"The Holy Spirit Leads the Church through Charismas" (LG 12). The Conciliar Doctrine on Charismas and its Significance for the Laity's Active Involvement in the Church
Moons, Jos

Published in:
The Letter and the Spirit: On the Forgotten Documents of Vatican II

Document version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2018

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright, please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 07. Sep. 2020
“THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS THE CHURCH THROUGH CHARISMAS” (LG 12)

THE CONCILIAR DOCTRINE ON CHARISMA
AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE LAITY’S ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Scholars generally agree that the Second Vatican Council’s teaching on charismas helps to conceive an active involvement of the faithful in the Church. Yet scholars disagree on the question how far the potential of the teaching has been realised. For example, in the 1980s, the French Dominican Yves Congar evaluated the conciliar teaching on charismas very positively, identifying charismas as one of the Council’s pneumatological “living seeds” that in the time following the Council “have yielded fruits”¹. In the same years, the Hungarian theologian Alexandre Ganoczy acknowledged the merit of the conciliar teaching on charismas yet not without reservations. He stated that it contains the theological foundation for a more active involvement of the laity in the Church but added that it needs a more precise articulation². More recently, reflecting on baptism as the new foundation of Catholic ecclesiology and ministry, the American theologian Richard Gaillardetz spoke in a similar manner. According to Gaillardetz, “the Second Vatican Council augmented its rich treatment of the common matrix of Christian baptism and discipleship with an uneven yet still significant use of the biblical notion of charism”³. The American Jesuit professor in religious ethics John


Haughey was more outspoken in his critique of the conciliar teaching on charisms. In a reflection from 1999, he stated that “there is considerable uncertainty about exactly where … charisms fit ecclesially”, and that “the ecclesiological implications [of charisms] are not pursued”\textsuperscript{4}.

As claims like these usually lack elaboration, I will delve in this chapter into the conciliar teaching on charisma and explore both its promise and limitation for conceiving the laity’s active involvement in the Church.

I. \textit{Charisma and Charismaticus}

The Council mentions \textit{charisma} (in singular and plural) eleven times, and \textit{charismaticus} (as adjective and noun) three times\textsuperscript{5}. These fourteen references are spread over various documents, with a prominent proportion of six references in the \textit{Dogmatic Constitution on the Church} (\textit{Lumen Gentium}, LG). Charisms are also mentioned in the \textit{Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation} (\textit{Dei Verbum}, DV) and in the Decrees on Mission (\textit{Ad Gentes}, AG), on the Apostolate of the Laity (\textit{Apostolicam Actuositatem}, AA) and on the Life and Mission of the Priest (\textit{Presbyterorum Ordinis}, PO)\textsuperscript{6}.

Sometimes the documents make use of synonyms. For example, before speaking of charisms, \textit{Lumen Gentium} 12 first states that

\begin{quote}
the same Holy Spirit not only sanctifies and guides the people of God by means of the sacraments and the ministries and adorns it with virtues, He also apportions his gifts “to each individually as He wills” (1 Cor 12,11), and among the faithful of every rank He distributes special graces\textsuperscript{7}.
\end{quote}

After specifying that these make the faithful ready to serve the upbuilding of the Kingdom, \textit{Lumen Gentium} introduces the term \textit{charismata}, thereby implying that these \textit{dona} and \textit{gratias speciales} function as synonyms for charisms\textsuperscript{8}. Similarly, \textit{Presbyterorum Ordinis} 9 first speaks of \textit{charismata} and then of the \textit{dona Dei}.


\textsuperscript{6} See LG 4, 7, 12, 25, 30, 50; AG 4, 23, 28; AA 3, 30; PO 4, 9; DV 8.

\textsuperscript{7} Quotes from the Council documents in English are based on the translation edited by Tanner, that I occasionally modify, see N. Tanner (ed.), \textit{Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils}, Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 1990, vol. 2, pp. 849-898.

\textsuperscript{8} See also AA 3, which is inspired by LG 12 and makes a similar movement, and LG 7, which first speaks of the \textit{varia sua dona} and then about \textit{charismaticos}.