

Thy Kingdom Come!

Central Commission for the Review of the Statutes of Regnum Christi

Theme for Study and Reflection Number 5

Charism and History of Regnum Christi

Goal

To prepare ourselves for the revision of the statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement for the first and second degrees, we need to take into account the charism of Regnum Christi, since the statutes should serve precisely to guard and promote that charism. We are seeking to understand what is the charism of a movement and how it is lived, so that then we can go on to remember the fundamental characteristics of our own, remembering the spiritual experience we share and its history, as well as the approval and other indications of the authority of the Church.

Outline

A. The charism of a spiritual family: Charisms are special graces that the Holy Spirit grants to faithful Christians for the good of the Church and of its mission in the world. By spiritual family, we mean a group of faithful Christians that, sharing a charism, are united by spiritual affinity and friendship in Christ. The charism of a spiritual family is collective and dynamic and generates a spiritual heritage. We pay special attention to the case of the founder of Regnum Christi.

B. What spiritual experience helps us to form Regnum Christi? The discovery of the personal love of Christ, who calls us to share his mission, generates in us the desire to respond to him by doing our best to be authentic Christians and to make an active effort to introduce people to him so they will be transformed into his disciples.

C. Some fundamental aspects of the charism of Regnum Christi. Formed by members from distinct states of life, the Movement works to make Christ reign in the heart of all men and women and in societies, going out to encounter other persons, form them and encourage them to be apostles of Christ in their own surroundings and to zealously and proactively promote the organization of Christians for the evangelization of society. Its style is contemplative and evangelizing at the same time. The rich spiritual reality of the Kingdom of Christ is a treasure to live and share.

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D. How was the Regnum Christi Movement born? As a secular movement, it was born in January 1968. It was the result of an insight from Fr. Maciel, the efforts of some legionaries and the response of some young people to create groups of Christians seeking personal holiness and the evangelization of their personal, family and social surroundings by joining efforts with the Legionaries.

A. The Charism of a Spiritual Family

1. *What is a Charism*

The word ‘charism’ comes from the Greek word *χαρισμα*, which means “a gift freely and graciously given”.¹ It was introduced in the religious environment of Christianity by St. Paul, who uses it sixteen times in his letters. St. Peter also uses it on one occasion (cf. 1 Peter 4:10). St. Paul uses the word ‘charism’ with various meanings; but in general, we can say that he means a special grace granted by God to someone for spiritual growth or for service to others.² Afterwards, in the life of the Church, it has taken on this second meaning: charisms “are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to building her up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world.”³

Pope Francis would say that “The charisms are special graces, given to some for the good of many others”; “gifts” that the Holy Spirit gives us “to be shared with others.”⁴ Charisms, insofar as they are graces, are gratuitous helps that God gives;⁵ this means that God does not give them because the people who receive them deserve them. He gives them because of his mercy. What’s more, the recipients of the good that he wants to do by granting charismatic graces are not only those who receive them directly from him but also the rest of humanity. Charisms are “special” or “individual” in the sense that that all the faithful are not given the same charismatic graces. They are given by the Holy Spirit because he gives life to the body of the Church. He is its principle of life.⁶

¹ Benedict XVI, Meeting with Young People and Seminarians, New York, April 19, 2008.

² Cf. Domenico Grasso, *Los carismas en la Iglesia: teología e historia*, ediciones Cristiandad, Madrid 1984, pp. 15-30 (chapter titled “Los carismas en San Pablo”). [No English translation]

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 799, cf. *ibid.* 2003.

⁴ Francis, General audience, November 6, 2013.

⁵ They are *gratiae gratis datae* (freely given graces); cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 111, a.1

⁶ Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 797-798.

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“Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit ‘distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank’ for the building up of the Church. (*Lumen Gentium* 12) Now, ‘to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.’ (1st Corinthians 12:7)”⁷ Pope Francis synthesizes:

“A charism is a grace, a gift bestowed by God the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit. And it is a gift which is given to someone not because he is better than others or because he deserves it: it is a gift that God gives him, because with his freely given love he can place him *in service to the entire community*, for the good of all. Speaking in a rather more human way, one says: ‘God gives this quality, this charism to this person, not for himself, but in order that he may put it at the service of the whole community’.”⁸

The entire Church, the great family of the children of God, is charismatic because it is enriched by the Holy Spirit with various charisms that guide its life. In fact, each Christian is enriched by the Holy Spirit with the charisms which prepare him or her to serve the spiritual good of others. “These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church.”⁹ Therefore, “all charisms are important in the eyes of God. At the same time, no one is irreplaceable. That is to say that within the Christian community, we need one another, and each gift received is fully realized when it is shared with one’s brothers and sisters, for the good of all.”¹⁰

“An important thing that should be highlighted immediately is the fact that *alone, one cannot understand whether one has a charism, and which one.*”¹¹ It is the People of God who confirm the charisms. This People depends on the guidance of its pastors, given that the charisms are always at the service of the Church community, belong to the Church and the Church authority is the judge of them all. That is to say, the Pope and the bishops have the faculty of discerning the authenticity of the charisms according to the authorized form. Do they really come from God and are therefore real charisms? They also have the authority to regulate the exercise of the charisms as helpful for the good of the community they lead.¹²

2. *The Charism of a Spiritual Family, Congregation or Movement.*

⁷ Ibid. 951.

⁸ Francis, *Charisms: diversity and unity*. General Audience, October 1, 2014.

⁹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 12.

¹⁰ Francis, *Charisms: diversity and unity*. General Audience, October 1, 2014.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 12, and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 801.

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St. John Paul II comments that “charisms can be individual or collective.”¹³ “These charisms are given to individual persons, and can even be shared by others in such ways as to continue in time, serving as a source of a particular spiritual affinity among persons.”¹⁴ Those charisms – granted to men and women destined to found ecclesial works and that continue through time as a living and precious inheritance, that generates a spiritual affinity and friendship in Christ between persons that participate in it – can be called collective, since they go on to characterize an entire spiritual family. This is precisely the case of those who start movements.¹⁵ Insofar as they live their charismatic identity with fidelity, the movements, congregations and other spiritual families enrich and embellish the Church.

The Church asks the members of spiritual families to be faithful to their foundational charism (also called charism of the foundation or in an expression of Benedict XVI, the founding charism¹⁶).¹⁷ We are talking about the charism that a spiritual family has received through its founder,¹⁸ that is, the “experience of the Spirit” granted to the founder that, transmitted to his own disciples, was received by them and inspires the lifestyle and action of the group approved by Church authority.

“The very charism of the Founders (*Evangelica testificatio*, 11) appears as an “*experience of the Spirit*,” transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth.”¹⁹ In this way, the person who first receives the charism must transmit it to a first group of persons who receive it, give it life and begin to live it in common. This gift is configured from an inspiration of God to the founders, who – contemplating in the mystery of Christ the response to the

¹³ John Paul II, *Consecrated Life in the Church*. General audience, September 28, 1994. (Our translation – no English translation on the Vatican website)

¹⁴ John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 24.

¹⁵ Cf. John Paul II, Discourse to the ecclesial movements, May 30, 1998, 6 and General audience, September 28, 1994, 4.

¹⁶ Benedict XVI, Address to young people and seminarians, New York, April 19, 2008.

¹⁷ For example, cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree *Perfectae caritatis*, 2b.; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica testificatio*, 11 and John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 36.

¹⁸ Sometimes there can be various persons and not just one who initially receives the charism, as is the case for example of the Seven Founders of the Servite Order.

¹⁹ Sacred Congregation for Secular Religious Institutes and Sacred Congregation for Bishops, Document *Mutuae Relationes*, (May 14, 1978), 11b.

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needs of the Church and the world²⁰ – conceive an idea or intuition about the nature and spirit of the work to begin (this is the ‘mind’ or ‘spirit’ of the founder) and about the projects or initiatives needed for the work to accomplish its mission (these are the ‘proposals’ of the founder). The founders share their mind and proposals with the first members who join in the initiative and participate in the same spiritual experience.²¹ From the first moments, it is necessary to verify the authenticity of the gift received. In order to guarantee and preserve the authenticity of the charism, it is necessary “that every movement submit to the discernment of the competent ecclesiastical authority. For this reason no charism can dispense with reference and submission to the Pastors of the Church,”²² to whom belongs the judgment over the “genuinity [of the charisms] and proper use.”²³ “A charism is a gift made to the Church and she, through the legitimate authority, recognizes it as her own;” because of this “it forms part of the patrimony of the institute – not the one the founder tried to bring into existence, but the one the Church approved,” “the constitutive elements of the charism only those recognized as such by the same Church authority.”²⁴ Saint John Paul II explained it to religious like this:

“that particular gift of your founders, which, received from God and approved by the Church, has become a charism for the whole community. That gift corresponds to the different needs of the Church and the world at particular moments of history, and in its turn it is extended and strengthened in the life of the religious communities as one of the enduring elements of the Church's life and apostolate.”²⁵

The spiritual experience which the charism refers to must be brought to life, deepened and developed constantly by the members of the spiritual family. The charism is a grace from the Holy Spirit and therefore only the Holy Spirit is its source and the Spirit communicates it to each person called by him to form part of the work. So, when dealing with a collective charism, he serves in a greater or

²⁰ The Holy Spirit “distributes charisms in relation with the growing needs of the Church and the world.” John Paul II, *The Consecrated life at the service of the Church*. General Audience. January 11, 1995, 3. [Our translation – there is no English translation at the Vatican website.]

²¹ Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Ecclesial Movements, May 30, 1998, 6: “The passage from the original charism to the movement happens through the mysterious attraction that the founder holds for all those who become involved in his spiritual experience.”

²² Ibid. 8.

²³ *Lumen gentium*, 12.

²⁴ Cardinal Velasio de Paolis, CS, Letter of presentation of the *Outline of the charism of the Movement Regnum Christi*, October 19, 2012, and idem. *La vida consagrada en la Iglesia*, BAC, Madrid 2011, pp. 123-126. [Our translation. There is no English translation of the book]

²⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptionis donum*, 15.

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lesser degree as the guide and companion of the persons that constitute the group (starting with the founder himself or herself) to introduce the persons he calls into the living of the charism, just as he helps the person discern whether or not there is a divine call to live that charism. The transmission of the charism is not identified with the handing on of something the founder has already completed and passes to the first members and these to the following members as someone would hand on an object or an art or an idea.

Each one of the members is called to make the charism his or her own and can use his or her own personal charisms to enrich the patrimony of the spiritual family. In fact, spiritual families

receive the characteristic elements of their charisms from the founders, live and act under their influence and in the measure of their fidelity, receive new gifts and charisms for each member and for the whole of the community. Therefore this characterization can discover new forms of apostolate according to the demands of places and times, without breaking the line of continuity and development that starts with the founder, while easily maintaining its identity and dynamism.²⁶

We could say that the charism is converted into a source of inspiration for life through time and its richness will be able to be discovered by the members of future generations. This demands a creative fidelity to the founding charism in order to respond to new situations and needs.²⁷ Therefore, Saint John Paul II reminded the Legionaries: “This fidelity to your charism cannot be static, anchored in the past, but it has to be dynamic and able to adapt to the different cultural and social environments in which the Lord calls you to work.”²⁸

The patrimony of the institute presents itself as a dynamic vital reality. It has its origin in the Holy Spirit through the founder, but at the same time is enriched with the flow of history and the development of the institute itself. It is alive. It is always the same, but adapts itself continually to new realities. Although it changes, it remains always itself; in its being it is always itself, it should continually adapt itself to arising demands.²⁹

²⁶ John Paul II, General Audience, September 28, 1994, 4. [Our translation – no English translation available at Vatican website]

²⁷ Cf. Idem. *Vita consecrata*, 37.

²⁸ John Paul II, Speech to the participants in the General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, December 18, 1992. [Our translation]

²⁹ Velasio De Paolis, CS, *La vida consagrada en la Iglesia*, p. 124 [Our translation]

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The patrimony of a spiritual family is characterized by being a harmonious assemblage of a plurality of charisms in permanent growth: “The wondrous array of charisms proper to each Religious Institute is an extraordinary spiritual treasury.”³⁰

It is important to understand that the gift of God “lives in the institute and its members.”³¹ As a consequence, with the collective and dynamic character of the gift received, we understand that “An effective renewal and adaptation demands the cooperation of all the members of the institute.”³²

In the process of institutionalization of all spiritual families, one stage is the writing of the statutes or a fundamental code of the new foundation. The statutes should contain the fundamental norms in order to guard more faithfully the vocation and identity of each institute.³³ Afterwards, the approval of the text of the statutes by the competent ecclesiastic authority is required and it cannot be changed without the approval of the same authority.³⁴ The right of approval belongs to those who are pastors who have the responsibility of discerning charisms, confirming through their authority the authenticity of the charism and defining its correct usage.³⁵ The approval of the statutes has the effect of confirming the authenticity of the charism, guiding the grace given by God to the Church and confirming that it is in line with the original charism.³⁶

3. The question of the founder of Regnum Christi

The Regnum Christi Movement recognizes Fr. Marcial Maciel as its founder. We know that during his life he practiced very grave immoral behavior. How could God have transmitted a gift to us through him?

The answer should begin from the awareness that the authority of the Church has confirmed for us that the Legion of Christ and the Regnum Christi Movement are

³⁰ Benedict XVI, Meeting with young people and seminarians, New York, April 19, 2008.

³¹ Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado sobre el camino de renovacion que stamos recorriendo* (Janary 20, 2014). [Our translation]

³² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree *Perfectae caritatis*, 4.

³³ Cf. Code of Canon Law, 304, 1.

³⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* 314 and 322, 2

³⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 12, and Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 3.

³⁶ The associations or institutes of pontifical right have to present modifications to the text of their statutes to the Holy See; if they are of diocesan right, to the diocesan bishop (cf. canon 589 of the Code of Canon Law).

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bearers of an authentic charism. The Legion of Christ and the associations of the faithful Regnum Christi, Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi and Regnum Christi Lay Consecrated Men exist in the Church. The constitutions of the Legion of Christ resulting from the recent Extraordinary General Chapter have been approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (October 16, 2014). The statutes of the consecrated men and consecrated women have the approval *ad experimentum* of the Pontifical Delegate.³⁷ The statutes of Regnum Christi have pontifical approval (November 26, 2004) and although they being revised, they are in force for the members of first and second degree and for all those who perform apostolic work in Regnum Christi. In his letter of July 11, 2012, the Pontifical Delegate Cardinal Velasio De Paolis referred to the members of first and second degree of *Regnum Christi* as “another beautiful reality of great importance and meaning” within the joined realities of Regnum Christi, “that participate in the same charism lived by each group according to its own identity.”

As we can see in the communication of the Holy See on the life of Fr. Maciel (May 19, 2006), in the letter of the Secretary of State to the General Director of the Legion of Christ announcing the Apostolic Visit (May 1, 2010) and in the interview in the book *Light of the World, The Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times* (Ignatius 2010), Pope Benedict XVI condemns the behavior of Fr. Maciel and at the same time approves of the Legion of Christ and of Regnum Christi.

“An inadequate understanding of the concept of founder,”³⁸ such as predominated in the past of the Legion and the Movement, can make the understanding of the charism – a gift from God – more difficult. Therefore, the Legionaries united in the latest General Chapter affirmed: “We recognize his place as founder. Nevertheless, a religious congregation and its essential elements do not have their origin in the person of the founder. They are a gift from God that the Church welcomes and approves and that afterwards lives in the institute and in its members.”³⁹ The founder is neither the source nor the master of the charism of the

³⁷ Once the question of the final canonical configuration of all of Regnum Christi is resolved (one of the objectives of the revision of the statutes), we will be able to proceed to the approval of the statutes of the Lay Consecrated Men and the Consecrated Women by the Holy See, as well as numbers 1, 2; 16; 112 and 130,2 of the Constitutions of the Legion of Christ.

³⁸ Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado sobre el camino de renovacion que estamos recorriendo* (January 20, 2014). [our translation]

³⁹ Ibid.

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work. He is the first voice, not the last. He is an instrument, for the granting of this gift from God to the Church and to humanity. He counts on particular graces in order to be able to begin the work and in this sense, introduces other persons to its accomplishment so they develop and continue it.

The charism is a freely-given gift from God that should not be confused with personal qualities or gifts, even when God uses them for the communication of the charism, nor should they be confused with errors or immoral conduct: “The charism is not identified with the person of the founder, and much less with his holiness or with his sinfulness.”⁴⁰ Theology clearly says that the charisms, as graces *gratis data* (freely given) are destined to the benefit of the community and can be granted by God to persons that do not lead morally good lives.⁴¹ What’s more, thinking above all of our own case, history makes us realize that “not all founders that bring a good grace to the Church live according to the grace that they communicate.”⁴²

Having it clear that the charism of our spiritual family already has the recognition of the Church – even when we are in a period of revising and deepening our understanding of the same charism – and knowing that Fr. Maciel received from God the charism of the founder to put the Legion and the Movement in march, we have to recognize at the same time that the founders of charismatic families have to lead an exemplary life in order to be recognized as inspiring figures of spirituality for their respective families: “the genuine figure of the *Founders* entails men and women whose proven virtue (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 45) demonstrates a real docility both to the sacred hierarchy and to the following of that inspiration, which exists in them as a gift of the Spirit.”⁴³

B. What spiritual experience helps us to grow Regnum Christi?

⁴⁰ Cardinal Velasio De Paolis, CS, *Carta de presentacion de los Lineamientos del charisma del Movimiento Regnum Christi*, October 19, 2012. [our translation]

⁴¹ Cf. Gianfranco Ghirlanda, SJ, *Carisma del instituto y derecho propio*. Conference to the Legionaries of Christ, Rome, March 31, 2011; Domenico Grasso, *Los charismas en la Iglesia: teologia e historia*, p. 70-72. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, II-II, q. 172, a.4, and Saint John Chrysostom, in J.P. Migne, *Patrologia cursus completus*, PG 51, col. 81.

⁴² Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, Press Conference, January 30, 2014, cited in the Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado y decretos*, Rome 2014, Comunicado “Identidad carismatica de la Legion de Cristo,” note 6.

⁴³ Document *Mutuae relationis*, 51

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It is necessary to approach every grace we receive from God with faith. Our knowledge of the charism of the Regnum Christi Movement, being a gift that comes from God, will always be wrapped in an atmosphere of mystery, like all sacred things. We can share our own spiritual experience in Regnum Christi to try to understand the grace that the Lord gives us all more deeply. What follows is meant to be an aid for each one of us to deepen our own spiritual experience. Therefore, it is not meant that what is told here has to be accepted by all the members of the Movement as something of their own, nor is it meant to be taken as an authorized expression of the living of the charism. Rather, it is meant to be a starting point for reflection and dialog on what the spirituality of Regnum Christi brings to me.

In the light of what we have already lived, we can see that the members of Regnum Christi are characterized by living our Christian lives according to a certain style, “a style or means of adhesion to Christ and to the Church.”⁴⁴ How can we describe it? Traditionally, we have called it ‘militant’, wanting to indicate that we live our Christian life seeking to correspond to the love of Christ with a sincere, committed, generous, grateful and joyful effort to give the best of ourselves in the accomplishment of the mission that he has called us to with so much love – the mission of cooperating with the growth of his Kingdom in ourselves, in others and in the entire world. “For you, soldiers [*militantes*⁴⁵] of that Kingdom, fidelity to your own charism means filling all your life with Gospel values;”⁴⁶ And “the lived Gospel should forge witnesses who are ardent and contagious with faith and love for Jesus Christ; the world and the Church need convinced Christians.”⁴⁷ Saint John Paul II told the Legionaries of Christ “your work in the Church should be done through the militancy [*militancia*⁴⁸] with which your institute was born, as an apostolic, dynamic and ardent mission.”⁴⁹ The communication of the Holy See from May 1, 2010 was inviting us to preserve “the true core” of our charism: “that of the *militia Christi* [a militia or army of Christ – Translator], that characterizes

⁴⁴ *Manual del Regnum Christi* (1990), 48 [our translation]

⁴⁵ A ‘*militante*’ is someone who fights like a soldier, who wages war; so ‘fighter’, ‘soldier’ and ‘warrior’ are all possible translations, but none carries quite the full connotation that the word ‘*militante*’ implies. It seems clear that the Holy Father specifically wants to emphasize the word from our spirituality. [Translator’s note]

⁴⁶ John Paul II, Speech to the participants in the General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, December 18, 1992. He continued: “It means to make charity and justice, respect for the human person, universal openness, solidarity towards the neediest reign in your own hearts through initiatives of service and human advancement.”

⁴⁷ *Manual del Regnum Christi* (1990), 48 [our translation]

⁴⁸ ‘*Militancia*’ in Spanish essentially means to be at war, on a war footing without the negative connotations of stubbornness and unreasonableness that the word ‘militancy’ carries in English.

⁴⁹ John Paul II, Speech to the participants in the General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, December 18, 1992.

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the apostolic and missionary activity of the Church.”⁵⁰ Significantly, the ‘charism tour’ of Fathers Owen Kearns and Patrick Langan have synthesized the heart of our charism with the expression of St. Paul: *Caritas Christi urget nos* [Christ’s love compels us – Translator] (2nd Corinthians 5:14)⁵¹

What is the spiritual experience that we share and that moves us to respond to the love of Christ with this “militant” style? Doubtless it has to do with an encounter with the love of Jesus Christ: “The *Regnum Christi* Movement promotes the powerful and personal experience of the love of Christ “who has loved me and given himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20) and seeks to make him reign in the hearts of men and of society, according to the demands of Christian justice and charity.”⁵² This encounter with the personal love of Christ moves us to a continual conversion that results in a personal commitment of holiness and of apostolate. Knowing this love of Jesus for us, we seek to give him a place in our hearts and therefore we feel called to communicate that love, to seek that others have that experience and become his apostles. “The Mission stems from a deep and personal experience: your living and life-changing encounter with Christ.”⁵³

How do we discover this love of Christ? Of course, each person has his or her own history of love with the Lord and the Lord makes each one discover an experience his love in a very personal and unique manner. Nevertheless, sharing something of our experiences, we notice that Jesus Christ has granted us to hear the call to be his apostles with faith and a very special intensity. The moment I discover that Jesus invites me personally to share his mission, is when I realize that he loves me very much: Jesus wants to make me not only the recipient of his salvation, but also his instrument for communicating that salvation to my brothers and sisters and to renew the world according to the plan of God. He focuses on me, counts on me to accompany him in his mission, which is far beyond my possibilities since I am the one who most needs his grace and pardon, his salvation. If Christ calls me to be

⁵⁰ Communication of the Holy See on the Apostolic Visit to the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ, May 1, 2010, 4a. In Sacred Scripture, especially in the letters of Saint Paul, we find revealing tests on what Christian ‘*milicia*’ [the art and training for war, and so, something close to the English concept of spiritual warfare - Translator] consists of; as well as in the writings of the Holy Fathers. The aspect of ‘*militancia*’ was already emphasized as a characteristic of the Legion of Christ and Regnum Christi Movement by Paul VI (Greeting during the General Audience of January 2, 1974) and by John Paul II (Speech to the chapter fathers, December 18, 1992 and speech to the members of Regnum Christi, January 4, 2001).

⁵¹ Fr. Owen Kearns, LC, & Fr. Patrick Langan, LC, *The Quest for the Core of the Regnum Christi Charism*, Cheshire 2014, pp. 154-156

⁵² *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 1c.

⁵³ Regnum Christi Member Handbook (2009), 101

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his apostle it is because he wants to show his strength through my weakness⁵⁴ and this helps me discover his great love for me that is merciful and compliant. This call reveals to me the great confidence Christ placed in me; the hope with which he looks at my life and gives me the great certainty that he will always accompany me with his grace. In the faith then, I have “the experience of a new, gratuitous, unlimited and unconditional love, which fills our soul with joy and security.”⁵⁵ I realize that really “Christ alone is the definitive and complete answer to man’s most dearly held desires and aspirations, his thirst for transcendence, and his insatiable hunger for happiness.”⁵⁶ The vocational sense of the Christian life is lived with great strength by each member of Regnum Christi, it is Christ who calls us to unite us in communion and send us out to the mission.⁵⁷ The words of the ritual of incorporation to the Movement are very meaningful:

Christ is the height of human aspirations, [...] he constitutes the joy and the fullness of every heart [...]. And it is a duty of our religious faith, a need of our human conscience to recognize, confess and celebrate this. [...]⁵⁸

It depends on me that your words, Lord are not lost. It depends on me that your message of salvation reaches all men. It depends on me to live your word in such a way that those who see me give glory to God and feel themselves driven by your grace to participate in my faith and give living testimony of it.

The call to the apostolate is perceived then as a precious gesture of Jesus’ love, like something that ennoble us and speaks to us of the loving choice of the Lord, like the ‘good news’ of the Gospel, and not as a burdensome obligation, a heavy duty or an imperative derived from the alarming situation in which the world finds itself.⁵⁹ From here is born the desire to correspond to that love, seeking holiness and letting ourselves “be permeated by Christ’s love for each person,”⁶⁰ making an effort to give the best of ourselves in the mission that we well know infinitely

⁵⁴ Cf. 2nd Corinthians 12:9

⁵⁵ *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 29.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 28.

⁵⁷ Fr. Owen Kearns, L.C., & Fr. Patrick Langan, LC, *The Quest for the Core of the Regnum Christi Charism*, pp. 131-153.

⁵⁸ Words taken from Paul VI, General Audience, February 3, 1965. [our translation]

⁵⁹ *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 105: “Being an apostle is not only a duty of Christian life, it is an extraordinary way to discover the full meaning of your own life as you serve others.”

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 103. Cf. *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement*, 36: “The preaching and extension of the Kingdom of Christ constitutes the ideal that inspires, stimulates, directs and forms the Regnum Christi Movement. Therefore let yourselves be deeply penetrated by the love of Christ for humanity, the inspiring source of the apostolic vocation and activity, and feel yourselves called to work tirelessly and passionately to proclaim and extend this kingdom by all lawful and good means to achieve that Jesus will reign in the hearts of men and societies.”

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surpasses our possibilities. Thus, our effort is above all a sample of our love for Christ with which we want to make him see that we appreciate his invitation, that we trust in his grace completely, since only that grace can make our commitment bear fruit for the Kingdom of God and that we give him our heart to love others with his own love.

The phrase “Thy Kingdom Come!” (Luke 11:2) summarizes this spiritual experience. It expresses both theological hope in the definitive coming of the Kingdom of Christ and the primacy of grace in apostolic work, as well as the ardent desire and the urgent need to work now in order to establish the Kingdom of Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:10), fulfillment and definitive meaning of the whole of the history of salvation.⁶¹

What current needs does our charism respond to? In our days, in which apostolic zeal has been weakening because of individualism and horizontalism,⁶² it seems that we are not interested in the eternal fate of others and of the world. The Church urges us towards a new missionary dynamism. In this context, Regnum Christi emphasizes the apostolic dimension of the Christian vocation, helping each person to discover the beauty of the personal call that the Lord makes to ask us to be apostles. Transmitting the ‘good news’ to others; the news that Jesus calls us to collaborate with him so that his Kingdom becomes a reality in this world, the member of the Movement witnesses to his or her own love.

The call to the apostolate is for every Christian and resounds in all times and places. But in our own time, God has wanted to raise up a clearer sense and universal awareness of this obligation. So all Christians have a duty to respond with action and conviction to this urgent call of God to extend his Kingdom among men.⁶³

What does the originality of Regnum Christi consist in if the call to the apostolate is obviously for all Christians? Every charism has its origin in the Gospel, it is a participation in the mystery of Jesus Christ, and is destined to serve all. Therefore, its particular charism should not be understood as a novelty with respect to the deposit of the faith, nor as a treasure reserved exclusively for a few.⁶⁴ The richness

⁶¹ *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 1b.

⁶² The tendency to see things from only the materialistic point of view. Seeing the spiritual aspects of things, seeing their transcendence is regarded as adding a vertical dimension. [Translator’s note.]

⁶³ *Manual del Regnum Christi* (1990), 56c. [our translation]

⁶⁴ John Paul II, Message to the World Congress of Movements and Ecclesial Communities, May 27, 1998: “The charism’s own originality, which gives life to a movement, neither claims nor could claim to add anything to the richness of the *depositum fidei*, safeguarded by the Church with passionate fidelity. Nonetheless, it represents a powerful support, a moving and convincing reminder to live the Christian experience fully, with intelligence and creativity.”

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of every charism comes from being an expression of the Gospel and its reason for existing is precisely its common usefulness. The charismatic originality is rather in the special mode of living this gift from God destined for all. Precisely because all should be apostles, it is very useful that some receive a charism that can help to remind all of this call. The Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi expressed it like this: “The experience of the personal love of Christ and his love for the salvation of souls generates in each consecrated woman the interior urgency to surrender herself to the extension of this Kingdom, so that persons will meet him and be converted into his apostles.”⁶⁵ And, “the charism of Regnum Christi is situated within the context of the New Evangelization that the recent popes have done so much to promote, especially in today’s heavily secularized society.”⁶⁶ We remember that the communication of the Holy See of May 2010 concluded with a call by the Pope to renew faith in our own vocation:

Finally the Pope [Benedict XVI] renews his encouragement to all the Legionaries of Christ, to their families, to the lay people belonging to the Regnum Christi Movement, [...]. He exhorts them to never lose sight that their vocation, born in the call of Christ and animated by the ideal of giving testimony of their love in the world, is an authentic gift of God, a richness for the Church, the indestructible foundation on which to build their personal futures and the Legion.⁶⁷

C. Some Fundamental Aspects of the Charism of Regnum Christi

Without attempting to draw conclusions nor be exhaustive, we now present some elements that we can identify as constitutive of the charism of Regnum Christi in the light of the Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism⁶⁸ and the suggestions of the General Chapter of the Legion of 2014 and of the general assemblies of the consecrated members of the Movement of 2013. They are definitively manifestations of the charismatic originality of our Movement, of the way in which all the members, each one according to his or her condition or state of life, seek to live our “Christian lives in light of the mystery of Christ the King”⁶⁹

In its nature, Regnum Christi is not only a spirit, but also an ecclesial community. Therefore, it has a structure and activities that characterize its way of being

⁶⁵ Statutes of the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi, 5 [our translation]

⁶⁶ *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 1b and 1c.

⁶⁷ *Communication of the Holy See*, May 1, 2010, 7.

⁶⁸ The suggestions to this document made by the members of the first and second degrees are in the Center of the General Directorate and will be taken into account by the Central Commission for the preparation of the working document for the revision of the statutes.

⁶⁹ *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 1a.

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organized and living. In it, “there are various categories of members: single and married lay people, lay people who consecrate themselves by taking on and practicing the evangelical counsels and religious and priests of the Legionaries of Christ. Each one lives according to their own vocation and state in life, with a function for the good of the one body (cf. 1st Corinthians 12:12-29), as members of one charismatic and apostolic family;” in this way, it is constituted by different branches with “their own norms for their internal life, according to their circumstances and state in life. The common charism will also provide the reference point to determine how they all relate and collaborate with one another.”⁷⁰ There is an interchange, a rapport, a complementarity among them. They all live the mission and each one contributes the best of himself or herself for the fulfillment of the common mission.

Referring to its goal, Regnum Christi seeks ardently “establish Christ’s Kingdom by means of the sanctification of its members in the state and condition of life in which God calls them and by means of personal and organized apostolic action [...] so that Christ will reign in the hearts of men and of societies.”⁷¹

The charism of the Regnum Christi Movement is properly speaking apostolic because the experience of the love of Christ begets an interior urgency in each member to correspond to the command to evangelize. Thus they become passionate apostles of the Lord who work to establish the Kingdom of Christ. This response is characterized by initiative, zeal and passion and brings them to employ all the licit and good means available to bring Christ to reign in all hearts and in society. The mission of announcing Christ and of recapitulating all things in Christ, overcoming the divide between faith and culture, spurs us on.⁷²

“Christ’s Kingdom becomes present in the world to the degree to which God’s love is known lived and transmitted to each heart and to society as a whole.”⁷³ To know, live and reveal the love of God is the necessary condition to incarnate the charism of *Regnum Christi*.⁷⁴ Regnum Christi evangelizes through the calling together of persons in Christ, in the Church and in his evangelizing mission; to form them into groups with natural social bonds; to form them christianly in a way that is personal and communal, and to motivate them apostolically by promoting, accompanying and increasing the reach of their initiatives for evangelization

⁷⁰ Ibid. 3d and 3e.

⁷¹ Ibid. 3a and 3c.

⁷² Ibid. 4a.

⁷³ *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 27.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement*, 2, 1.

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through *Regnum Christi's* own social reality.⁷⁵ The members of the Movement seek to focus their endeavors by forming or joining groups of Christians to evangelize the different branches of society.

The life and activities of the sections of Regnum Christi are organized for the mission its members have of evangelizing secular realities and not simply for the personal Christian activity of the lives of its members.⁷⁶ Because of this, the apostolate of Regnum Christi, according to its charism, cannot be limited to 'pastoral action', but is oriented towards the evangelization of the pluralistic and globalized society of today through "lay apostolate".⁷⁷ Pope Francis says that reality is understood better from the outskirts than from the center.⁷⁸ We might reflect: what are our 'outskirts'? The "outskirts" in which the members of the Movement bear witness and preach Christ are many since the apostolic activity of Regnum Christi arises and is organized according to the needs of society for evangelization. If we had to summarize them, we could say that our "outskirts" are principally the ignorance that so many people have that they are called by Christ to be apostles in their own surroundings and to effectively transform them for him. We are called to wake up souls to the love of Christ, to help them discover that he calls them to join the mission of renewing the entire world for the glory of God. These "slumbering" souls today live in surroundings that are de-Christianized or never were Christian. They require the "new evangelization" and the mission *ad gentes*.

Therefore, the sections of Regnum Christi, while being Christian communities, are not called to substitute the pastoral labor and sacramental assistance of the parishes. The sections of Regnum Christi are fundamentally teams of adults or the young "going forth" to evangelize according to their own charism, in an apostolic effort that is rich in initiatives for the evangelization of their own surroundings. To accomplish this, sections offer spiritual guidance and formation to their members.

Regnum Christi also has a universal aspiration, as does the Church itself, of which Regnum Christi is a living part; and as does the social action of humanity, that

⁷⁵ Cf. *Ibid.* 1, 2 and 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 15-20, and *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 318-323.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 374: "Its members serve the Church not simply by giving personal witness in the world, but by committing themselves, as sons and daughters of the Church, to be the yeast and soul of society, transforming temporal realities according to the spirit of the Gospel through apostolate."

⁷⁸ Cf. Francis, Greeting in the Parish of SS. Elizabeth and Zachariah (Rome, May 26, 2013): "we understand reality better from the outskirts not the centre. We understand it better."

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today is reaching global dimension.⁷⁹ Its apostolic influence should have universal aspirations. People today establish social and cultural relationships in environments that escape geography and go beyond local, diocesan and even national limits. These unbounded environments are also those that the members of Regnum Christi seek to evangelize.

Since Regnum Christi feels itself called to cooperate with the evangelical renewal of societies, it also tries to evangelize those persons of greatest influence in the different spheres of society, in order that they will put their talents at the service of the Kingdom of God.⁸⁰ “If we evangelize and form people deeply, we also help them to evangelize their surroundings and society, putting their leadership at the service of the Church.”⁸¹

Insofar as its spirituality, the Movement is based “on the contemplation of Christ, who with his incarnation, came into the world to announce and bring about the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), and lives in communion with his Father (John 17:22), glorifying him and saving men with his life, death and resurrection (cf. Ephesians 2:6-11);”⁸² also, “it surrounds itself with apostles, reveals to them the love of his heart, forms them and sends them to cooperate in the restoration of his Kingdom in the hearts of all men and women and in society.”⁸³ Jesus has shown us his love and enthralled us with it. As a result, Regnum Christi “presents itself as a way of life that is profoundly contemplative and at the same time decidedly apostolic, in which members live with charity, joy and authenticity, as well as a sense of time and eternity.”⁸⁴ In their desire to respond to the love of Christ, the members find in the Movement the ideal to live and revive Christianity in its fullness. Life in the Kingdom of Christ is a life of grace, of real freedom and of love. The awareness of the infinite love of Christ for each person has to lead us to nourish a great appreciation for all, working so that respect, trust, openness, acceptance, joy, mutual help, common prayer, and missionary cooperation will

⁷⁹ Cf. Regnum Christi Member Handbook (2009), 371.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 4; *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement*, 3, and *Statutes of the Consecrated Lay Men of Regnum Christi*, 7.

⁸¹ Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado y decretos, “Identidad carismática de la Legión de Cristo”*, Rome 2014, n. 11.

⁸² *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 2a.

⁸³ Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado y decretos, “Identidad carismática de la Legión de Cristo”*, Rome 2014, n. 6.

⁸⁴ *Principles of the Regnum Christi Charism*, 2c

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always direct our relationships.⁸⁵ In the Kingdom of Christ we should always spread the joy of the faith, the courage of hope and the enthusiasm of charity.

D. Historically, how was the Regnum Christi Movement born?⁸⁶

Nowadays, we use the term “Regnum Christi Movement” to refer to our entire spiritual family that is comprised of the Legionaries of Christ, the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi, the Consecrated Lay Men of Regnum Christi and the lay members and the priests of first and second degree. Of this family, the first to appear historically was the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ. Since then, as we will see, the Regnum Christi Movement was born; which in its first moments was conceived as a lay movement – made up only of lay people, consecrated lay people and secular clergy – although directed by the Legionaries of Christ. It was in the summer of 1971 when the Legionaries of Christ were integrated into the Movement as members of the third degree. The internal statutes of Regnum Christi of 1979 and 1988 presented the Legionaries as members of the Movement, in spite of the Constitutions of the Legion (1983) failing to mention their belonging. Since 2004, the relationship between the Legionaries and the Movement has been confused, given that the Regnum Christi statutes approved by the Holy See do not include the Legionaries as members. Currently, the Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legion of Christ of 2014 has affirmed that the congregation understands itself as part of the Regnum Christi Movement, although the juridical form remains to be worked out. In that sense, the actual process of renewal of the statutes of the Movement is directed toward preparing a proposal for the whole family of Regnum Christi, with all its different branches; to find an adequate legal framework. In this brief historical glance, we will not speak about the foundation of the Legion of Christ, but we will focus on how the associative reality of the Movement, with the name Regnum Christi, that is, how the lay group of our spiritual family came about.

The first constitutions of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of Sorrows (1948)⁸⁷ indicated as its specific goal of the congregation to create “special battalions of lay people, according to specific professional categories that work together vigorously in the restoration of the Kingdom of Christ according to

⁸⁵ Cf. *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Movement*, 40 and 44.

⁸⁶ This is only a preliminary historical sketch, not trying to be authoritative, only trying to clarify a little the beginnings of the Movement in order to better understand what the original inspiration behind the Movement was.

⁸⁷ This was the name of the Legion of Christ at that time.

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the demands of Christian justice and charity.” (n.2), and proposed various general means of organized apostolate in secular surroundings in order to “make Christ rule in international society,” not only in individuals, but also in society. Fr. Marcial Maciel⁸⁸ considered that for the religious congregation to act in accord with this goal, it would be necessary for it to complete itself with an international organization of lay persons, giving rise in about 1949 to the idea that in the future the Regnum Christi Movement would come into being. Now he was thinking of the idea of a single organization and not just in the different groups he had been thinking of before. Together, the members of the religious congregation and those of the lay organization would have to dedicate themselves to constitute those “battalions” or groups of committed lay apostles with the spread of the Kingdom of Christ in the different sectors of society. When Fr. Maciel conceived the idea of the lay organization, he considered it as a clarification of how the Legion would have to fulfill its specific apostolic mission. “Regnum Christi has a particular link to the religious congregation of the Legionaries of Christ in having the same founder and sharing the same spirituality and mission in the Church.”⁸⁹

Although the first apostolic works of the Legion would be educational – the Cumbres Institute (1954), the Anahuac University (1964), Mano Amiga (1965), the Irish Institute (1966) – the congregation never thought of itself as a congregation oriented toward education. These works were conceived as a means to make contact with families, with lay people, in order to evangelize and them and send them out in apostolates. In the fifties and the beginning of the sixties, that is, before the existence of the lay group of Regnum Christi, the novices were told that the apostolate of the Legion of Christ should be the formation of groups of lay apostles who would dedicate themselves in an organized way to the evangelization of the different fields of society on the national and international levels.⁹⁰ According to the mentality of those years of the Cold War and the spread of ideological and political groups, the thinking was to win over for Christ especially those who could exercise a positive influence on the orientation of culture and on the direction of society, so that they would collaborate with the spread of the Kingdom of Christ in the world according to the demands of Christian charity. In order to build those groups, the Legion would turn to a “central international organization” yet to be

⁸⁸ On the person and behavior of Fr. Marcial Maciel (1920 – 2008), cf. Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado sobre el camino de renovacion que estamos recorriendo* (January 20, 2014).

⁸⁹ *Regnum Christi Member Handbook* (2009), 50.

⁹⁰ In the General Historical Archives are copies of the notes of the *Spirit of the Legion* classes (classes on the constitutions of the congregation that the instructor of novices taught to the novices) of two novices, given by Fr. Maciel in 1954 and by Fr. Rafael Arumi in the 1961-62 school year. From these notes come the ideas that follow.

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created of lay people and with it accomplish its specific apostolate. The idea was to help people live christianly as much in private as socially and publically. There was the firm idea that evangelizing the individual was not enough, but that society also had to be evangelized. There would be a special effort to evangelize the unchurched.

Consistent with this, the constitutions of 1965 said “The specific goal of the Congregation is the restoration of the Kingdom of Christ in society.”⁹¹ The evangelization of society must be done through the evangelization of temporal realities, which is a mission principally of the laity.⁹² The mission that the Legion (a clerical religious institute) foresaw was a mission that it would share with the yet to be founded international organization of laity. Therefore, thinking of the mission, Fr. Maciel insisted that for him, the Legion without the Movement would be incomplete and that the Movement was united inseparably to the Legion⁹³ in our days, the latest General Chapter of the Legion of Christ said: “The laity, by means of their lay state, make the Kingdom of Christ present in the family, social and professional environment. For our part, the Legionaries esteem the lay vocation and want to fulfill together with them the mission that God has entrusted to Regnum Christi for the good of the Church.”⁹⁴

In the fifties and into the early sixties, Fr. Maciel spoke of a “Second Legion” formed of laypeople.⁹⁵ 1949 was when he settled on the name “Legionaries of Christ” for the congregation. Both institutions would be “Legion”, underlining the principle of unity. Nevertheless, fearing that arguments would arise considering whether the first should be considered more important than the second, he ended up discarding this terminology since in the relationships between the members of each branch he wanted there to be a principle of equality. Therefore, from the

⁹¹ The following versions of the constitutions of the Legion of Christ maintained the goal that Christ reign “in society”. This is also true of the version resulting from the General Chapter of 2014 (cf. CLC, 2)

⁹² Cf. Theme of reflection number 2, on the lay apostolate within the mission of the Church. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*, 31, and John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 9 (where it is recalled the Pius XII said that the laity “The Faithful, more precisely the lay faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church's life; for them the Church is the animating principle for human society.”: Pius XII Discourse to the new Cardinals, February 20, 1946).

⁹³ For example, in the Christmas seminar at Cotija at Christmas 1968, as stated in the community dossier of the Interamerican Cultural Center of Tlalpan, DF, July and August, 1969.

⁹⁴ Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, *Comunicado y decretos*, “La Legion de Cristo en el Regnum Christi”, Rome 2014, number 9.

⁹⁵ He spoke of a first and second Legion. The first was the one that existed, that of the religious. The second would be that of the laypeople. Some Legionaries even say that the founder said that for him, the laity would be the “first” Legion for being in the vanguard of the apostolate, while the priests would be the “second Legion”.

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beginnings of the sixties, while trying to clarify the organization of the lay group, he sought a different name, that would not lend itself to these kinds of problems: first, *Milites Christi* (Soldiers of Christ) and afterwards, from the end of 1963, *Regnum Christi*. The use of the term “movement” for the organization dates from 1964 or 65, perhaps influenced by Vatican II.

It is interesting that by April of 1963, Fr. Maciel already had a first draft of statutes for *Milites Christi* thanks to the help of some religious.⁹⁶ The text was already complete and detailed, already presenting the distribution of members in “three degrees”. The lay organization was established in a very detailed way on paper before having groups of laypeople to take part in the project.⁹⁷ Afterwards, laypeople were sought out and invited to join. Thus, in Holy Week, 1963, there was a Triduum of spiritual exercises with young men in the Interamerican Cultural Center in Mexico City (founded that same year) and with these youths, there was an attempt to begin the *Milites Christi*. Nevertheless, it failed and the group was dissolved within a few months.

In February, 1965, Fr. Maciel sent Fr. Alfredo Torres to Madrid to look for vocations and begin Regnum Christi.⁹⁸ He arrived in Madrid February 8, 1965. He visited schools and universities. He had meetings with young people. These, under the guidance of Legionaries, did Gospel reflections in groups, received formation and tried to attract other young men; they did Eucharistic hours together. On January 3, 1968, eight young men from Madrid incorporated into the Regnum Christi Movement in Zaragoza (Spain) at the feet of the Blessed Virgin in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar (Pilar). Four more joined them in Madrid and they formed the first team of the Movement with twelve members. In July, 1968, they had the first seminar of the Movement, in Rome, on ecclesiology, together with other youths from Barcelona. That same summer, in Dublin, Fr. Maciel and seven other Legionaries organized the structure and dynamics of the Regnum Christi Movement. In Christmas, 1968, there was a seminar on Regnum Christi in Cotija with some twenty Legionaries and five young men from the Anahuac University. The fruit was the naming of the first Legionary community composed of directors of Regnum Christi who would live in the Interamerican Cultural Center in Tlalpan. There still exists a handbook developed by that community in

⁹⁶ This is preserved in the General Historical Archive.

⁹⁷ The founder for years had been establishing contacts with laypeople, but without success.

⁹⁸ This is written in the Diary of the Community of Rome, kept in the General Historical Archive of the Movement.

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1969 with notes from the seminar in Cotija and various other materials.⁹⁹ Beginning in January, 1969, those Legionaries started to work in Mexico to put together lay groups of Regnum Christi from the foundations laid in earlier years in schools. In the Cumbres Institute in Mexico City, for example, Fr. Carlos Mora and others were organizing groups of adolescents starting in 1963. Between February and March, 1969, five youths from the Cotija seminar incorporated into the third degree and went to live with the Legionaries, but in November, they were sent home, abandoning this first attempt to start the men's third degree. In July 1969, twelve youths incorporated in Regnum Christi in Mexico City. At the extraordinary Chapter of the Legion of 1968-1969, the Regnum Christi Movement was presented to the chapter fathers. A first Regnum Christi Handbook was put together in 1969 in Salamanca. The ECYD, a group experience for catholic adolescents based on the spirit of Regnum Christi, started in 1970, with Mexican youngsters. In the summer of 1971, there was a seminar about Regnum Christi for Legionaries and some lay people in Monticchio (Massa Lubrense, Naples, Italy), where Fr. Maciel announced that from that point on, the Legionaries would also be members of the third degree of Regnum Christi.¹⁰⁰ That same summer, in Ontaneda (Santander, Spain) there was the first international seminar of the Movement. Besides Spanish members four Mexican and two Irish young men attended. In December of the same year, the second Handbook of Regnum Christi was put together. It would remain in use until replaced by the next edition in 1990. In the structure of the Movement, knowledge – sometimes superficial – of other groups influenced to a greater or lesser degree. These groups included *Opus Dei*, Catholic Action, Christian Worker Youth, the Christophers, the Cursillo Movement and the Italian *Comitati Civici*.

On December 8, 1969, in the Interamerican Cultural Center (Tlalpan, Mexico City), the incorporation of the first consecrated women to the third degree took place, who, the preceding August 15 had incorporated to Regnum Christi. On February 25, 1970 they established themselves in Dublin, and were joined by some Irish women. On January 25, 1972 the first two members of the Men's third degree were incorporated at Cobas de la Sagra (Madrid), who with others incorporated in December, began to live as a team in January 1973 in an apartment on Conde la Cimera Street in Madrid. Also that January 25, 1972, in the same ceremony, took place the first incorporations to the men's and women's second

⁹⁹ Kept in the General Historical Archive of the Movement.

¹⁰⁰ The contents of the Monticchio seminar, gathered in two binders of loose pages under the title of *Vocabulario del Regnum Christi*, was distributed to Legionary centers and centers of the third degree.

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degree. In July 1974, an International Seminar of Regnum Christi took place in Reajo del Roble (Navacerrada, Madrid), with the participation of laymen and Legionaries. Some of the Mexicans that roomed with the Spanish consecrated men there would afterwards become first Mexican consecrated men, incorporated April 13, 1975.

In conclusion, Regnum Christi originated historically from the foundational intuition of Fr. Maciel, from the formation of groups that some Legionaries started to work with and from the attraction felt by the first young laypeople who began to give it life. Very soon, older adults also joined. The laypeople themselves, together with their religious directors invited others to this experience. The Movement took form through the laypeople who, united in teams and directed by Legionaries, reflected on the Gospel to apply it in their personal lives and read in its light the social reality that surrounded them to find apostolic initiatives oriented to make Christ reign in their surroundings – that he would be known, loved and followed more and more by more people who in their turn would become apostles for their classmates and peers. They were motivated by Christian authenticity and fidelity to their baptismal promises, including apostolate. As a consequence, Regnum Christi historically has taken shape as a gathering of teams of persons with social links, who, Gospel in hand, analyze the reality surrounding them from a Christian perspective in order to live their lives more and more as Christians and apostles, stimulating each other to give their best in the thinking out and fulfillment of evangelizing initiatives that will transform social reality for Christ and make it a place where people meet the Lord and the environment of apostolate for those who encounter the Lord.

With the passing of the years, multiple apostolic works have been the fruit of the apostolic initiative of the laypeople of Regnum Christi, some of which have been institutionalized and replicated in different places, like *Gente Nueva*, Youth for the Third Millennium and *Sonar Despierto*. The Movement aspires to form zealous apostles capable to imagining and putting in march apostolic initiatives adapted to the changing needs of times and places.

In the light of its early history, we can see that in summary, Regnum Christi was lived by its first members as:

-A means to respond to the vocation of holiness an apostolate demanded by their own baptism. To deeply live the baptismal commitments to be new men and women, objectively developing a friendship with Christ in the life of grace and

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assuming the mission of Jesus Christ and the Church with conviction and responsibility. The Gospel, the Eucharist, spiritual direction and apostolate as pillars of their Christian life.

-A community experience. Through his or her own team, the person is integrated into the mystery of the missionary Church with availability and enthusiasm, receiving encouragement and help for their spiritual and apostolic life.

-A mission to transform the world for Christ. A mission of friendship with Christ and to gather groups of Christians from one's own surroundings, to give them a Christian formation and send them out to evangelize according to the needs of the Church in order that Christ will be all things for all people. A mission to fulfill together with the Legionaries of Christ.

Assimilation Questions for Team Reflection

1. What attracted you to incorporate in *Regnum Christi*?
2. What has *Regnum Christi* contributed to your Christian life?
3. Do you feel your participation in the Movement as a vocation and gift of God that commits you and helps you in all the aspects of your life, or rather as a help that you receive and collaboration limited to certain activities.
4. What needs does the charism of *Regnum Christi* respond to?
5. What attitudes should characterize a member of *Regnum Christi* in his or her relationships with other persons?
6. What characteristics does the apostolic action of *Regnum Christi* need to have?

Recommended Reading

Principles of the Charism of the Regnum Christi Movement

Estatutos del Movimiento Regnum Christi (2004) [No English translation]

Fr. Owen Kearns, LC & Fr. Patrick Langan, LC, *The Quest for the Core of the Regnum Christi Charism*, Chesire (Connecticut) 2014 (ISBN 978-1491237861)

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