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Year of Faith:

Though not of the world we are sent into the world

Michelle Moran



In this year of faith we are being encouraged to ‘rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God’ (Porta fidei 3). Recently, I have been reflecting on St John’s Gospel and his letters. During the days leading up to Christmas, life becomes busy and there are many things that I need to do. I made a conscious decision not to let the commercial side of things distract me. I tried to stay in the silent anticipation of Advent, when we gaze through the darkness longing for light. This is not easy amidst the bright decorations in the shops and the loud sound of Christmas carols, which begin to be played during the first week of Advent! We returned to our home a few days after Christmas and met our neighbour, who was busy taking down her Christmas decorations. She said she was glad to ‘get back to normal’ and yet for us this was only the fourth day of Christmastide. For many of us, it is easy to feel out of step with our world. We are a people of destiny and we know where our true homeland lies (Phil 3:20). Yet while we have our earthly life, we also have a calling and mission. We are not to be spectators or passengers merely passing time as we await our heavenly reward. We are called to fix our gaze on heavenly things, to adopt the heavenly perspective, and to live ‘life to the full’ (Jn 10:10). We must radiate this to all those whom we meet.

Called to be in but not of the world

As we read John’s gospel, Jesus reminds us that we ‘do not belong to the world’ (Jn 15:19) and yet we ‘are in the world’ (Jn 17:11). How are we to understand this? Is God calling us to live an ‘otherworldly existence’ keeping ourselves apart from

the world lest we get contaminated or corrupted? We have to be careful not to slip into dualism



where we see light and darkness locked into permanent conflict and therefore we reject everything of the world as being evil (CCC 285). In his priestly prayer, Jesus does not ask the Father to remove us from the world but to protect us from the evil one (Jn 17:15). Therefore, there is certainly a battle we are engaged in but ultimately, through the blood of Jesus, we have the victory.

In the Creed, we profess our belief in ‘one God the Father almighty maker of heaven and earth.’ Also, the Catechism reminds us that ‘Scripture and Tradition never cease to teach and celebrate this fundamental truth: the world was made for the glory of God’ (CCC 293). So clearly, our mission is to be ‘in the world’ radiating the glory of God. As St Bonaventure reminds us, we do not increase God’s glory but we show it forth and communicate it. However, we also know, because of the Fall, ‘the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat’ so we always need to be calm and vigilant (1 Pt 5:8). We have to guard ourselves from being too immersed in the ‘things of the world’. These range from becoming too busy and being distracted by temporal matters, to the dangers that St John warns us of, which include, ‘the sensual body, the lustful eye and pride in possessions’ (1 Jn 2:16).

The Last Days—a time of Missionary Activity

There is a sense in which we as Christians find ourselves in the same complex situation in which

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We are not to be spectators or passengers merely passing time as we await our heavenly reward. We are called to fix our gaze on heavenly things, to adopt the heavenly perspective, and to live ‘life to the full’ (Jn 10:10).



Christ was while on earth. Jesus was fully human, he was Emmanuel ‘God with us’ and he was faithful to his mission. He came into the world as redeemer and saviour to take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). Through the Pascal mystery, Christ heralded in the new creation and made it possible for all those who have faith to receive new life. However this present world has not fully attained its end. The grace of redemption is at work in a suffering universe (Rm 8:18–25). The victory of Christ will only be complete when he comes in glory. Today we live in ‘the last days’ the special time when Christ has come among us and where we wait in joyful hope the return of the Lord in Glory. The Church reminds us that ‘this is the time of missionary activity when like the harvest the Church will be gathered from the four winds into the Kingdom of God for the Gospel must be preached to all the nations before the Lord comes’ (Vatican II, Decree on Missionary activity, 9). At the end of his earthly ministry Jesus handed onto us the great commission, so we today are called to ‘Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation’ (Mk 16:16).


One of the themes highlighted by the Holy Father during this Year of Faith is the call to ‘New Evangelisation.’ In one sense, this is not a new concept for us in the Charismatic Renewal, because when we are baptised in the Spirit, there is a grace for evangelisation. Therefore, many of us have been putting into practice the call first issued by Blessed John Paul II to engage in New Evangelisation, which is ‘new in its zeal, new in its methods and new in its expression’ (Haiti 1983). However, this should not lead us to be complacent. We have been prophetic in responding early to the call and we have been used by the Lord to prepare the way for the new things of the Spirit. The challenge for us now is to keep moving ahead with confidence, constantly discerning how the Lord wants to use us to witness to and proclaim the Gospel in today’s world.

This finds an echo in the Lineamenta for the 2012 Synod on New Evangelisation. ‘The new evangelisation is not a matter of redoing something that has been inadequately done or has not achieved its purpose, as if the new activity were an implicit judgement on the failure of the first evangelisation. Nor is the New Evangelisation taking up the first evangelisation again, or

simply repeating the past. Instead, it is the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today’ (5).

As we continue to journey through the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict encourages us to ‘live an authentic witness of life where we radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us’ (Porta fidei 6). Reflecting upon the first letter of St John, we are reminded that we are called to walk in the light and to live as God’s children. He presents us with four ‘conditions’ which we can use in our personal reflection.

- Break with sin. One of the names of the devil is the father of lies. One of the ways he holds us in bondage is to blind us to our sin. Undoubtedly, for those of us who seek to walk in the Spirit, the more we walk towards the Lord, the more we walk away from sin. However the call is to ‘try to be as pure as Christ’ (1 Jn 3:3). So let us try to build into our lives regular times to examine our consciences, to repent and to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Keep the commandments, especially the law of love. ‘We can be sure that we are in God only when the one who claims to be living in him is living the same kind of life as Christ lived’ (1 Jn 2:5). St John goes on to say, that this involves very practically loving those around us. ‘Our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active’ (1 Jn 3:18).
- Be detached from the world. We are reminded that the world as we know it is passing away and therefore we need to carefully discern the things of the world whilst at the same time radiating the light of Christ.
- Be on guard against the enemies of Christ. Although we are engaged in a battle, St John reminds us that we ‘have been anointed by the Holy One’ (1 Jn 2:20) and ‘we are from God and have within us one who is greater than anyone in this world’ (1Jn 4:4).

Certainly, we are living in challenging times where faith has been eroded and where we sometimes feel under attack. In the light of this, let us draw even more deeply from the grace of this special year and ‘profess the faith in fullness with renewed conviction and with confidence and hope’ (Porta fidei 9). 

Conflicts in a leadership team

■ María Eugenia F. de Góngora



The greatness of the human being is to know how to overcome conflicts. As it is said, “By speaking, people understand each other.” How can we translate this into Christian language, the language of Jesus Christ? Perhaps: “By loving, Christians understand each other.” We must lovingly seek this language to understand each other and to overcome conflicts.

To err is human, and we are human! We still live in a human context, so there will always be conflicts. Good can come of this! Conflict is an excellent opportunity to practice the virtues, the gifts, especially love. It is an opportunity—despite the apparent contradiction—to show courage and to honestly face the challenges of working in service teams. The Book of Acts describes how servants in the first Christian communities overcame conflicts. They would probably raise their voices, they would get angry, they would offend. In the end, though, they all recognised that they were pursuing a common goal: to serve the Lord and spread His Kingdom. They decided to move forward and overcome obstacles.

To move forward, undoubtedly, they had enough clarity to know they were united not by a membership of a club, or employment in a job. In either of those cases, they could easily have resigned and retired, with no further attachment to the cause. On the contrary, the clarity of their “call” prevailed. This was a call full of love and compassion, from the Creator to his creature, a call from the heart of God to the human heart. The call was not earned by merit. The call came only by grace. It was also the special look of God upon each called one. This call filled and transformed their lives. The disciples were well aware that he called them to do what he does: to manifest his glory, his power, his compassion... in other words, to express his love.

History conveys great lessons to us. Despite their differences, the disciples reconciled for Jesus’ sake. Even though it was not always easy, they yielded. They died to themselves so that unity and love would reign between brothers.

Their gestures of self-denial bore great fruit! In the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples faced conflicts properly. They made of the apparent failure a triumph out of love for Jesus Christ. The result built up the whole community. We find in these disputes the origins of great councils that defined—and still define today—the mission of the Church.

Here are some simple guidelines for resolving conflicts and achieving a consensus:

1. Deal promptly with conflict: Objectively, clearly and fearlessly discern the problem (Jn 2:3, Acts 6:2,3).
2. Prayer. Pray for God’s solution with expectant faith. Be calm, unhurried, and persistent Listen attentively to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. “It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves...” (Acts 15:28).
3. Dialogue: Engage in fraternal dialogue, with all its good features: respect, mutual listening, authentic appreciation of each other, and maturity. Know that all parties win when the Lord’s will prevails. Seek unity. (Phil 2:1–5). Only in this way we can come to the best agreement.
4. Love: Above all, love. The Spirit of God moves and encourages. Without him, we can do nothing, and without love, we have nothing. Nothing will be pleasing to the Lord without love.

Only in love’s authenticity can we yield without seeking reprisals later (1 Cor 13; Prov 10:12).

Give the necessary time: it is not a waste of it, but the best investment.

Happy is the community that resolves conflicts and moves on, as we read in Acts 2:47: “Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.” Despite persecution and martyrdom, the Church grew every day. Why?, What was its motivation? Certainly the Church was compelled by authentic testimony! Credibility, strength and authority were grounded in love. Nobody wants to follow false, incoherent people. There is no power in deceit. The Holy Spirit cannot abide in the heart of a liar. The truth always comes out. You reap what you sow. Where there is authenticity, communities are attractive, even with the burden of problems; communities that are faithful to Christ’s command, testify how to resolve disputes.

In the 21st century, despite extraordinary progress in many fields, harmony remains absent. Tolerance, respect and love for others are in short supply. We see a world divided by irrational selfishness and ambition. Sadly, this is sometimes reflected in service teams. They may be involved in the darkness of rivalry or suspicion. They may make no progress in love. If we ask right now if we know of any communities that are stagnant or divided, the answer is probably yes. They lost sight of their mission. Communities that far from manifesting the greatness of Christ and his Church manifest something different. Their witness is ineffective. They do not attract, they repel, and prevent people from participating in communities. Hence we hear that harsh cry of Gandhi, “I believe in Jesus Christ, but I do not believe in Christians...”

Communities are human structures and, for that reason, they cannot be perfect. Good order does not arise spontaneously. The service team should play an essential role in the healthy growth of a community. In particular, the ministry team guides the community to fulfil the mission that the Lord entrusts to it. Unhappy and complacent people will not be courageous or concerned enough to properly resolve conflicts. The objective is to become a Civilization of Love. The Word says that we are “bland” and no longer good for anything. What a tragedy it is to be useless when the calling and mission are so great and sublime.

To promptly address conflicts and not let them mushroom, we must act promptly with love and responsibility. By not knowing how to handle conflicts in time, a service team can be torn apart. This is costly, because as the consequences of division reveals itself, the unfortunate destruction becomes obvious. Poor management of conflicts can infect and eventually kill a community.

Rather than being seen as sources of division and destruction, conflicts should be regarded as opportunities for receiving God’s grace, for discerning his will, and for learning humility. After overcoming differences, we will be even closer to each other, we will mature; by growing in love, we will be more of a family. Joined together in the good fight, being docile to the Holy Spirit, we can go beyond our human struggles to where the Lord will lead. 🏡



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

Are Cleansing Prayers necessary?

What is a cleansing prayer? Is it necessary after praying with someone for healing or deliverance? If you do not do it, are you liable to experience torment such as headaches, pain, or sleeping trouble?

A cleansing prayer is typically a prayer to free prayer ministers from the influence of any evil spirits that may have attached themselves to a person during ministry.

The first thing to remember is that both prayer and faith are essential to ministry; a particular cleansing prayer is not.

We pray before and during ministry, humbling ourselves before the Lord asking for what we need. We give thanks and praise to the One who is the deliverer and pray for greater anointing, deeper faith, humility, and for release of the captives.

We also call to mind our faith, remembering the truth: Christ is in you (Col 1:27), you have the authority of the children of God (John 1:12), you have been given faith to quench all the flaming darts of the enemy (Eph 6:16), if he sends you, nothing will harm you (Luke 10:19), and the Lord will strengthen you and guard you from evil (2 Thes 3:3)

Prayer expresses faith, deepens faith, and releases the power of faith. Prayer can overcome fear, which is opposed to faith. We must ask, is the person who stays up all night in anxious prayer really praying...or simply worrying with their eyes closed?

A good place to start

After a ministry session, it is good to follow what Jesus teaches in Luke 10:17–20:

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Our first response should be to return to Jesus with rejoicing and to share in his pleasure and joy. As we humble ourselves in praise and gratitude for the privilege of participating in his ministry, we remember that our success is all by his grace. He promised, “Nothing will harm you.” We should not give the devil too much attention or become preoccupied about the works of the enemy. Nor should we be awed by the manifestation of evil in a person’s life. This can give the enemy an advantage. Rather, we should keep our eyes on Jesus and his work of redemption.

We may have greater vulnerability to the enemy if the person we prayed for did not experience relief, or if evil was manifest and in some way penetrated our thoughts through a word,

emotion or images. We may also be vulnerable if the session provoked a painful memory that has not been purified. An evil spirit needs a foothold in us to become attached to us.

If this occurs, resist fear, doubt and unbelief, and see this as your opportunity for growth. Pray with others and enter into to the Lord’s presence. Renounce the lies, doubt and unbelief. You may wish to use your favourite cleansing prayer to aid you to enter into his joy.

Resist the temptation to build expectancy for some sort of retaliation from the enemy. When climbing mountains, there is a certain elevation above which snakes will not go. We should all expect to grow to the place of faith where the enemy no longer can nip at us in the same way as when we began.


Evaluate the prayer

When we pray a cleansing prayer that another ministry has developed, from time to time we should evaluate it to see if it reflects the faith that we have been given and if it fits the ministry that we are doing. A cleansing prayer that expresses your faith and draws you to God may be of great help. Conversely, you should not pray cleansing prayers out of legalism or superstition, thinking that something bad will happen if you do not pray the exact prayer.

Spiritual warfare

Spiritual warfare is a normal part of the Christian life. It is part of living in the kingdom here on earth. Spiritual attacks include everything from temptation, to the daily trials of living in a fallen world, to a more intense season of attack on your identity and well being. In these times, remember that God is always good.

However, not all trials come from the enemy. We struggle against our fallen nature and against the natural pressures from the world. Sometimes, what feels to us like an attack of the enemy is really testing from God (see Deut 8:2). The Lord has set us free and he wants to expose any subtle return to the idolatry of trusting in our own strength.

Jesus is, of course, our true model. He was tempted and certainly had trials, but he never blamed the devil for his trials or focused on the enemy. He focused solely on the Father’s will and either ignored the enemy (he remained asleep in the boat), resisted the enemy’s temptation (he quoted Scriptures), or rebuked the enemy (in the desert and in Peter) as he yielded to the will of God. He daily poured out his heart to his Father, and as he proclaimed the kingdom, he advanced it by driving out spirits. In his passion, Jesus obediently took on the sins of the world and experienced the full weight of the evil that entered us through sin. He trusted the Father in all things. Our attitudes are to be the same as his. 

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 ICCRS receives many questions about the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and we do our best to answer them with the help of the Doctrinal Commission. Its members kindly take time to check their references and credit their sources. Some of the questions and their answers are published in this section of the *ICCRS Leadership Bulletin*. They are selected for their relevancy and helpfulness overall for those involved in the CCR.