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# ICCRS LEADERSHIP BULLETIN

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ICCRS Leadership Bulletin

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Guided by the Spirit:

## I am a leader – What if I no longer hear from God?

■ Charles Whitehead



Every leader wants and needs to hear from God if he or she is to fulfil God's purposes, to know exactly what he is asking of them.

But we know there are times in the life of every Christian when heaven seems closed, when God seems very far away, when the Holy Spirit falls silent. We have only to read the lives of some of the greatest Saints to find examples of this – it's not an uncommon experience. At such times we need the grace of faithful perseverance; we need to stand firm in our faith, believing that bushes still catch fire and that God still speaks to those who are putting into practice the last thing they heard him say to them.

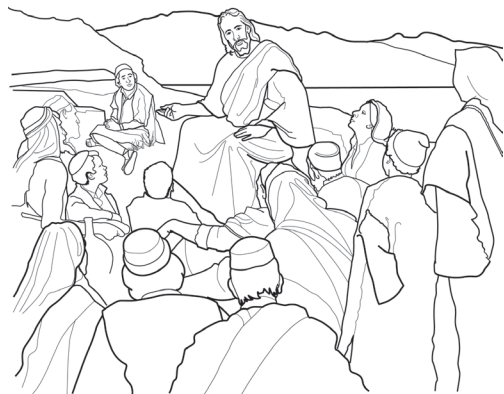
### A Spiritual Wilderness

When a leader has this type of wilderness experience it is particularly painful. Why? Because people have high expectations of their leaders. A leader must always lead, and this means knowing what God is asking of the group, community or church in his or her charge. They are expected to hear the voice of God the Holy Spirit and lead the people accordingly. The burdens of such high

expectations have crushed many good leaders. So how does a leader overcome this problem, particularly when God is silent?

I do not believe that such wilderness experiences can always be avoided.

After his baptism by John in the river Jordan, the Spirit took Jesus into the wilderness where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days. God will sometimes take his leaders into the wilderness today too, bringing us face to face with a part of our lives where we need to be challenged, healed,



sorted out and prepared for whatever is to come. Such a challenging experience often precedes a time of powerful ministry and anointed service. But this is not always the case – more often we bring a wilderness experience on ourselves. How do we do this and how can we avoid it happening?

### My Spiritual Life

Usually we do it by neglecting our own personal spiritual life, by spending too little time with the Lord in prayer, reading his Word, receiving his sacramental life. In other words, by being too busy doing his work to have the right amount of time to dedicate to receiving his life. This is a problem for all leaders – putting the work of the Lord before the Lord of the work. In other words being so busy working for him that we have no time left to spend with him. Our personal time with the Lord must always be our top priority – only then can we do his work effectively. Activity that does not come from being in his presence is usually a waste of time and effort. A minister named Duncan Campbell, who was at the heart of a great revival between 1949 and 1953 in the islands north of Scotland, wrote this:

“These are days of much activity in the church and in mission work, but we must remember that no amount of activity in the service of our King will make up for neglect of the King Himself. I do not believe the devil is greatly concerned about getting between us and work; his great concern is

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to get between us and God. Many a Christian worker has buried his spirituality in the grave of his activity”.

Sobering words! We do well to remember that he must increase and I must decrease and if this is to happen we must protect the time we spend with him.



**Daily Time with the Lord**

From the moment I was baptized in the Holy Spirit in 1976, I have found that without my morning “quiet time” my day will often be a struggle. My habit is to start each day with a time of praise, Bible reading, prayer (partly in tongues), careful listening for the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and some intercession. I have learned that at those times when I no longer seem to be hearing the voice of God, I need to go back to the last time I was aware he was speaking to me and to think again about what he was saying then. Have I acted on what he was asking me to do? Or did it seem too challenging, too difficult, so that I put it to one side and then forgot about it? It’s always important when God speaks to me, I must never ignore it, set it aside, or forget about it. He never wastes his time or ours on unimportant things. Just

as Jesus always listened to the voice of his Father, so we have to listen to the voice of Jesus and to act upon what he says. When we fail to do this we’ll often find we can no longer hear his voice. Jesus himself tells us in John 8:47: “He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God”. These are strong words for a leader to hear, but the point I am making is that in order to be able to say we belong to God, we must stay close to him and spend daily time with him. Our personal relationship with Jesus must remain strong. “The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice” John 10:27.

**An Examination of Conscience**

As leaders we may also be prevented from hearing God’s voice when there is sin in our lives, or perhaps a lack of love and forgiveness. With this in mind I need to give some time to a real examination of conscience – have I unwittingly become too worldly in my outlook, thinking too much about success, popularity, status? Or do I need to sort out problems in my relationships, ask forgiveness of a colleague, perhaps recognize that I was wrong and someone else was right? Hebrews 5:14 reminds us that: “Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil”. There may of course be unconfessed sin in my life, and this may be preventing me hearing the voice of the Lord. We must always be aware of those three recognized areas of sin which often face leaders: money, sex, power. There’s only one solution for unconfessed sin – acknowledge and confess it without delay, knowing that the Lord will always forgive and restore us. When we do this, another blockage to hearing the Lord’s voice is removed.

There may be other personal reasons why we as leaders are no longer hearing from God, but in my personal experience the most common one is that I am not giving enough of my time to just being with the Lord in prayer. The busier we are, the more we must protect our quiet time with the Lord. Yes, we must of course deal with any sin in our lives, maintain good relationships with others, and make sure we are not becoming personally ambitious, but above all we must spend quality time with the Lord every day if we are to hear his voice. He is always there for us – are we always there for him? 🏠

<p><b>ICCRS</b> International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Please contact the ICCRS office for permission to reprint. The <i>ICCRS Newsletter</i> is e-mailed freely. It can be posted to you for € 10 per year. In addition, the <i>ICCRS Leadership Bulletin</i> can be e-mailed for an annual subscription of € 15.</p>
<p>The <i>ICCRS Leadership Bulletin</i> is published along with the <i>ICCRS Newsletter</i>. Its purpose is to publicise formation on decisive topics in CCR.</p>		

## Intercession Training Course (ITC) in Quebec, Canada

■ Cyril John

St. Paul highlights the priority that intercession should get in the life of a believer when he says: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone for king and all who are in high positions so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Tim 2:1-2). The Church and the world are facing more number of challenges today than what we have heard of in our life time till now. It is no more easy to be a Christian and practice and profess one's faith. Increasingly the conviction is rising that the greatest need of today is to intercede for the Church and the world. The horse needs to be put before the cart. Intercession should become the detonator and the prime mover of the mission of the Church.

Sensing the need and urgency of intercession, ICCRS has been trying to create more and more awareness about intercession and raise up intercessors across the world. Michelle Moran as President of ICCRS Council took the bold initiative of setting up an ICCRS Sub-Committee on Intercession and asked me to chair it. When the ICCRS Council met in Bethlehem in November 2013, we submitted a proposal to the Council regarding organizing of a Training Course on intercession. After the Council approved the proposal, ICCRS Councilor, Denise Bergeron from Quebec province in Canada agreed to host the event in her place. As a result of this the first Intercession Training Course by ICCRS was organized in Montreal hosted by the Renewal and Centre de Priere l'Alliance from 30 June to 5 July, 2015. 500 intercessors from 31 countries participated in the Training Course.

In her keynote address Michelle stated: "Following prompting from the various people round the world, I am increasingly convinced that intercession is the need of the hour and that we need to keep promoting and training people actively to engage in this ministry." Other speakers were Cyril John (India), Denise Bergeron (Canada), Jude Muscat (Malta), Maria Jose Cantos de Ortiz (Chile) and Cathy Brenti (France). The inaugural Mass was presided by Bishop Luc Bouchard. Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Iacox, Metropolitan Archbishop of Quebec, Bishop Denis Grondin, Bishop Andre Gazaille and other Bishops celebrated the Holy Eucharist on other days of the training course.

The training course highlighted that intercession goes beyond personal needs. Its scope covers the Church, the city, the nation and the world that needs prayer. In petition God does something for us; in intercession God does something through us. God makes us one with Christ, the Great Intercessor, in His prayer for the whole world! In intercession we pray to the Father through Jesus led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Often what we consider to be intercessory prayer really is prayer of petition. It is I telling God what I would like him to do. On the other hand, in intercession we need to be led and directed by the Holy Spirit on what to pray for and how to pray. "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27). Intercession itself is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Some of the other charisms which could be used during intercession are: gift of tongues,

gift of interpretation of tongues, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discernment of spirits, gift of prophecy, etc.

While the teachings included topics like, the repentant intercessor, deepening understanding of intercession, call and urgency of intercession, how to intercede effectively, tools of effective intercession, spiritual warfare in intercession, intercession through fasting, intercession and suffering, intercession through Mary, the four wheels of intercession, etc. the most novel among the teachings was on prophetic intercession. This was followed by two workshops on prophetic intercession which were found very useful by the participants.

The teaching of prophetic intercession pointed out that the scope and efficacy of prayer gets restricted when it is guided by our own understanding. Fidelity to God's will is a necessary precondition for the prayers to be answered. "You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly..." (Jas 4:3). The attitude of the intercessor should be, "Here I am... how I love to do your will, my God" (Ps 40:7-8). Many people think that intercession is taking a whole list of requests to the Lord for answer. In intercession we need to keep our eyes fixed on what is moving in the heart of God. In fact, every time a situation which warrants prayer arises, the Lord searches for partners: "Thus I have searched among them for someone who could build a wall or stand in the breach before me to keep me from destroying the land" (Ezek 22:30). The intercessor becomes the trusted aide, the lieutenant of God.

This awareness helped the participants to go beyond their traditional style of intercession and rely more on the Holy Spirit to direct on what to pray for and how to pray. During the workshops most participants were able to use the charisms of the Holy Spirit and discern God's will in intercession. The reporting sessions were very enriching with each group sharing the new experiences they had during prophetic intercession. All participants got the opportunity to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Eucharistic celebrations, adoration and praise and worship sessions were really anointed time of grace and blessing for all. The Centre de Priere l'Alliance community did a marvelous job taking care of all minute details regarding organization of the event.

Towards the end of the training course, a number of countries expressed keen interest in organizing similar event in their country. Sensing the powerful move of the Spirit, Michelle intends to promote Intercession Training Course (ITC) in all continents, regions and nations as an initiative of ICCRS. She asked me if I could coordinate the Training Course on behalf of ICCRS which I have agreed. More details are to be finalized by the ICCRS Council. It would consist of 6 days of training which include workshops on intercession and intercession outreaches. Proposals for organizing the school in Congo in July 2016 and Indonesia in December, 2016 are being worked out by ICCRS Office. More than ever before the Church and the world stand in need of more and more fervent intercessors. Jesus is calling you and me to partner in His ministry of intercession. Are you willing to say 'yes' to the Lord? If you sense that there is a need to have systematic formation in the area of intercession for raising up more committed intercessions, ICCRS is willing to help you. You may please get in touch with the Director regarding this. May God bless all intercessors! 🙏





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 There a Charism of Prophetic Dreams?

A dream is a succession of images, thoughts and emotions occurring in a person's mind during sleep. We spent a significant amount of our lives asleep, about eight hours out of every twenty-four. Can the Lord use dreams to communicate with us? He surely can, since he often does so in Scripture and in the lives of the saints. Through dreams God sometimes speaks to us in a way that is impossible while we are awake, with our minds busy and in very distracting environments. While we are asleep, God can capture our attention! One amazing example is that many Muslims have come to faith in Jesus after he has appeared to them in their dreams.

Scripture says God speaks to his prophets through dreams: "If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream" (Num 12:6).

But dreams are not limited to the prophets. Job 33:14-15 says, "God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while they slumber on their beds." At Pentecost Peter declared the fulfillment of God's promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh... your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

There are many examples of God speaking to people through dreams in both the Old and New Testaments. Joseph had prophetic dreams that dramatically impacted the course of his life, his family, and many other people. His first dreams made his brothers angry and jealous, with the result that they sold him into slavery in Egypt (Gen 37:5-8). Later, his prophetic interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, led Pharaoh to store up food so that Egypt and the surrounding nations could have food to survive in the lean years (Gen 41:1-32).

God communicated to St. Joseph through dreams to tell him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife (Matt 1:19- 20). God used dreams to expose the enemy's plan and to warn Joseph to flee to Egypt to save the Christ child (Matt 2:13).

Can someone have a charism of prophetic dreams? The Catechism defines charisms as "graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world" (799). What is important to notice in this definition is that the purpose of charisms is to serve others and build up the Church. This accords with the teaching of St. Paul, who wrote,

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). So if someone has a charism of prophetic dreams, the dreams are given by God to build up, encourage, or warn the community of the faithful. On the other hand, some prophetic dreams are given solely for the benefit of the individual who receives them, and thus are not charisms.

While God can communicate to us through dreams, it is important to note that many dreams are not God's revelation but simply an expression of our unconscious thought world. Sirach warns against giving too much credence to dreams, saying those who believe in dreams are like those who grasp at shadows or chase the wind. "Unless [dreams] are sent from the Most High as a visitation, do not give your mind to them. For dreams have deceived many, and those who put their hope in them have failed" (Sir 34:6-7).


So how do we discern whether a dream is a message from God or simply an expression of our unconscious thoughts? It is similar to the way we discern prophecies.

Pray for clarity. If a dream has special intensity and seems to come from the Lord, ask the Lord to make it clear if he is speaking to you through the dream, whether it be for encouragement, guidance, a warning, or promises for the future. Pray for the grace to understand and interpret the dream accurately. Review the dream. What

emotions does it provoke? Does it leave you with a sense of peace and draw you closer to the Lord, or does it produce fear or anxiety? The latter would be a sign that it is not of God. Does its content align with Scripture and Tradition? If not, then it is not of God.

Listen to God. Sit quietly before the Lord and listen to him. Ask the Lord to reveal his truth to you.

Seek spiritual counsel. Take the dream to your spiritual director, prayer group leadership, or trusted spiritual friends. Sharing dreams and seeking the proper interpretation is scriptural. Pharaoh sought counsel from Joseph about his dreams, and Egypt was saved from starvation.

Discernment. After you determine the meaning of the dream, discern whether it is meant only for you or for the wider body of Christ. One way would be to prayerfully consider the interpretation of the dream and whom it would impact. This too requires the counsel of others. 



ICCRS receives many questions about the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and we do our best to answer them with the help of the Doctrinal Commission. Its members kindly take time to check their references and credit their sources. Some of the questions and their answers are published in this section of the *ICCRS Leadership Bulletin*. They are selected for their relevancy and helpfulness overall for those involved in the CCR.