



ICCRS LEADERSHIP BULLETIN

FORMATION FOR CURRENT AND NEW LEADERS IN CCR

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BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF PERSONAL HOLINESS

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In our Catholic Tradition, many profound conversion experiences occurred when people were called into the desert to be alone with God. In this place of refining demons were fought and chains broken. Warfare was waged against one's selfish desires, attachments, sinfulness. It was a battle, which sought to tame the beast within (ego), through prayer, fasting and renunciation.

Except in rare circumstances, it is no longer appropriate to leave family, move into the desert and live the life of a hermit. However, to build a foundation of personal holiness it is still necessary to visit such a place. In the present time, we are drawn to the desert place within. The interior place where God is both known and unknown. The place of both intimacy and absence. That place of seeing God and that place of looking for God. This place can be filled with Joy and equally filled with despair. It is in this place, the ego demons are faced and we are transformed at our very core into the image of Christ.

During our recent Charismatic history, God poured out His Spirit in abundance. Millions of Catholics became 'alive' in their faith. Jesus is known personally. Many experienced the Love of God the Father and witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit through Signs and Wonders. The lame walk! The deaf hear! Those in chains released! Like King David we were dancing and leaping and praising God. It was so exhilarating to witness the power of the Holy Spirit as it was witnessed at the birth of our Church. However, we do well to remember that some years after the Church's birth a terrible persecution took place and the new Christians lived through a time of great suffering.

Luke 2:41-52 recalls the story of Jesus teaching in the Temple at the age of 12 years. This scripture leads into what is known as the hidden years of the life of Jesus. We get an insight into these 'lost' years through Verse 52 "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man". These 'unknown years' prepared Him for His ministry and ultimately Calvary. We must be honest with ourselves and ask the question "are we constantly chasing the euphoria and excitement of our initial Holy Spirit awakening

or are we maturing in our relationship with the Lord?" If we are maturing then we too must enter into an 'unknown time', a silent time and face what awaits us there. This essential journey is possible through another Tradition within the Church - Contemplative Prayer. St Teresa says, "Contemplative prayer, in my opinion, is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us".

To be contemplative as Christ is contemplative is to be open to all the Father wishes to pour into our hearts. With our minds made still and with a quiet spirit, our faith can begin to deepen. The face we need to show to our world is the face of a humanity which is in a perpetual growth towards love. This face revealed by mutual gazing into the Divine Mirror transforms humanity and all of God's creation, in its reflective glory.

Maturing as a Charismatic is being drawn into contemplative prayer. "To learn to look to God without regard to my own instant satisfaction, to learn to scrutinise and to relativise the cravings and fantasies that arise in me—this is to allow God to be God, and thus to allow the prayer of Christ to come alive in me. Invoking the Holy Spirit is a matter of asking the third person of the Trinity to enter my spirit and bring the clarity I need to see where I am in slavery to cravings and fantasies and to give me patience and stillness as God's light and love penetrate my inner life. Only as this begins to happen will I be delivered from treating the gifts of God as yet another set of things I may acquire to make me happy, or to dominate other people, as this process unfolds, I become more free to "love human beings in a human way," (St Augustine) to love them not for what they may promise me, to love them not as if they were there to provide me with lasting safety and comfort, but as fragile fellow-creatures held in the love of God".¹

To build a foundation of personal holiness we must contemplatively enter into the "Unknown Desert Place" within where God resides. In this place, we do not have to strive, bring a formula or say certain prayers. It is here we simply BE and surrender to the transforming grace of God. It is here we learn to live for the Other, to give ourselves away as Jesus did. 🕯

¹ Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury address to the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelisation for the transmission of the Christian Faith (October 2012).

JESUS HOPE OF THE WORLD

■ Christopher Noone · Catholic Fraternity member



Hope is an essential ingredient for human life and happiness and a necessary virtue in the Christian life, but what is the foundation of hope?

What is false hope? What is true hope? What distinguishes Christian hope and what makes it a sure and certain hope?

In Charles Dickens' book *Great Expectations*, one of the legendary characters he created was a lady by the name of Miss Havisham who, at 8:40 AM on her wedding day, received a letter from her groom to say that he would not be in attendance. Stopping all clocks in house at the precise time the letter arrived she spent the rest of life in her bridal dress and wore only one shoe, as she had not yet put on the other when the letter arrived.

For Miss Havisham time stood still. She could not move on or would not move on. She was hopeless. Her life had ended.

Hopelessness, despair, grief, tragedy, condemnation, failure, shame, discouragement... they can all lay claim to our lives at one point or another. We can't control life's difficulties, but we can control how we respond to them. We can let them dominate and control our lives and cause us to live in the past or we can choose to move on. To do that, we need hope.

In the Bible we see people in hopeless situations like Joseph in Pharaoh's prison or Job who loses everything in a day, yet they choose hope anyway even when they have no evidence that things will ever get better. Hope is always about the future.

The death of Jesus was a traumatic, defining moment for the disciples, a moment to hope or despair. Peter hoped, Judas despaired. Judas, gave up all hope of forgiveness or redemption and took his life.

Peter, on the other hand, had been confident, hopeful, strident, brash and willing to give his life for Jesus, but by evening, Peter is fearful, humiliated, devastated by the weakness of his disloyalty and weeping bitter tears over his betrayal. Jesus is crucified. Peter is nowhere to be seen, a deserter, shamed, confused, hiding. The dream is shattered. Jesus, the fulfilment of Israel's hope is dead. Peter is losing hope. Come Sunday, Jesus is alive! Yes, it's true. He's alive, He's alive and that means everything changes! Hope is

restored not just for Peter and the disciples, but for all humanity.

Peter refers to the resurrection event as a "living hope" that we are born into, a hope whose foundation is both an event AND a person. "By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (1 Peter 1:3). Jesus is alive and because he's alive, he's conquered every obstacle to hope at its source. The resurrection is proof that the death of Jesus worked! Satan, death's author, the master of hell and despair, is defeated. Jesus disarmed and defeated him at the very moment when all seemed hopeless. Jesus' death and resurrection become the foundation of all true hope.

In difficult circumstances we need hope, but what we usually want most is change, deliverance, a quick solution. We all want that, but, sometimes what we need more, is for God to sustain us until we see the change, and that's always longer than we want it to be... and so the need for hope. So, how does hope come? Hope comes through believing in God's character and His promises in the bible. Faith in God's character and promises evangelises our hearts to hope and hang on. Feeding on the truth gives us hope, joy and peace despite our circumstances.

Disappointment comes with false hope. In our age, humanity on the whole has a misplaced hope in science, technology, engineering, medicine, education, its own cleverness, etc. We have replaced God with hope in a new Eden of our own creating where man is both author and manager. There's another word for it, idolatry. God in his mercy smashes idols so that we can find him and put our hope in him alone. Often, we need to reach a place of hopelessness before we can discover that, "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven & earth," (Psalm 121:2) and only in Him.

Christian hope is for this earthly life, a means to overcome difficulties and discouragement, but more than that, it is an anchor in eternity. Our hope is secured in heaven. Jesus is alive! We hope in Him, His promises and His resurrection. We hope in Jesus coming again, in our own resurrection from the dead and the life to come "And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). As sure as his hoped for coming was fulfilled in Bethlehem, so will his coming in glory because: Jesus is alive! 🙌



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THE EFFECT OF MODERN DAY CULTURE ON INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

■ John Duiker · ICCRS Doctrinal Commission Member



A well known biblical scholar stated that when interpreting scripture there are three worlds to consider: (1) the world behind the text, (2) the world of the text, and (3) the world in front of the text, which concerns the interaction of the Gospels with the readers who, by interpretation, enter into them, appropriate their meaning and are changed by it.

All three ‘worlds’ are of significance in biblical interpretation and the more we can be aware of them, the more we will uncover the meaning of scripture as the author intended. I propose for this article to look at the world in front of the text to try and ascertain what sort of dialogue and interaction is occurring in those who read the scriptures and appropriate their meaning today.

What we are speaking of here is culture. Culture comprises deeply internalized assumptions, beliefs, ideas, values and rules that effectively characterize a society. It determines patterns of human activity in that society. What then, are the hallmarks of our culture today that are driving us as we go about our daily lives? We need to uncover this as it will provide some clues as to the interpretative lens through which we view scripture.

Much scholarly research carried out in recent years has identified narcissism as a defining characteristic of today’s culture, whilst some has gone so far as to actually define it as a culture of narcissism. What does this entail exactly?

For a long period of time now there has been an increasing emphasis on the place of the individual, the role of choice and the demand to be personally happy at whatever cost. Moral and social restraints have been rejected, weakened and targeted as instruments of oppression. Looking good and feeling good has replaced doing good and being good. Our society has produced individuals that are dependent upon others for validation of their own self-esteem and cannot live without an admiring audience. These people have apparent freedom from family ties and institutional constraints. While the question has been in the past ‘can man live without God?’ this has now turned to ‘can man live as God?’. Such a society has only interest in itself, severs itself from any authority, categorizes the past as largely bad, and therefore establishes itself as the only and final authority. This is a culture of narcissism.

When this mode of being presents itself to the scriptures, what happens? Here are some examples:

1. It becomes easy for individuals to make themselves the starting point for biblical interpretation; for example, I mine the scriptures for verses that are immediately relevant to my life and ignore texts that are not seemingly applicable. I read the text in isolation because I have the authority to interpret it; though it may differ to what the church stipulates, I understand that to be just another point of view. All are equal. This is dangerous as it can leave us basing our lives on something less than the fullness of truth, even worse, it can lead to error.

2. I make myself the focus of scripture. The first question I ask myself is how I can apply the text to my life, rather than seek the meaning of it. It is a jump over meaning to applicability. What can happen here is that we can interpret scripture as being first and foremost applicable to me, my country and my time in history. The bible is simply not about me, its about Jesus and its about us, as a community. This interpretation misses the meaning of the text as the author intended.

3. Freedom from historical and institutional constraints and severance from any authority has led to historical revisionists reinterpreting scripture in order to have them align with modern day values or deeming as irrelevant those texts that do not fit with the modern narrative. This interpretation manipulates scripture to suit ourselves, exalting the self.

We can see even from these examples the impact our culture can have on our interpretation of scripture. There is perhaps even a danger of deconstructionism here: truth is fluid and not objective, everything can be challenged, there is no secure meaning in the text itself, there can be a dismantling of tradition and traditional modes of thought and it becomes ok to import your own meaning into scripture. What’s the solution?

There are many, but perhaps one of the main remedies is the Church itself. We need to humbly acknowledge our need for guidance of all members of Christ’s Body: the Church past and present. The exegetical and theological insights of different members of the Church can provide the illumination we need to read and understand scriptures for today. We need to ensure we read the bible as a global community, embrace the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and submit ourselves to Church teaching. 🏰

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, serves 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

HOW CAN THE CCR REACH OUT TO THOSE WITH SAME-SEX ATTRACTION?

There are many people today, both inside and outside the Church, who identify themselves as gay. What can the CCR do to welcome, serve, and accompany them on their journey of discipleship?

The grace at the heart of the CCR is baptism in the Holy Spirit, by which the Father's love has been poured into our hearts and we have begun a new life in the lordship of Jesus. This great gift equips the CCR in a particular way to reach out to those who identify as gay. There are several specific ways that we might do so.

First, because we have experienced the Lord's love and mercy so powerfully in our own lives, far beyond anything we could deserve, the CCR can imitate Jesus in his acceptance of everyone he encountered. Jesus welcomed women and men, Jews and Gentiles, pious people and sinners. He overcame the social barriers that divided people, sometimes to the surprise or disapproval of others (cf. Mark 2:16; John 4:27). When some complained, he responded, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Lk 5:31-32). By imitating Jesus, the CCR can be a place where people with same-sex attraction can experience the welcome of Christ.

Second, in the CCR we have experienced the liberating truth of God's Word—even those parts of his Word that can be hard to listen to because they call us to repentance. Scripture is clear that homosexual conduct is contrary to God's plan for human sexuality and degrading to those who practice it (Rom 1:26-28). Sexual activity belongs only within the covenant of marriage, in the one-flesh union of a man and a woman. But at the same time, Scripture proclaims the glorious freedom won for us by the cross and resurrection of Jesus. St. Paul, after listing several serious sins (including sexual sins), reminds the Corinthians, "Such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). And then he exhorts them, "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:19-20).

But how is it possible to live chastely if one experiences strong sexual desires outside of marriage? Those who are baptized in the Spirit can attest that they have experienced a new power within them—the Holy Spirit—enabling them to resist the desires of the flesh in a way that was not possible before. We are no longer slaves to our desires! This includes all the disordered desires that result from the Fall, including anger, revenge, jealousy,

greed, etc., as well as misdirected sexual desires. By the Holy Spirit we are empowered to say no to these desires, to die to sin and live for God (Rom 6:6-14).

Sometimes preaching and teaching presents God's high standards for our conduct, but fails to show how we can access the power that enables us to meet those standards, the Holy Spirit! To omit that part of the gospel is like asking people to get to the moon in a Fiat [car]. It leads to a view of God as a harsh taskmaster, and the Christian life as burdensome and unattractive. So the CCR has a special responsibility to bear witness to everyone that living a holy life is truly possible, even in the midst of struggles, because of the unlimited divine love and power at work within us.

Third, the CCR can bring a prophetic critique against our contemporary culture's idolatry of sex by showing that there are many other forms of human fulfillment, especially through deep bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood with others in the body of Christ. We can bear witness that it is possible to have a personal relationship with Christ that satisfies the deepest desires of the human heart.

Finally, the CCR has a role in helping people experience God's healing. Many of us have experienced either physical or interior healing through ministries of healing and deliverance. The deepest healing occurs by coming to know and embrace our identity as a son or daughter of God, infinitely loved by him. As St. Paul teaches, the revelation of who we truly are is a work of the Holy Spirit: "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:15-16). The CCR can provide a great service to those experiencing same-sex attraction by enabling them to encounter the healing power of Christ.

As is the case with all ministries, ministry to those who identify as gay must be carried out with wisdom and good discernment. It should help people to live chastely and to grow in their relationship with Christ. It should be carried out only by those who understand clearly what Scripture and the Church teach about sexuality and who recognize that God's plan for sexuality is always good news—even when it is difficult. It should include people who have long experience walking in the Spirit and who can accompany others with love, patience and wisdom. It should also include many opportunities for people to encounter God's love, to share their lives with others, and to receive the help of the sacraments. 🏠