

RCIA, THE 5 KEYS AND UNBOUND

My name is Fr David Barrow, I am a diocesan priest incardinated in the diocese of Westminster London; ordained 23 years.

In this short paper I will outline an experience of how the integration of the 5 keys¹ as outlined in the Unbound model of deliverance prayer, was integrated into the RCIA program. For many, the result was deliverance from many serious traumas, a new freedom in Christ and joy in their lives. This group of people, hungry for the gospel, came to a real encounter with the Heart of the Father, and led by the Holy Spirit, went on to take important roles in the parish as catechists, in administration and so to speak became a leaven in the dough of the parish community.

BACKGROUND

The background to this experience of including the five Keys of Unbound in the RCIA program came from many different inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, I have been part of many RCIA programs and saw how frequently the people who came would eventually drift away from the church or lapse, unconvinced by their new-found faith.

Secondly there is the general situation of the church in England. It is clear that the society and the church is changing. Post lockdown my church has lost 30-40% of our parishioners.

Many today speak of a return to an apostolic model of the church which existed in the first 4 centuries, a church which was small, but so vibrant in its faith that by the 4th century it had converted the Roman Empire, a society which was as pagan as ours is today.

At the heart of the apostolic church was a formation based around a catechumenate lasting 3-4 years; today we have the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults (the RCIA) which seeks to carry out a similar function. At a certain point, aroused by a certain curiosity, I began to study the

¹ Unbound Neal Lozano : Repentance and Faith, Forgiveness, Renunciation, Authority, the Fathers Blessing

catechumenate of the early church, in particular the writings of St Cyril of Jerusalem²³, to understand the difference between the RCIA as it is carried out today, and the early catechumenate as presented by the church Fathers.

What was clear, is that deliverance prayer played a much greater role, and was understood as fundamental if a persons' faith was to take root and grow, in particular in many of St Cyril of Jerusalem catecheses. (see below) Today deliverance prayer finds its place primarily during the RCIA in the 3 minor exorcisms before Easter during the scrutinies, and those associated with the sacrament of baptism. Often these are poorly understood and done without much preparation or understanding of their importance, with little expectation of major breakthroughs or of inner healing. This was my experience for many years.

What was also clear, was that the early church believed in systematic, kerygmatic catechesis. If we consider the homilies and writings of the early church fathers, such as Cyril, Augustine etc. the majority of these writings were homilies or catechesis given to catechumens coming into the church for the first time. Now the people coming were not educated, farmers, lowly people, yet there was no dumbing down of church theology or catechesis, but rather a raising of the bars.

In the end the two principal elements which stood out for me, were deliverance prayer, and the need for kerygmatic systematic catechesis.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER⁴

² St. Cyril of Jerusalem's catechetical lectures provide detailed insights into the exorcisms performed during the catechumenate. He emphasizes the spiritual purification and protection these rites offer to those preparing for baptism. Here are some key points from his teachings:

1. **Purpose of Exorcisms:** St. Cyril explains that exorcisms are meant to cleanse the catechumens from any spiritual impurities, comparing it to the process of refining gold from impurities.
2. **Rituals Involved:** The exorcisms involve prayers, blessings, and sometimes anointing with exorcised oil. These rituals are performed to invoke God's protection and to strengthen the catechumens against evil influences.
3. **Spiritual Significance:** St. Cyril highlights the importance of receiving these exorcisms with earnestness, as they are acts of salvation. He encourages catechumens to participate actively in these rites as part of their spiritual journey.
4. **Frequency and Context:** These exorcisms are typically conducted during the catechetical sessions and are part of the broader preparation for baptism, which includes other rites such as blessings and anointings.

ST CYRIL OF JERUSALEM'S PROCATECHESIS AND MYSTAGOGICAL CATECHESSES & CYRIL OF JERUSALEM'S USE OF SCRIPTURE IN CATECHESIS - Theological Studies

³ "Let thy feet hasten to the catechisings; receive with earnestness the exorcisms: whether thou be breathed upon or exorcised, the act is to thee salvation"^[1]. This indicates the importance of these rituals in the catechumen's journey. [Cyril of Jerusalem, The Catechetical Lectures](#)

⁴ **MARYVALE INSITUTE**

THE DEVELOPING VISION OF CATECHESIS

BA HONS IN APPLIED THEOLOGY

YEAR 3 MODULE 14 C LEVEL 2

1.6 THE SOWER: A CASE STUDY IN CATECHESIS

The parable Of the Sower from the gospel of Mark serves as scriptural focus and contextualisation for all that follows in the Directory (See 14-15). It is worth noting at this point that it has become a characteristic of the magisterial teaching of the Holy Father to begin with a reflection upon a passage of scripture. Other examples are *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*(1984) — the parable of the Prodigal Son, *Dominum et Vivificantem* (1986) — Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit, *Christifideles Laici* (1988) - the parable of the workers in the vineyard, *Veritatis Splendor* () — the Rich Young Man. Such example gives concrete witness to the principle that one of the key sources for catechesis is the Word of God. as interpreted in the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church.

The primary purpose of presenting the parable of the Sower is to remind pastors and catechists of the necessity of maintaining a consciousness of the "field" in which the seed of the Word of God is sown. The parable is very familiar and draws attention to the condition of the soil into which the seed falls. The symbolism of the parable represents an invitation to consider the variety of conditions in which the gospel will be proclaimed and the various factors that can inhibit the gospel's fruitfulness.

In spite of the familiarity, we would ask you to take some time to reflect more deeply on the meaning of the parable, and in particular on the significance of the various kinds of soil. There are a number of reasons, provided by the text itself, that suggest we should pay particular attention to this parable. The parable is recorded by all three Synoptic gospels and presented as the first of Jesus' parables. It is also one of only two, that Jesus actually explains afterwards to his disciples (the other is the related parable of the dandelion). This would seem to indicate the importance Jesus attached to the third, and perhaps, clinching reason is that in Mark's account, Jesus answers the disciples query with the remark "*Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand the parables?*" (Mk 13) It would appear that the parable of the sower is a key to understanding all of the parables and perhaps all of the teaching and the deeds of Jesus. If this is the case, then we might be invited to conclude that the parable has something to say about the processes that take place when the Word of God comes into contact either with an individual mind and heart or with whole societies.

There is one feature of the parable, which, at first sight, may seem to be a source of disappointment. While there is much said about the various soils that fail to produce lasting fruit, the parable seems to omit any obvious teaching about the nature of productive soil. The very thing that we might be expecting seems to be missing. Here we touch upon the main point about Jesus' use of parables. They serve as a kind of conundrum. a problem to be solved. They engage the heart and mind of the hearer, and as they do so, they raise further questions, thus drawing the person in, towards receiving further insights and enlightenment concerning the mysteries of God's kingdom. Let us engage then with the parable of the Sower. What is there in the parable that might tell us about the productive soil? It does not take long before the solution jumps out at us. If we look closely at the different kinds of soil, we will notice that there is a progression. Not all of them are equally unproductive. In fact, each type of soil makes more progress in producing abundant fruit than the previous type. Each type of soil fails, Jesus tells us, for a different reason. We shall gain a great deal of information about the good soil by observing closely the failure of the three types of poor soil.

It is important therefore, to unlock the teaching of this parable, for the sake of gaining further understanding of the way to deal with the teachings of Jesus (and even the scriptures as a whole). The parable of the Sower is unique in the sense that both the content of the message of the parable and the process by which we perceive the message provide teaching concerning the way that the Word of God interacts with the human mind in a way that leads to life and light.

The parable of the sower, and the interpretation given to the parable by Mgr. Paul Watson, Director of the Maryvale Institute (see attached copy of article) was crucial to the understanding of the role of deliverance in the RCIA. This parable is usually interpreted as describing 4 types of people/soil on which the seed of God's word falls. One is fruitful and the other three bear no fruit; it seems that this lack of fruitfulness which is a result of the type of soil into which the seed of the word is sown is a given, a fait accompli, something which the evangelist has to put up with. However which farmer, before he sows seed, does not prepare the soil by tilling it, and fertilizing it?

Mgr. Pauls' understanding of the parable, is that Jesus meant the parable for the evangelist, rather than the people. The purpose of the parable would then be to describe to the evangelist the different types of soil that he will have to work with, and the different stages toward which the barren soil can be rendered fertile by a process of preparing the soil to bear good fruit. In the parable the soil which at first bears no fruit, gradually begins to bear fruit, and ultimately becomes the good soil. By a process of ongoing preparation and cultivation, the soil is ploughed so that roots can go deeper. Weeding removes the thorns and thistles and the soil becomes good soil, fertile and able to produce a crop at the end of this process.

This insight is vital because it indicates that one of the reasons for the lack of fruitfulness in many programs, RCIA and otherwise, is the lack of knowledge of how and in what way the soil can be prepared! This is where deliverance prayer, the 5 keys, and Unbound become crucial, because they add to the RCIA program a tool which is precisely targeted for the people of today. Those who come from our highly secularised society are wounded in so many different ways ; they are seeking healing and spiritual growth. The 5 keys of Unbound can help them so that the Word of God can take root and they can produce an abundant harvest.

This was my experience of integrating the 5 keys, and offering Unbound prayer to the candidates who were coming to the church seeking a fuller communion with the Catholic church.

RCIA PROGRAM - OUTLINE

The RCIA program, which was done over 2 years, consists of the following stages⁵.

- Pre-catechumenate
- Catechumenate
- Period of Purification and Enlightenment during Lent
- Celebration of the Sacraments at the Easter vigil
- Period of Mystagogy

In the pre-catechumenate we would meet every 3-4 weeks; important at this stage to give enough time between sessions for the catechumen to engage with what was said, and to allow time for the Holy Spirit to work.

In the period of the Catechumenate, we met every week, as the catechumen having made a decision to go forward and receive the sacraments, is now in a different position, having believed in the announcement of the Good News and assented to the teaching of the church.

⁵ Rites of the Catholic Church

PRE-CATECHUMENATE

In the first year the focus is on encountering of the Most Holy Trinity through the announcement of the kerygma. As in Acts 2:38-41; Acts 10, Acts 13, the announcement of the Kerygma, i.e. Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, creates an event in real time in which a person has to decide in freedom, how to react to this news, with belief and acceptance or with rejection. The first year follows this pedagogy.

At a certain point during this year, about half way through, the 5 keys would be introduced, using the example of a house with a door with 5 locks⁶ which open when we take up and use the 5 keys; the house is the house of the Father which is described in the parable of the prodigal Son⁷, a house full of every blessing and grace.

Very important in this presentation of the Kerygma was the witness provided by a number of case studies of deliverance prayer modelled on the 5 keys. These examples were drawn from my own experiences of deliverance prayer. As I got to know the lives of the participants better I would select these case studies to match their experiences.

The result of using these case studies was twofold: firstly, the witness of others who had found freedom in Christ, began to create a level of expectancy that inner healing and transformation were really possible; and into this expectant faith which was growing over time we could then propose prayer for deliverance using the model of the 5 keys, with the aim of ultimately leading each catechumen to an individual unbound session.

Secondly, the Good News became very real for them, because they began to understand the power of Jesus to deliver and to heal.

THE CATECHUMENATE

At the end of the pre-catechumenate which lasted a year, the candidates and catechumens would meet me, their parish priest and speak about their experience of the program, and whether they wanted to continue or not. This meeting was important because it allowed the catechumens to articulate their own Yes to the Good News, and for me to know in what areas the catechumens needed specific help, including the help of deliverance prayer.

The next major step in introducing the 5 keys, was during the period of purification and enlightenment during Lent, particularly during the first, second and third scrutiny, and the minor exorcisms which accompany the scrutinies.

These scrutinies and the accompanying minor exorcisms, presented another opportunity to integrate the 5 keys into the RCIA program. In the gospels of Year A, around which the scrutinies are based, we are presented with a number of individuals who are delivered by Jesus from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light; the man born blind⁸, the Samaritan woman⁹ and Lazarus¹⁰ raised from the dead.

With each scrutiny, the deliverance of each of these individuals in the gospels, was explained through the lens of the 5 keys, and the candidates and catechumens, invited to place themselves within the gospels, identifying the main aspects of each of these gospel character's deliverance, with their own

⁶ Unbound Neal Lozano

⁷ Luke 15:11-32

⁸ John 9:1-12

⁹ John 4: 1-42

¹⁰ John 11: 38-44

story and their own need for deliverance; then coming to the rite of the minor exorcisms asking for the same deliverance. A weekly meditation was prepared each week setting out the main points, to help in this.

Finally, before the reception of the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil, there would be moment for the candidates to receive deliverance prayer within the liturgical context of the celebration of Evening Prayer and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. At the conclusion of Evening Prayer, the five keys of deliverance, lend themselves well to a form of litany in the context of the healing power of the Eucharistic presence. I would go through the 5 keys collectively, beginning with the prayer of repentance and faith, that of forgiveness etc. then ending with the Fathers blessing in the context of Benediction; *"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9)*.

After accompanying the candidates and catechumens and getting to know them over a 2 year period, the Holy Spirit would suggest many things which should be included in this litany based around the five keys. Many experienced an outpouring of grace during this time of prayer.

Many candidates and catechumens experienced deliverance during this service; some felt something lift; some were confronted with the need to forgive a person and given the grace to do so and find new freedom.

PERIOD OF MYSTAGOGY

Following the reception of the sacraments at Easter, having experienced already the power of Jesus to deliver and to save, many of the candidates and catechumens, came of this time of formation hungry for more! With this hunger they could be guided towards an individual Unbound session, and a revisiting of the 5 keys at a deeper level, learning how to stay free, where what they had already experienced would be deepened and go further, and many did.

They could also be guided to join a movement which could take care of their ongoing formation, and need for community and fellowship. In this case most joined the Prayer and Life Workshop (PWL) founded by Ignacio Larragana.

Both me, and my collaborator, Marie Ann Cuthbertson, was stunned by the changes which we saw in the people, the zeal they had for the gospel, their desire for more formation, their willingness to serve the parish, and the joy evidenced on their faces.

CONCLUSION

Finally, after two years, I had a group on fire with the gospel and hungry for more, to whom had been proclaimed the truth of the gospel, the Good News of salvation, and who had received it with the help of deliverance prayer as power and as joy and as freedom. The twin witnesses of a truth proclaimed, and an experience of liberation, like two strands of a rope, had convicted them of the truth of the gospel, and of Jesus' love for them.

Most then went on and asked for more formation, and many them became the leaven in the dough of the parish. Blessed be God!