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# ICCRS LEADERSHIP BULLETIN

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Year of Faith:

## The Holy Spirit makes God's word come alive in every culture

Fr Emmanuel Tusiime



The theme of New Evangelisation, with the Year of Faith as a backdrop, inspires us into a new awakening. It calls us to renew our witness according to the culture in which we find ourselves. It requires an attitude of discernment and careful scrutiny of the signs of the times. The Holy Spirit moves us into ministry according to the life of the Church in our territory. The renewed love for God's word and renewed awareness of God's presence help us identify and value what is positive in every culture. At the same time, they purify the culture from elements that are contrary to the full realisation of the person according to the design of God revealed in Christ. "Inculturation involves the effort to have the Gospel take flesh in each people's culture" (CCC, 854).

Pope Benedict XVI, in his homily during the opening mass for the Year of Faith, explains the meaning of the mission of Christ as expressed in *Luke 4:18*. He tells us that "Jesus Christ consecrated by the Father in the Holy Spirit is the true and perennial subject of evangelisation": "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor." After Jesus' Resurrection, John records that Jesus' mission from His Father is to continue in his disciples. "As the Father has sent me even so I send you." (Jn 20:21) In addition, in verse 22, Jesus breathes upon his disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Not only to the disciples, but to His body, the Church, Jesus imparted the Holy Spirit to give us courage

and discernment. This is to help all peoples and nations acculturate our faith in the Living Christ. This is so all may encounter Jesus, who is alive and present in our midst.

Pope Benedict XVI stated, "the renewal of the Church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers."

He said, "The Year of Faith is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world...Through faith, this new life shapes the whole human exist-



ence according to the radical new reality of the resurrection. Faith works through love (Gal 5:6). It is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelise."

This Year of Faith calls for a renewal of our belief. Our faith is in a person—the person of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the beginning and the end. He is the focal point. This person is the Word made Flesh. He is the living word. He is the good news of the New Evangelisation. In this time of renewal, a revitalisation or transformation can take place in us if we allow Jesus to be the Lord and Saviour of our lives. In this Year of Faith, we are encouraged by church leaders to personalise our beliefs and write up the creed by which we live. How does the Holy Spirit inspire you each day to be the living word made flesh? The Bible is the WORD of God. Which passages does the Holy Spirit inspire you to live, day in and day out, in your culture?

Culture is one of those words that encompass many nuances. Gerard Egan (2006)<sup>1</sup> describes culture as "the way we do things here." This involves the "thinking" part of culture as the group's beliefs, values and norms, as well as the "doing," which includes the set of norms translated into rules, guidelines, imperatives, habits, regulations, customs, and ritual. This thinking and doing reflect in a group's patterns of internal and external behaviour. The internal would include the group's worldview, what they think, how they dream, plan and imagine. The external behaviour would be the way

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they tend to act in public. Where is the gospel currently mirrored in your culture? What aspects of your culture need transformation? How can the gospel message reflect and inspire the change that needs to be acculturated for your region to be a sign of the new evangelisation? Gospel values describe the kingdom of God in terms of love, peace, justice and truth as opposed to hatred, jealousy, war, conflict, abuses, injustices, lies and deceptions.

Jesus is the centre of the Christian Faith. God's face is revealed in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the fulfilment of the Scriptures. Jesus not only is the object of our faith, but He is "pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2). God calls us to know Christ and to make him known. "It is not possible," John Paul II states, "to bear witness to Christ without reflecting his image, which is made alive in us by grace and the power of the Spirit."<sup>2</sup> It behoves us to be in communion with Jesus so we can communicate Him to others through our acts of faith, hope and love as well as selfless service to others. As we are grafted onto Jesus, we will share in the inner life of God who is the person called the Holy Spirit. This inner life of grace and blessing is known simply as LOVE.

In living this life of Love, we are called to surrender and live in complete docility to the Holy Spirit. In surrendering, we trust whole-heartedly and rely on the promise that God is with us. When the fullness of God fills us, our Spirit appears to be intoxicated, as was witnessed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:13-15). Let joy and gladness radiate in a psalm of praise and thanksgiving to our God who loves us unconditionally.

A Christian may never think of belief as a private act. Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord to live with Him. Faith also demands social responsibility for what one believes. Pope Benedict XVI said, "The Church on the day of Pentecost demonstrates with utter clarity this public dimension of believing and proclaiming one's faith fearlessly to every person." (*Porta fidei* 10)

This witness to our faith occurs in a particular location or region, with its unique flavour of conversion from sin to holiness. The call to holiness is personal, though not purely private. The call is intended to lead to conversion of life producing a commitment to justice and to other people. The invitation to discipleship implies a sending forth to create communities of love. These communities are composed of real people who are culturally shaped. Pope Paul VI, in his writings of on evangelisation in the modern world reminds us that "Evangelisation loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into

consideration the actual people to whom it is addresses, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life." (*Evangelii nuntiandi* 63)

What is the "Good News" that your particular culture has to offer to the stranger in your midst? What gifts of diversity are you called to share in the global economy? We talk of shortfalls, downfalls and collapses worldwide, with rippling effects. The gospel we live calls for joy, peace, compassion, unity and love. We look to Jesus crucified, who traded in wealth, pleasure, honour and power for counter-cultural values of poverty, deprivation, humility and powerlessness. This exchange brings us hope by reconciling us with our kin, our neighbour, the stranger and ultimately to friendship. Christ does this by loving each of us through his death. He laid down his life for us and there is no greater love. There is no death or lack of gifts for those whose lives are marked with the Holy Spirit.

The mystery is that all of humanity is different, but also the same. In our diversity, we will begin to remove the boundaries and walls that divide us. Racism, consumerism, sexism, poverty, human trafficking, fear of terrorist attacks, suspicion of those we do not know or who are not like us, genocide, wars, child sacrifice and child soldiers, threats of nuclear destruction, environmental degradation, and the list goes on, only remind us of our need for conversion and transformation. Called to surrender ME, YOU, US and THEM to create a unity and communities of WE, will require a radical commitment for social and religious change in our society.

Anthony Gittins, in his book *Called to be Sent*, states, "There is only one way forward; we must identify the sinful structures and sinful actions that produce strangers and aliens and foster the animosity that distorts and dehumanises us. We must also pledge to change some of those structures and actions by changing our own lives in order to love more faithfully and intimately. We must identify our sin, the sin in our hearts and at the heart of our own culture and our own Church."<sup>3</sup>

Jesus modelled inclusiveness and respect for the individual. He waits patiently for each one to awaken from their slumber. A new dawn emerges with the radiance of hope-filled dreams. The dream of our God, with a surprising synchronicity, enters our lives and sets our hearts on fire. It is the same fire of which Jesus spoke. "I came to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already ablaze" (Lk 12:49). May all nations come to welcome the kingdom of harmony, peace and love. 🕯

<sup>1</sup>Egan, Gerard: 2006 *Skilled Helping Around the World*, Thompson/BrooksCole: Canada.

<sup>2</sup>*Redemptoris Missio* 87

<sup>3</sup>Gittins, Anthony: 2008 *Called to be Sent*, Ligouri: Missouri

# The tendency to escape or remain

■ Denise Bergeron + Sr Monique Ancil, rsr



Leadership is a gift of the Holy Spirit. This is why it is necessarily founded on the maxim of selfless love and joyful, fervent service. Joshua is an exemplary model for the leader. The Lord chose him and accompanied him in his mission. It is thus for any leader who, in faith and trust, agrees to be guided. By his faith and his faithfulness to God's call, Joshua can inspire us in our leadership (Nb 27:18–23).

Leadership addresses the duty of the shepherds of prayer groups in the Renewal in the Spirit.

## A Gift

Leadership is a gift. It is a grace insofar as it is received and accomplished faithfully to the Holy Spirit and in a deep spirit of service, following the example of Jesus who came not to be served but to serve. This implies that the Holy Spirit has primacy.

Spiritual animation is done in an atmosphere of love and service. St John the Baptist could be regarded as the patron of facilitators, who said, "He must grow greater, I must grow less." (Jn 3:30) The real leader believes that he, and everyone, is inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, every community is mysteriously the place of God's presence.

## How to Lead, How to Help on the Journey?

The group is on the march, it must advance, otherwise it is stuck walking on the spot. The leader's role is to accompany, which is a specific and delicate kind of service. His ability to listen and to welcome the Holy Spirit will help him identify the needs, the hopes and the concerns of each member and of the group. To "be guided by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16) cannot be done without asceticism and without spiritual warfare.

## A Burden

This role is a burden that cannot be taken on by the same person over several long years. Otherwise, there is the risk that the person makes it their home and their identity. This task can become a burden if it does not come from a call from the Lord manifested through the members of the group. It can also be a burden if it is an opportunity for the person to meet his need for recognition, control, or domination... In that instance, there is little or no room for the Holy Spirit. It becomes overwhelming for the person who exerts this role or for those who suffer under it.

Often, the leader remains too long in this position. He takes up much room and has difficulty delegating. He runs out of breath.

There are many signs that he must stand down and pass the torch to another person: Fatigue, defeatism (a crushing liability), lack of joy and enthusiasm in service, routine, repetition, and too great an attachment to his own ideas and methods.

The true mission of a leader in a charismatic community has three dimensions:

### 1. Be a Watchman

- vigilant in prayer, charity, and unity;
- vigilant to remain faithful to the grace of Pentecost;
- vigilant to help everyone grow in the ways of the Spirit;
- vigilant to discern, from what is happening in people and in the group, what comes from the Holy Spirit or the human spirit or the evil one;

To awaken is to create life, to bring people to a richer, more committed life. It is to stimulate the desire to make life burst forth by the gift of self, commitment, and the release of charisms.

### 2. Be a Servant

- Following the example of Jesus, to be a servant to our brothers.
- Do not seek recognition or power.
- Be a servant of the Word by participating in ministries of proclamation, animation, teaching, and prophecy.

### 3. Be a Witness

- of Jesus Christ living and acting in the heart of our gathering;
- of a dynamism constantly renewed by the Holy Spirit;
- of a loyalty to the community of prayer;
- of a love marked by charity;
- of the Word and by worship.

## The major challenges of Renewal in the Spirit

Every leader must face these challenges and try to overcome them in his charismatic community:

### First Challenge

Renewal in the Spirit: we must keep the flame alive! Maintain or restore to the Renewal in the Spirit the whole charismatic dimension that defines it. Remain faithful to the uniqueness of the Renewal so that the Church can benefit from its grace and its anointing.

### Second Challenge

Be ever more devoted to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Pentecost, which prompted the Renewal of the heart of the Church so spontaneously and unexpectedly, is at work today. Let us have faith that the Lord wants to complete what he started and do beyond what we could possibly want or hope for.

### Third Challenge

Preserve the prophetic dimension of the Renewal. This is the duty of the leader. Renewal is prophetic, in that it is different. It is distinct from other movements. In fact, it is not a movement but a current of grace. It is therefore important to welcome all who come regardless of their life situations. However, beware: to be more accepting, we sometimes are tempted to tamper with the nature of the Renewal. This is a death warrant for a prayer group.


### Fourth Challenge

Enter the new evangelisation. The leader is responsible for getting people to be open to the great needs of their brothers. Our society needs to be re-evangelised. Discussing evangelisation often invokes fear. We may believe that evangelisation demands ambitious projects, which is not true. Through our baptism, we are already called to be missionaries.

Our ministry of deliverance, healing, and liberation exercised by the laying on of hands with prayer, is an expression of our faith in the power of Jesus. By His Spirit, we can overcome all obstacles, be they physical, mental, moral, or spiritual.

### Fifth Challenge

Accompanying members of the prayer group. The leader has a role in accompanying people on their walk in a charismatic community. He must also accompany new members who come to the group, especially the young. How? By offering life in the Spirit Seminars, by teaching the Word of God, and by encouraging the charisms.

The grace of the Renewal is a grace of Pentecost. The true leader must keep written in his heart and in his flesh the grace of Pentecost and foster the blossoming of this grace. May this grace be a "consuming fire" that ignites his way of thinking, speaking, and acting. 



## QUESTIONS TO THE ICCRS DOCTRINAL COMMISSION

The ICCRS Doctrinal Commission, currently headed by Dr. Mary Healy, is in consultation with theologians and experts from around the world.

If you have a question about the CCR, please send it to [newsletter@iccrs.org](mailto:newsletter@iccrs.org)

# The Life in the Spirit Seminar: A tool for the New Evangelisation?

“Look to the future by committing yourselves to a new evangelisation, new in ardour, method, and expression.” With these words Pope John Paul II gave the Church its primary task for the third millennium: a new proclamation of the gospel carried out with renewed vigour inspired by the Holy Spirit, the power who creates witnesses (Acts 1:8).

The Life in the Spirit Seminar is an ideal tool for the New Evangelisation. When it is done well, one can find in it the three characteristics mentioned by Pope John Paul II.

### New in Ardour

Zeal and fervour come from the Holy Spirit. Only baptism “in the Holy Spirit and fire,” lived in a context of deep and permanent conversion, enables a person to act in the anointing of the Holy Spirit to evangelise and to serve the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit gives us the courage to proclaim Christ to those who do not know him, just as the Samaritan woman, given the living water to drink, became a zealous evangelist (Jn 4:39–49).

Today, people listen to witnesses whom Jesus’ unlimited love compels. People hear and believe the ardent evangelist because he has met the Lord, who has attracted him, called him, healed him, and sent him to bear fruit. His heart is inflamed with love like those of the disciples of Emmaus when they heard the word of God.

### New in Method

Christians who become syncretistic or lukewarm generally have not been evangelised. They have not had as yet a personal encounter with Jesus the Messiah, the crucified and resurrected Saviour. The first step in the new method of evangelisation is therefore the presentation of the risen Jesus. The Life in the Spirit Seminar proclaims Jesus by experiential testimony, speaking openly of his name, his teaching, his life, his promises, and his kingdom. It proclaims the kerygma: “God the Father loves you personally. Jesus is your Saviour and Lord.”

The second step is the communal sharing in Jesus’ mission. Jesus sends workers into his vineyard to work as a team, using the gifts and charisms of the Spirit. The unity established by the word of God gives us credibility and plants the seed of fruitful action. When the apostles Peter, Andrew, James and John worked together, they filled their boats with fish (Lk 5:1-11).

### New in Expression

The new evangelisation is new in expression if the evangelist proclaims the gospel in clear and direct terms, if he pays attention to the signs that accompany the proclamation of the word, and if he, driven by a deep faith, speaks under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Through baptism in the Holy Spirit, we learn to imitate Jesus, who “went about all Galilee, teaching... preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people” (Mt 4:23), and who sent his disciples to do the same (Mk 16:15–17). The proclamation of the kingdom is not only in words but also in deeds, done through faith in Jesus’ name and the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Conclusion

The new evangelisation calls us to return to the teaching of Jesus and the powerful action of the Holy Spirit. It therefore calls for a return to basics. The Life in the Spirit Seminar proposes an approach to meeting the living Jesus and experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. It is truly a royal path of entry into the abundant life (Jn 10:10).

### Can the Life in the Spirit Seminar be done in one day?

The Life in the Spirit Seminar was originally designed to be a seven-week program, modelled on the seven weeks of prayer and expectancy that Jesus’ disciples, including his mother Mary, lived from the Resurrection until Pentecost. On the fiftieth day, “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

Today, the Life in the Seminar is sometimes done in a two-week format, or over a weekend, or even in a single day. For some groups, these are the only feasible options due to various pastoral circumstances. However, they are less than ideal. Whenever possible, it is best to use the full seven-week format. In some cases, where people are unfamiliar with the gospel message, a longer format such as three months or a year is even better.

The Seminar is not only a matter of listening to talks, but of following a path of deep conversion, breaking with a life of sin, obtaining inner healing and liberation. People discover anew the Father’s love, come to know Jesus’ salvation and lordship, and are equipped to become his disciples and witnesses in the world. It is only after this formation and conversion that people are ready to receive a deeper outpouring of the Spirit and his gifts.

If there is insufficient preparation, the prayer for baptism in the Spirit will usually not bear the expected fruit of holiness, nor will it bring authentic charisms to serve the body of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Of course, God sometimes sovereignly baptises people in the Holy Spirit apart from the Life in the Spirit Seminar, for example through the sacrament of Confirmation if its preparation stresses the same themes as the Seminars. God pours out his Spirit when he wills.