

From a Prayer Group to Slavery

Testimonial from a former follower of the Lisieux Welcome Centre

I will certainly be less theoretical and technical than the people who have already spoken, but I want to share with you what I experienced...

I had a happy childhood. My mother was a very orderly and authoritarian, when she said something we quickly obeyed. She was very attentive to her children, she took good care of my brothers and me. But when I turned eight, my father started touching me (he didn't rape me). At the same time, he thought I was worthless: when I said I wanted to be a nurse, he said I would only ever be able to be a farmer. Those two ways that he treated me caused internal conflicts, and it is perhaps my childhood that created a fertile ground for what happened later, as I had a strong need for recognition.

I left the house young and got married. We had a son, but my husband was an alcoholic and extremely violent and I had to leave him because I was really scared that he would kill me (I divorced him shortly after). My mother was in contact with the businessmen of the Full Gospel and she suggested I go with her: "You should come. You'll see: it feels good to hear about God." And it helped me, even if my faith wasn't all that strong! Later I started going to an evangelical church; many things took place in my life, meetings, and my faith really grew.

I met D, the father of my children, during an ecumenical gathering and we got married very quickly.

Meeting and Prayer Group

I met Françoise Dercle (FD) in 1996: we were colleagues where I worked as an educational assistant in a hotel school. We had a couple of common friends, who were also Christians. It was what brought us together. English teacher, FD also led a "Jesus Workshop" (a time for searching and discussion) in this school.

What attracted me to her was that this mother was close to her children: she had a way of educating them, spending time with them, doing things with them...I really admired her, she was the kind of mother I dreamed of being, a model! In my eyes, everything she did was good, her children obeyed her, they were good pupils in school, nice to everyone, and above all self assured.

In school FD was liked by all the students, even those who didn't like English, and additionally they progressed very well. Very active, FD organised European trips and exchanges for the students. The dream for me was to become a woman like her. She was very charismatic. We spent more and more time together.

She prayed a lot, she spoke about God in a very lively manner, which appealed to us. Once a month, the members of an English evangelical church came and taught our prayer group about the Bible. Then, FD organised annual meetings with them.

The better my English became, the more I noticed that she didn't translated exactly as I had understood, thus denigrating myself once again, I said to myself: "she is the one who knows".

Very quickly, she starting to create links with us, to become closer to us, to listen to what we had in our hearts, to get us to speak so we would tell her our daily problems.

First Signs of Her Hold

In 1997, she made D., my husband, quit his job to work as a volunteer managing the home of an Englishman, which served as a welcome centre for English Christians coming to rest in France. That was where our prayer group met.

At the end of 1998, the owner of this house no longer wanted to welcome us, we went to live in Lisieux, in the empty rooms of a school that had moved. Gradually, the Christian meetings with FD attracted more and more people.

It was during this period that the "heart to heart" discussions started. She spoke to us individually, alone, for hours and hours. She searched our past, made us talk, and because finally someone was listening to us, we delivered: she knew a lot about each and everyone one of us, which allowed her to then "pull the strings", to use everything she heard to make us suffer.

Over time things changed. Before, when we prayed for someone, we put our hand on our shoulder or things like that. Now, there was no time to pray like that. She spoke like that about the bible or God, but without using the bible. Then, we started to cuddle together, but only with her. She placed us in situations that we wouldn't have experienced if we had not met her. She made us jealous because we all wanted to be in her arms. Personally, I was part of the group she rejected, for years and years.

In 2003, she took my husband from me: "he doesn't belong to you anymore", she said, and she ordered me to return my engagement and wedding rings. At that moment, I thought about leaving...but she had already spun her web, for five years, day after day, she held her hold over us. I feared ending up alone with the children. It was too late, I was "addicted", I was dependent of her. Even if I had a home and salary, given that our home was in my name and my salary allowed by family to live...I really suffered, she spent a lot of time with D. And I spent my time thinking about what they might be up to.

The meeting were more and more frequent; then started the times when we would cuddle in each others arms, then she placed tatamis on the floor to be more comfortable. The more it happened, the more she grew on us...and the more we helped to develop the guru in her. Gurus can't exist if there are no followers...

Celestial Meetings and Navigations

Then FD found new techniques to chase away demons. According to her, in fact there are two types of personalities in each person: a "God personality", which manifests itself when everything is going well, and a "Demon personality" which is the source of difficulties, illnesses, problems. That was when the "Celestial Meetings" started: we would surround her,

and she would spit or vomit (literally) demons, we did so as well; we fought to be against her, we pushed to be beside the queen.

Little by little, we arrived the “Navigations”, lying on the tatamis. What is supposed to happen will happen: a man and a woman from the group got undressed and started to make love. It was a sign from God: to chase away the demons you need to make love. Additionally, when you make love, or rather when we “navigate”, if we are with God it is not carnal, it is spiritual...And as the “Woman Mistress”, with absolute powers, FD organised who went with who, when and where.

She became more and more directive. Women who did not work became her cleaning women, or rather her subjects, her pawns that she moved and she would do what she wanted to do to them. She was very authoritarian, everyone was scared to displease her; so we would do everything possible to make her happy, but anyways it was never good enough, because what is good one day is not the next. She is the only one, the chosen one, the living Holy Spirit, the only one who knows!

Terrorised and Totally Submitted

It is increasingly terrifying; however, we have the feeling that what she is doing what is good for us. We all need recognition and, while she never hesitated to hit us, to treat us as worthless if things didn't go as she wished, we spent our time trying to please her.

Then FD decided to buy a house so that we could all live together in a true community to please God and so that people could see that we were happy. This house was bought with the money from the sale of several follower's homes, including my mother's. Anyways, money is a demon, and FD knew what to do with it, no us. For the glory of God, and to chase away the demons, she would look at our accounts and tell us how much we must give and how to share it out. She knew us so well that she would use us where it would be most effective. She took all our time, tired us out; she was a tyrant...and yet we never complained about her.

In 2005, the infernal life started in the house. For such different people, it is extremely difficult to live together, especially since FD made people jealous by separating couples, by organising who slept with who. She commanded, gave orders, nothing could be done without her authorisation. Everyone denounced, either on paper or by email, those that did bad things. Françoise knew everything, we were her subjects, she called herself “the queen”, we lived in a dictatorship.

For each of us, no need to think, everything was organised by FD: “I am not responsible for anything, nothing is my fault, no need to make decisions”.

Investigation, Arrest, Trial

In 2006 a follower made a complaint. This act would lead to the start of an investigation, and the police used phone taps. They were analysed by Dr. Parquet, a psychiatrist. The investigation would lead to the arrest of FD and members of the group in June of 2007. I went to prison for six months, first having been considered FD's right hand, before then being recognised as a victim after psychiatric evaluation.

Françoise Dercle was sentenced after appeal to five years in prison for fraudulent abuse of a state of weakness.

My children were placed in a foster home for three years.

I would like to share with you the education that was given to them from almost their birth till they were 9 and 11: this education did not allow them to grow and develop their identity. Luckily, they did not take part in the adult meetings. But they never had to think, think about their needs nor to reflect, as the adults took care of them, following an established plan, doing it for them.

And nothing could take place without the authorisation of Françoise. They were educated without being unhappy, or dropouts or de-socialised, but outside of the realities of life (no organisation of school work, for example).

When they came home on weekends, I reproduced the same things, I felt guilty that they were in a foster home and I gave them everything they wanted and more! They were never confronted with frustration, so I will leave it to your imagination how difficult their adolescence was, and still is...

Awareness

Being dominated by someone can often lead us to commit harmful acts that are serious and irreversible. Looking back, I realise that if FD asked to “navigate” the children, I probably would have allowed it.

I am fully aware that it is very difficult to judge followers that are victims and who are coauthors of serious acts, but under her hold, FD would have made me give her the moon, make love to who ever, or, why not, go as far as killing...Still today, I often ask myself the question how far she could have made me go, because due to the love I had for her, I was no longer able to judge, but above all it was so that she would love me and that I was important in her eyes. I always had an increasing need for recognition.

I have become very distrusting once I feel that someone is trying to manipulate me, sometimes even for day to day things; my biggest fear still today is to once again be recruited.