

The **POWER** OF CONFIDENCE in the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Dear Friends of the Heart of Christ,

In my mind's eye I can still visualize some of the scenes that I encountered in our move from our Wilmington Monastery. Having been a part of that historic event in the life of our community, I experienced how God's plan and our surrender to it, triumphed over many obstacles. As we approach 2020, we will be recalling our 25th year in Tyringham. But as we all know very well, doing the work of the Lord will always entail difficulties and trials.

One of the most poignant images that has stayed with me over the years from our Wilmington move is the image of our monastery being dismantled. Our beautiful greystone, granite building and surrounding enclosure wall was covered by a lush growth of ivy that softened its appearance and made it look like a mystical dwelling place. As workers started to strip off the ivy tendrils and as the green vine began its descent into shades of brown, the building literally looked like it was dying. When we vacated the monastery on the morning of August 25, 1993, for our temporary residence at St. Joseph's Convent in Pittsfield, we left it in the hands of its new owner and developer who would turn the site into deluxe townhouses. Our friends in Wilmington kept us abreast of the stages of demolition of that 100 year old building. Photos were taken for us so we would have a historic record. Out of their great consideration for our years of dwelling there and what was transpiring on site, our friends did not show these photographs to us until a year after we had moved. Viewing them was, indeed, painful. The building that had housed a century of contemplative life was slowly demolished. (Only parts of the surrounding wall were left intact.) God was leading us to a new home in Tyringham, but to establish us anew there had to be the dismantling of our past property. These reflections come to me as I think and read about the present events in the life of the Church. The Lord seems to be permitting the current dismantling of our Church in some sectors, yet His plans are never suppressed by human initiatives. As He told St. Margaret Mary, "I shall reign in spite of My enemies and those who wish to oppose Me" and "I can easily find ways—often seemingly the most unorthodox and least likely—of making my plans come true."

Recently, I came across a very interesting story. It was about a man who went from being very much in charge of his life, to the realization that everything was deteriorating. He writes, "I feel like everything I touch is falling apart." Describing a scene from his life, he gives us this account:

We were sitting in a restaurant having breakfast together. I was pouring out to a friend how it felt like my life was a disaster. All the things that used to be good were now going bad. It felt like I was cursed or something. At one time it felt like I had the Midas touch—everything I touched seemed to turn to gold. Now it was all turning to... manure. My work, my marriage, my ministry in the church, my relationships were all souring. What was going on? My world was crumbling... Another friend told me he had a dream about me. His dream was of a building that was in the process of being torn down. Piece by piece it was being dismantled by a great excavator. The rubble was littered all over the ground at the base of the building. He got the sense that the building was a picture of my life. The problem with the building was that its foundation was flawed. The Master Builder wanted to make the building more significant, but the flawed foundation would not be able to sustain the planned structure. So, because the Master Builder had a greater vision for the building, He was dismantling it. His plan was to form a stronger foundation that could carry the weight of the larger building He was going to build. Then my friend said something that was a turning point for me: "I think God is shifting you from self-confidence to God confidence."

So, so many people put their confidence in themselves and in their own resources. They rarely bring God into the fabric of their lives, except when things go really haywire and there is nowhere else to turn. You know people like that. Even good-living Christian people want to be the masters of their own problems, without ever referring their difficulties to God and humbly asking the Lord for His help. Here are some choice reminders from the Lord (as recorded in the book *In Sinu Jesu*) on how He desires us to put our confidence in Him.

—It is not by your works that you will be pleasing to Me, but by your confidence in My merciful love. (p. 98)

—When you seek to reason out everything, to know everything ahead of time, to control everything by human means, you keep Me from acting as the God of love that I am, I ask neither for ability nor for great preparations on your part; I ask only for confidence, your confidence in Me, in the love of My open Heart for each one of you. (p. 11)

—When nothing is clear, when nothing is foreseeable, it is the moment to make many acts of confidence. You will repeat them as often as necessary and, in them, you will find peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (p. 11)

—Confidence opens the door to all the treasures of My kingdom. To one who has confidence in My merciful love, I can refuse nothing. (p. 105)

—Bring me your desires, your good will, a profound regret for all your sins, and, above all, a boundless confidence in My merciful love. (p. 126)

—My Heart cannot remain indifferent to prayers offered in confidence, humility and faith. (p. 168)

—If I delay in answering you, it is so that you will trust Me to reveal the answer you seek in the persons who surround you or communicate with you, in events, in circumstances, and in those barely perceptible signs of My providence by which I communicate My love to little souls. Speak to Me confidently and without fear of being misunderstood or judged. I know your inmost thoughts, and the questions you bring to Me in the Sacrament of My love are clearly known to Me. (pp. 179-80)

—Pray to Me with confidence and with abandonment, and not with a secret desire to force My hand and to obtain from Me only what you have in view. Ask and you shall receive. Only ask with a trusting faith, believing that whatever I will give is best for you and most glorious for Me and for My Father. (p. 182)

These words coming from the Heart of the Lord bring home the importance of confidence in God that is needed for growth in our spiritual lives but also for our renewed hope that God will cleanse and revivify the Church. When everything is dark and seems to be falling apart, that is the time to exercise all our interior forces to bolster our confidence in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and His intervention in the world. So let us pray for the Church. We may be well aware of the prophetic words of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as he conducted the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday in 2005. He declared these remarkable sentiments: "How much filth there is in the Church and even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely to him." In a future interview as Pope, he told journalists who had asked about Mary's message at Fatima, "The sufferings of the Church come precisely from within the Church, from the sins that exist in the Church... today we are seeing it in a truly terrifying way that the greatest persecution of the Church comes not from her enemies outside, but arises from sin within the Church..."

Listen now to the laments of the Lord as he warns us (again in *In Sinu Jesu*) about the present concerns of His Heart:

The movement of persecution that is about to break out against My Church will focus on three objects. In fact, this has already begun. I will be attacked in My priests; they represent My Eucharistic Face. The face of the priesthood is My Face, once again mocked and covered with mud, spittle, and blood. I will be dishonored in the Sacrament of My Body and Blood. You will see an increase of sins against the mysteries of My Body and Blood: sacrileges, desecrations, and mockeries. I will be attacked in the weakest and most vulnerable members of My Mystical Body. This too has already begun, but it will increase until it reaches proportions that will oblige My Father to avenge the blood of His beloved innocents. For all of this you must make reparation... The day is coming, and it is not far off, when I will intervene to show My Face in a priesthood completely renewed and sanctified; when I will intervene to triumph in My Eucharistic Heart by the conquering power of sacrificial love alone; when I will intervene to defend the poor and vindicate the innocents whose blood has marked this nation (namely, the USA) and so many others as did the blood of Abel in the beginning. (p. 91)

In all these perplexities we must take to heart the words of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary: "If you believe, you will see the power of My Heart and the magnificence of My love." Still, the Lord had also warned our saint that forces of evil would be trying to trip her up and lead her astray. Anyone who is striving to do the Lord's will and seeking to live a good Christian life will be targeted by dark powers to discouragement, to rationalization to follow the world's ways and even to despair. How many baptized Christians are tempted to give up the fight for what is good and right in God's sight. They will be waylaid to pursue bogus "spiritual" paths that lead, not to confidence in Jesus, but to confidence in themselves and to superficial man-made rituals and gods. Matthew's Gospel cautions us by recording the words of Jesus, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits." (Mt 7:15-16b)

The words of Our Lady to Sister Agnes Sasagawa in Akita, Japan (an approved apparition) resonate with a truth we see played out before our very eyes, "The Church will be full of those who accept compromises." To counter this, I would like to purpose some wise guidance given by Msgr. Charles Pope who writes, "Everything we hear is to be squared with the consistent teaching of the Church, back through the centuries, as articulated in Scripture and in the doctrinal and dogmatic teachings of the Church. Stay close to the catechism, close to Scripture, close to the Fathers of the Church!" And I may add, close to the counsels of the saints.

Where can we find help to augment our confidence in the Sacred Heart of Jesus? These words from the Lord (recorded in *In Sinu Jesu*) give us some salient advice:

My Mother, on the other hand, raises souls when they fall; she instills in them a confidence in My loving mercy, a readiness to believe in My merciful love, a desire to come into My presence and to expose to Me, the divine physician, the wounds suffered in spiritual combat. My Mother is the Mother of Holy Hope. She is the Mother of Holy Confidence. One who entrusts himself to My Mother will never fall into the pit of despair. Even when sorely tempted, there will remain in that soul enough confidence to turn to Me, and to make an act of abandonment to My merciful love that will touch My Heart and release from it a torrent of forgiveness, healing and mercy. (p. 203) +

This talk on Sacred Heart Spirituality was given in our Gathering Room on October 6, 2019. If you would like to attend similar presentations by the sisters, our next talks will be held on Sunday, November 3, 2019 at 4:00 pm.