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PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA**

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**5TH GULF CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL SERVICES CONFERENCE
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**Message of Cardinal Kevin Farrell
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“Be Holy, for I am Holy” (1 Pt 1:16)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I would like to extend my cordial greetings to all of you who are gathered in Dubai to take part in the Gulf Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Conference.

“Be Holy, for I am Holy!” (1Pt 1,16). This verse from the First Letter of Peter provides me with some thoughts as a meditation for your meeting. It is a powerful statement that can already be found in the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus (*Lev* 11:44-45). It has numerous implications.

1. Thinking of God's holiness, we immediately all think of His transcendence, His superiority over earthly things, His total separation from evil and from every imperfection. Without doubt this aspect is present in “God's holiness”, which gives way above all to a moral exhortation: that of being “holy”, in other words, separate from sin, just as God is “holy”, that is, full of goodness and completely alien to evil. This is the moral appeal we find in the same Letter of Peter in the verse that immediately precedes it: «Do not act in compliance with the desires of your former ignorance, but, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct» (1 Pt 1:15). Christians are new creatures; they no longer find themselves in that spiritual darkness of the past - as Peter calls “ignorance” - which sparked in them only earthly and selfish desires. Now they are new men and women, reborn from above. Their spirit is full of light and “sees” everything with new eyes: it sees the truth of God, the truth of humanity, the truth of existence. That is why the desires of the baptized are no longer only earthly, but they are desires for good, justice, truth, fraternity and love. I am

sure that all of you, thanks to the “Baptism in the Spirit”, have experienced this newness of life and the moral renewal that followed. But it is never a process that concludes once and for all. It is always necessary to “immerse oneself in the Spirit”, so as not to fall back into the ignorance and desires of one's past life, to remain new men and women and renew oneself day by day, growing in prayer life, in every virtue, as well as conforming more and more to God's holiness.

2. However, the moral dimension is not the only one entailed by the call to conform to God's holiness. In the Old Testament God is often called the “Holy One of Israel”, as can be found in the beautiful hymn of exultation in the book of Isaiah: «Shout with exultation, O city of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel» (*Isa 12:6*). So we understand that God's holiness is not only separation, transcendence, distance, but it also means “relation”. God is the “Holy One of Israel”, He who chose a people and made them “His” people. God elected an insignificant people, moreover enslaved and oppressed, and made them the recipients of care, fatherly and motherly attention, and led them to freedom and peace. Hence, this leads to a second implication found in the invitation to be holy as God is holy. This is an invitation addressed to each person to become neighbors to their brothers and sisters, to enter into a relationship of closeness, of care, of love with others, especially with those who are suffering, those who are oppressed, those who are enslaved, not only to external situations of unjust oppression, but also those who are enslaved within by sin, by vice, by the lack of hope and meaning in life. In this sense, “be holy as I am holy”, means be “neighborly”, be “close” to those around you, to those you meet in the family, at work, in daily life, and bring to all the closeness of God Himself, especially to those scarred by suffering.

3. A third aspect of God's holiness refers to His deeper nature, namely, that of His being the “Holy Trinity, one God”. God is the “Holy Father” (*Jn 17:11*). Jesus Himself is “Holy” (*Rev 3:7; 6:10*), recognized by Peter (*Jn 6:69*) and even by the demons as the “Holy One of God” (*Mk 1:24*). The very Spirit, promised by the Son and sent by the Father, is also “Holy” (*Lk 11:13*), given to men to sanctify all their lives and make them temples of God (*1 Cor 6:11, 20*). From the mystery of God as the “Holy Trinity” we come to know of another dimension found in the invitation to “be holy as I am holy”. It is about humankind's call to realize its deepest vocation, that of being “in the image and likeness of God”. Humans are called to be the image of God the Trinity and to relive in themselves the mystery of “Trinitarian Holiness”. This means striving to relive the mystery of unity in diversity, of perfect communion of spirit, intent and desires, while fully affirming one's own personality in every aspect of life. I believe that this aspect as well is familiar to you, but it should always be remembered and further explored. Even in your groups you are called to relive the “Trinitarian Holiness”, which creates the greatest inner union and nonetheless preserves and, indeed, enhances, what is proper to each of you: your sensitivity, your gifts, your charisms. United and yet different. Unanimous, but always multi-faceted and original. Each with a different charism, but all covered with the same holiness that comes from God.

4. There is one last aspect I would like to underline. Even the Old Testament reveals to us that God's holiness is fully manifested in His love for sinners: «I will not give vent to my blazing anger...For I am God and not man, the Holy One present among you» (*Ho 11:9*). God is holy because He does not remain a prisoner to the evil committed by human beings, He is not blinded by resentment and anger, rather He is capable of compassion, forgiveness,

and reconciliation. This is a profound and moving dimension of God's holiness. According to the latter perspective, the exhortation to be “holy as I am holy” takes on special meaning. It means that we too are called to become capable of compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation. You too, always calling to mind the “compassionate holiness” of God, which I believe you have experienced so many times, do not let feelings of resentment, of bitterness over others' shortcomings or of hardening over unforgiven offenses weaken the spiritual union in your groups. The Holy Father Pope Francis often urges us to be men and women of peace and reconciliation, and reminds us that it is impossible to live together without forgiveness, in the family, in the Church, in society, in the international community. So you too, in your personal lives, in your prayer groups, in the social and work environments in which you find yourselves, be instruments of God's forgiveness everywhere, of His holiness full of compassion for sinners, be promoters of peace and fraternity in a world so divided by hatred, violence and war.

Dearly beloved, I am certain that the Holy Spirit will fulfill in you this call to “be holy as God is holy”. I entrust the work of your Conference and all the immense work of evangelization and mission carried out by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the Gulf countries to the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, assuring you of my closeness in prayer and my blessing.

Card. Kevin Farrell
Prefect