

## Awake from your slumber

■ Francis Edo Olotu



The fruits of the renewal in the lives of Catholic men and women when it started in 1967 left no one in doubt that the renewal was the work of the Holy Spirit and with time, it was accepted by the whole Catholic Church. The renewal brought freshness in the life of the Church and people touched by the power of the Spirit where experiencing conversions, expressive praise and worship, spontaneous praying, speaking in tongues, healings and miracles, prophecy, evangelization and other spiritual gifts. However, as we journey towards the golden jubilee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in 2017, it is pertinent to ask ourselves whether our fervour had retained its vigour over the years?

Spiritual slumber is a state of indifference to God and his calling upon our lives; it insidiously develops in a formerly fervent Christian. It is a common trend in human beings to allow the fire of renewal to gradually chill into lukewarmness and slumber unless a person is spiritually alert. Jesus used hard words for the Church in Ephesus when he told them in Rev 2:4 'But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.' In Mt 26:40-41 when Jesus found his disciples asleep, he woke them up telling them to watch and pray that they would not fall into temptation. St. Paul in Ephesians 5:14, 1 Thess 5:6 and Romans 13:11-14 told his audience to wake up from sleep. Jesus in Rev 6:15 said: "Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!"

This Jubilee affords us an opportunity to re-examine our lives and repent of the sin of sleeping while we ought to be awake doing God's work. To stay awake in times like this, the following are practices would be helpful:

1. Aspire to grow in the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. You must be acutely aware at all times that you need the grace of God to succeed as a Christian; ask the Lord daily for this grace. Paul told Timothy that he needs to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 2:1).
2. Spend quality time with the Lord every day; regular visits to the Blessed Sacrament affords you the opportunity to be intimate with the Lord. Power flows from God to us when we are

in his presence. Psalm 16:11, tells us that in God's presence, there is fullness of joy and on his right hand, there are pleasures forever.

3. Practice the presence of God. It means uttering a prayer before all your activities of the day. When you cultivate an awareness of God's presence in all you do, sin would be repugnant to you. 'He "prays without ceasing" who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer. Only in this way can we consider as realizable the principle of praying without ceasing.'

4. Establish a personal culture of Pentecost wherein you ask the Lord for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon you daily. By this you would not be living on stale manna. Praying in tongues for extended periods daily helps you build your inner man (1 Cor 14:4). The Holy Spirit makes us a fountain of living water (Jn 7:38) and helps us in contending for the faith in times like this (Eph 5:18; Jude 20).

5. Frequent reception of the sacraments especially the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist. The sacraments help us to remain steadfast in the faith. They enable us to connect with Jesus who tells us in Jn 15:5-6, that unless we abide in him and He abides in us, we cannot bear fruit.

6. Active involvement in evangelization. Pope Francis said, "How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervour, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction! Yet I realize that no words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts. A Spirit-filled evangelization is one guided by the Holy Spirit, for he is the soul of the Church called to proclaim the Gospel....I implore him to come and renew the Church, to stir and impel her to go forth boldly to evangelize all peoples" (The Joy of the Gospel, 261).

7. Spend time on the word of God – read, study and meditate upon it. It would build your faith, shine light on your path, make your life fruitful and give you an inheritance among the saints. (Josh 1:8; Ps 1:1-4; Acts 20:32).

8. Active use of your spiritual gifts in the prayer group and in the church at large.

May the Lord give us the grace to know how much we need to keep awake in the times we are in so that we can maximize every opportunity to serve the Lord faithfully. 🕯️

### ICCRS Leadership Bulletin

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# Father May They Be One

■ Ann Brereton



The Book of Nehemiah speaks of the rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem. The Lord asked Nehemiah to 'rebuild the Walls of Jerusalem, an impossible task for one man. Determined to fulfill this commission Nehemiah set about uniting a divided people (Israelites) with this common purpose - the end result being when the Wall was complete it became a fortress capable of withstanding attacks from enemies.

We live in a fractured world. There is disunity on many levels. Nations fighting against Nations. Religions against religions. Families against families. Individuals against individuals. This is nothing new. Since the beginning of humanity, the chosen fracture between God and humankind has resulted in disunity. However this is not God's plan for us.

Today powerful voices are calling for unity. There is a building currently occurring between mainline and evangelical denominations. Historic gatherings of unity are being planned for 2017. Various Christian denominations will meet and dialogue in Geneva for the 500 year anniversary of the Reformation. There is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Catholic Charismatic Renewal which the Pope has said "was born ecumenical and therefore will be ecumenical in that sense". On many levels we are witnessing unity in diversity.

Pope Francis said "The search for unity among Christians is an urgency from which today, more than ever, we cannot subtract ourselves. In our world, hungry and thirsty for truth, love, hope, peace and unity, it is important for our own witness to be able to, finally, proclaim with one voice the happy news of the Gospel and to celebrate together the Divine Mysteries of our new life in Christ! We know well that unity is primarily a gift from God for which we must pray incessantly, but all of us have the task of preparing the conditions, of cultivating the ground of the heart, so that this extraordinary grace will be received" (Pope Francis address to members of the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople 28/6/2013).

Leonard Ravenhill said "The opportunity of a life time must be seized within the lifetime of the opportunity." There is an opportunity now for rebuilding. A time of uniting Grace, of hope. A time of Mercy and Forgiveness.

Saints Peter and Paul had doctrinal disagreements which

were resolved through brotherly dialogue. The Nicene and Apostolic Creed came from disagreements. Through Christians meeting together these powerful proclamations of Faith were born.

Satan wants division and has accomplished this from the Garden of Eden. He knew he needed to separate Adam from Eve as it would be harder to tempt them together. He lured them away little by little... a tactic he still uses today. Jesus warns "a house divided upon itself cannot stand" (Mk 3:5).

How much more powerfully can the Spirit of God work in a whole body rather than a fractured one.

Our voice may not reach to the ends of the earth however we are called to be like Nehemiah, to be builders, in our own sphere of influence. Many prayer groups and communities are divided. This is not acceptable. As prayer group leaders it is imperative that we work towards unity within our groups and communities. To dialogue together on that which unites and that which divides. This move is not to be a superficial token of unity but a deep heart connection with our brothers and sisters. We must pray for the Grace to live Philippians 2:1-5 "... make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus".

A deathbed message can encapsulate the hopes and desires of the dying for those who will continue to live. John Chapter 17 reveals the desires of our Lord's heart for those He would be leaving behind. Praying to the Father before beginning His passion: "Father, I pray for those who through their (apostles) teaching come to believe in me (US). May they be one just as, Father you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me... May they be so perfected in unity that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me and that you loved them as you loved me"...

Jesus' pray for unity from John 17 still stands – as it is yet to be accomplished "that we may be one". It is our Unity which will cause "the world" to believe in Him. 🏡

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# Nurturing future leaders

■ Jude Muscat



We all know that good leadership is essential in all areas of human life. If we want people to be motivated and productive we need to have inspiring leaders. Of course in each area of human activity motivation and productivity may take on different meanings. Concision forces us to assume that we know what we are talking about and so we move straight to the subject matter.

## Creating an Environment

Lk 6, 12-13 captures an important image and shows that the twelve were chosen from among the disciples. Jesus first created an environment then chose the twelve. If the next generation of leaders (or any other gift) are to be effective and charismatic, the present environment is to be Spirit-filled. Leadership is simply one of the services within a Spirit-filled environment where great things are happening and people are encouraged and given the freedom to exercise charismatic gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Spotting Leaders

It is commonly believed that the twelve Jesus chose would have been the least possible contenders for a leadership job. I am not too keen about this theory since it reduces human nature to nothing. We know that Grace does not destroy human nature, but perfects it. So, Jesus would have already seen the twelve, he would have analysed their action, their fervour, their intelligence, and their potentiality. He did not stop there; Luke made it clear that Jesus “went up on a mountain to pray.” Our good hunch is not enough; the last word should necessarily be given to the Holy Spirit. A nearness to God (the mountain) is essential for present leaders when discerning and looking out for potential leaders.

Leadership may be a skill but experience taught us that many leaders share similar traits. It is these traits that we have to identify. In this short article I will concisely limit myself to the most important spiritual traits that can identify a good leader.

a. Community builder: A good leader is always an affable person who can bring people together, hold them together and shows great respect to all.

b. Motivated by love: Many people can manifest a lot of stamina and a lot of creative attributes, but they are not always motivated by love towards the community.

c. Prayer: It is extremely easy to spot a person who has a strong and committed prayer life. A person who prays shows a great desire for God rather than a desire to belong somewhere or a desire to ‘do’ things for God.

d. An inclination towards study and truth: Since a leader

is expected to lead, to spur and to mentor, an inclination towards deeper study, reflection, meditation and a search for the truth are essential. Surfing the waves is not for people who want to change the world.

e. A genuine charismatic approach: In simpler words ‘led by the Holy Spirit’. Charismatic gifts have to be apparent and manifested in the power of the Holy Spirit. A leader within the CCR must not only use one’s gifts powerfully, but looks for other gifts and motivates people to use them.

f. A person of Authority: We read in Mt 7:29 that Jesus taught as ‘one who had authority’. This is the underlying concept of authority and surely not being despotic or authoritarian. A person of authority must show a good degree of humility and must have an open heart, an open mind and an open ear. Potential leaders must be approachable, receiving people with love, joy and mercy.

g. A person of impetus and vision: Such people are intent on what is essential. They do not just react to things happening around them but they push toward a goal and move others with them. They are not people of empty words, but their action is in sync with their ideas and visions.

## How to Nurture

First and foremost we need to establish good relationships with these people. Extreme care is needed here because it is very easy to create division within a community if a person or a group of persons are perceived as ‘favourites’. Calling people into leadership is not moving them up the scale, but rather helping them move into humble service and bringing out the gift bestowed on them.

While keeping a watchful eye for the traits discussed above, we need to show trust and provide them with opportunities to take on roles of responsibility. These roles give a lot of feedback and help us monitor the progress.

When we are nurturing leaders we are collaborating with God. He gifts his people and we help them reach maturity. God may have different plans for them. For this reason we have to delegate different roles to them. As long as division is not created or pain is not caused, we have to give them the freedom to solve problems and manage things according to their abilities. True leaders are gate-crashers so they can forge pathways where they do not exist. Do not burden them with old strategies, as long as a good balance between the old and the new is maintained.

Mentoring includes ongoing training and so we need to provide good programmes and teachings. Open and honest discussion with potential leaders is essential. We must recognise their achievements and show appreciation and praise where it is due. On the other hand we have to point out mistakes, admonish and correct accordingly. 🙏



## 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)

# Is baptism in the Holy Spirit necessary for those who receive confirmation as adults?

*If the sacrament of Confirmation is delayed to a time when the recipient is making a free will adult decision (18 years plus), is baptism in the Holy Spirit necessary?*

This is an understandable question, since baptism in the Holy Spirit is the essential and intended gift of the sacrament of Confirmation. Yet experience confirms that there can be an enormous difference between the objective reality of what God does when a sacrament is administered and its subjective realization in the recipient.

On the objective side, the Catechism states that “the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (CCC 1302). So when the sacrament of Confirmation is validly celebrated—whether for a child (in some of the Eastern Rites), an adolescent, or an adult—we must assert by faith that the bishop’s laying on of hands imparts the gift of the Holy Spirit.

On the subjective side, the Catechism notes that “the fruits of the sacraments also depend upon the disposition of the one who receives them” (1128). The ICCRS booklet *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, drawing from St. Thomas Aquinas, elaborates on this subject: “various factors such as inadequate preaching of the word of God, lukewarm faith, unrepented sin, insufficient preparation, lack of understanding of the reality of the sacraments, a secular mindset, or psychological or spiritual obstacles can hinder the sacraments from achieving their full fruitfulness.” Thus although the sacraments always confer grace, we can never assume that they are “automatically” fruitful in a person’s life.

Scripture shows that with each group of new Christians who were brought into the Church, the apostles were very attentive to what was experienced. They sought to ensure that the new believers experienced what they themselves had experienced—that people were actually “clothed with power from on high” as Jesus promised (Lk 24:49). This occurred, for example, for the new believers in Samaria, in Caesarea, and in Ephesus (Acts 8:17; 10:44-45; 19:6).

In the case of Cornelius, Peter later shared with the church in Jerusalem how he had witnessed the signs of tongues and spontaneous praise, declaring that “the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 11:15-16). This evidence was crucial for those who had challenged Peter, who when they “heard this, stopped objecting and glorified God,

saying, ‘God has then granted life-giving repentance to the gentiles too’” (Acts 11:18). Clearly, the observable evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit was an essential part of the Church’s understanding of the Christian life, even though no single effect—such as tongues, for example—was ever considered a “litmus test” of having received the Holy Spirit.

Part I of the ICCRS booklet discusses these characteristic effects of baptism in the Spirit. Although they differ in each person, the following are common:

A personal encounter with Jesus, experiencing his unspeakable love and strong awareness of the Holy Spirit and his supernatural gifts: Freedom from sinful tendencies, the healing of relationships, the Mass coming alive, scripture coming alive, prayer springing from the heart, praying in tongues, the release of other charisms, awareness of the spiritual battle, zeal to evangelize.

The fact that someone receives Confirmation as an adult (18 years or older) does not in itself guarantee that this personal, experiential fruit of baptism in the Holy Spirit will be realized. People receive Confirmation for a variety of reasons—because they have a desire to grow spiritually, or simply because they know they are supposed to, or because Confirmation is necessary for getting married in the Church. In such cases, they may not be adequately prepared to make the full surrender to Jesus that is at the heart of baptism in the Spirit. On the other hand, children younger than 18, sometimes even as young as seven, can be capable of such a surrender. So the key factor is not age but faith, repentance, understanding, good preparation, surrender of one’s life to Jesus, and openness to the Holy Spirit and his gifts.

A caring pastoral approach must look at whether these effects have been experienced by the individual. It may be helpful to lead the person through a list like the one above. If these fruits are evident, we rejoice at the priceless grace that has been released into their life. If not, we can invite them to a Life in the Spirit Seminar or offer to pray over them for baptism in the Spirit so they can experience the fullness of what God has for them.

We can take the same posture as St. Paul who wrote twice in 1 Corinthians, “I handed on to you what I myself received” (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3). We who have received baptism in the Holy Spirit are under a profound obligation to “hand it on” in any of the countless ways that are modelled in the Charismatic Renewal. We can be confident that God himself seeks to restore the normal fruitfulness of Confirmation, while in the meantime we pray for baptism in the Spirit with anyone who is disposed to receive it. 🙏