

Deliverance *from* Darkness

THROUGH THE LOVE OF CHRIST'S HEART

Dear Friends of the Heart of Christ,

In these past days we have witnessed the end of the liturgical year which terminates before the season of Advent. Traditionally, the Church has selected for us at this time some very apocalyptic readings that remind us of the end-times. For those following the Roman breviary, we heard just the other day from the second letter of the apostle Peter these words, "In the last days, mocking, sneering men who are ruled by their passions will arrive on the scene. They will ask: 'Where is that promised coming of His? Our forefathers have been laid to rest, but everything stays just as it was when the world was created.'" These sentiment often reflect the mindset of many people today. They jeer at the thought that there is even a God and if there is one, why, they insinuate, does this God not come and do something about all the chaos and hardship in the world. So, so many people do not want to be bothered with the thought of God and they certainly do not want God to interfere in their lives. They would much rather live how they choose, even if that means living in darkness. To follow God's commandments and to depend on Almighty God would only stifle their lifestyle.

To add weight to these thoughts, I'd like to share with you some experiences voiced by a priest who is the designated exorcist of an American diocese in the midwest. He is frequently visited by people needing help against attacks from evil forces. His responses are very enlightening. First of all, he explains that since the devil's main thrust is to tempt us to sin, all people are potential prey. We know from the lives of the saints like St. Margaret Mary and St. Padre Pio that they too were targets of the devil's sinister schemes. For Catholics, this priest-exorcist tells them simply to pray sincerely and regularly, and to go to confession and holy Mass. "People think," he emphasizes, "that they have to do something extraordinary, but it is actually the very ordinary things that build up graces and offer protection. If a Catholic is praying, going to Mass, and receiving the sacraments, then the devil is already on the run." He also advocates the wearing of a crucifix, blessed medals and scapulars, and the blessed Sacred Heart badge as well as using Holy Water and other Catholic sacramentals that have power for protection. But he points out that the power is rooted in our faith, not in the objects themselves, warning us not to treat these sacramentals as good luck charms.

Many people of non-Catholic denominations also approach this exorcist priest. He helps them provided they come with someone from their own church for he says, "I need to know they are connected to a faith community and that someone will continue with them." Even non-Christian people seek out this priest, but he is strong to express the fact that the power to heal them comes from the name of Jesus Christ. There is no other power in the universe that can grant true blessings and real healing for our ultimate good. Only the Sacred Heart of Jesus, revealed to Saint Margaret Mary as "the source of all blessings," can give us true and lasting peace and healing of mind and soul, and, if God wills, renewed health and vigor even to our bodies.

Referring to the Gospel writings, Father relates the story of the demon who was driven away but later returned to find the house, that is, the person's soul, devoid of faith. Quoting Matthew (12:45), he says, then the devil takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself and they go in and live there and the final condition of that person is worst than the first. "Half the people who come to me have no faith life," the priest says. "They want the benefits of these practices but they don't want the commitment to Christ." How sad this is because without a relationship with the Lord, Father stresses, the situation will only get worse in the end. Regretfully, he has to turn them away. Yes, people frequently walk away from the help they could receive rather than turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and his loving, merciful Heart. From his wealth of experience, the priest explains that these kinds of people "just want a Catholic bag of tricks and then go back to what they were doing before. People want to treat an exorcist like a magician," he says, "but our role is to help people see the face of God in their lives." When people say they are spiritual but don't go to church, they are setting themselves up for trouble, the priest clarifies.

If we return to the second letter of St. Peter that I quoted at the beginning, we will find many references to the end-times. A careful perusal of the text gives us these intriguing words, “the earth and all its deeds will be made manifest.” Another translation from the International Standard Version reads, “and the earth and everything done on it will be exposed” (see 2 Peter 3:10). For those of us familiar with the “Warning” predicted by various Catholic saints, mystics and writers, we can learn about a future event by which each person on earth will experience a mini judgment from God. Each individual living on this earth will know how they stand before God and will see their souls in the light of God. For a fuller appreciation of this, I refer you to Christine Watkins’ new book entitled: *The Warning: Testimonies and Prophecies of the Illumination of Conscience*. In this book you will read about numerous holy people and saints who have experienced this spiritual phenomenon. But besides this, you will be amazed at the people who have wandered away from the Lord and who have experienced radical conversions. They too have had their lives turned around as God showed them the effects of their sins and called them to new life with Him. God’s ways are unpredictable, but His loving Heart has designs on all souls and He wants to save as many as possible. The Lord plans to enlighten us all and to let us see for ourselves how our sins have led us away from Him. No one will escape God’s hand, but each will respond with their own free will, either to turn to the loving Heart of Jesus or to go their own way, eschewing God’s light and love.

Let’s take the case of Vince Sigala, a man who had a major conversion and tells his story in Christine Watkins’ book. Vince experienced for himself the effects of an illumination of conscience. He tells us of his dramatic spiritual turn-around from “an unholy mix of heavy metal music, violence, drunkenness, drug use and unbridled sex” which was nothing short of a miracle from God. At one point he says, “I pondered taking my own life. I remember sitting on our bed with a loaded gun in my hand, as my wife cooked dinner and my nine year old son played in the living room. I reviewed my life: I had taken numerous drugs and downed gallons of alcohol. I had hurt a lot of people in fights; I had slept with countless women. And here I was, a husband and dad, trying to do things right, and more miserable than when I was doing everything wrong. True joy, I thought, must be a myth. The only thing stopping me from putting the gun into my mouth and pulling the trigger was the faint sound of my son’s voice in the other room.”

At his lowest ebb, Vince turned to an old friend who directed him to a good priest who led him to immerse himself in prayer, particularly the rosary, the scriptures, and daily reception of the Eucharist. In 2003 Vince began to experience unusual phenomena, receiving private revelations through visions and locutions. He questioned such things, asking “why on earth would such things happen, especially to someone like me, who had offended the Lord in so many ways?” Part of him grew concerned that he might be losing it. But he kept up his daily regimen of prayer. Then one day he was just walking down the hallway of his house early in the morning. In a flash, Jesus began showing Vince interiorly his past sins and their consequences. He was totally blown away as he says, “God revealed to me how sin spreads like a malignant cancer.” It took him months afterward to come to the full realization of what had happened to him that morning. He writes, “I was not only shown my sin for what it truly was, but what everyone will experience, in essence, during what I later learned is called, ‘the Warning.’ To recollect it even now brings tears to my eyes and an overwhelming sadness for the world, simply because I know what awaits each person if he or she does not repent and turn back to God. There will be many who will not survive this. Their bodies will physically not be able to withstand an encounter with their sin, as seen within the Holiness of the Living God. Simply put, they will die of sheer fright at the sight of their own sin. That is how I understood this. Some will drop dead, some will convert, and others will completely reject God and become possessed by Satan.”

The drastic state of our world is leading the good Lord to use extreme measures to wake us up and to save us from our lethargy and waywardness. In a heartfelt plea (recorded in the book *In Sinu Jesu*), Jesus addresses these words to his priests, but they are so applicable to all of us. The Lord laments: “Why are they so obstinate and hard-hearted, wallowing in worldly pleasures and suffering the terrible boredom of those who look to this world and its deceits for the joy that only I can give? Why have so few of My beloved priests turned to Me in the present darkness and in the crisis that afflicts my Church in nearly every place?”

In this season of Advent, as we await the Lord’s coming at Christmastime, we are exhorted to keep vigilant and prayerful. The Heart of Jesus desires that we turn to him and to his mother Mary. She is the one whom the Lord has commissioned by her all-powerful intercession to prepare the world—yes, this sleeping world—for the Lord’s return in glory. These sentiments are expressed very clearly by Jesus in the March 2, 2010 entry in *In Sinu Jesu*. His words are meant to give us confidence amid our worries and concerns. “I tell you, this,” Jesus reassures us, “not to alarm you or to frighten anyone, but to give you cause for an immense hope and for pure spiritual joy.”

Our present darkness by which we witness the moral decline of our society, the rapid secularization of our religious feasts, the debasement of our school systems, the upside down perception of basic human principles, the subtle but real infiltration of pagan concepts into our Catholic teachings... All these are going to be wiped away by the predicted reign of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. While we are anticipating their promised coming, we can turn to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus to strengthen us. And we can do as the Lord exhorts us: “Adore Me more generously; make the offering of your time out of love, trusting in My power to bring about the impossible, and you will see wondrous things. Adore Me more generously and I will bless you more abundantly” (see *In Sinu Jesu*, p. 146). +

This talk on Sacred Heart spirituality was given in our Gathering Room on December 1, 2019. If you would like to attend similar presentations by the sisters, our next talks will be held on Sunday, February 2, 2020 at 4:00 pm.