

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood,

I want to welcome you on behalf of the International Organism at the Service of the Parish Cells of Evangelization for this special moment during the 31st Extraordinary International Seminar.

Thirty years ago, Father Michael Eivers had the courage to cross cultural and religious boundaries in search of the novelty of the *Small Home Groups* which he found in the Assemblies of God Church in South Korea. He was the pioneer to implant the cells of evangelization in a Catholic parish, in St. Boniface in Pembroke Pines.

Soon after, the charm of this novelty for the Catholic Church attracted Don PiGi who, did not only introduce the cells of evangelization in his parish of such an ancient tradition as that of St Eustorgio in Milan, but thanks to the generosity and dedication of well endowed people, fascinated many parish priests and lay people by the beauty of this novelty.

For thirty years, people from all over the world, from every continent, flowed to Milan intrigued by the novelty of this method of parish renewal.

Many others were afraid; because the new is always surrounded by a cloud of the unknown, and the danger that one may lose control.

Today we can say that what was new, now is no longer new. The Renewal in the Holy Spirit, the experience of Baptism in the Spirit, the new evangelization and the Parish Cells of Evangelization, today these expressions no longer frighten anyone. After the journey that we have made during the last fifteen years together with the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the support of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, the Parish Cell System of Evangelization has received official recognition from the Catholic Church, by approving our International Organism "*for the enhancement, development and dissemination*" of this method. To confirm this were the two international meetings with Pope Francis in 2015 and 2019.

We can say that the Church has already embraced our novelty and initiated the institutionalization of our experience.

Losing the sense of novelty early, even if it frees us from a lot of misunderstandings and obstacles can be disadvantageous and can offer a challenge. For it is not the habit that makes the monk.

That is why the subject we are having this morning is very important, not only for our brother parish priests who have not yet accepted the call to transform their parish into a missionary parish, but also for us who may have lost the ability to renew ourselves in order to awaken the imagination and curiosity of our confreres.

We recall one of the first experiences that shook the Early Church: when pagans, like Cornelius the centurion and his household, began to receive the Holy Spirit even though they had not yet received baptism.

Yes. Because the Holy Spirit does not accept being locked into our systems and structures. The Holy Spirit is always new; he is the creative Spirit.

I ask you to take this talk that the Bishop of Solsona, Mons Xavier Novell i Gomà, will present to us, not so much as a talk for someone, but a talk for us, for me. Let us let it inspire some new things in us.

Let us pray:

O Lord, deliver us from fear so that we may face new challenges, new pastoral conversions.

Open wide our hearts, Lord, to welcome something new that You want to give us through Mons Novell.

Send Your Spirit upon Him so that He may pass on to us his passion for Your Gospel and evangelization.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord

Amen.