
In this issue: *Europe today and the Charismatic Renewal. The speech of Archbishop Kevin McDonald from England, speaker in the first meeting of national representatives of Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) in North-West Europe, March 28th till 30th 2014 in Brentwood, England. His main work for the Catholic Church in England and Wales is in the area of interreligious dialogue and Catholic-Jewish relations. He is involved in the Renewal (CCR) and member of the Doctrinal Committee of ICCRS.*

EUROPE TODAY

Archbishop Kevin McDonald

The title I have been given to speak on is “How does the Church see the situation in Europe Today?” I think what I am being asked to do is to suggest how generally the Church sees the situation in Northern and Western Europe today and to say some things about the Catholic Charismatic Renewal within that wider picture.

The first thing I have to say is that what I am going to present is not the result of any kind of scientific analysis or research. What I will try to do is to draw together and comment on some of the more typical concerns and perceptions about Europe that are around in the Church today and say some things about the Renewal in that perspective.

First, though, what and where are we talking about? Essentially, as I understand it, the Germanic countries, the Benelux countries, the Scandinavian countries, together with Britain and Ireland. When we are considering that region, what words come to mind? Perhaps adjectives like prosperous, tolerant, democratic, secular, developed, industrialised, enlightened, ecumenical, post-Christian,- perhaps issues like the economy, immigration, communion for divorced-remarried, same sex marriages, issues of culture and history, relationship to previous countries of Empire and influence, relationship to emerging economies like Brazil and China and India, relations with the USA and, of course, crucially the European Union. It is interesting to ask how the analysis would be different if it included the Eastern European countries and the Mediterranean countries including France.

Also, as we mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War we are reminded of the fact that the stories of all the European nations are intimately connected. We share a long history and in the last century a deeply troubled history. Today with the European Union that connectedness and cross-fertilisation continues to be part of the European story for everyone but hopefully a much more positive story.

But in the countries we are considering I think that economic freedom, and high expectations of life in all areas are central as is the marginalisation of religion and loss of religious sense. In more educated circles this is likely to take the form simply of a conviction that the Christian heritage of Europe has now been superseded. We are now in a new situation where the beliefs and narratives of Christianity are seen as part of our cultural heritage, not our present reality. In so far as they continue to figure it is a matter of personal choice made by what sociologists call a “cognitive minority.”

Electronic revolution

Religion is a matter of choice and I would say that in the parts of Europe we come from, choice is a kind of watchword, a sort of absolute and something that few would presume to question. But what shapes and informs peoples' choices? The electronic revolution together with affluence has heightened what the culture of choice can mean. People relate to who they want to relate to. Young people relate most importantly with their peer group and it seems to me that young people are formed within their peer group and find their sense of identity and their self esteem within it rather, than say, within their family, or school or religion. The right clothes, tastes, opinions, moral attitudes, language and outlook are vital and matter in a way that I think is different from both their parents' and grandparents' generations - this despite the fact that they may end up being less well off than the generation before them. Crucially the electronic revolution and the fact that people spend a lot of time looking at screens shapes not only how we communicate but what we communicate

To highlight one key area, sexual preferences are seen as a matter of personal choice except when they involve coercion or relations with minors. Abortion is seen as a matter of women's choices. Tolerance is a vital value, at least in theory. In fact tolerance may be quite selective.

Context for faith changed

Faith as I said is a matter of choice and the context for faith has changed in a number of ways and I want to note some of them. One factor which actually qualifies some of the things I have already said is the presence of Catholics from all over the world in our parishes. This has brought life and vigour to many of our parishes in South London and elsewhere which are now very vibrant and multicultural. Some people from Africa and elsewhere come from an experience of Catholicism that has been very much marked by the Renewal. But this can create problems. Some of them experience disappointment at what they find in our Churches - dull liturgy and no ministry of healing or deliverance. Some go to Pentecostal Churches as well as or instead of coming to the Catholic Church. One parish priest who is not in the Renewal wrote an article in the Tablet some time ago in which explained the strategies he was adopting to keep such Catholics within the Church.

Pluralist society

There is also the ecumenical and the interreligious environment in which we now live. The religious landscape was once marked by Churches and the occasional synagogue but we now all have mosques and temples as well. We now live in a pluralist society, a multi-faith and multicultural society. That makes the issue of choice more complex. For example in this country, when the issue of Muslim girls being allowed to wear veils comes up, whatever people say about it, they are always anxious to avoid any suggestion that they wish to limit peoples' freedom of expression in religion. Perhaps this may be particularly a British thing. We certainly live in a culture in which there is great insistence on the rights of others to worship and express their religions freely, provided my right to believe what I want to believe or else to believe nothing at all is absolutely respected.

But what seems like British good sense and tolerance is not accepted by everyone. I remember being at the Catholic-Muslim forum in Jordan - obviously outside Europe but relevant to our discussions nonetheless - when the question of religious freedom came up. The cultural contrast

between the Western Christians and some of the Muslims there was very sharp. Whereas we would tend to take it as axiomatic that people should have freedom of choice in religion, some of the Muslims were appalled that a Christian man could acquiesce in his son or niece rejecting their religious heritage and therefore rejecting salvation.

Attitude of the Catholic Church

Of course the attitude of the Catholic Church towards other religions and other Christians has changed dramatically over the last 50 years since the Second Vatican Council and the roots of that change lie in European thinking and European theology. This is an aspect of our context that we need to take account of. One of the key thinkers behind the changes of Vatican II was the French theologian Henri de Lubac. Although deeply rooted in the Christian tradition he developed a very inclusive take on the Church. His thinking lay behind the Second Chapter of *Lumen Gentium* which in its vision of the People of God incorporates other Christians, the Jews, other religions and all people of good will. It sees all these as in some way ordered to the one People of God. Pope John Paul in *Redemptoris Missio* affirmed the action of the Holy Spirit in other religions. This was not in any way intended to compromise our faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour but to set it in a new historical and global and theological context. And Catholics are not alone in this.

The Renewal

Where is the Renewal in all this? I think we have to acknowledge that with the Renewal, as with other things that developed in the aftermath of the Council - things like the contemporary Catholic commitment to ecumenism, and to justice and peace - there is a feeling that the generation which was inspired and enthused in the 1960s and 1970s has not replaced itself. It is as if a very powerful action of the Holy Spirit was experienced in the 1960s and 1970s which has not been repeated or at least not with the same vigour. And so we have talk of not having any power, frustration at the seeming lack of the outpouring of the gifts, together with prophecies of a new era, a new springtime, especially following the Word and the experience in the Holy Land last autumn*. But there is a continuing disappointment that the evidence of gifts and of power seems less than entirely convincing.

There is a school of thought that would say that the grace of the Charismatic Renewal as poured

out in the Catholic Church and the other mainline churches in the 1960s and 1970s has done what it was intended to do. We now have liturgical songs and a eucharistic style which is much more focused on the personal relationship with Jesus and is less formal and less ritualistic. In some contexts we have a degree of spontaneity in the liturgy, even though there have been strong efforts to reverse all that especially among some of our young people. But in any case the work of the Renewal is not to facilitate more spontaneous worship but to awaken people to life in the Spirit, and to the gifts of the Spirit. Events like Celebrate show how young people can and do grow into the Renewal and there are the movements which are to a greater or lesser degree part of the story of the Renewal: Chemin Neuf, Beatitudes, Emmanuel and so on.

The gifts are for service

I was very struck recently by a visit I made to Peter Hocken's house and centre at Hainburg in Austria. There were young people from Eastern and Western Europe there and I just want at this point to mention something that really made me stop and think. We were celebrating Peter's 50th anniversary of ordination and at the lunch I sat with Johannes Fichtenbauer, a deacon who works closely with Peter and with Johannes's wife. She was telling me about the work she does with victims of sexual trafficking, which seemingly is now a huge and very profitable business. But she and Johannes were talking about this work in relation to the Renewal and to the gifts of the Spirit and he spoke very forthrightly about how the gifts are given for service. That is the context and the reason for the outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit. There will be no outpouring of gifts if we just want them for our own comfort or to reassure us that the Renewal is still alive.

Many things going on

That conversation and that gathering was just one of a number of very promising signs of things going on, of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church but there are so many things going on in the Catholic Church at the moment. The phrase post-modern is often used to describe our present situation and I think it means a situation in which people have quite different takes on what being a Catholic is all about and some people are comfortable with that and don't see why anyone would want everyone to be the same. I gave a talk on interreligious dialogue recently and someone asked during the questions: why can't people just respect peoples' freedom to be in the religion of

their choice - why is there any need to talk about it?

There is, for example, a significant and very vocal body of opinion which wants the Catholic Church to come back to its senses and to cast off what is seen as the shallow liberalism of post Vatican II Catholicism. Many put their hope in Pope Benedict's Reform of the Reform seeking the restoration of Latin, much more use of the Old Rite and altars facing East, together with a return to Catholic discipline in all areas. People of that mindset are not the majority by any means but they are robust and include many seminarians and young priests.

Charismatic dimension to Pope Francis

It is a complex situation and I think we should take encouragement from Pope Francis and see his election as providential. Of course everyone - or almost everyone - claims to like him. Recently when it was announced that he would be attending the big Charismatic gatherings in Rome**, the *Catholic Herald*, an English Catholic newspaper, asked Kristina Cooper, editor of the *Good News* magazine to write an article on why Pope Francis is wooing the Charismatics. In her article she talks about how there is a very real Charismatic dimension to Pope Francis but says that he is also, traditional, marian, liberal and conservative.

That said, Pope Francis's Charismatic credentials are very clear in *Evangelii Gaudium****. It seems to me that the way in which he sets out the evangelisation agenda make complete sense if read in a Charismatic perspective. Chapter 5 begins with the words: "Spirit-filled evangelizers mean evangelizers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit" and continues in that vein with phrases like: "The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love for him"

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

But Pope Francis, like the other Popes of the post-Vatican II era has to proclaim and promote everything that the Lord is revealing and enabling and nurturing in our times. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit cannot be seen in isolation and must be experienced in openness to and cross-fertilisation with other streams and developments within the Church. Pope Francis has to embody that. Some of the Charismatic Communities combine, for example, the Renewal with a strong Marian spirituality or a spirituality deeply influenced by our Jewish roots. It is quite

significant for example that for Peter Hocken his interest in Messianic Judaism grew out of his experience of the Renewal. For him the two areas of concern are inextricably connected. They are both about Messiah, about Covenant and about Parousia. Also absolutely connected in his vision are the Renewal and the ecumenical movement. This is a short passage from his recent book. He is talking about how some Christians who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit have come together to form ecumenical communities and he says:

'They were convinced that the shared grace they had experienced could and should be made the foundation for their lives together in community. However, it seems that these communities have not led the way in understanding the eschatological character of baptism in the Spirit, and the importance of the one shared hope for Christian unity. This is most likely to happen as they awaken to the ongoing role of Israel in the mystery of Christ.' (*Pentecost and Parousia* p.144)

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is put in the context of a bigger picture and a bigger narrative.

Let me broaden that out a bit further in relation to something I have mentioned. The main work I do for the Catholic Church in England and Wales is in the area of interreligious dialogue and Catholic-Jewish relations. In my talks and articles I frequently refer to the famous Prayer for Peace event which Pope John Paul convened in Assisi in 1986. Here is something he said later in that year as he reflected on the Assisi Day:

'At the Assisi Day, in an extraordinary way, there was the discovery of the unique value that prayer has for peace. It was seen that it is impossible to have peace without prayer, the prayer of all, each one in his own identity and in search of the truth. In deepening what we have said, one must see in this another wonderful manifestation of that unity which binds us together, beyond the differences and divisions which are known to all. Every authentic prayer is under the influence of the Holy Spirit "who intercedes insistently for us because we do not even know how to pray as we ought" but he prays "with unutterable groanings" and "the one who searches hearts knows what are the desires of the Spirit." We can indeed maintain that every authentic prayer is called forth by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in the heart of every person'"(Address to the Roman Curia, 22nd December 1986)

Prayer in tongues

When we pray in tongues we are allowing the Spirit to pray within us because we do not know how to pray. We are mandated to pray the Our Father, but what else should we or must we say? Perhaps because I am involved in this work, when I pray in tongues I have a very strong sense of being in solidarity with people of other religions.

The point I want to make, I suppose is that as Catholics we have a very broad, open and complex vision of what it means to be a Christian in the world today. Not all Catholics may appreciate that. In practice that can mean that we are in full communion with people who have no experience of the Renewal and people whose concerns and priorities as Catholics are completely different from ours. We must maintain a distinctive Charismatic identity if we are to have anything to give to the wider Church. But I would say that we must also be fully at home and at peace with the Catholic Church in all its richness and complexity.

This puts us in a somewhat different place from the Pentecostal Churches, but here too we must not generalise and we have things to learn. Peter Hocken put me on to the writings of Amos Yong, the American Pentecostal and academic and, in particular to his book *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh*. In it he argues for a global theology that is able to embrace people of other religions in a positive way. But of course he does it in a strictly biblical way referring to the different covenants God has made with humanity as recorded in the bible and invoking especially the gospel of Luke.

Inclusive vision

What it is important to mention here is that the very inclusive vision of humanity and this generous perception of other religions which became so central to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council very much originated in Europe and especially, I would say in the writings of the great French Jesuit Henri de Lubac. His writing provides, I think a profound theological basis for the openness and tolerance which I mentioned earlier as one of the characteristics of the parts of Europe we come from. Ecumenism, work for justice, inter-religious relations and Charismatic Renewal are evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in our times. We must not compartmentalise. We must embrace the work of the Spirit in all its dynamics if we are to see the fruits in our times.

The footnotes and small titles (**Electronic revolution, Context for faith changed**, etc.) are added by the Editor of EUCCRIL.

*The experience in the Holy Land last autumn: Bethlehem consultation. See EUCCRIL 263 on www.iccrs.eu.

** The big Charismatic gatherings in Rome: June 1st-2nd 2014. See www.iccrs.org.

***Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* English: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html

French:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_fr.html

Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

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