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ICCRS Leadership Bulletin

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# ICCRS LEADERSHIP BULLETIN

Formation for current and new leaders in CCR

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## Advent Christmas preparation

■ Jim Murphy



Protruding out of the jungle, on a cliff above the Caribbean Sea, lies the ancient walled Mayan City of Tulum. Because of its location on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, the people of Tulum were the first to see the sunrise each day. In fact, the original name of the city (Zama) simply means dawn.

Since ancient times man has waited for the dawn. Before electricity, or candles, or campfires, darkness was a frightful thing for humans. The darkness was fraught with danger and confusion. We huddled close and waited for the first streaks of light in the eastern sky.

Darkness in the human experience is more than simply the absence of light. It speaks about fear, confusion, evil, and bondage. It is something with which every human being struggles. Like the ancient people of Tulum, we are all waiting for the dawn, waiting for light, waiting for the revelation of God. We can all say with the psalmist, "I wait with longing for The Lord, my soul waits for His word. My soul looks for The Lord more than sentinels for daybreak. More than sentinels for daybreak, let Israel look for The Lord" (Ps 130).

Advent is a season of looking and waiting for the Lord. It is a time to recognize that of ourselves, we cannot escape the darkness. We recognize the power of sin and the brokenness of our fallen world. It is a time to turn from darkness and look to the light.

In the early Church, Advent was actually a penitential season. It was a time of fasting and penance in preparation for the great feast of Christmas. It is as if the Church wanted us to recognize our poverty, so that we could appreciate and celebrate more fully the "light that has come into the world". You will note that purple is the color of both Advent and Lent.

Advent is also a time when the Church proclaims that we await the return of Christ to our world. Advent is not only a reflection of events that took place 2,000 years ago. Advent is a looking ahead to the glorious return of Jesus, when at last, He will completely vanquish darkness and we shall live in eternal light!

Sadly, these reflections are lost on many - even faithful Catholics. For so many people, Advent is simply the warm-up for Christmas in our over-commercialized world. Merchants exploit the selling power of Christmas and many stores are already displaying Christmas

themes by the end of October!

In this high tech, instant gratification world we live in, we have simply lost our ability to wait. There is no time for the luxury of reflecting on darkness and light. There is just too much to do! Sadly, we barely reflect upon our own poverty, our need of a Savior, and the great gift of God coming into our world. "The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom, a light has shown" (Is 9:1).

If you are ready to make of Advent a deeper experience, consider trying a few of these ideas this year:

**Spend more time with the Advent wreath:** Whether it is with family, friends, or fellow ministers, enter deeply into the rituals, prayers, hymns, and readings of the Advent wreath. It is simple enough to have something for everyone, yet carries within it great lessons. Spend more time there.

**Take more time for silence:** Turn off the electronics and just be quiet. It will be hard at first, but in that silence, great revelation will come.

**Recover the penitential nature of Advent:** Celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation during this season. Find some way to bring even a little fasting and penance into this time.

**Reflect upon your need for light:** Perhaps keeping a journal this Advent would help you recognize areas of your life that need the merciful light of God. This is not meant to be a negative thing, but instead a time of joyful "looking for daybreak". It's an opportunity to reflect on our great need for a Savior.

**Slow down!** The commercial pressure of Christmas puts so many demands on us. Do not surrender Advent to your Christmas to do list! Pace yourself. Simplify Christmas preparation a bit, so you can participate in Advent.

As simple as these things sound, I assure you, there will be many temptations to abandon them all! Do not surrender Advent! It is a holy season of the Church that, when properly observed, not only makes Christmas, but the rest of the year, so much more meaningful.

Like the prophets of old, like the people of the City of Dawn, let us patiently wait in hope for the Light that is coming into the world, the revelation of God, Jesus Our Lord.

I wish you a blessed Advent. 🕯️

# Prophetic Intercession

■ Cyril John



Last evening, I returned from a whole day's Jericho Prayer in New Delhi organized by the Delhi Crusaders. About 130 people attended. This is the third year that the Jericho prayer is being organised in India's capital city. It takes place monthly for seven months ending with 40 hours of adoration and intercession in the eighth month. Assembling at 7:45 AM in the Cathedral premises, after confession and Eucharistic celebration, the group moves in three buses around the capital city. The results of the two previous Jericho prayers have been amazing.

In many regions of the Renewal, similar things are happening. Prophetic intercession and Jericho prayer are growing and becoming quite popular. The keen interest shown by some of the bishops in promoting intercession in their dioceses is notable. In recent times, I was invited by bishops to organise prophetic intercession training for priests, religious and lay people in three dioceses. Seminars and retreats on intercession take place in many locations. Teaching sessions and a workshop on prophetic intercession given to 110 sisters at the religious sisters' retreat in June 2017 were well received.

At the meeting held in Bethlehem in November 2013, the ICCRS Council sensed that the spread of intercession in all parts of the world was a powerful move of the Spirit. The Council decided that training in intercession should be offered to the Church as a Golden Jubilee gift of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. The Council offered to organize "ICCRS Intercession Training Course (ITC)-A call to Prophetic Intercession" in all continents, regions, and nations that would like to host the course. ITC consists of six days of training. They include about ten teachings on such subjects as intercession, workshops on prophetic intercession, intercession outreaches, workshops on charisms, Eucharistic celebrations, and adoration. The first such Intercession Training Course by ICCRS was organized in Montreal, Canada hosted by the Centre de Prière l'Alliance from 30 June to 5 July 2015. Five hundred intercessors from 31 countries took the Course. The second ITC took place in Kinshasa, Congo, Africa from 1 to 6 July 2016 with 750 participants from five countries. The third ITC took place in Surabaya, Indonesia with 275 participants from seven countries. More ITCs are being planned in Gaborone, Botswana from 6 to 11 November 2017 and in Fulda, Germany from 2 to 7 October 2018.

Besides the six days ITC organized under the auspices of

ICCRS, I have been invited to preach retreats or seminars on intercession in Canada, Italy, Tanzania, Brazil, Bahrain, Latvia, Finland, Oman, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Singapore, and the USA. The ICCRS Subcommittee for Asia Oceania (ISAO) organized "Intercessors Arise-A call to Prophetic Intercession" in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 22 to 25 January 2014. Seventy-five intercessors from twelve countries participated in the first intercessors' gathering held in the Asia-Oceania Region. ISAO is organizing a second gathering of intercession leaders in Singapore from 4 to 6 December 2017. Two workshops on Prophetic Intercession took place in the Basilica of St. Ignatius of Loyola on 1 June 2017 as part of the Golden Jubilee events in Rome from 31 May to 4 June. They attracted large crowds from several nations.

As the recognition of the importance of intercession has grown, several leaders have made spreading the cause of prophetic intercession an urgent priority. For example, Anne Marie Gatenby from Perth, Australia who also coordinates intercession for ISAO, is promoting prophetic intercession in Oceania. Denise Bergeron in Quebec, Canada is spreading the message of intercession among the French-speaking people. Elvira Cardenas in Peru, who coordinates intercession for CONCLAT, travels to different countries to speak about prophetic intercession among the Spanish-speaking people.

Brian Sullivan from Ontario, Canada attended the ITC in Quebec in July 2015. He has been spreading the message of prophetic intercession among the English-speaking people of Canada.

Brian shared with me one of the prophecies that Christy Johnston received during the prophetic intercession workshop: "I am empowering My intercessors with heavenly insights and unrivalled strength. They are My secret weapons... In this time of turbulence, I am commissioning them as My Secret agents to destroy the powers of darkness and the enemy's plans. Their intercessions will bring to light everything that has been hidden in the shadows." How true. Prophetic intercession is the Lord's own secret weapon. Prophetic intercessors are the Lord's own secret agents chosen to destroy the powers of darkness and the tactics of the evil one in turbulent times such as these!

May the Golden Jubilee Year of the CCR, as we await the birth of Christ, be a time of listening and praying prophetically for the birthing of a new springtime in the Church! 🕯️

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## Being witnesses in a secular world

■ Andrés Arango



In today's world, whenever a special time of year approaches, people devote their attention, time, and money to preparing for the celebration. We are about to celebrate Christmas. Most people will gather to eat and exchange gifts. They will gather to celebrate according to the tradition and culture of their countries. Still, what is Christmas really? What do we celebrate during this time of the year?

Christmas is a time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the coming of God into the world. He became man and was born of the Virgin Mary in a humble stable in Bethlehem. The Church wisely proposes to us the season of Advent, in which we prepare to welcome Jesus again in our hearts. December 25<sup>th</sup> is the day dedicated to celebrating the birthday of Jesus, a joy that spans for days during the Christmas season.

If we surveyed the people celebrating Christmas and asked them what they were celebrating, many would not mention the birth of Jesus. I remember years ago a story in a youth group. There was a family gathered to celebrate Christmas. The child Jesus was hiding in a corner of the house. Suddenly, they knocked on the door and the child Jesus saw them come in with a delicious cake. He was so happy! He thought they had brought it to celebrate His birthday. Then, more people came with gifts and they started exchanging them. Jesus thought, "The biggest one must be for me", but in the end, He did not get any gifts. The revellers ran out of food and ate all the cake. Finally, the child Jesus left the house saying, "Once again, they forgot that the reason for the party was to celebrate my birthday".

We could ask ourselves, "What should my gift for Jesus be this Christmas?" Tradition tells us that Saint Jerome, the great scholar of the Bible, was in Bethlehem working on translating the Holy Scriptures. The child Jesus appeared to him, asking him excitedly, "Jerome, what are you going to give me for Christmas?" He replied, "I give you my hours of study, my fasting, and my nights studying your Word". The child asked, "What else?" Jerome said, "I have nothing else to give you". To which the child responded, "I just want you to give me your sins".

In today's society, it is not easy, especially for young people, to live in the world as faithful witnesses to Jesus. However, in this holiday season, we can, with simple things, witness that God became man out of love for us.

To that end, we will give you some ideas of how to live this Christmas:

**1. Setting priorities in life:** We can make a list of what people, things, hobbies, etc. take time in our lives. We will be surprised by the place God occupies. Therefore, we must be intentional in placing God above all: in the first place. This means that every day, we should take a considerable amount of time to pray and to talk to Jesus and we shall see the wonders that will happen. I remember in my country Colombia, every year we pray a novena before Christmas. One of the prayers says that the baby Jesus told Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque that whatever we ask by the merits of His infancy will not be denied. So, put Jesus first, ask what you need, and you will see great miracles.

**2. Making the right decisions:** Every day, we face decisions that we need to make. Life is constant decision making. In this Christmas season, you will debate yourself on what to spend your money on, or for whom you should buy presents. Presents are great ways of expressing to others how much we love them because we know that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). However, in this Christmas time, there will be many people living in solitude, in sickness, or in hunger. We will encounter people who might ask for our help and we will have to make a decision. What a great joy if we are able to offer our help materially and spiritually to those in most need. Right there, in them, we shall see the face of Jesus. "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40).

**3. Establishing good habits:** A successor to Saint John Bosco, the great apostle of the youth, used to say that whenever he needed to make a decision, he would look at a picture of Don Bosco thinking, "What would John do in this situation?" By remembering what John used to do, he became a great successor to this work with the youth. Thus, if we establish the habit of reading the Holy Scriptures every day, we will increasingly know the thoughts, feelings, and actions of Jesus. In this manner, we will learn to act like Him every moment of our life.

Therefore, Jesus calls us to be His witnesses in today's world. It is not so much about talking about Jesus, but about living like Jesus. Therefore, let our every action, every word, and every gesture during this season show the world that Jesus dwells in the midst of our society. 🕯

### THE CROSS OF THE RENEWAL

With great joy we announce the resumption of the Cross of the Renewal production and distribution. The project, conceived and implemented in Canada by our brother René Brimo, now in heaven, to give a symbol of belonging and witness to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal's stream of grace and for the continued support of ICCRS in its worldwide service mission.





## 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 it licit to bless objects via the media? #DC4-JD

*Sometimes a priest blesses water, oil, or salt and then says, “This blessing is also valid for those who are watching this video”. Can objects be blessed via the media (TV, phone, video calls or recorded videos like YouTube)?*

There are no hard and fast answers to this question. There are varied opinions, reflecting the changing environment in which we find ourselves when it comes to online presence, virtual communities, social media, live streaming, and the like. To answer this question adequately, there are several items to consider.

The first issue is what particular items or objects can be blessed? The answer is that almost anything can be blessed, if it is not inappropriate. People have had their shops, cars, and homes blessed. There is even an official blessing of pets on the feast of St Francis. Very often, we ask the Lord to bless our food before we eat it. Jesus blessed the loaves before He gave them to the 5,000.

The question at hand, however, is referring specifically to sacramentals, which are objects that we use for prayer or the spiritual life. Sacramentals are “sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments” (CCC 1667). Although they do not “confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do... by the Church’s prayer, they prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it” (CCC 1670).

Sacramentals include crosses for wearing or hanging, holy pictures, holy cards, medals, scapulars, rosaries, candles, prayer books, and similar holy items. They ought to be blessed by a member of the clergy (a bishop, priest, or deacon) because they always ought to have some kind of sacred use. He may use an official church blessing, or he may bless the item by saying his own prayer and making a sign of the cross over it.

When it comes to whether or not the sacramentals can be blessed over the internet, live streaming, social media, TV, or otherwise, there is very little guidance available. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to turn to the example of the Holy Father. On some occasions, he expresses his intention to bless devotional objects such as medals and rosaries over the radio, television, and the internet, to those who follow the transmission directly. This intention to bless cannot be presumed for every transmission of a papal Mass. It needs to be stated explicitly.

Regarding a blessing that is recorded and then viewed or listened to later, we can again turn to the example of the Pope. The Church specifies that the plenary indulgence that is given through a papal blessing “Urbi et orbi” can be received by social media, but only while it is being performed, not later. If we extend this principle to all blessings of sacramentals, then a blessing has its intended effect only for those who participate in real time (whether by personal presence or by media transmission). However, the blessing can still be a means of grace for those who follow the recording later, just as any prayer can. The grace of God is not bound by time. When we listen to preaching or teaching or prayer through recorded social media, our souls can be touched and our relationship with God and others deepened through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning the seven sacraments, the Church has made clear that they always require some form of physical presence between the minister and the recipient. Therefore, they can never be given over the internet, phone, or any social media. The Pontifical Council for Social Communications states in its document *The Church and Internet* (9):

- There are no sacraments on the Internet; and even the religious experiences possible through the internet by the grace of God are insufficient apart from real-world interaction with other persons of faith... pastoral planning should consider how to lead people from cyberspace to true community.

A final factor to consider comes from another statement in the same document (5):

- Although the virtual reality of cyberspace cannot substitute for real interpersonal community, the incarnational reality of the sacraments and the liturgy, or the immediate and direct proclamation of the gospel, can complement them, attract people to a fuller experience of the life of faith, and enrich the religious lives of users...

Whilst there is the possibility of the blessing of sacramentals over the internet, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications provides us with a timely reminder that in-person interaction with real people in real communities is far better than virtual or online interaction. 🏠