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DEEP CALLS TO DEEP

Jane Guenther · ICCRS Councillor



We recently celebrated Christmas and the mystery of our Lord's Incarnation. What does the Lord want to birth anew within you so that you will be able to give more of him to others. Recognizing that this is the work of the Holy Spirit within us, Christmas really can be every day.

Pope Francis said, "An authentic faith always implies a deep desire to change the world." Psalm 42:7, "Deep calls out to deep" is the life of intimacy Christ desires with each of us. Our response is the desire we have to live in this intimacy. Intimacy can be understood as "into me you see." His Spirit calling to your spirit.

Pope Benedict XVI, at World Youth Day, said, "Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful, and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of the long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ—and you will find true life. Amen."

An angel told Mary, our model of humility, "Do not be afraid." Can you enter into those same words and not be afraid to live more fully in the Holy Spirit?

Galatians 5:1 says, "For freedom we are set free." This is exactly what Pope Benedict is referring to here. When we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in this dance of life, we are set free to do the great things for which God created us. No longer bowed down in our

sins, we are free to receive more of Him and to give more of Him to others.

St John Paul II, in his 3 July 2002 General Audience, spoke these words, "The Psalmist mentions in particular the 'voice' of the rivers, in other words, the roaring of their waters. Actually, the thundering of great waterfalls produces a sensation of tremendous force in those whose ears are deafened and whose whole body is seized with trembling. Psalm 41 [42] evokes the same sensation when it says, 'Deep is calling on deep, in the roar of waters; your torrents and all your waves swept over me' (v. 7). The human being feels small before this natural force. The Psalmist, however, uses it as a trampoline to exalt the power of the Lord, which is greater by far. The triple repetition of the words: 'have lifted up' (cf. Ps 92 [93], 3) their voice, is answered by the triple affirmation of the superior might of God.

The Fathers of the Church like to comment on this Psalm by applying it to Christ, 'Lord and Saviour.' Origen, translated into Latin by St Jerome, says, 'The Lord reigns, he is robed in beauty. That is, he who formerly trembled in the misery of the flesh, now shines in the majesty of divinity.' For Origen, the rivers and waters that lift up their voices represent the 'authoritative figures of the prophets and the apostles' who 'proclaim the praise and glory of the Lord and announce his judgements for the whole world.'" (cf. 74 omelie sul libro dei Salmi, Milan 1993, pp. 666, 669)

St Augustine develops the symbol of the torrents and oceans even further. Like swollen rivers in full spate, that is, filled with the Holy Spirit and strengthened, the Apostles are no longer afraid and finally raise their voice. However, "when many voices begin to announce Christ, the sea starts to get rough." "In the ebb and flow of the ocean of the world," Augustine says, "the little barque of the Church seems to rock fearfully, menaced by threats and persecutions, but 'the Lord is full of wonder on high'; he 'walked upon the waters of the sea and calmed the waves.'" (Esposizioni sui salmi, III, Rome 1976, p. 231)

Each of us is charged to respond generously to this call to holiness, this invitation that God has already written upon our hearts. Are you ready for this? 🏹

THE POWER OF TRADITIONAL PRAYER

■ Tim Kirk · Catholic Fraternity Executive Member



I have a confession to make.

After 35 years as a praying-in-tongues, prophecy-giving, healing-ministering, worship-leading, power-preaching charismatic Catholic, I have discovered something that I did not know about myself before: I love praying the rosary!

I still love all the charismatic elements as well, of course—more than ever, in fact—but in recent times I’ve come to a much deeper understanding of how powerful traditional prayers can be.

It is all thanks to insomnia.

It seems it is quite common for folks approaching their middle years to have trouble sleeping through the night. (Hint: I was born three and a half weeks after the famous 1967 Duquesne weekend.) I often seem to wake up between two and three in the morning and sometimes struggle to get back to sleep. Moreover, I find that when I cannot sleep and it is three o’clock in the morning, the small but persistent worries and concerns that I carry with relative ease through the day become a lot larger and more threatening. If I am not on my guard, anxiety will gain a foothold and then I will be awake worrying until my alarm clock goes off and it is time to get up.

So, faced with insomnia and the looming threat of anxiety, I started praying the rosary.

Slowly.

Doing an exegesis of the Our Father at 2 AM is a profound exercise.

I find that prayer through the night often carries an extra spiritual charge, a touch of mystical presence that it takes longer to enter into during daytime prayer. Some nights, I do not even get past the word “Father,” so rich is that word as a source of theological wonderment. How about “Your Kingdom come”? Whole libraries have been written on the in-breaking of the reign of God through the person and ministry of Jesus. What a powerhouse concept to pray into in the dead of the night! I started to declare it over myself, my family, community, parish, diocese, city, and nation: “Your Kingdom, come! Your will, be done! on earth as it is in heaven.”

If I get through the Lord’s Prayer, I start on the Hail Marys, where I likewise find much material for contemplation.

Unlike many Catholics, I did not receive a devotion to Mary with my mother’s milk. My beautiful mum is an Anglican. And, if I’m honest, I have sometimes found the somewhat porcelain presentation of Mary in some of our Catholic churches just a little hard to relate to. In my own family, we have prayed the rosary in times of need, or, for example, when we have been on car trips together. Now, however, I have a new respect for this ancient form of prayer growing in my heart. So, what has changed?

I believe the Spirit has given me two striking images of Mary that have caused me to reassess what Marian devotion can mean for me. The first came to me during intercessory prayer at a meeting of leaders in the Disciples of Jesus community. As we were praying strongly for protection and blessing for our community, I suddenly saw in my mind an image of Mary as a warrior queen, the terror of the devil and his demons. Sharp blades of light seemed to fly from her mantle as she moved. I was left in no doubt that Mary is mighty in warfare and a powerful intercessor. Believe me; you want this woman on your side.

The second image was even more affecting. It was one of the 2 AM waking nights. I was experiencing a significant level of struggle about a particular issue and I began praying the rosary. An image came into my mind in my drowsy but prayerful state. It was a woman, about 30 years of age, with brown hair and a strong, maternal air. She carried great authority and she spoke to me words of comfort and encouragement. I have no memory of what she said, but was left with an image of a very human Mary: an earthy, passionate, powerful woman. She came to me as a mother. I think, for the first time, I understood in my heart what Catholicism has championed for so long: Mary possesses a role, assigned to her by God, as one who mediates to us a powerful maternal influence and care. Just as an earthly mother watches over and intervenes, when necessary, on behalf of her children, God positions Mary in the spiritual realm to watch over us and to intervene for us. Asking for her intercession is a powerful weapon of spiritual combat. Mary is willing and able to take up the spiritual battle on our behalf.

So now, I have no doubt: traditional prayer does indeed carry great power. Even more so when prayed with an enlivened expectation of the action of the Spirit, something I would like to think we charismatic Catholics are good at! 🙏



International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services

Postal address: Palazzo San Calisto, 00120 Vatican City – Europe
 Telephone: +39 06 69 88 71 26/27
 Fax: +39 06 69 88 72 24
 Website: www.iccrs.org
 E-mail: newsletter@iccrs.org

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People come together forming assemblies of various sizes, structures, and goals. Situations might exist where people gather spontaneously, but there is a common goal or a situation that motivates people into coming together. There are three essential elements that are necessary for the formation of an assembly, listed here in order of precedence: an objective, an invitation, and a decision. All these elements can exist in different forms and styles, but if any one of them is missing, assemblies never happen. These are also essential for the coming together of the people of God. The proper awareness and significance of them are necessary for the growth and maturity of God’s people. In this context, objective and invitation differ in character and in essence.

I will limit myself to a brief explanation of what I call the Primary Objective:

God, who dwells in unapproachable light, wants to communicate his own divine life to the men he freely created, in order to adopt them as his sons in his only-begotten Son. By revealing himself God wishes to make them capable of responding to him, and of knowing him and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity (CCC # 52).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly defines the primary objective of any Christian gathering. I am sure we have all heard different versions of this objective and it normally differs according to the different charism or nature of the entity calling a meeting. One popular version of the objective in our Charismatic meetings is that God’s people meet to praise and give glory to God. Although I cannot conclude that this is intrinsically wrong, because it has elements of truth in it, I believe that the one objective is that God “wants to communicate his own divine life” to us. In truth, the objective subsists in the entity that is calling the meeting. It lies, so to speak, in the mind of the one who gathers the assembly.

Matthew and Luke both record Jesus’ marvellous metaphor of the hen. In this one sentence, we can clearly identify the three elements—objective, invitation, and decision—linked together. God desires to gather his people for a reason, but unfortunately, here, the response is a negative one:

How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (Lk 13:34b)

We often quote Psalm 63 to manifest our desire and thirst for God. This is good and holy, but I believe that the greatest desire and thirst come from the one who called us into being. Apart from divinity itself, nothingness filled the nothingness of the universe. Nothingness can never call for redemption from itself. It cannot desire to be, let alone desire to be with God or to thirst for God. God called us into being because He wanted to share Himself with us. Out of pure love, God brought us into being and raised us to the dignity of sons and daughters.

This is why Jesus’ metaphor of the hen becomes excellent and awesome. He wanted to show God’s motherly love for us and that He desires to be with us. God calls us because He wants to protect us from all harm and desires us to find rest in the warmth of His embrace.

The defenceless hen selflessly becomes a shield, laying down its own life for the chicks under its wings. Jesus Christ, in total obedience to the will of the Father, became “defenceless” when He bore our human form and lay down His life for us. In doing so, He freed us from the bond of sin and the influence of the evil one. He desires to heal us, to save us, and to empower us. He wills us to be fulfilled in Him, to become the persons that He had originally intended us to be. Only under His wings can we be fulfilled and then receive the joy that surpasses understanding (Phil 4:7) and peace that flows from the throne of God, the likes of which the world can never give (Jn 14:27).

God’s call is not simply an invitation. In essence, it is a Kenosis. The Triune God pours His own divine life upon all creation and shows extreme bias towards all His beloved children because He deals with them in a special and abundant way. This uncreated grace is interiorised in the lives of His children and it becomes a life-changing power in those who respond positively to it.

A positive response means a better alignment of our objectives. We need to be sure that our objectives are parallel to those that subsist in God. Our own objectives might be so narrow and short-sighted that we block the tremendous flow of grace that cascades out of God’s own heart. 🙏

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. Visit online shop at www.iccrs.org / www.arrediliturgici.it



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

IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO GET A TATTOO?

Tattoos are more popular than ever. It seems as if every second person has a tattoo of some sort. Entertainers, professional athletes, barbie dolls and even some priests have them. With such a proliferation of tattoos and the rising interest in them, what does the Church teach about the practice?

In short, there is no clear teaching by the Church prohibiting tattoos. Opinions vary: some say that marking your body in this way is wrong, while others say that it is a legitimate form of self-expression. So who is right? Is there an objective answer to this question?

Many people turn to the Old Testament, specifically Leviticus 19:28, and state that God clearly prohibits them. This is because the word tattoo appears in this verse in some translations; for example, the NRSV version states, “You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord”.

Before looking at this verse in its context it is worth noting that Catholic tradition classifies the laws of Leviticus into three kinds of laws: ceremonial, judicial, and moral. Since the coming of Christ, the ceremonial and judicial laws no longer apply, but the moral laws do. The prohibition of same-sex relations in Lev 18:22, for example, is a part of the moral law and still applies, but Lev 19:26-27, which states it is not permissible to trim one’s beard or eat meat with the blood still in it, is part of the ceremonial law. There are many laws like this that are no longer applicable to Christians, and thus it is a mistake to quote Lev 19:28 out of its context and use it to justify a condemnation of tattoos.

To interpret Lev 19:28 properly, this verse must be read in its context. So what significance does the word “tattoo” have in its Levitical setting? After being rescued from slavery in Egypt the Israelites were caught between the cultures of Egypt and Canaan, being influenced by both. Recent archaeology has found some evidence of tattooing in Egypt. Women would tattoo various parts of their body in line with fertility customs. This was believed to be a good luck charm associated with the birthing process. In Canaan, rather than mark their bodies with ink,

more extreme measures were used: scarification or branding, slashing, and gashing the skin. Archaeology has found that the Canaanites would slash their bodies for ritualistic purposes, especially to honour their gods and mourn their dead. It is this particular practice which Lev 19:28 seems to prohibit when it says “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead nor print any marks upon you”. It would seem likely, therefore, that God was forbidding scarification rather than tattooing as we know it today.

This different cultural context of this text is one of the reasons why there is no direct teaching by the Church on the subject of tattoos; however, this is hardly a license for unrestrained tattooing. A person still needs to “think before they ink.” In the first instance it is important to remember that we are not our own, we are God’s temple (1 Cor 6:19-20). We need to ask ourselves how much can we disfigure our bodies to suit our own desires without dishonoring the beauty of the human form as God made it.

There are other considerations as well. One is the motivation behind the desire for a tattoo. While self-expression is permissible to a certain extent, is the desire for a tattoo to glorify God or is it to glorify oneself? Is it a rash decision induced by peer pressure or alcohol, or is it something deeply meaningful that has taken much prayer, thought and consideration? What of the placement of the tattoo? Is it in a highly visible area on the body such as the face or neck, which are perhaps not the wisest places to have a tattoo, or is it in area that could lead other people to objectify you and turn their thoughts away from the Lord? What of the type of tattoo—is it an image or writing worthy of the temple of the Holy Spirit or is it mere graffiti containing obscenities or even blasphemies?

Opinions will be strong on both sides of this debate but we must careful not to make this an issue of fidelity to Catholic teaching, since there is no magisterial teaching on the subject. It is possible for Catholics to disagree on this issue in good faith. As with all things, the virtues of temperance, charity and prudence apply. 🙏