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Celebrate Jubilee:

A Child is born—He is Christ the King

■ Fr Wojciech Nowacki

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Christmas is the time of renewing our relationships. We all need the warmth of family love and the sense of true community. God Himself instilled this longing in the human heart. He is the only source of the essence of Christmas.

However, in today's world, the proper and deepest meaning of Christmas is being increasingly drowned out by the culture of commerce and political correctness. Aggressive commercials draw our attention to shopping, promotions, gifts, and food. There is a tendency to eliminate the word "Christmas" from the public on the pretext of respect for the non-believers.

We are happy to celebrate birthdays. However, Christmas is much more than a birth anniversary of Jesus. On Christmas night, the angel announced to the shepherds, "To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Lk 2:11). The Holy Spirit enables us to recognize this most important Person in the centre of our celebrations and meetings: A CHILD IS BORN. This child is unique because in Him, God became man! We celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation—the mystery of love that transcends the distance between the Creator and creation. The only Son of God is born like us human beings. This new dimension gives us the dignity of the children of God.

He comes as a child of poor parents, born in a cave for cattle. The first ones to hurry to greet Him are simple shepherds. One needs the light of faith and the work of the Divine Spirit to recognize God's truth in this simplicity and poverty. This child was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit who today enables us to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior in the poverty of our hearts.

In Bethlehem, the Child Jesus united the poor shepherds and the Magi in adoration "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:52). His humble birth announces the ultimate humiliation on the cross from which He draws all people to Himself (John 12:32).



In Polish families, this unifying power of Christmas is well expressed by the custom of sharing a wafer on Christmas Eve, i.e. breaking with unleavened bread when exchanging greetings. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which means, in the "House of Bread". He constantly comes to overcome the sin that divides us. He comes to unite us by "breaking bread" or by the Eucharist.

Christmas is a great time to revive and deepen our faith, but also to share it with others like the Bethlehem shepherds did "when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child" (Lk 2:17). Then, they "returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them".

Also, the Magi from the East, the first pagans expressing their faith in Jesus, became witnesses of the personal encounter with God. Pope Benedict reminded the youths of Cologne, "Anyone who has discovered Christ must lead others to him. A great joy cannot be kept to oneself. It has to be passed on. So many spaces of the modern world long for the courageous witnesses, full of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming: God is with us! He comes to give meaning to our lives and fill them with true love! He is the answer to our questions and longings!"

During the Christmas season, parents take their children to churches and other places to show them nativity scenes depicting the truth about the birth of God. God's Spirit urges us to help one another to come to Jesus and to recognize in Him the Messiah and the Lord—Christ and King. Our loved ones need our testimony! Then, let us proclaim with joy the true Christmas miracle—A CHILD IS BORN—HE IS CHRIST THE KING! 🙌

The ICCRS Golden Jubilee Council Meeting

■ Oreste Pesare



Certainly, the Council Meeting we attended this year in Rome at the conclusion of the CCR Golden Jubilee celebrations was unique. As usual, the work on different matters exchanged daily alternated with a good time of prayer, Eucharistic adoration, and celebration of the Eucharist.

CCR Golden Jubilee - The meeting gave much attention to reviewing and commenting on several aspects of the Jubilee event. Here are some of the official statistics:

- Attendance at the Friday night celebration at Circus Maximus: 35,000;
- Attendance at the Saturday night celebration at Circus Maximus with Pope Francis: 50,000;
- Participation from 127 countries;
- Presence of more than 50 bishops from around the world;
- Presence of about 750–800 priests from around the world; and
- Many others around the world followed the celebrations on social media, giving them a sense of belonging.

The whole celebration was a great blessing for the Universal Church. First, the involvement of the Holy Father gave a deep accountability to the Church hierarchy. Also, seeing the Holy Father and hearing his voice was very important, particularly to those who came from the farthest corners of the earth.

The theme of the entire event had been the quest for real unity in diversity by the grace of the Holy Spirit. We sought unity among the Charismatic realities in the Catholic Church and between the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and other Christian Communities and Churches open to it.

A significant word for the Jubilee celebrations was given by Patti Mansfield on Saturday evening: “Lift up the gates, open the doors, widening our horizons...” This followed a previous significant word given by Mary Healy at the Duquesne Celebrations in February 2017: “The Lord is giving us unity as a gift. Renewal has gone through many different divisions. There is going to be a reconciling of relationships...”

One single service - An important topic, which focused the attention of the Council’s discussion, has been the explicit request made by Pope Francis to the CCR since 2014 to create a new “one single service” for the entire current of grace of the Renewal. The ICCRS Council had a good discussion with Michelle Moran. She, along with Pino Scafuro from Argentina, has been nominated ad personam by Pope Francis to reach the important goal of real unity in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

Notably, Pope Francis thanked them publicly on the Saturday evening of Pentecost weekend for having delivered to him the act of constitution of a new CCR service. They assured him that they had begun the plan for a new service body and the process for new statutes.

In this regard, some very good things have been achieved during the planning of the Golden Jubilee celebrations. Three items stood out. 1) The moderators of the Sword of the Spirit and of the

European Network of Communities were delighted to experience a renewed unity with ICCRS and among their networks. 2) The Schools of Evangelisation, which have had a history of division with the Renewal, were with us as protagonists during this time of Jubilee. Historic wounds are being healed and we recognise that this is a new moment of healing and unity. 3) The French Communities testified to the move of the Spirit for unity.

A new President for ICCRS and renewed committees - Another important issue that contributed to the uniqueness of this Council meeting was the election of the new President, after ten years of Michelle Moran’s (England) presidency. Among four candidates, Jim Murphy (USA) was elected with a 2/3 majority. We then elected Christof Hemberger (Germany) as Vice President, to take the place of Marcos Volcan (Brazil).

Here are the members of the updated ICCRS committees and subcommittees:

Executive Committee: Jim Murphy (President), Christof Hemberger (Vice President), and Oreste Pesare (Director).

Financial Committee: Cyril John (Chair), Christof Hemberger, Endie Rahardja, and Oreste Pesare (Director). Assisted by consultants Hilary da Veiga (Dubai NSC), and Felix Ali Chendra (ISAO V/President).

Newsletter Committee: Ann Brereton (Chair), Jude Muscat, Francis Olotu, Jane Guenther, and David Bustamante.

Project Fund Committee: Bishop Francis Kalist (Chair) and Jean-Christof Sakiti.

Youth Committee (formerly Youth Ad-hoc Committee): Christof Hemberger (Chair), Andrés Arango, and David Bustamante.

ICCRS Formation (formerly Formation project Ad-hoc Committee): Jim Murphy (Chair) and Cyril John.

Family Ad-hoc Committee: Francis Olotu and Andrés Arango (Chair to be appointed).

Intercession Network (formerly Intercession Ad-hoc Committee): Denise Bergeron (Chair), Jean-Christophe Sakiti, and Cyril John.

Doctrinal Commission: Mary Healy (USA) (Chair), John Duiker (Australia), Fr Peter Hocken (Austria, recently RIP), Fr George Kumbloomoottil (India), Archbishop Kevin McDonald (UK)-Episcopal Advisor, Fr Wojciech Novaki (Poland), Fr Andre Luiz Rodrigues da Silva (Brazil), and Fr Etienne Veto (France).

Ad hoc Committee on Charisms has been formed: Ann Brereton (Chair), Jean-Christof Sakiti, Denise Bergeron, and Christof Hemberger. Their task is to consider how to develop a specific teaching school on Charisms.

Various - Among the interesting subjects shared during the meeting, some merit to be noted: there is a new focus on the CCR family at a wider level and many are interested in reading ICCRS resource material. Among them, certainly, is the book *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. There is also still a great need for discipleship and formation. Many youths are participating in leadership formation. Among other training courses, the ITC is a prophetic sign for our time. 🙏

Reflections on a Prophetic Birth The Swaddling Clothes

■ Ann Brereton



Meditating on the Word of God should lead us to new places: new revelations on God, ourselves, and others. Each word of Scripture has the ability to awaken awe within us and draw us further into the mystery of God. It is easy to become so familiar with God's Word that our openness to new insights is depleted.

One such narrative is the story of the birth of Jesus. Found in two of the four gospels, the shepherds are mentioned only in Luke. For many years, I have read this story. I have sat my children and grandchildren on my knee and joined with them in exploring this miraculous event. Until recently, I had never considered the significance of why Luke mentions that Jesus is wrapped in "swaddling clothes". She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger (Luke 2:7). This seems a very ordinary thing to say, yet we hear that the angels gave this description as a sign to the shepherds as well (Luke 2:12). Luke's inclusion of these two words, swaddling clothes, is deliberate and so invites some exploration.

There are many ideas from the Middle Eastern tradition concerning the significance of the swaddling clothes in the life of Jesus. These ideas do not provide answers as to why Luke included this description in his narrative. However, the following perspective offers an invitation to new insights contained in these two simple words.

Finding the firstborn son wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger would also have meaning for the shepherds. It was customary for the shepherds to choose the firstborn lamb of the flock for the Temple sin sacrifice offering. To be without blemish, they would wrap it in swaddling clothes and usually lay it in a manger to protect it from being trampled. This symbolises that Jesus is the Lamb without blemish or spot (1 Peter 1:19).

Swaddling was a cheap cloth, which was often soaked in oil and used to wrap around the top portion of a reed. When lit, it would light the way as a torch. In twisted form, the material also served as wicks in oil lamps. Jesus came to be the light of the world (John 9:5).

Still today, newborn infants are generally swaddled. Having come from a warm and confined womb, this gives babies both warmth and a sense of security. Interestingly, Ezekiel describes wayward Israel as "unswaddled" (16:4). This is a metaphor for abandonment.

Today, many in our world suffer from a deep sense of abandonment. As we celebrate Christ's birth this Christmas, we would do well to reach out to the unswaddled of our global community, particularly those in war-torn countries and those living in daily poverty without food, water, or medical supplies. Looking closer to our own community, we have the homeless, addicts, and others struggling with day-to-day living. Surely, these are today's unswaddled and abandoned ones.

The Christ Child is the light of the world. How can we shine His light this Christmas season? Perhaps we could spend less on the latest decorations, elaborate food, and unnecessary gifts, and use what money we have saved on these, to swaddle those whose very existence depends on our love and support.

Rejoice and proclaim that the news that the whole world is waiting for has already happened: "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And all at once with the angel there was a great throng of the hosts of heaven, praising God with the words: Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace for those he favours". 🙌

HELP! ICCRS needs YOU to reach more people for the Lord!



ICCRS needs well-organised and responsible people who have the talent of speaking more than one language to offer their **voluntary service** to the CCR worldwide.

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...THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ACTION IN MY LIFE
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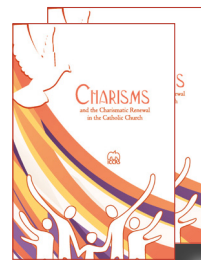
By Oreste Pesare



DELIVERANCE MINISTRY

Deliverance ministry is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that testify to the abundance of grace granted by God to the whole Church through Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

By ICCRS Doctrinal Commission



CHARISMS AND THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

There is need for deeper theological and pastoral reflection on the role of charisms and how to discern, guide, and foster their use for the good of all.

Acts of the Colloquium on Charisms, by ICCRS and Catholic Fraternity in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for the Laity

ICCRS FORMATION Visit www.iccrs.org or e-mail formation@iccrs.org for more information about our training programmes.



LTC • Cameroon

- 3 – 10 November 2018
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ITC • Germany

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VIII LFI • Rome, Italy

- 2 - 22 September 2018
- Contact: ICCRS Formation
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ICCRS International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services

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