

RENEWAL IN RELIGIOUS LIFE
Lambeth Palace, 28 March 2014

When Rev JW sent me the invitation to give this talk, knowing the 1st keynote speaker was ABC, I answered: are you really sure? Answer: ABC is positively sure it is a good idea. 2 thoughts: 1) I sure hope he's infallible! 2) If someone who used to be in the oil industry is concerned about RL it means it's a burning platform... Needs radical forceful solution.

All over the world and in all Christian denominations, religious life is in crisis.

I will not analyse it: very good analysis can be found. Let me just point to you a paper by P. P. Dunstan.¹ If knowing that you are not alone in your plight will encourage and reassure you, the situation in the RC will fully comfort you!

Obs: by the way, the crisis in RL only reflects the deeper crisis of the Church: not less vocations per practising Christian than before. But renewal in RL will be a spearhead for renewal of the Church.

On other hand great potential (and great need):

- so many are in deep financial or material difficulty (material need). So many are lonely and isolated, emotionally or psychologically wounded
- so many people are on a spiritual search (spiritual need). We find ourselves in a situation close to MA times before full Christian society: monasteries are central, poles for religious life. Much more strength than dispersed parishes

More deeply, and said with a more positive wording: we have an extraordinary treasure, the most beautiful of lives to share: Union to God, Absolute love; Christ friend and Saviour with his reconciling, healing power; a life according to the Gospel, i.e. a life pervaded with meaning (so many people do jobs they do not like); a group of loving people we live with, from different social and ethnic roots (Kingdom of God on earth...).

With such a treasure, even though we hold them in jars of clay, renewal is possible.

Good news: there are cases of growth, beautiful things happening!

Of course, we must know what we mean by growth. I like the way it is presented in: *From Anecdote to Evidence, Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013*: 1) growth in depth, quality of RL 2) growth in numbers 3) growth in outreach

There are no recipes, but I would like to reflect on (just) three ingredients of religious life that may help us see, realize that we have a treasure and nurture it. A choice, other important questions too.

- Rediscover the gift God has given us, and even more deeply and simply that we have been given a gift. In other words: rediscover our charism.
- Rediscover (and renew) our roots and tradition
- Renew our relation inside the Church

Of course, what I will present will be limited: I'm a RC. And French (mostly). Neither are particularly advantages... And I'm member of a specific community. It will be a limited perspective. Maybe some things you will not be able to relate to. And of course, not solutions. Rather sharing: in the RC we are exploring new ideas, in other denominations as well.

I – “FAN INTO FLAME THE GIFT OF GOD WHICH IS IN YOU” (2 TIM 1:6)

¹ Peta Dunstan, “Some thoughts on Identity in Anglican Religious Life”, 2002.

In a crisis situation, it is important to go back to what gave life, to what is essential. “Fan into flame” the coal.

But this is to burn new wood: that’s what a fire is for: be renewed, adapt.

In this perspective we are often encouraged to “know our charism”:

1) clearer perspective, clear purpose and aim. We often tend to get dispersed: prune the tree. We were founded for hospitals or for prayer, for example, and at some point we get dispersed: needs of a bishop (parish...), a quirk of a superior, a trend (exclusive priority to the poor), just a drift (Salesians in the Philippines: education of poorer boys, but of course best schools, so more and more rich, elite, makes money, good for the other activities with the poor, concentrate best forces, only that!)

2) easier to reinvent it, adapt it when we know what we are adapting.

There is a risk though in concentrating too much on charism: 1) it may be reduced to a mission or a purpose. An activity. This is not wrong, but it isn’t deep enough. 2) it may reduce the sap of RL to a series of formulas, definitions: ossification, petrification.

So we need to reflect on what charism actually means in RL to understand how to fan it back into flames and reinvent it.

1.1 Simply put: follow Christ and live the Gospel

Christian Vocation

The first aspect to consider is that the charism is not the first thing. It is a God given gift that follows and stems from a strong relation to Christ.

Anthony or Benedict or Francis of Assisi did not have the intention to go into “RL”, become a religious, live the three vows. As Paul says: “Christ took hold of me” (Ph 3:12) -, fell in love with him, and felt the impervious urge to follow him (*sequela Christi*) and to conform their lives to his. When Anthony sets out to set into practice “Sell all your belongings [...] and follow me” (Mt 19:21), he simply decides to live out the Gospel.

The paradox is that the centre of RL is what is common to all believers: following Christ wholeheartedly, setting the Gospel into practice. There is only one Christian vocation. And it is radical and total: “God claims for himself the whole of our being” (R. Bultmann, *Jesus and his teaching*, [94]).² This explains another paradox: apart from the word “monk/nun” the terms used to name RL are for all Christians: “religious”, “consecrated”, “sister/brother (friar)”, even “life of perfection” or “full Christian life” or “men/women of God”: normally all are called to living a full and perfect Christian life, a life “for God”.

“Normal Christian life” then entails:

- 1) Conversion. Benedict introduces the vow of *conversatio morum*. But who does not try to live a conversion of style of life?
- 2) Transformation of relationships, especially with fellow believers: one family (sisters/brothers), as related in the Acts. The Acts have almost always been a reference for RL.³ But they do not describe a convent: they describe the Christian community.
- 3) Witnessing/service: same!

Of course, RL is something specific. So what is specific? Different (good) ways of explaining. Most are more or less a version of: “some are called to leave everything for Christ 1) as a

² Most Biblical scholars agree now on the fact that the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to all, not only to a chosen few: God’s demands are “illimited” (Dodd, *La morale de l’Evangile*, 1958, 84).

³ J.-M. Tillard, *Devant Dieu et pour le monde*, Cerf, 1974, p. 176ff.

prophetic sign to Christians that all are to let him be the centre and priority and 2) a sign to the world that Christ is worth all that". In both cases it shows the "sharp edge" of Christian life.⁴

Mt 19:16s does concern all insofar as all are called by Christ to leave that which keeps them from following him freely, and to be ready to leave everything if necessary, when necessary. The religious is someone who lives this all the time.⁵ It will correspond to a sense of urgency⁶: for oneself - to a certain extent it is even a question a character: some passionate people throw themselves body and soul into what – or *who* - is central for them, disregard all the rest, while others will just let it be central⁷ - for a situation, a need one encounters (many early Anglican orders confronted with poverty).

Consequences for the renewal of RL?

The best and only way to renew RL is to become better Christians. Better disciples of Christ. Advantage: extremely simple. I could stop the conference right now.

Monasteries that are growing in number or at least in depth and outreach are the ones that are the most radical and passionate in trying to put Christ at the centre. This is true in the past: Cistercians are reformed more radical form of Benedictines, very successful when they were founded in the XIIe, as where the Discalced Carmelites in the XVIth.

In France now one of the most successful monastery is the Cistercian Sept-Fons (Auvergne): it is really growing (70 monks) and founding elsewhere (Czech R 10 years ago). Explanation: Strong attractive force of the former Abbot, Fr Jerome. But also very radical: dormitories, much attention to liturgy and "desert", silence, manual work: pure Cistercian tradition. Something similar with Cistercian nuns in Laval (Brittany): 50 sisters, very beautiful, radiant community.

Difficulties are also illuminating. X Abbey on was rejuvenated under the late Abbot: back to life of prayer, only the necessary contact with tourists, manual work: planted vineyards, with quite a lot of success. Growth. But past ten years, decline. One explanation is that this success pushed them to forget the intention of the Abbot – only produce what you can produce with the strength you have, because the first aim is manual work – and started hiring workers: it has become almost industrial, monks do not work there anymore so it is not part of their life as a religious – tradition of manual work.

In a way, the success of new communities is not only due to their new forms. Maybe not even principally due to these. Simply put: they are closer to their originating, powerful, enthusiastic spiritual experience. They offer a strong spiritual experience.

So far, mainly the spiritual dimension, with conversion and community life. But the same is true of those who have a passion in witnessing. The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in Bronx, NYC : direct work with the poor, very passionate evangelization. They are renewed by living to the full what all Christians are called to: witnessing to the fact that Christ is the ultimate source of happiness and fulfilment.

This means by the way that some of the renewal of RL today will not happen among "religious" in a classical sense or even in the sense of New Monasticism or Fresh Expression. What is happening at HTB is exactly that. And even though one may suppose that RL is what renews a Church, sometimes RL is rejuvenated by spiritual renewal that comes from elsewhere, from lay movements that are not formally speaking RL: Abu Gosh osb monastery

⁴ J.-M. Tillard, *DDPM*, p. 71 ;

⁵ J.-M. Tillard, *DDPM*, p. 140-142 ; 157.

⁶ L. Bouyer, *Introduction to spirituality*, Liturgical Press, [1961], p. 194; J.-M. Tillard, *DDPM*, p. 169.

⁷ J.-M. Tillard, *DDPM*, p. 65.

in Israel or Carmelites of Mazille: Abbot or Abbess discovered charismatic spirituality and the whole community caught up. Very lively. Many come for retreats.

CI: Ignatius of L: when you are in a difficult stretch, when you are tempted to change what you decided on, “it is better to change yourselves with determination”, and then see what’s left to change in your surrounding. True on a personal level, true on the level of a group or institution.

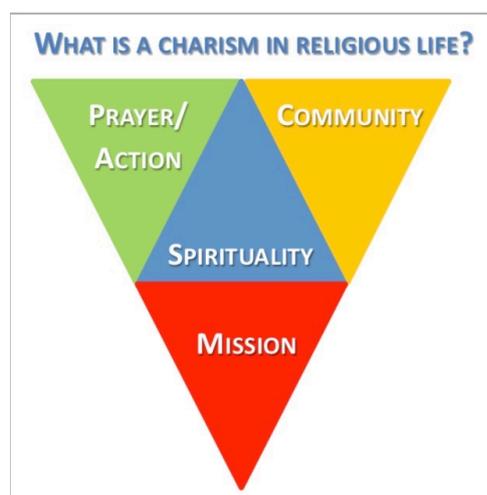
Y. Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 2011 (F: 1968²): our tendency is to change the institution, rules and structures, activities first → then to reflect and propose a new theology → then to try to conform our lives to it, reform our lives. We should reverse the trend, the tendency: reform our lives, individually and in the community → reform our theology → reform our institutions so they express our renewed relation to God and the better understanding this has brought into being.

1.2 Know your charism

Once the centre is set out, now we can speak about the charism of our religious communities. All those who follow Christ receive gifts of the Holy Spirit, charisms, for ourselves – impossible to do so without God’s help: God never calls without giving capacity we just don't have naturally to answer the call – and to the benefit of the whole Church. In classical theology this is a charism: “a specific God-given gift to the benefit of the whole Church”. Now what we have been discovering in the past 40 years is that there individual charisms and “*collective charism*”. A God-given gift and capacity that is made to help others lead a similar way of life, follow Christ and live out the Gospel in the same way, and inspire the whole Church: this is the type of charism that will be bestowed upon a community or an order.

What is the charism in RL?

The charism of an order or community (charism of an Institute in RC-talk) is generally considered to be made up of four dimensions.⁸



⁸ See M. Dortel-Clodot, « Le charisme, refondation permanente », C.S.M., *Charisme, refondation permanente, regroupements*, Paris 4-5 décembre 1993, Lyon 11-12 décembre 1993, p. 3-14 ; G. Ghirlanda, art. « Carisma » and « Carisma collettivo di un istituto di vita consecrata », *Nuovo dizionario di Diritto canonico*, xxx, p. 128-133.

1) A spirituality: way of understanding the whole of our relation to God from a certain point of view. A way of grasping the Gospel from a specific perspective. Plus some practices that unfold from it: liturgical prayer, meditation, *lectio*, finding God in others.

Obs 1: even when the congregation was born as an answer to a terrible social problem, it's root is a spiritual intuition, answer to God's calling: a popular spiritual current, the vision of faith of the founders, an attachment to one of the mysteries of the life of Jesus (washing of the feet), a Gospel verse.

Obs 2: Sometimes simply rooted into one of the main large spiritualities (Augustinian, Franciscan, Benedictine, Ignatian...) – or at the crossroad (ignatian Franciscans...). Doesn't have to be innovative.

Obs 3: we could add: “a specific way of living the three vows”. More or less radical or balanced poverty. Chastity in solitude or in with a rich relational life. Military style obedience or very proactive and processual. But I will return to the question of the vows later.

2) A specific balance between “contemplation” or prayer (personal prayer, desert, liturgical prayer) and action: it can be quantity, but often deeper: Dominicans: *contemplata aliis tradere*, two moments: contemplation and then preaching about what we meditated on ≠ Jesuits: “find God in all things”. Benedictines: prayer *is* action, evangelization.

3) Way of living community life: very intense, very transparent, in silence. Balance between community life and prayer, between community life and action.

Obs: Not all need the same size of community: some need large communities: Benedictines, Cistercian. If it is dispersion, real, deep relations must be upheld, watched over.

4) Finality, purpose, mission: work for the poor, family, education, for unity of Christians.

=> The charisms of different orders are made up of the same dimensions, pieces. It's just their balance and relation to each other that changes. Like twelve different people given the same flowers: twelve different bouquets. Do not put in the front or use as “theme” the same flowers (actually I'm terrible at making a bouquet...).

The whole is a “spirit”, difficult to define.

Joke on Jesuit, Dominican and Franciscan by the lake of Galilee.

How to know your charism?

Two preambles

1) The first step in knowing ones charism is to realize we have one. Not only way of living or activity, purpose, but realise we have a God-given capacity. A treasure. Entrusted to us.

2) There are many charisms, variety. But many have the same: plural embodiment of same gift, groundwater that wells up in different places. Anyhow they are all made up of the same stuff, elements. So do not focus only on what makes you different from the others: what is our own, what is essential to us, is more important than what is specific, what differentiates us.

Where to look?

Since it is a gift, God's intervention into the life of the Church, and not only an idea, principle, one of the best things to do is go back to the history of the order – God acts in history - and the people who made it up – a gift is always incarnate in concrete people. 1) This means to look especially at the way God acted in the lives and deeds of the founder or founding group – not always one person. 2) And then how it developed, very concretely. 3) Stories like the *fioretti*, or guides for spiritual life, like the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of L or spiritual writings of Theresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Theresa of Lisieux.

=> Before starting to think it out, define, express in formulas, look at these texts, as expressions of the charism given by God to real life people in history.

What to look for?

Follow the different dimensions of the triangle.

First of all a spirituality, a spiritual experience. That is the centrepiece of the triangle, of what makes up the charism of an order.

This means *experiencing* the same thing. Jesuits found a new vitality in the first ½ of the XXth with the rediscovery of Exercises, not as ascetic spiritual workout, but as letting the Bible speak, through imagination and feelings, to enter into an immediate relation to God (Rahner brothers, young Urs von Balthasar). Experiencing what Ignatius and his companions experienced. Not people who have read Jesuit rule but done the Spiritual Exercises and have been transformed by them.

In general, best way is to read the Bible together. If RL and the charism is a way of living the Gospel and of following Christ: what Gospel texts, what facets of Jesus attract me, give me life, are beacons on my way? When most members say the same: we have the founding texts, building blocks or foundation. Have you noticed how often the same verses crop up?

An example of paying attention to spirituality-balance between prayer/action-community are the Poor Clare sisters in Cormontreuil, near Reims. Have taken a lot of time to 1] move from a huge, impractical and dark monastery, to a smaller one, full of light 2] meditate and rewrite their customary, to set it into words they feel touch them and that they can choose again = a] Poverty (90% of their sustenance comes from gifts, donation, plus the fruit and vegetables they grow themselves) – and they give surpluses to others: real poverty always means sharing, not only receiving but giving, contact with poorer quarters of their town b] community life: continue these weekly meetings and take their time, see to it that all participate, the youngest and most shy especially – Monday evening also a community reconciliation celebration, ask for forgiveness to the community. Actually not growth in numbers, 26 sisters and no novices for 4 years, but beautiful, radiant, many people go there for prayer or retreat. Have founded 2 sister communities in Africa.

4) Mission: last!!! Not least, but last.

I have the impression that setting mission/apostolate in its right place, right balance inside the charism may be particularly difficult in the Anglican tradition. P. Dunstan: achievement and acceptance through works. Heroic and self-sacrificial sisters during Crimean war, cholera, or in slum parishes. It was also a defence vs criticism of RL: “Being useful to society” is deeply embedded in Anglican RL identity.

Take 2 aspects into consideration:

1] Once again: given, God given gift. God’s initiative and God gives purpose. Not only a project, a vision.

Benedict or Francis did not analyse a need – society/Church needs prayer, society/Church needs poor friars to relate to the poor. Powerful experience of God, an aspect of the Gospel becomes attractive force. Love of prayer, love of poverty.

God’s order of doing things. Ours is often to 1) analyse a situation 2) define a project 3) create structures for the project 4) find some people to enter into the structure, be fitted into it and carry out the project. God’s order is to 4’) call a person and fill her/him with a deep impervious desire to follow Christ in a certain way and the capacity to do it 3’) call others to join her/him: will become a structure, a group, who will do the same thing, find it life-giving and inspiring and the right thing to do 2’) Can be analysed, put into words: after a while, when we actually say: here is the gift God has entrusted us with 1’) will change things! We can add 5: entrust to God (please bless everything I have decided to do)/ 5’ Listen... (Rule of St Benedict).

Obs1: of course analysis and strategy are absolutely necessary. God gives a charism through intelligence as well. Praying with open eyes. But just know the source and the priority. Events sometimes show the way.

Melanesian brothers: 7 martyrs in the Solomon Islands. Not original part of their project (evangelisation) but events lead them to confront deep political problems. We'll see...
 Chemin Neuf: 7 young RC wanted to live together and pray together. Project: take care of addicts. But after one year, married couples and protestants asked to join: not planned, discern: it became charism: reconciliation, in couple, between denominations, then reread founding project: reconciliation of the individual with himself and God, reconciliation in society.

1.3 Renewing your charism

Situations change, we are called to adapt. But this is not contradictory with rediscovering our charism, fanning the flames. The same fire, burning new wood, fuel.

Tradition is alive: a charism is always richer than what we perceive of it. Charism is always behind me (foundation, traditions) but always before us, to be fully discovered.

Bad example: Carmelites: Theresa of Avila established that in a monastery cells should face due North: helped protect the sisters against the Spanish sun. The first foundation in Norway applied the rule strictly. You can imagine the results ...

4 lines of research:

1) *Faithful creativity*

If founded for schools, rarely contemplative, or vice-versa. 1) human: we have a certain expertise, maybe a "brand name" we can rely on 2) deeper: if God gave us this gift, talent, not to be buried away or exchanged, but nurtured. Not really our choice.

Sometimes widen: schools → education

2) *Collaboration and unity*

Collaboration is future of many religious communities. Collaboration is the future of the Church. Especially in cases of common charism (image of groundwater...).

1) Sharing among leaders. SicheM: twice a year meeting with Jean Vanier and leaders of each new community: sharing and praying. Of course discuss questions, but fraternal support. And rule: say what is difficult, not only boast about what is going well. Vital for new communities.

2) Common projects: Studium, ITD

2') "Intercommunity life" (intercongregational communities): focused on a project.

Sisters of Saint-Andrew in Taizé: Founded in the XIIIth in Belgium: hospital, then monastery, then apostolic, with a new ignatian rule. Br Roger asked them at the end of the '60s or early '70s for 3 months help in welcoming the youth and spiritual accompaniment. They have been there since, dynamic, every year a few novices. a] something that is part of their DNA and in a way back to the source: hospitality and prayer b] benefit from dynamism and power of attraction of Taizé, new community. c] Have helped through their expertise in spiritual accompaniment and giving Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and have been opened to ecumenism d] every single sister receives a full theological training.

Sometimes a new Community looking for a house helps an older one run a retreat house (cf. Puits de Jacob and Soeurs de la Croix in Strasbourg). New communities are always in dire need of money, no patrimony, but plenty of energy: share our gifts!

3) Unions.

a] federations: for example common noviciate (not easy at all!), missions, training.

b] fusion: a bigger congregation swallows up a smaller. Easier when same charism. 4 Cistercian nuns' monasteries at Igny (Northern France) in 2011. Regrouped in the biggest and most beautiful, new name, lay group accompanied the move and is now thriving. Real dynamism, beautiful liturgy, but too early to evaluate.

c] union: new entity : Mysterium Christi (Soeurs du Christ Epernon): at a chapter new constitutions are drafted.

=> Not 100% convincing. Almost always painful: each member should choose absolutely personally if wants to be part of the new reality, absolute freedom (can be automatically relieved of her/his vows if doesn't). ¾ time : no new vocations, putting poverties together.

Crisis management or damage control more than growth. Or course sometimes better than nothing.

4) Pass the baton on to others: by lending or actually giving houses. (cf. Oosterhout). Not always possible to take off again, better to do something while still strength to decide, to move if necessary. The Church is wider, our charism is wider than we are: we are just a cell in that larger body.

God's logic is not ours. Passion and resurrection, death and life, "there is more in giving than in receiving" (Ac 20,35). Poor Clare sisters in Trevi (near Assisi) were dying off and the XIIIth monastery they had had to many steps for the older sisters, so they prayed and discussed and together decided to move and to give their monastery. And started having novices again. They are in a new monastery, more adapted to the older sister, but are hoping again... Not automatic of course, but their decision was a way of putting everything into God's hands, opening to new life in whatsoever way God would give it entering into God's view of things (the good of the whole Church): all in all a radical step of religious life, deepening, growth in depth if not in numbers, but that may have been the fertile soil for growth in number.

3) *Networking and integrating*

Usually the communities that are thriving are the ones that overcome traditional borderlines.

1) Men and women. a] Mixed communities (fully mixed). Bose (ecumenical, northern Italy), Focolari, CCN, Beatitudes, Emmanuel...

Of course, difficulty. Obvious risks for celibacy. Clear rules are needed: separate and exclusive quarters, same-sex spiritual accompaniment when possible, change houses and missions. But sometimes extremely irritating. No solution: permanent cause of conversion...

b] dual (do not live together, often do not have a common Superior) communities are thriving: Abou Gosh (Israel), Bec-Hellouin (Normandy), Communautés monastiques de Jérusalem (founded in Paris), Community of St John. Some have common apostolate and shops, some common liturgy once a day, or Sundays. Mixt community meeting on a regular basis. Abbots and abbesses meet and work together (of course sometimes they leave together: Bec!). Or at least a symbolic touch: Cistercian trappists monks invite Cistercian nuns as observers to their general chapters.

=> Beauty of liturgy, interaction and mutual enrichment, attractive force.

=> Of course, not always, no simple solution good for everyone. Fully mixt community life has to be your DNA. And can't force if not God doing it. But stay open.

2) Lay members. Remember our life style is for all or at least to inspire all. Especially in a post-Christian society: lay Christians, lay churchgoers are very committed, have a personal search, and need it because not the same pervasive atmosphere of faith as before. Not in the air you breath. Lay associates or lay members.

ABC: Invent different intermediate layers. a] once or twice a week meeting and some apostolate b] compulsory once or twice, but every evening possible (Sant'Egidio) + tithe c] move to live close to one another (USA, CCN): flats in same building, neighbourhood d] At CCN: under the same roof: separate flat and if possible entrance, 2 meals/3 in family, those who share all their belongings: provision for education of children until 1st diploma at University (and of course heritage: minimum or compulsory share).

Don't exaggerate! Simply coming to a prayer when one wants too... Or X (a new community in France): children eating in common, without parents. No: family structure is 100% > community!!!

3) Collaboration with other realities. Church but non-religious, or non-Church. Ex: parishes. Parishes need religious life, communities in their midst, to set the pace. Each Christian community could have a nucleus of "religious", men and women of God. Parishes are a new frontier..., not "traditional Church" anymore. a] witness to prayer and sharing and community life b] others can tap into this strength and life: daily prayer where all can come, sharing groups for some community life c] Be careful: work with : not do everything! On the contrary: offer strong commitment to those in sharing groups. One difficulty in Parishes is that the same people do everything and do not have the spiritual nourishment and fraternal support they require for all they invest. "Missionary burnout!"

4) Benefit from international outreach.

4) Acknowledge the new continent (youth)

There will be no renewal of religious life without the youth. Self-evident.

But sometimes more difficult to engage with them than with an atheistic society or other ethnicity. Y generation: cultural gap, at least as important as other ethnic origins, international. This would call for a whole new day of reflection.

Let me just mention some aspects of this new culture we must engage with:

- a] other relation to group: sometimes easier contact with virtual community than with the flesh and blood community they live with – a group is not something you join fully to identify with its values, but something you use, as you will other groups, to build up your identity
- b] change of relation to authority: how to accept authority if you are used to constantly challenging what is given (and have instant access to so much information)? Obedience is difficult in a culture that promotes personal mastery, self-driven continuous development, used to win-win solutions.
- c] place of emotions – difficulty in accepting suffering
- d] generous, needs to feel useful – needs challenges, adventure
- e] different relation to communication and information: constant access to mounds of information, and constant contact with a great number of people - concept of cell may disappear if you have a smartphone
- f] relation to time: just want things to go quicker, patience? At the same time, difficult to commit, difficult to stay

How to do it? *ABC: Deliberately!!!*

- 1) Be ready to change, to adapt: “We’ve always done it this way: knife on the right hand side, fork on the left!”
- 2) Be relational: community life with emotions, keep one-on-one contact (phone calls), authority with personal relations, that promotes active obedience
- 3) But do not be wishy-washy: be radical, show RL is an adventure: poverty, even obedience. There is a great potential, good image is not so far away: Jedi Knights... It would be interesting to discuss question about visibility: habit... No clear cut solution but beware of the Charlie Brown syndrome!
- 4) Do not drown out the younger members by dispersing them? Auxilatrix Sisters and Carmelites are experimenting with some communities that group the younger members together. Of course the challenge is to maintain the unity of the whole.

Outreach to the young:

- a] Permanent pastoral: student homes, chaplaincies, youth groups
- b] Help: organised sessions of reviewing for exams (Jouarre), language schools,
- c] Service: weeks of giving time for the poor, or to evangelise, or to rebuild a monastery. Retreats of course: choice of life.
- d] Common life: spend a month with the Sisters of Bethlehem, or a week in Timadeuc (Cistercians in Brittany), or sometimes a year: “One month for God”, “One year for God”.

II – “GUARD THE DEPOSIT ENTRUSTED TO YOU” (1 TIM 6:20)

Title seems close to the 1st one but it is more about keeping or rediscovering tradition than about fanning the flames of a charism. It is another kind of treasure.

Renewal needs roots. A tree that grows and spreads out its branches needs roots as deep and wide as these branches, and when it starts growing again (if that happens!) needs to grow in both directions.

This part addresses new communities or movements more than older ones, though the logics are the same for both.

Many new communities are in deep trouble, struggling through crisis. RC: at least 20% have disappeared, 40 % of the surviving ones have a reasonable chance of disappearing too.

Analysis?

1) Superficial spirituality: good for 1st evangelisation, conversion. Good: it has to be simple, clear, and straightforward. But no growth potential. Pentecostal or CCR prayer groups: every year the same person gives his testimony: it is always the same thing. Spiritual life has growth (or deepening), steps, suffering and desert patches. We do not pray the same way our lives long, neither do we even in a given period according to situation.

2) Disappear after the departure or death of the founder.

3) "Accidents"... But as they are quite frequent and most often the same, not accidental accidents! Accidents that are part of life and growth problems of any human group, maybe even more so when "spiritual", when *conversatio*. To put it simply:

1) Money: Maciel

2) Sex: Bec Hellouin (Abbot and Abbess) < founder of Beatitudes (with novice sisters) < Legionaries of Christ (double or triple life..., abuse)

3) Power: most of the time, struggle with power, old leader vs new (New Communities X and Y), or simply authoritarian leader, or leader who uses his knowledge of inner life and fragilities of those who have entrusted so much to her/him in full confidence. I have founded x... I am "Abbot", "prior": what a grand title. Even if tiny community.

=> the devil is not very creative – and he doesn't have to be, we are always duped in the same ways.

Two attitudes:

1) The first answer is three words: Humility, humility, humility! Moses: he was the humblest person on earth (Nb 12:3).

2) One of the greatest strengths, potentials, of Christian RL is that it has been around for almost 15 to 20 centuries depending on how we define it. It has had time to establish traditions, what works and what doesn't. Of course it is stimulating to have the impression of doing something new, to be a discoverer. What a waste of energy to start from scratch when there is an incredible amount of beautiful successes to be inspired from, a well to tap into. "Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of house who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Mt 13:52).

For the new: discover them, go back to them. Gently, can take time, should not drown out the fragile new shoots, and all traditions to fit, but do it with resolve: what is lacking, what do we need? For the old: discover them as life giving, renewal.

2.1 Spiritual roots

One aspect of our roots is spirituality. Fr Cantalamessa, an Italian Capuchin monk, who is the Preacher of the Pontifical House, told me once that he worked on comparing new communities that lasted and grew and those that didn't, mainly in Italy and France. His conclusion was that one of the main differences is spirituality: those that lasted and where solid were the ones that had clear roots in a traditional spirituality: Emmanuel in the Sacred Heart devotion, CCN ignatian, Community of St John Dominican – without speaking of those

that are an explicit revival in a traditional order: i.e. the Franciscans of the Renewal in the Bronx.

a] well-proven and structured, with available, well-proven means: accompaniment, types of prayer b] stages and steps of maturation

Of course, transformation: CCN a] specific colour: group Exercises because of special emphasis on community and fraternal life b] other influences: new - prayer groups with free prayer, praise, charisms – and old - liturgical prayer[discussions at Ellezelle], with albs [explain process of discernment for albs!] c] entirely specific, according to our charism : Celebrations of reconciliation.

Some have lost their ways through too much dispersion. A new French Community (X), now going through a big crisis. Crisis has different causes, but I think the one aspect was spiritual: very eclectic: continuous prayer as in oriental Christian tradition, Carmelite personal prayer (*oratio*), charismatic shared prayer, strong marial devotion in the tradition of St Louis Marie Grignon de Monfort, jewish rites and prayers (mixed Sabbath and charismatic prayer every Saturday evening). Very creative, but difficult to unify and to deepen when too dispersed. Bits and pieces, not a fully developed, structured spirituality that covers all aspects of life and all stages of life. Picking up some techniques here and there is not entering into a spirituality.

It is possible to start from scratch, but an entirely new spirituality is extremely rare. Attached to a “spiritual genius”.

2.2 Institutionalisation and the vows

Institutionalisation

The most dangerous and most necessary process for any human group.

1) Dangerous because rules can be poorly crafted. Dangerous because they can dry out the spirit and replace relations. Dangerous because they can create hierarchy and exclusion.

2) Necessary because they ensure a group can last, because they ensure it can grow: the biggest test for a new community is when the founder dies or stops leading. Depends a lot on the institutions. Necessary because they protect the individual from power-grabs: where there is no institution, the charismatic leader will prevail without marks and checks.

Institutions and bureaucracy are slow... Everything would be lighter, no hindrances if all was wind and sails. But we need masts, or else sail flies away flapping in the wind.

3) Not against charism, or not even something else: stems from it. Charisms are for a group, to build the group, to be put together, they ask to be discerned by others => they carry in their DNA a potentiality for institutionalisation.

A CCN sister is writing a PhD on the institutionalisation of charism: all this points towards there being connatural to the institutions that structure the group (actually I'm guessing, because she hasn't finished...)

4) But that means that not any institution will fit, should flow as much as possible from spirituality, effective community life and practice. a] At the right time: too early will ossify it (too late will never be able to support it). b] Stemming from prayer: Ignatius wrote a paragraph a day, after prayer and offering it during Eucharistic celebration. c] It can be a long process involving the whole community (Poor Clare sisters of Cormontreuil, Moot). d] Be very conscious of what would benefit from old, what is new and needs to be new. CCN: religious but also couples. This implies different rhythms, different ways of living. Balance between fluidity and clarity (and common sense!). See example of X. OK for fluidity, but not fuzziness).

=> Most communities that offer a diversity of ways of life are thriving or are at least lively. Brothers and sisters of St John: man/women, contemplative/active.

Remember you need the Church. It is not only unavoidable control. Charism is not the whole of the Gospel. Some movements become churches, because of difficulties in being acknowledged, theologically (charisms...) or slow bureaucracy. No examples! It just gives the faithful less than what they are entitled to, only one aspect of the Gospel.

The vows

Traditionally: poverty, chastity (in celibacy) and obedience.

Hypothesis: one of the possible answers to the “accidents”: money, sex, power. An excellent way to pay attention to these three sensitive areas, to put limits to them and to nurture them so they grow in the right direction.

Of course, as was the case with the new continent of youth, we could spend a full day on this theme. I will just focus on two aspects.

1) Vows as a protection. The vows are one way of protecting communities from the three accidents – especially if they are extended to all who are in RL.

a] A way of handing over to God these extremely sensitive dimensions of our lives, very explicitly. b] one of the finality of the vows is liberty. Freedom from slavery of consumption, of sexuality and of addictive relations, free from power. Traditionally seen as a way of learning control over ones passions, recovering mastery. They are a process of healing: a permanent conversion

Of course temptation will be there, always, and we may fall, but we are aware how sensitive these areas are, we have handed them over to God in a special way, we nurture them and try to have them grow.

Of course you cannot reduce the vows to these partly defensive dimensions!!!

2) They can be for all. Lay and married can relate to the vows, receive orientation from them for their own life-style. a] poverty can be *simplicity of lifestyle*, tithe, patterns of professional life – coming home early for family or Church b] *chastity in marriage*: full and constant respect for the other gender and absolute faithfulness in marriage, taking time to nurture life as a couple, living it like the vow it actually is (calling from God, with his help, never taken for granted place of conversion, treasure to be nurtured). c] *Obedience to God*: this is always the true and ultimate meaning of religious obedience; obey to your superior you see as a means of entrusting your life in full confidence into the hands of God whom you do not see. But towards others: *dependency and inter-dependency*. Obedience for some aspects of life: Church service, maybe professional. And interdependency when one lives community life: transparency (financial), sharing, calendar, listening to advice on personal-couple-family: not living it alone.

Maybe all communities are not called to the vows.

And if they do often a fourth that corresponds more specifically to their charism: Often 4th: St John of God : nurse the ill, CCN: give our lives for the Unity of Christians.

But all should at least consider if could be part of their calling. Please consider them, at least once as a serious question. Celibacy (*monos*) is the defining characteristic of RL from the beginning, as is leaving all belongings.

Transition: obs: With vows and institutionalisation we have described the 3rd step in theology of RL, 3rd “circle”:

→ Follow Christ and live the Gospel

→ according to a charism (specific collective gift of God which will also be to the benefit of the whole Church)

→ which will be set down in rules and institutions, some shared by all (vows), some specific

Institutionalisation and vows bring us to relation to the Church.

III – “HOW ONE OUGHT TO BEHAVE IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD” (1 TIM 3:15)

The verse is actually: “How one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15).

Charism is given for the Church, in the Church. Church communion, unity, reconciliation is one of the “collateral” gifts always given in and with a specific charism.

2.1 On the side of authorities, structures

If there is a charism, let it bloom! At the service of HS’s way of leading the Church.
If Church really led by the HS, Bishops and pastors first mission is to obey the charism.
Remember the Church is a tops-down and a grassroots movement, but it is first and foremost a grassroots one...

This obedience and letting bloom has 2 dimensions: 1) discern and recognize 2) support and nurture it.

Plant to grow needs to be pruned, and given a tutor, and treated for illness.

Plant to grow must be watered, nourished.

Oops, I got it the wrong way around. You don’t start by pruning a plant; you start by helping it grow. A big difficulty: Bishop X: my role is to supervise, exercise caution, and solve difficulties. Nurture and support? We can understand because:

1) Most of the time what they are confronted with are the difficulties.

Obs: help them have other contacts than only difficult cases, problems to solve (and Bishops: have other relations: friends, community of prayer and rest).

2) Often does not fit into existing Canon Law provisions. Needs to be supervised and discerned, but also understood: changes the Law. Law follows life and charism, expresses and protects them, not the *a priori criteria* if right life.

Must be seen very positively: not only accept, consent to presence of religious life but try to help it grow. Not thorns in the side of diocese but treasure and opportunity!

Not only happy because help for diocesan pastoral projects, to fill in empty spaces, and consent to their own apostolate because necessary. Their apostolate is precisely what the diocese needs. Remember that diocese > diocesan structure. Remember *supra*: not project, then people, but people, and what do they do best, what gift has God given to them for the situation they are in (i.e. my diocese).

DDO Diocesan Director for Ordinands : should send vocations to religious orders. If not, failure. 30%??? Are ODD sometimes religious themselves?

Freedom: Francis P, diocesan priest, wanted to join the sj. Made him wait 2 years with no real answer, then went to Rome, two letters before he was allowed to join. Still consider him a traitor. A diocesan priest once asked me: “Why didn’t you want to join the Church?”...

2.2 On the side of religious communities

Sign that the charism is authentic : unity, communion, obedience with authorities.

⇒ charism is for the Church, not for the RL itself
 Bon Pasteur seminary in Chartres: Bishop learnt about it from through the press...

Two virtues we should grow, nurture:

1) Trust. Pb: suspicion. But we need to trust before asking to be trusted. CCN life commitment in Lyon in 1986: the RC members waited an extra year that the Reformed members receive authorisation for their life commitment. But then obedience and active communion helped create strong confidence with the Reformed Church.

Maybe particularly difficult in Anglican tradition. P. Dunstan again: birth of RL was countercultural, in society and in the Church. Had to fight their way into existence, often against Bishops and Church structures. Many founders developed their vision very much by themselves and by being hard-headed and original. Very independent spirit developed, no tradition of cooperation. Spirit of determined resistance toward outside interference.

2) Patience: diocesan Church and global Church structures are like a transatlantic boat, while small RL communities waiting to be recognized are like lithe sailboats: can turn around (or capsize!) much more quickly.

CONCLUSION

A lot is happening!

A miracle

There is no miracle solution – apart from a miracle. That is what we need – and that is also what we can expect from God, who we believe gave rise to RL, cherishes it as much as we do, more so actually. I went to the doctor's recently: he said I don't work miracles. I said: well that's my field. And actually it is our field... At least opening ourselves to miracles, having faith and hope, readying ourselves as best we can, like the sailboat tries to catch the wind.

Young and old together (Jr 31,13)

Miracles only happen when we are united. "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Mt 18:19) This is addressed as much to the new as to the old: we will learn from each other, receive from each other. Not only say it is important ("I have no problem with them"): but actually do things with, know each other concretely (go do retreats in another place...). "Do you personally know and meet a monk?" "Have you met a moot?" Siloé in France: many older congregations send us sisters or brothers with psychological difficulties, not afraid they will enter CCN or loose their vocation. And we often go on retreats in monasteries.

Mutual love among religious is only way for RL to be renewed and grow. Love and immense respect for those who have bourn the heat of the day – admiration and love for those who are daring new paths, and who are not competitors but sharing the same call, or a call that is close. Growth of one reality makes other grow: if new movements grow, they will help rediscover treasures of the old, if old grow, more people will want the same but in other ways. CCN: our formation at HTC: many young people join CCN, many join traditional monasteries, after first encounter with Christ or renewal with CCN. Many who have discovered Christ through new will join old – and the other way around.

⇒ stained-glass window in the Cathedral of Chartres: 4 Evangelists on the shoulders of 4 prophets. Comment by John of Salisbury: "We are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants. We

don not see better than they do, but we see further away, because we are carried by their great height”.⁹

⁹ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, III, 4 .