



ICCRS LEADERSHIP BULLETIN

Formation for current and new leaders in CCR

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Guided by the Spirit:

I am a leader, I have lost my passion for the Lord

Denise Bergueron



1. First of all, we must define the words “leader” and “passionate.” A leader is a person chosen by God, through the members of the prayer group, to perform a ministry of service: the washing of the feet. He has the responsibility of guiding his brothers and sisters to Jesus Christ. He is like a shepherd who goes before the flock to show the way. His call is not to be “over” others, but rather to walk with them. A passion is a strong, violent movement, towards the object of one’s desire (Larousse Dictionary). A passionate leader is one who has had a transforming experience of Jesus as Lord and Savior, in such a way that this experience impels him toward achieving a specific goal. The passion is an interior force that channels all his words, thoughts and actions and directs them towards the Lord and his glory.

This passion is the fruit of a deep spiritual experience, which is meant to develop and deepen over time by a sincere and faithful relationship with the Lord. To avoid its withering and dying, this passion must find its source in prayer, and by a living, personal and authentic relationship with Christ, as taught by the Apostle Paul (Ph 3, 12-16).

Just as any child must go through growing pains, so a child of God who wishes to grow, must endure trials in his spiritual life. The leader needs to accept this growth

with all its richness, and have a great desire for reconciliation and communion.

2. Some causes leading to the loss of passion. Let us consider the importance of the spiritual combat of a leader, and anyone

wishing to give himself to the Lord and serve him with a passionate, loving heart.

- Weariness due to excessive activity and the failure to delegate responsibilities.
- Discouragement, when, relying on one’s own strength, the leader does not see the fruit that he had expected.
- Control, that is to say, being before the Lord but failing to give the Holy Spirit room to act.

• Acedia, that is, spiritual sloth that leads to negligence in receiving grace from the sources of life. Spending less time in prayer, easily abandoning the Word of God, neglecting the Sacraments, and so on.

• Experiencing spiritual dryness; which could favor spiritual growth, but is also a place of warfare. It is a time of purification, for seeking what is essential in the inner life. Particularly in these moments, the leader needs support.

These attitudes become obstacles for growth in the spiritual life.

3. The infirmities and temptations that weaken our service as leaders. Raising awareness of these infirmities – which threaten and weaken our service to the Lord, will help us to devise ways to find new strength. Pope Francis presents some remedies (From the original Italian text of *l’Osservatore Romano*, December 22, 2014):

• The illness of thinking oneself “immortal” “immune” and “indispensable”: The antidote for this epidemic is the grace of acknowledging our own weakness and sinfulness, so that we can sincerely say that “we are useless servants; we have only done our duty” (Lc 17, 10).

• Excessive activity: which affects those who work too much, inevitably neglecting “the better part” of sitting at the feet of Jesus (Lc 10, 38-42). This is why the Lord asked his disciples to “get some rest,” (Mc 6, 31) because neglecting the necessary rest leads to stress and agitation. The times of rest for those who have fulfilled their mission is a necessity, a duty that must be taken seriously. Spending time with one’s family and observing the holidays as opportunities for spiritual and physical renewal. Remembering what Qohelet teaches, “there is a time for everything” (Eccl 3, 1-15).

• Excessive planning and organization. There is a need for planning, but never yield to the temptation to control and limit the freedom of the Holy Spirit, which is much greater and bountiful than all human planning (Jn 3, 8).

• Poor organization. When there is not enough communication between the members the Body cannot function harmoniously and temperately. This causes disorder and division, because the members do not collaborate with a spirit of communion and coopera-

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tion, “The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you” (1 Cor 12, 21), thus causing embarrassment and scandal in the Body.

- There is also the disease of our first love; forgetting the 'history of salvation', our personal history with the Lord, the 'first love' (Rev 2:4). This is a gradual decline of the spiritual faculties which, more or less on long term, causes severe disability in the person, making it unable to perform an independent activity. This person lives in a state of absolute dependence vis-à-vis their views often imaginary. We detect this sickness in those who have lost the memory of their encounter with the Lord; those who do not perceive the historical meaning of life; those who are totally dependent on their present, their passions, whims and fads; in those who build walls around themselves and habits and become more and more enslaved to the idols that they have carved by their own hands.
- Rivalry and vanity. “Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2, 3-4).
- Murmuring, slander and gossip. This is a serious illness, beginning with a simple chat about a person, and then it sows suspicion. Saint Paul says, “Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent” (Phil. 2, 14-18).
- Indifference towards others. It happens when everyone thinks only about himself and loses the sincerity and warmth of human relationships; when those who know do not put their knowledge at the service of others; when learning is a self-seeking activity of hoarding knowledge without sharing it generously with others; when, out of jealousy or deceit, we rejoice in the fall of others rather than helping them up and encouraging them.
- A gloomy face. It is the illness of acrimonious and grumpy people who feel that to be serious one must wear the mask of melancholy and severity, and treat others – especially those considered as inferior – with strictness, harshness, and arrogance.

In reality, the theatrical severity and sterile pessimism are often symptoms of fear and insecurity. The apostle must strive to be a courteous person, serene, enthusiastic and cheerful that conveys joy regardless of where one is. A heart full of God is a happy heart that radiates and communicates His joy to all those around him; it shows immediately! So do not lose that joyful spirit, that knows how to handle humor and self-criticism, and makes us pleasant people

even in difficult situations. A good dose of healthy humor is always good!

- The disease of close-up circles. When belonging to a small group becomes stronger than belonging to the Body, and, in some instances, to Christ himself.
- 4. The weapons to be victorious in battle.**
- The strength of the Holy Spirit. The leader lets the Holy Spirit act on him, in both directions: inwardly and outwardly. Inwardly, the Spirit impels him to encounter and contemplate God in love and faith. Outwardly, the Spirit is the soul of any missionary apostolate, he gives the leader concern for others and the need to participate in the evangelization of the world.
 - Assiduous and regular listening to the Word of God. By believing in the Word of God man adheres to the mind of Christ, imitating him, living with him, in him, and for him. The Word transforms him and makes him enter into the new life in the Spirit.
 - Prayer. It allows the leader to deepen his filial relationship with God.
 - Discernment and spiritual direction. According to Rev. Jean-François Catalan, SJ: “spiritual direction is showing the way, offering support in the journey, sometimes shedding light in the midst of darkness, sometimes pointing in a direction and nothing more” (Jean-François CATALAN, s.j., Professor emeritus of psychology. Jesuit faculty of Paris. Doctor in philosophy. Expérience spirituelle et psychologique, Paris, DDB, 1994, p. 168).
 - Community. By attending one’s prayer group, the leader will not be isolated and find strength and support.
 - Prayer with laying on of hands. The leader will find in it a place of grace and healing.
 - The Sacraments. The leader is called to receive the graces of the Sacraments regularly.

I mentioned a few ways to address what I call “spiritual lethargy.” These are part of our human and spiritual growth. Let us be vigilant. The Apostle Paul, by experiencing his littleness, gave us a marvelous secret: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2Cor 12:9).

The leader needs to remember and return to that fundamental experience of his life, the moment when Jesus looked at him with love. He must keep alive in his heart that moment of grace that changed his life and burned his heart. 🍷

Celebrating unity and diversity

■ Oreste Pesare



I am not afraid to say that the Renewal is a revival that challenges the Church, and the churches, to be united in the Spirit, and also seek visible unity in the whole body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the soul and the creator of the Church and of unity; and only with His grace will we be able to reach the goal that Jesus expressed in His last prayer to the Father just before surrendering His life for the salvation of all humanity.

In this respect, Pope Francis is speaking loudly to the Charismatic Renewal. He said to more than one thousand Charismatic priests and bishops during the 3rd Worldwide Priests' Retreat in Rome, on 12th June 2015: "There is a problem which is a scandal... it is a scandal. It is the problem of the division among Christians... it is the problem of the division among Christians. Ecumenism is not just another thing to do, it is a command of Jesus, a command He expressed at the moment before being delivered up to death. "Father, may all be one, as you and I are one, so that the world may believe that it is you who have sent me". Ecumenism is not just a task. It is seeking the unity of the Body of Christ, broken by our sins of division. [...] it is our task now that there is an ecumenical conscience [...] that Jesus, through His Spirit, gives us the grace to discover this way... He invites us to seek the unity of the Body of Christ. Seeking it first of all within our hearts. This is the work of the Holy Spirit".

And also to the participants of the 16th International Conference of the Catholic Fraternity in Rome on 31st October 2014: "Do not forget that the Charismatic Renewal is, by its very nature, ecumenical. Blessed Paul VI commented on this in his magnificent Apostolic Exhortation on evangelization which is highly relevant in our own day: 'The power of evangelization will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways. Is this not perhaps one of the great sicknesses of evangelization today?...'"

From this standpoint, I see the need to re-evaluate the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit so as to - finally - "give the power back to God", rediscovering:

- a personal relationship with Jesus which allows us to experience authentic salvation through "trust" in him;
- a growth in holiness "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (cf Eph 4:13);
- a committed involvement in spreading God's reign first of all in building the Body of Christ and mending old fractures and divisions among Christ's believers... 'for the triumph of the civilization of love'.

Now, continuing with Pope Francis' teachings, this triumph of the civilization of love - that also our beloved Popes Paul VI, St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI dreamed of many times - should be built on the basis of unity in diversity, and not by the easier goal of uniformity. Here are some excerpts of his speech to the Catholic Fraternity, already quoted: "Uniformity is not Catholic, it is not Christian. Rather, unity in diversity. Catholic unity is different but it is one: this is strange! The cause of diversity is also the cause of unity: the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does two things: He creates unity in diversity. Unity does not imply uniformity; it does not

necessarily mean doing everything together or thinking in the same way. Nor does it signify a loss of identity. Unity in diversity is actually the opposite: it involves the joyful recognition and acceptance of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one and the placing of these gifts at the service of all members of the Church".

So, we can build the body of Christ only by seeking unity in diversity, without wishing that the others become like us, while losing their identities. We need to renew our way of thinking about the Body of Christ and step back from our many prejudices about the beliefs of our brothers and their way of living their faith in Christ. In this regard we need to mend many old fractures and division among Christians of different churches, members of the same Church, and certainly between members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal itself. Unity in diversity.

We can reach this goal only through means of forgiveness offered to others, including our enemies, in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is the important tool which the Lord gave us to build the kingdom of God, according to His heart. In fact, although none of us can undo the wrong done by creating and sustaining divisions at all levels, each of us can - and is strongly called to do so - remedy the evil done by concrete acts of forgiveness: with our own neighbours, families, prayer group and community, parish church, and finally with Christians from different churches.

This will happen when we welcome and accept the differences of others without dreaming anymore of a world around us just like we imagine it should be... and this forgiveness becomes mercy, real love that, forgetting the past, allows the 'different one' to be free, just as we want and should remain free, to be faithful to one's identity and faith. Let us, with a merciful heart, think of what unites us more than what divides us.

"Let us walk with what we have in common, which is enough [...] Let us go forward in the strength of the Holy Spirit" (Pope Francis' to the 38th Convocation of the RnS - 3rd July 2015).

Believe me! Each reconciliation done in this spirit will become an effective medicine to heal the many wounds of the Body of Christ... and the Body of Christ will become more and more "the fairest of the sons of men" (Ps 45:2).

Let us seriously take up this commitment in our personal life, for our own holiness, for building the Body of Christ and for the growth of Christian evangelization of the unbelievers of the XXI century. This would be the best preparation towards the Golden Jubilee of the CCR that we will celebrate with Pope Francis at Pentecost of the year 2017.

Greater forgiveness and merciful love for those who are different from us will also help us - as believers and disciples of Christ - in dealing and dialoguing with Muslims in these difficult times. Not responding with violence to violence, but by the power of forgiveness planting a seed of peace in the heart of those in the world who only know the ways of war.

Let us be "another Christ", ready to lose our life completely, in order to spread the seed of mercy... and the civilization of love will be a reality, the prayer of Jesus fulfilled, and a new Pentecost will descend upon the earth. 🕯️



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

Can the pope overturn the laws or teachings of the Church?

Many non-Catholics today comment on how wonderful the pope is and then ask a question like, “Will Pope Francis overturn the ban on ordaining female priests?” The perception is often “new pope – new rules.” Is it true?

Pope Francis has appeared on the cover of Rolling Stone and the Evangelical magazine Christianity Today. Cartoonists have depicted him as a caped superhero. He has a global appeal, and with that is carried people’s hopes that his papacy may usher in change of some kind. But what exactly can the pope change? This question touches upon the teaching authority of the papal office and is often widely confused by Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

When Christ said, “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church” (Mt 16:18), he committed the office of governing the Church to Peter, and this authority is continued in Peter’s successor, the bishop of the Church of Rome, who is the vicar of Christ and pastor of the universal Church on earth. By virtue of his office, the pope has supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church. His authority is supreme because nobody on earth can overrule it; it is full because he shares it with no one, and it is immediate because he requires nobody to speak for him. It is universal, because unlike a diocesan bishop, there are no territorial boundaries to limit his authority, nor are there any constraints of it being applicable to only certain categories of individuals. It is ordinary because it has not been delegated to the pope by anyone else.

So in effect, the pope has at his disposal the supreme executive, legislative and judicial authority of the Church. Does this mean that he can do anything he wants? No. He serves a higher authority: Christ himself. The pope is not the head of the Church, Christ is.

This theological point therefore requires a distinction to be made between two different types of laws: ecclesiastical laws, which are established on human authority, and doctrine or divine law, which is laid down by God himself. Ecclesiastical laws and rules can be changed, divine law cannot.

The laws based on human authority can be changed as often as the Church sees the need to do so. Still, it is important to remember that the authority to make these changes is not granted by any human person; it is God-given. Jesus said to Peter and the apostles, “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and

whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt 18:18; 16:19).

Doctrine, or divine law, on the other hand, is the teaching of the Church on matters of faith and morals. All of this teaching was handed to the Church by Jesus and the apostles before the death of the last apostle. This doctrine can develop over time as the Church comes to understand it better, but it cannot be changed in the sense of reversal. No one, not even the pope, has the authority to change doctrine.

Papal teaching cannot contradict Scripture, Tradition or previous binding papal teaching. Popes have authority only to preserve and interpret what they have received. They can draw out the implications of previous teaching or clarify it where it is ambiguous. They can make formally binding what was already informally taught, but they cannot reverse past teaching and they cannot make up new doctrines out of thin air.

An example of these two types of laws relates to the doctrine of the priesthood. Pope Francis has been asked several times if the Church would consider ordaining women to the priesthood, and his response was “the Church has spoken and says no... That door is closed”. While noting the important role of women in the Church, Francis was referring to the 1994 document *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, in which Pope John Paul II said the Church has no authority to ordain women, and this view must be held by all as a definitive belief. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith then issued a clarification, stating that while *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* was not itself an infallible statement, it expresses the constant and clear tradition of the Church which makes the ban on women priests infallible. One should also point out that non-admission of women to priestly ordination does not mean that women are of lesser dignity than men; it highlights diversity in mission which in no way compromises equality of personal dignity.

In contrast to the doctrine of male ordination is the practice of celibacy in the priesthood. At present, in the Roman Rite, only men committed to lifelong celibacy are normally selected for ordination. By contrast, the Eastern rites in communion with the bishop of Rome do not require the celibacy of all men seeking ordination. If priestly celibacy belonged to the deposit of faith, then all rites would need to conform to it. Celibacy however, is not a doctrine of the Church but a discipline of the Church. It pertains to the ecclesiastical type of laws, and so theoretically could change. 🏰