with the charismatic and the institutional. He mentions the 1977 document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which strongly affirmed that it is not possible for women to be admitted to the priesthood. Duquoc draws on the ideas of of the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski who boldly asserted that women feel called to the priesthood and experience that call as a grace and a gift for the Church. But the institution does not recognise that gift. Duquoc says:

“Christianity implies a contradiction in its very structure because it has a fundamental unifying concept and combines it with the concept of grace which has nothing to do with that order.”

Back to Luther! Duquoc says there is no reason to think that the Spirit can only manifest itself through the medium of institution and sacraments. He says the Church limps between two contradictory poles. On the one had the Church is pure gift - it is the Body of Christ in the world and through baptism we are received into that grace. But the institution according to Kolakowski and as reported by Duquoc does not respect the logic of grace. It puts limits on it and that makes Christianity inherently conflicted. The Church accepts charisms at the private and personal level - and in the Middle Ages talk about charisms was mostly at that level - but rejects the idea of gifts being bestowed afresh and in new ways. And he refers also to an issue that is very current in the Church today, namely that of communion for the divorced remarried. Duquoc complains that the sacraments which should be pure gift - moments and expressions of pure grace - have become the most untouchable elements in the canonical legal system of the Church.

“the charisms are at the core of the ecclesiastical institution as a form of gratuitousness and unpredictability which checks and regularises the phenomena of legalisation and hierarchisation.”

So whereas Iuvenescit Ecclesia sees the institution as regulating and validating the charisms Duquoc sees the charisms as regulating and validating the institution.

It is not my purpose to enter into the substantive issues here, issues of ecumenical discipline, sacramental sharing, ordination or marriage discipline. My purpose has been simply to indicate that our topic cannot simply be treated as an internal issue within the Catholic Church and also that when you open up the issues of charisms the horizons will shift. Also the issues discussed in Concilium forty years ago are live issues for the Church in Europe today. Perhaps what I have tried to do in the latter part of my talk is to suggest that the tension and complementarity between charism and institution can serve as a metaphor and even a framework or context for addressing some of the issues facing the Church today. In what way are divorced married people a gift to their parish communities? Perhaps a better example for today would be the things that Pope Francis has said about homosexuality. On a number of occasion people have been concerned about the way in which he has affirmed people in their homosexual identity and encouraged them to see it as a gift. He has not of course changed Church teaching on homosexuality, but he has inevitably raised the question about how this gift should be used in the Church. It seems to me that there is a great deal of unease and anxiety around these questions and about how to talk about them. Seeing the issues terms of gift and call may be one way of engaging with them - providing a language if not any immediate resolution.

More broadly though, in our age of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, as well as dialogue with culture, we cannot treat this subject simply as what I have called and in-house Catholic question. Ever since the publication of Pope Paul VI’s groundbreaking encyclical Ecclesiam Suam, dialogue and engagement with those outside the Church has become integral to the mission, role and profile of the the Church today. We see this very clearly in the international profile of the Popes. The Assisi Day of Prayer for Peace convened by Pope John Paul II in 1986 was a watershed moment in this process of change.

The Church has affirmed that the Spirit is at work outside the Catholic Church. Let us just recall some of the remarkable statements about the Spirit in other religions made by Pope John Paul II in Redemptoris Missio. Speaking of members of other religious traditions, he says;

“For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way that is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his Sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her own cooperation“ (RM 10}

Further on in the document he says:

“the Spirit manifests himself in a special way in the Church and in her members. Nevertheless his presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time” (RM 28

So the Holy Spirit, bearer of gifts is at work beyond the bounds of the Catholic Church. One can think for example of Catholic thinkers and mystics who have deepened their spiritual lives by their openness to the gifts they find in Buddhism and Hinduism - people like Bede Griffiths, Henri le Saux, Thomas Merton and William Johnston .The key issue must surely be discernment which Pope Francis talks about a lot. The discernment of gifts within the Church is vital but that discernment has to be exercised also in relation to the wider cultural and religious horizons that shape the globalised world in which we live.