



ICCRS LEADERSHIP BULLETIN

Formation for current and new leaders in CCR

VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 2

MARCH - APRIL 2016

Guided by the Spirit:

I am a Leader – I am an addict

Jude Muscat

ICCRS Leadership Bulletin

Guided by the Spirit:

I Am A Leader – I Am An Addict

Jude Muscat

Spiritual Warfare: Defeating the Enemy

Bob Canton

Questions to the ICCRS
Doctrinal Commission:

Participating in non-Catholic Communion Services



1. Addiction: an introduction. By way of introduction a short presentation of addiction is called for. Although most addictive habits have a moral dimension, we must also understand that there is a psychological and/or physical dimension as well. Addiction dominates the will and is compulsive in nature. Even though deep down addicts might understand that their irrational behaviour might be ruining their lives and the lives of those around them, the compelling habit, whose source goes beyond the simple search for pleasure, is nonetheless also driven and stimulated by psychological and/or physical reward. Speaking in layman's terms, this tricks the mind into thinking that their addictions are desirable objects. Experts in the field realise that addiction has nothing to do with one's morality or strength of character and as far as I know there is an ongoing debate whether addiction is a disease or a true mental illness. But of course, this goes way beyond the scope of this article and I am the least qualified person to debate such notions. I think it is important to keep in mind that the cause of addiction differs from one person to another. In most cases dealing with it calls for a multidisciplinary approach.

2. Recognising addiction: Some addictions are clearly distinguishable and addicts know very well that they are hooked. The signs and evidence of these addictions are clear and cannot be denied, like excessive alcohol or drug abuse. Other addictions might seem less harmful because the signs are not as yet so obvious and visible, like gambling, if the financial system is still standing, or pornography which is not as yet affecting one's

relationship with others. Addicts deny it by some kind of excuse or else think that they can control it and dismiss it as a simple weakness. Other addictions are nearly imperceptible by the addict. Of course people around them know very well, or at least they can deduce that there is some kind of



addiction. Addiction for leadership, for example, is one kind of condition that can be invisible to the addict but obvious to the rest.

As leaders we need to be extremely careful and diligent in self-examination. Furthermore it is important to react responsibly and maturely if we recognize addiction in our lives. First of all we must always ensure that we are surrounded by strong, trusting and faithful friends. I deliberately use friends rather than brothers or sisters, since the Master himself called us friends, and this kind of friendship means that one is ready to lay down one's life for the rest. (Cf. Jn 15:13-14) We need friends who are not only ready to lay their lives for us, but also ready to call a spade a spade, not because they are arrogant extroverts, but because they care and desire us to be healthy at all levels of our being.

Undoubtedly a wise and holy spiritual director is essential in our lives; we cannot do without one. A good spiritual director, in most cases, can easily discern that something is not going well in our lives. When we are somehow addicted, whether we know it or not, there are always telling signs that are noticeable to those who know us well and love us most.

It is of utmost importance not to let any new habit get over us. Whenever any habit is somehow compelling us to do that which we know is not right, or else we understand that it is getting out of hand and we are forcefully attracted to it, it is better to start sharing. That is why we need to be surrounded by true friends and a good spiritual director. Community is our very special ITU. (Intensive Therapy Unit)

One very important thing is self-examination. As Catholics we have this great tradition of praying the Compline, or night prayer. This prayer offers us an

“
God's mercy provides us with the right tools to walk in step with Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
”



excellent moment of reflection and examination of conscience. If we encounter a compelling habit, it is the place where we can clearly see it in the light of Christ our Saviour. During our night prayer we are opening our lives to the light of Christ and if we see a blooming weed, let us nip it at the bud; if it's grown out of proportion, we need to take drastic measures. In any case, let us seek immediate help.

God wants us to be whole and healthy and whether or not there are moral values connected with our addiction, he wants to heal us, he wants us to be free of the chains that burden our lives. Jesus invites us to go to him, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. (Cf. Mt 11:30) The yoke of addiction maims and it could dismember us from the community that we love so much. It could also inflict a lot of pain and confusion to our families, communities and parishes.

3. The paralyses of shame. Knowing and acknowledging our weakness, addiction or sin, is always the best point of departure. Denial leads us nowhere. On the other hand, acknowledging our addiction has the undesirable effect of filling us with shame: we do not want the world to know that we are addicted, especially if we are leaders and people look up to us and think highly of us. We think that this would destroy our reputation. Let us keep in mind that it is not shame that destroys us, but rather obstinateness and fear.

In Luke 18 the tax collector stood far off and begged for mercy. Jesus declared: "I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted." When we go before God in humility, he is able to heal us. God will never turn away a contrite heart. He will create for us a new heart and will wash us clean of our weaknesses so that we may not sin again. Psalm 51 is the heartfelt cry of a sinner in pain and shame, but is knowledgeable of the fact that God is creator. The term used in verse 10 (*bârâ*) is a verb reserved for the action of God in the act of creation. It expresses a profound theological thought because its subject is God himself, the God of mercy and wonderful healer. Only God can create in the sense of *bârâ*.

If we keep in mind John 13 and the foot washing scene we see in it a prefigure of Jesus' self-giving on the cross. I will only take one aspect of this which is directly linked to the present argument. It would be shameful for a person holding a high position to stoop down and wash his servant's feet. Worst still is the shame of the cross; he was crucified like a traitor, a criminal or a murderer, hanging naked being exposed to all who were present. St. Paul in Hebrews teaches us that "Christ ... endured the cross, disregarding its shame." (12:2) Jesus knew that his self-giving would mean

victory over sin and death, shame did not paralyse him; rather, it compelled him to do what is right and just. That is the reason we "proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23), because running away from shame is a stumbling block to complete healing, and a foolish choice.

If we want complete healing from addiction, apart from any medical or psychological therapies we might need, we must embrace and endure the shame of the cross, being one with him who endured shame in our stead, that we may be made whole.

4. Birthing mercy. One of the most beautiful and touching icons of birthing mercy in the New Testament is recorded in John 8. Jesus, who is purity and perfection, and who is solely eligible to judge and condemn, straightens up, looks straight in the eyes of the adulterous woman and says: "Neither do I condemn you." (v. 11) The woman, thrown into the dust as one would toss away some kind of garbage, was fortunately thrown into the womb of mercy. Biblical scholars teach us that the roots of the words *racham* (verb) and *rachamim* (noun used in the plural intensive to denote excellence) which is translated into mercy, has their roots in the noun *rechem*. (womb) Just like a woman whose womb offers a space where new life could take place, God has this special space within his Holy presence wherein people of all races and of all times can find a hiding place and a birthing place. God's womb is his richness in mercy.

Mercy does not simply obliterate the stains of sin; sure enough it does that as well. Mercy desires to rebuild, renew and recreate; it reaches out to those people who are entangled in the grasp of sin, addiction or any other act that robs us of our true dignity. Mercy is a liberator; while cleansing, it breaks away the chains of bondage and helps us to straighten up. It gives us strength to rise from the filth, strengthens our feet and ankles, our muscles and bones, and gives us the necessary stamina to move into new pastures. God's mercy provides us with the right tools to walk in step with Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mercy speaks the words: "Go now and leave your life of sin" (Jn 8:11b), but in its essence it is an active current of grace that gives life. That is the reason why Jesus quotes Hosea in Matthew 9: "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (v. 13) Sacrifice and burnt offerings are objects of the law, while mercy flows out of God's being. Law, by its very own nature, checks out our deeds according to its data and cries out 'foul' if we are found lacking. Mercy hides us in its bosom and recreates us into new beings.

Do not be afraid to plunge into the open space of God's mercy. 🏠

Spiritual warfare: defeating the enemy

■ Bob Canton



Whether we like it or not, we are at war! And of course, our adversary is Satan or the Devil or the Evil One. He hates anything and everything that God loves, especially human beings because they were created in His image and likeness. This is what Jesus says about the Devil in John 8:44, "Satan was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks in character, because he is a liar and the father of lies."

The New Testament contains at least 300 references to the devil with a variety of names that describe the nature and wickedness of the evil one. The Documents of the Second Vatican Council refer to the devil 18 times. The first reference is found in the document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* promulgated in 1963: "Just as Christ was sent by the Father, so also He sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. This He did so that they might preach the Gospel to every creature and proclaim that the Son of God by his death and resurrection had freed us from the power of Satan and from death, and brought us into the kingdom of his Father."

The teachings of the Fathers of the Church, following the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures, were concerned primarily with the pastoral aspect of demonology, namely, the devil as tempter and evil doer, and how the faithful could protect themselves from his influence.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "The whole of man's history has been the story of our combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day." (CCC#409)

"The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and His kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries - of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature - to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him." (CCC#395)

Pope John Paul II, in his visit to the Sanctuary of St. Michael the Archangel on May 24, 1987, declared, "The battle against the devil, which is the principal task of St. Michael the Archangel, is still being fought today, because the devil is still active in the world."

Pope Francis remarked not too long ago, "We are all tempted because the law of our spiritual life, our Christian life is a struggle. That's because the Prince of this world, Satan, does not want our holiness, he does not want us to follow Christ. Maybe some of you might say: 'But Father, how old fashioned you are to speak about the devil in the 21st century!' But look out because the devil is present! The devil is here even in the 21st century! And we must not be naïve, right? We must learn from the Gospel how to fight against Satan."

Indeed, one of Satan's *modus operandi* is for man to sever his relationship and fellowship with God. To achieve this goal, he often uses his influence on human beings such as temptation, obsession,

physical pain, oppression, infestation, subjugation, and possession. The word of God says in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." Many people, including Christians, wittingly or unwittingly, open the 'gates' for the evil one to enter into their lives. Let me enumerate some of these entry ways:

1. Through occult involvement. (Deut.18:9-12, Deut.7:36, Lev.19:31)
2. Through drugs and alcohol (Prov.23:29-33, 1Cor.10:21), which can subject a person to demonic influence because they are not in control of their minds.
3. Through habitual sin, practicing unclean habits and yielding to the lust of the flesh. (1 Cor.6:9-20, Gal. 6:7-8)
4. Through a person's pattern of thinking. (Eph. 4:22-32)
5. Through unforgiveness, hatred, resentment, and bitterness. (Matt. 18:21-35)
6. Demons can enter children if their parents were involved in Satanism or witchcraft or if they worshipped pagan gods. (Ex. 20:1-5)
7. Through transference of spirits. Demons can transfer to a person through fornication, rape, incest, homosexual acts, movies, T.V. shows that are full of violence, fear, horror, and sexual lust.
8. Through following false religions, heresies, and cults. (1 John 4:1-3, 1 Tim. 4:1-2)
9. Through idle words, (Matt.12:36:37) uttered thoughtlessly, which do not express a person's real thoughts or intentions.
10. Through laying on of hands by someone who is involved in the occult or practices witchcraft. (1 Tim.5:22)

In Eph. 6:12, St. Paul asserts, "For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens." We should remember that Satan is already a defeated foe. Jesus has set us free from the grips of the enemy through His death and resurrection. God's words declare on 1 John 3:8, "Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil." In Luke 10:19, we read, "Behold, I have given you the power 'to tread upon serpents' and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will ever harm you." As baptized Christians, we have been given the power to defeat the evil one. In Rom. 8:37 St. Paul declares "in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through Him who loved us." No, we cannot defeat Satan with our own power or strength. We have to rely on the Lord and the power of His Spirit in order for us to be victorious over Satan. In James 4:7, St. Paul says, "So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

The Lord has equipped us with a powerful arsenal to conquer the enemy. Allow me to enumerate some of these weapons: the Blood of Jesus, the Name of Jesus, the cross of Jesus, the Word of God, the presence and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Intercession of Mary, the great Mother of God, the ministry of St. Michael and other Angels, the Sacraments of the Church such as the Eucharist and Confession, and the Anointing of the sick, the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church, the word of our testimony, prayer and fasting, the authority to bind and to loose, the Sacramentals such as holy water, the crucifix and blessed medals, blessed salt, and the recitation of the rosary. "For, although we are in the flesh, we do not battle according to the flesh, for the weapons of our battle are not of flesh but are enormously powerful, capable of destroying fortresses." (2 Cor. 10:3-4) 🕯️



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

Participating in non-Catholic Communion Services

Is it OK to participate with other Christians in their "communion services"? In the spirit of unity, when attending an ecumenical event, is it possible to share "the breaking of bread" with our fellow brothers and sisters, knowing in full conscience that it is not the Real Presence? What is acceptable in such a circumstance?

We will answer these questions at two levels: 1. What is the law and teaching of the Catholic Church? 2. What should be our approach as Catholics in the developing ecumenical situation?

The law and teaching of the Church

This question is treated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1398 – 1401. A clear distinction is made between Eastern churches not in communion with Rome (that is, the Orthodox and Oriental churches, par. 1399) and the Protestant communities. (par. 1400) With the Orthodox, there are circumstances in which with the approval of church authority, a certain Eucharistic sharing "is not merely possible but is encouraged." (par. 1399) However, these conditions are rarely fulfilled, since the Orthodox requirements are stricter than the Catholic. These restrictions should be respected. (Ecumenical Directory, 1993, par. 132)

Receiving communion in a Protestant church is never permitted for a Catholic, because these communities "have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially because of the absence of the sacrament of Holy Orders." (par. 1400) This last clause refers to the Catholic Church not recognizing in the Protestant communions a ministry passed on through the apostolic succession of bishops from the beginning.

Our approach today

It is also important to recognize, however, that there have been big changes of attitude and in relationships between the Catholic Church and other Christians since the Church committed herself to the movement for unity at the Second Vatican Council. These changes are accelerating under Pope Francis, who is emphasizing the urgency of healing the wounds of division, and who manifests a great openness to Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. In this new situation, in which we are all being led further by the Holy Spirit, we must ask what attitude Catholics should have towards the worship and the liturgy of other churches and communions, particular towards the Eucharist or Lord's supper.

First, we have to respect everything that other Christians do as those sincerely seeking to live and serve as disciples of Jesus Christ. This means that we have to respect their celebrations of the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, even though we do not recognize them as iden-

tical to the Catholic Mass. This was commended even at Vatican II, recognizing that when Protestant communities "commemorate the Lord's death and resurrection in the Holy Supper,... [they] profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and await his coming in glory" (Decree on Ecumenism, par. 22, also cited in Catechism, par. 1400) This is all that the Catholic Church teaches about the communion services of Protestant churches.

Now that the Catholic Church recognizes the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Protestant communions, is it really credible any more for Catholics to speak and act as though Protestant communion services are empty, devoid of the presence of the Lord? We do not know in what ways the Lord Jesus is present in them. But they are not nothing, just as Protestant ministries are not nothing - a fact recognized by the Church's openness to ordain as priests married Protestant pastors who have become Catholics. We cannot say in full conscience that "it is not the Real Presence." We can apply here the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?" (Matt 7:9) We can see that when other Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper they are in some way asking the Father for bread. We thank the Lord for what we know He has given to the Catholic Church, and we pray that He will give this same gift in its fullness to our Protestant sisters and brothers. The teaching of Vatican II in the Constitution on the Liturgy is that the Lord is present in various ways in the Eucharistic liturgy, "most of all in the Eucharistic species," but also, for example, "in the word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in church. Lastly, he is present when the church prays and sings." (par. 7; the last phrase then cites Matt 18:20) These forms of presence are found among Protestants.

The very respectful approach to this question taken by Pope Francis is instructive and challenging for all Catholics. When the Holy Father visited a Waldensian temple in Turin, Italy, last year, he commented positively about a recent gesture concerning the Eucharist and the supper of the Lord. "I would like to recall the ecumenical exchange of gifts that took place on Easter, in Pinerolo, from the Waldensian Church of Pinerolo and from the [Catholic] Diocese. The Waldensian Church offered Catholics wine for the celebration of the Easter Vigil and the Catholic Diocese offered our Waldensian brothers bread for the Easter Sunday's Holy Supper. It is a gesture between the two Churches that goes well beyond simple courtesy and which allows a foretaste, in a certain sense — a foretaste, in a certain sense — of that unity of the Eucharistic table for which we yearn." (Address to Waldensian Christians, June 22, 2015) 