

Testimony of Former Jesuit Priest Victor J. Affonso

To Follow Jesus Without Compromise

by Victor J. Affonso

Why I Joined The Society Of Jesus

At the age of 23, I was a successful commercial artist on the verge of going abroad where a job was awaiting me. I was happy at the prospect of leaving India and thereby also escaping the terrible anguish caused of seeing the misery of the poor in the streets of Bombay.

Political saviors like Gandhi and Nehru had failed in giving true freedom and justice to India's poor majority. Murder and divisions assailed "independent" India, and so it still is today. All the social works were but a few drops of water in a desert. Yet there was still one solution left: The words of Jesus kept coming to me during prayer, "...For with God ALL things are possible" (Mark 10:27). "Don't run away!" On another day I heard the words, "Follow My Son — Jesus!" This word finally led me to leave the world and join the Society of Jesus, a missionary order that promised by its very title, its "Spiritual Exercises" and its Constitutions to serve Jesus at any cost and to lead all men to know Him, His Peace, and His Justice.

To Give India The Gospel

My vision when I joined was to know Jesus intimately, to study and obey His Word, to be completely free of outside encumbrances, even a girl I loved, in order to follow Him uncompromisingly. Like Paul, I wanted to preach the Gospel and bring India to Christ. The misery of India hurt me, and I was hopeful that with other fully committed Christians, I could help lead the people of India to Christ that they might be saved spiritually and socially and live truly as God's children. Only then would India experience the Father's full providence and justice for her people.

When I studied communications media and taught at St. Xavier's College, it was for the same purpose: to give India the Gospel. Today, I am grateful that this vision for India not only remains but is even more alive and closer to fulfillment. This is my faith; I see Jesus Christ is accomplishing His already-won victory through his "little flock" of ordinary people who are "born-again" and empowered by His Holy Spirit. These are His visible Body on earth, the Christian church. God's Word says that it is God Himself, through Jesus Christ, Who will sovereignly, "...bring justice to the nations...in faithfulness He will bring forth justice. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42:1-4).

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having

made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Colossians 1:19-20). Thus when it happens, ALL praise and glory of delivering our people will go to God through Christ Jesus. Men are but unworthy and useless servants. For with man it is impossible to save the poor. “But with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26), if only we believe in the One Whom He has sent — Jesus!

The Mission Factor

During the time of my studies, a good fourteen years, my Jesuit superiors and companions also seemed to have had the same vision, and dedicated their lives to the same goal, to know and to serve Jesus and to proclaim Him to the whole world that men might become His disciples. I was also one of the rare, privileged Jesuits who was able to travel and to live abroad for studies and was given freedom to act responsibly. As a man I felt fulfilled. Yet, something very important was missing! I could not satisfy the hunger in my heart to experience Jesus, the Risen Lord, as He was experienced by simple “unschooled” men in the first apostolic church, as described in the Scriptures.

In the early sixties and seventies, when studying abroad, I lived in the Philippines and in many countries of Europe, and later in the U.S.A. I witnessed the exodus and the emptying out of Roman Catholic churches in Europe in the sixties while I studied in Spain. Only six percent attended Sunday Mass! Later in Los Angeles, USA, I saw the double-standard lives of the Sunday Catholics, including myself and the other priests and nuns. I questioned my Christianity, imported from the West, and wondered if Jesus Christ and the Bible were not mere fables for which I was giving up my life in vain.

The Church Opens To Accept Hindus

I had experienced no other church except the Roman Catholic Church. I was brainwashed to believe that it was the one and only true Church, outside which there was no salvation. Vatican Council II had changed the emphasis a bit, but not too much. The Protestants, though now called “brethren” and their churches called “ecclesial communities,” were still treated as “heretics” and their churches were imperfect, “truncated.” I faithfully remained anti-Protestant and avoided any contact with their heretical teachings and TV programs. On the other hand, I was encouraged by the Jesuits in India to be more open with non-Christians, Hindus, Muslims — even calling them “God’s children” — and to study their religions for a “dialogue,” which meant engaging only in mutual appreciation of religions but avoiding any intentions of converting them to Christ.

Professional But Lost

In 1971, while studying in California, I was enveloped in an atmosphere of

hippies, gurus, drugs, divorce, sexual hedonism, and perversion of every kind. All my psychological counseling and prayers were not helping the “sinners” at all. I felt helpless. At that time thousands of priests and nuns were leaving the Church in Western countries. Others, like myself, were becoming professional in the media, in psychological counseling, or in social programs to justify our priestly vocation and to save the world by every method except “The gospel ...the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16).

I was already seventeen years a Jesuit in my late thirties, equipped with several university degrees and a “green card” for permanent residency in the USA. I considered leaving the powerless and unexciting priesthood along with the rest. But just in case there was a heaven and judgment, I would remain a Sunday Catholic and pay my heavenly insurance. Outwardly, to the Catholics, I appeared to be the efficient and “happy” popular priest studying film and television at the University of California at Los Angeles and living the “yuppie life” at St. Martin of Tours Church in Brentwood, near Beverley Hills and Hollywood. I mingled with my favorite stars at their cocktail parties and never felt discriminated against by this “white” parish. On the contrary, I felt loved and, materially speaking, was very happy. With a good but deceived conscience, I also believed in horoscopes, taught yoga exercises on the campus to young Americans, and never knew that the Bible strictly forbids the occult activities into which I had delved. I needed help!

Unknown to me, some Christians, whom I had accused and preached against as being Protestant “fundamentalists,” were praying for me to be delivered from my deception. They prayed, and I received the grace to come to a point of confusion and desperation regarding my faith and vocation and to cry out to the Lord, “O God, show me if You are true, if Jesus is Your Son, and if the Bible is Your true Word.”

Turning Point

In 1972, precisely on Pentecost Sunday, the Lord dramatically saved me. I had prepared to preach a sermon on the Holy Spirit, to be repeated at five consecutive Masses in Brentwood. I had no faith in what I preached. My back gave out early that morning, for the first time in my life, and I did not preach. An ambulance hurried me to St. John’s Hospital. A leading orthopedic surgeon diagnosed my serious condition as congenital scoliosis of the spine in need of major surgery. I lay on my back in traction, in pain, and in confusion. The Lord arranged for Christians to come to my room and to pray for me. Against my will, they placed their hands on me and while I patiently suffered their “foolishness,” I tried to forgive these “heretics” who began praying. I sighed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” But in His own way, the Lord had heard my cry and was answering it through His servants, the very ones I was rejecting. The Lord opened my heart from that day on to know Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior, assured of salvation here and now in a way I had never experienced before. I now knew the big difference between experiencing Jesus as my personal Savior after being “born-again” and knowing Him as a Roman Catholic who left all things to work for Jesus as a

man religious but still not sure of my salvation and destination after death. Words cannot describe this wonderful experience of Jesus my Savior.

The Lord Opens My Eyes

During that month in the hospital, the scales slowly fell from my eyes. The risen Lord sovereignly removed from my heart the doubts and confusion about the reality of the risen Lord and eternal life. The Bible, which I had once labored to study as professional knowledge, now became an exciting real life spiritual revelation to me. I could easily understand the Word, enjoy it, and remember it. The Bible is always held by the Roman Catholic Church as her Book. The Roman Catholic Church reasons that the Church, which she identifies as herself, existed before the Scriptures of the New Testament, and she also helped to define the canon of the Bible. Hence she holds that to judge ongoing apostolic doctrine, the final norm is not Scripture alone (“Sola Scriptura”) but rather Scripture and tradition (of the Roman Catholic Church). Catholics are obliged to believe finally what the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church officially declares as truth. Christians, however, believe that Scriptures should be the final norm to judge the doctrines. This is shown in the Bible: Jesus and the apostolic writers of the New Testament always referred to the Old Testament Scriptures to verify their teachings and actions. Jesus said:

“...These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44).

Paul wrote: “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord...” (Romans 1:1-3). When Paul preached: “...they [the believers at Berea] searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

It is the Holy Spirit Who is the Author and Who finally edited and completed the Bible. His Scriptures warn all teachers: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it...” (Deuteronomy 4:2). Any teachings or “infallible dogmas” which add, subtract, or deny the Scriptures must be rejected, including purgatory, immaculate conception, adoration of the transubstantiated elements, infallibility of the Pope, etc. Jesus speaks strongly against such “traditions” and teachers: “Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:13).

Grace — God’s Free Gift

Grace, the free gift of God that causes man to believe in Jesus and to have eternal life, cannot be earned by man’s “works” for himself or for another. Yet the Roman Catholic Church stresses the essential mediation of the bishops, priests and sacramental “works” for the reception of grace for salvation. This

comes against Scripture which says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Scriptures teach that Jesus is the only Savior. Only He could die and shed His divine blood at Calvary to forgive men their sins and take away eternal death. He, the Lord God, came to give us freedom and salvation: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Paul would not permit even himself or an angel from heaven to pervert the Gospel he was already preaching (Galatians 1:8):

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Corinthians 1:23-24).

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

The root cause why Catholics cannot understand or proclaim this Gospel is because they are not open to receive this conviction when reproved by the Holy Spirit, since they have been brainwashed by the Roman Catholic system to be immersed in salvation by human works, and are kept ignorant of the Gospel Truth in the Bible. Jesus promised, "And when he [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me" (John 16:8-9).

The Gospel and commission of Jesus is being denied today by clergymen not empowered by the Holy Spirit (and probably not born-again). Instead, they are birthing "dead churches" through "good works" and rituals (sacraments), "charms" (scapulars, medals), and "mantras" (chants, novenas, rosaries), which the pagans do as well or better. As it is written, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind..." (Isaiah 26:18).

I Believe The Real Good News

When I had my "born-again" experience in the hospital, the Holy Spirit convicted me of my sins, some of which I even thought were my virtues. I had depended on my "works" and "sacraments of the church" to work out my salvation. But now I knew I had only "brought forth wind." I repented and believed the REAL GOOD NEWS: that Jesus had done it ALL for me, once for all by His one sacrifice on the cross. The only way to be saved was to repent and just believe in Jesus Christ as my only Savior and Lord.

The Lord also convicted me that I had fought against a lot of people. I had always prided myself on being a friendly and forgiving priest who loved everybody, including the Hindus, Muslims, my enemies, and sinners, giving

my life to convert them to the Catholic Church for salvation. But now I heard a clear inner voice of the Holy Spirit convicting me of unloving ways, wrongly judging many Christians as “heretics.” Suddenly I saw it. I had no love for “protestants.” With prejudice and fear I had avoided the “heretics” and their TV programs and warned Catholics against Protestant Bibles and writings. I repented. It was a great miracle of God’s grace. Years of prejudice dissolved and I suddenly hungered to meet my long-lost Christian brothers and sisters. It was as if a dark screen had been drawn from my heart, and my mind and eye could see the truth plainly. I experienced such great joy of salvation that the patients in the next hospital room enquired why I was so joyful. The love for Jesus burned within me with a new zeal to return to India and a boldness to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world.

God Heals

I also was graced to believe for my healing. I trusted my expert surgeon that he could (with some risks) cure my back. But I wanted to have a testimony of my living Jesus, He who declares: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:18). So with faith in Jesus I walked out of that hospital, refusing surgery, unafraid of the great risk.

I was healed miraculously of the scoliosis without surgery, to the amazement of the surgeon. My spine, which had become shaped like an “S”, had become straight as a rod within the year. This strengthened my faith and proclamation.

New Life, New Zeal

I launched out into all churches, beginning with some Protestant ones, and found such great love among these my Christian brothers as I witnessed to the risen Lord: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). He is Faithful and True.

“I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD” (Psalm 40:1-3.)

The Lord has answered my questions. Jesus Christ is truly risen and is alive and is doing very well indeed! He is coming soon! “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). And He is with us, just as He was with the saints of the Apostolic Church, and also with Joshua and the saints of the Old Testament.

Someone had faithfully prayed for me and I had received the grace to cry out to the Lord, “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (I Timothy 1:14). In the same way, I will continue to pray for all those who are deceived like I once was when I did not

know where to go. I pray that the Lord will hear their cry and they will be filled with joy and be empowered to be witnesses to Christ. I pray this especially for the Jesuits and Catholics in India, that our nation may soon be delivered from every evil by the blood of Jesus Christ. Someday this vision will come true! And Jesus, the Truth, shall prevail!

The True Church Upholds The Bible

The Roman Catholic hierarchy had requested me to stop teaching because I had publicly admitted that some of their main dogmas and practises were contrary to God's Word in the Bible, making it a religion separated from the one true Church of Jesus Christ. The true Church consists of believers who uphold God's Word without blatant perversions.

Converted by the Word and the Spirit

To the best of my ability I have always respected and obeyed the Roman Catholic Church leaders as unto the Lord. But now my conscience convinced me that in remaining under the Roman Catholic authority or headship, I would be forced to submit to teachings that were false and lies coming from the anti-Christ spirit. In John 8:43-44, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and asked them:

"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

These qualities were evident in the Roman Catholic Church during the Inquisition and murder of the reformers. The false dogmas have not been changed at all by Vatican II. This Council fully supported Trent in totality. Catholics were and are encouraged to accept false religions as equally "salvific."

The Bombay Cardinal and church leaders urged me not to leave the Roman Catholic Church. I loved them. They had once supported me fully in the work I was doing in India. I wrote to the Cardinal and indeed the Pope and the Jesuit Provincial explaining in detail and respect that: "...We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

It broke my heart to leave the Roman Catholic people, with all my friends and relatives, and not be able to teach them the Bible Good News. May the Lord sovereignly bless them with His truth and set the prisoners free to follow Jesus without compromise. I ask this in Jesus' name.

In 1993 I married Julie Laschiazza Baden of Brentwood, Los Angeles, who had ministered with me for salvation of souls through the Holy Spirit in Roman Catholic Churches all over India and the USA. God has gifted her with a

powerful ministry. Together we founded Cornerstone International ministries in India and USA for discipling believers to pray and labor by the power of the Holy Spirit and also use the mass media for India to come to Jesus Christ.

Postscript On Present Day Doctrinal Pollution

I am quite aware of difficulties also in Protestant churches, some of which have fallen prey to the same trap of doctrinal pollution, secular humanism, pluralism and above all Christian materialism that preaches the “prosperity Gospel,” and political messiahship. In many rich and powerful Christian countries, the god of mammon reigns supreme. Preachers and “healers” calling themselves “born-again” and “Holy Spirit filled” are making evangelical work a business in the Father’s House. While they point fingers at the Vatican power and harlotry, they too are building their own little Vaticans and becoming powerful “infallible” popes on their own television stations or in their large institutions and church buildings and Christian entertainment centers. Their million-dollar estates discourage them from leaving their comfortable homes to visit more difficult and poor mission stations even in their own country. Some of the so called Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches have been seduced into seeking the signs and wonders through cultivated occult powers attributable to human potential and its concomitant evil – the idolatrous deification of self.

If you need prayer or any help to follow Jesus without compromise, or to be partner in this ministry you may contact us at:

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Victor J. Affonso

Born in India. He is presently very active spending equal time each year in the U.S.A. and in India. His heart is as an evangelist. His presence is felt in preaching and witnessing in the U.S.A. and in cities and towns around Bombay and Goa in India. He is the founder and director of Cornerstone International.

Renunciation

FINAL DECISION of VICTOR J.J. AFFONSO TO RESIGN FROM THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH and its JESUIT ORDER I, VICTOR JOHN JOSEPH AFFONSO, a disciple and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ saved by His precious BLOOD, anointed by His Holy Spirit, and appointed by Him to live and preach His GOSPEL to ALL peoples, while remaining a member of the ONE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD of the People of God in Christ Jesus, I hereby declare my RESIGNATION from the membership of the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH and from its Religious Order called the SOCIETY OF JESUS in obedience to God's Word as my conscience discerns. Henceforth I do not accept the headship of Roman Catholic authorities since they make void the Bible, and obstruct my MISSION to preach the GOSPEL without COMPROMISE.

In my conscience, I believe that many of the Official Doctrines and Practises of the Roman Catholic Church come against God's written Word. These aberrations have resulted because of a "rotten root," which is that the Church, even after the Canon of Scripture was completed, holds that there are TWO SOURCES of divinely revealed Truth: The Bible and Tradition. In practice the Tradition has added to and contradicted the inerrant and completed Revelation in the Bible. I hold the Bible as the FINAL NORM to judge what is God's Word for us today. To please God I have to obey what He says. In His inerrant Word He says: "blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). Jesus is against "Making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:13). I also believe from Scriptures that the "Religious Vows" and "Clerical Hierarchy" as practised in the Roman Catholic Church today, making the clergy a brahmanical upper class, set apart as holier than the rest of the Royal Priesthood, are anti-scriptural and not according to God's biblical pattern for His Church. The Religious Vows are also superfluous for any true member of the Body of Christ whose Baptismal Vows are to die with Christ to the values of the world, include his being, POOR in Spirit: not lusting for his possessions, but sharing with those in need, CHASTE: in thought and living, whether single or married, OBEDIENT: to all authority constituted by God, social or religious in all things except sin. Hence, I hereby RENOUNCE ALL THE RELIGIOUS VOWS taken in the "Society of Jesus" which included the special "cultic" Vow of obedience to the Roman Catholic Pope. I hereby renounce ALL FALSE VOWS AND CONSECRATIONS to Mary or to any other departed saint or created spirit, that have been performed by me or by anyone else on my behalf, with or without my knowledge.

Signed by Victor J.J. Affonso

Date: 20th June, 1988

Bombay, India