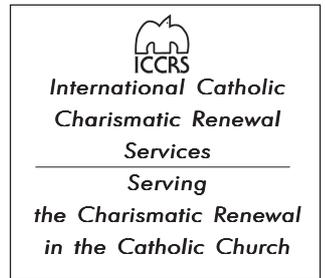


LEADERSHIP FORMATION

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Restart from Christ The New Challenge of the 3rd Millennium

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TEACHING OUTLINE

1. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus
2. "Who do people say I am?"
3. Let us open our rooms to Jesus
4. "Who do you say I am?"
5. The challenge to believe in Jesus
6. Conclusion

1. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus

On January 6, Pope John Paul II promulgated the apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "At the beginning of the new Millennium". As Catholics, how are we going to live this momentous moment in the history of humankind. Pope John Paul II asks us to contemplate the face of Jesus. "And is it not the Church's task to reflect the light of Christ in every historical period, to make His face shine also before the generations of the new millennium? N.16. This is in line with what the author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote, "Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus" (Heb. 12:2). However, in order to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, as we start the third millennium, we need to reflect deeply on who Jesus is for us, on His values and ideals. This is encapsulated in the powerful question that Jesus made to his disciples - "Who do you say I am?" (Mk 8:28) The deeper we reflect on this question, the more we can comprehend what course of action we need to develop as Catholics as we live our lives as people of the third millennium.



2. "Who do people say I am?"

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus starts with an easy question to his disciples. "Who do people say I am?" (Mk 8:28). It is very easy to talk about what other people think or say. It is also easy just to go with the majority. It is much safer. Their response was, "John the Baptist...others Elijah, others again one of the Prophets". (Mk 8:28) What an answer. How can Jesus be any of these people? They were all dead. How can we compare Jesus Christ to someone who is already dead? The temptation for many can be to say that we believe, but we do not like to let Jesus too close to our way of living. Many do not want to be disturbed or challenged by His teaching, principles and values. Jesus is not merely interested to remain at a distance, but he constantly challenges us to make a radical decision to live as he has shown us how. He knows that we have got only one heart, and he is constantly inviting us to let him move the heart to make it like his own, holy and sacred.



3. Let us open our rooms to Jesus

What does this entail in practice? In John 14:2, we find Jesus saying, "There are many rooms in my father's house. Where is the Father's house? It is true that God is in heaven and in the tabernacle. However, I am the Father's house, I am the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the core of my existence, deep down in my heart there are many rooms. With some of these rooms I am very comfortable. I can open the door, pull up the blinds, open the windows, and enjoy the fresh air. However there are other rooms where the doors are locked, where the blinds are down, where the windows are shut and where darkness reigns. I cannot even think of opening the door. These are the rooms of my hurts, my fears, my anxieties my prejudice. These are the rooms full of the memories that cripple me and prevent me from becoming a powerful witness of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus wants to heal all of this. He challenges us to pray and say: Lord take my hand, help me to open these rooms, help me to pull up the blinds, to open the windows, and to let in the fresh

air. Help me to face what I need to face, and put it at the foot of your cross, so that I can become a powerful instrument of your healing presence.



4. "Who do you say I am?"

Jesus then turns to his disciples and says "Now let us forget a little bit about what other people say or think about me. "Who do you say I am?" (Mk 8:29) Peter speaking on behalf of the others replied, "You are the Christ" (Mk 8:30). Peter's response might seem correct at first glance. However, Peter's idea about Christ was very different from that of Jesus. There was no room in Peter's mind that the messiah was destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and the chief Priests and the Scribes and to be put to death". (Mk 8:31-32) When Jesus started to talk about these things, Peter started to remonstrate with him. Do not talk about death, about suffering for others. Do not spoil everything Jesus. This is where Jesus became angry with Peter, "get behind me Satan" because the way you think is not God's way but man's (Mk 8:33).

5. The challenge to believe in Jesus

What a challenge. Do I believe in Jesus only when I see miracles, only when I can be a witness to signs and wonders? Let us thank God that signs and wonders occur when we pray to the Father, through Jesus Christ in the power of the

Holy Spirit. Let us continue to pray that miracles continue to occur as we take seriously the words of Jesus Christ our master and Lord. However Jesus is also challenging us to literally die, so that others might have life. There are moments when we are called to be the last of all and the servants of all, so that the good news of Jesus Christ might be manifested more boldly and powerfully. Am I ready to embrace the cross, by being able to take the pain and hurt of others and at the same time be a steadfast witness of hope and healing because of the conviction that Jesus Christ is alive in me? Am I ready to get rid of my unforgiveness? Am I accountable before God, for all my actions? Am I ready to be the first to lend a helping hand, with genuine interest and love? Am I ready to decide once and for all to love God and my neighbor irrespective of what it costs me? How can we hope to conquer evil in the name of Jesus Christ, if we cannot conquer a sink full of dirty dishes?

Conclusion

In conclusion, I revert to John Paul II, that for us Catholics as we start the third millennium, "It is not therefore a matter of inventing a new programme. The programme already ex-



ists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n.29) Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Questions for discussion

1. *Who do you say that Jesus is?*
2. *What areas of my life need to be changed with the healing love and presence of Jesus?*
3. *What practical areas of service am I going to be committed to this year?*

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