

ers to justify their offenses against everyone and everything that they have sought to oppress and exploit. Christians, once known as pious ascetics in the age of the Apostolic Fathers, ended up running the breweries and wineries of Europe. Benedictine Rule accommodations for religious alcohol consumption and flesh-eating were stretched to the extreme. Ale became the main daily drink of the religious at monasteries like Durham in fifteenth-century England. Feast days found the tables of wealthy European religious spread with spiritous drinks and carcasses of every description. This was the beginning of the pathetic caricature of the gluttonous, drunken, carousing friar.

The Shameful Record of Our Sins

Because of pathological inculturation and general moral infidelity to Christ, for much of humanity, Western Christian culture has become identified with imperialism and economic predation, violence, enslavement of women and people of color, the genocide of non-Christian peoples, and the worldwide development of markets for opium, heroin, cocaine, alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and other addictive substances. Christians have sinned by tolerating these evils and promoting sexism, racism, fanatical nationalism, and other evils in the name of Christ. Must Christians today take up Oriental ascetical disciplines to learn how to control their minds and senses? Must we stand ashamed in the presence of pious, gentle "pagans"? Can't we see that a drinking, smoking, gluttonous, and sexually immoral priesthood will fail utterly to inspire faith in the "un-saved" and holiness in the faithful? Does "carne-val," the feast-of-the-flesh, really belong anywhere in the Christian life? No. We need to return to our own Judeo-Christian ascetical roots to recover the moral authority and spiritual power of God to overcome these evils in our individual lives and in our societies.

Asceticism and Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Ascetic theology commands us to "be filled with the Holy Spirit!" Authentic Catholic Charismatic renewal will be evidenced by the presence of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit filling the members of His church. As Abba Matthew the Poor states in *The Communion of Love* (1984):

We always proceed from theoretical statements in dogmatic theology to practical applications in ascetic theology when we come to deal with the Holy Spirit.