

Introduction

What follows are some thoughts I have regarding the current state of the moral and spiritual condition of the Church and the Country given all that has been happening these past few months and years. This is not in any way to be considered a political, economic, or social studies essay. Politics and economics largely regard matters of prudential judgment that belongs to you, the laity, and not to the clergy. Therefore, I will limit myself to what are spiritual matters concerning the two great commandments. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. The second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

If you do not care to read the whole article, then I’ll sum up what I am hoping to convey. We are in the midst of a great and terrible spiritual battle both in the individual and in society in general. Millions of souls are at stake. In light of Romans 1 I believe many have literally lost their ability see and live in the truth because sin has taken a deep hold in the hearts and souls of many here and abroad. Ephesians 6 tells us what our response should be. To put on the armor of God because our fight is not against other people, but Principalities and Powers. God has already won the victory, but it is our time to take up spiritual arms for the sake of our salvation as well as this generation in the spiritual battle upon us.

The wrath of God is indeed being revealed from heaven against every impiety and wickedness of those who suppress the truth by their wickedness. For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse; for although they knew God, they did not accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God handed them over to their undiscerning mind to do what is improper. They are filled with every form of wickedness, evil, greed, and malice; full of envy, murder, rivalry, treachery, and spite. They are gossips and scandalmongers and they hate God. They are insolent, haughty, boastful, ingenious in their wickedness, and rebellious toward their parents. They are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know the just decree of God that all who practice such things deserve death, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (see Romans 1:16-32)

In the opening chapter of his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul, the great evangelist of the first century, anointed by Christ to bring the gospel to the world, passes on to us the Divine Revelation of what happens to those who abandon their faith in God. Those who cooperate in wickedness, and celebrate that which God has revealed as evil, are turned over to follow their own wiles as God allows their minds to be darkened by the evil they think and do. Since God freely calls us into a loving and life-giving relationship with him and his Church, he does not correct the mental distortions of those who freely, and of their own will, turn away from him. When a person turns his back on truth and calls “evil” a “good”, his mind and ability to reason correctly becomes impaired. If he or she does not repent this damage may become permanent. Worse, one unrepented sin opens the door for many more and blinds one to God and truth. As Jesus tells us in Matthew’s gospel, chapter 12:

⁴³ “When an unclean spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴ Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the

house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and 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 worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

Forgive me for being so blunt but to a simple mind like mine, “sin makes you stupid” about sums it up. In fact, unrepented sin makes one hate truth. I cannot help but think we are experiencing this happening in our day and age. We live in a time and place where many celebrate evil. Certainly, in the face of injustice there should well up in us righteous anger which is not sinful but provides the strength to correct a wrong. Many, to the contrary, seek not to correct injustice and restore peace, order, and human rights, but rejoice in the destruction of the innocent, the family, social order, private property, and rejoice in much more that is evil. They no longer look on others as a brother or sister in the family of mankind but as objects to be used for their sinful desires or pawns made to bow before their will to power. Those who are of this world and not of God will often avoid dialogue based in truth and fact and will instead hurl insults, “cancel you”, and even inflict bodily harm. Everything becomes about power for them. Power to use others and for some it is the desire to be used or the idea that they somehow deserve subjugation. Those of the world are the ones who have turned away from God who is Truth and instead have become allies of the Prince of Lies, a murderer from the beginning.

It cannot be a coincidence that all of this has erupted to the surface of society since the closing of our churches. No, or very few, Masses have been offered in the past months in many parishes. The lay faithful have been starved of the Eucharist, the ultimate source of Christian strength and grace. In some cases the laity have also been starved of the grace of the sacraments of Reconciliation, Anointing, and more. Even our brothers and sisters of other denominations have been shut out their houses of worship and off the sustenance that God provides them in communal prayer and the sharing of the Word. Without the worship of God and the grace of the sacraments society has become weak much like the athlete who has substituted beer for a balanced diet and T.V. time for a commitment to the track, gym, ring, or pitch. The exercise of virtue becomes difficult when not practiced. When our spiritual arms are laid down the enemy has full run of the battlefield. Worse yet, we have allowed the enemy to dictate which spiritual arms we are allowed to bring to the fight!

What are we to do as faithful members of the Church and sons and daughters of God Most High? Are we to simply wring our hands and lament the downfall of our society? Are we to abandon the Commandments or the ideals on which this nation was built, a nation with many warts to be sure, but still a nation with many good, honest, hardworking men and women of good will? No. Not at all. We must arm ourselves for the spiritual battle that is upon us. We must put on the armor of Christ!

Finally, draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power. Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. So, stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. – Ephesians 6:10-17

Saint Paul tells us that our battle is not against mere earthly powers. It is against the Devil, his angels, and those aligned with him. The way through the present age is nothing short of personal and communal holiness for clergy, religious, and laity alike. Holiness is simply becoming who God

wants you to be. Jesus tells us to, “Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48). It means being united in such a way to the Most Holy Trinity that God himself shines through us, that there grows a union of wills and a sharing of essence between God and man. Saint Paul uses the image of a Roman soldier to illustrate what a Christian soldier is like spiritually.

“So, stand fast with your loins girded in truth” – What does this mean but having the truth of God as the foundation of our spiritual armor? Under everything else we must have the will to see things according to the mind of God in truth and not to be afraid of others who insist on the contrary. A person lives in truth when his or her ideas or words correspond to reality. Truth needs to be the foundation of our interactions with others or else we end up living a lie and put our lives and immortal souls in profound jeopardy. To acknowledge truth requires openness and honesty of mind, not sentiment. One might say in response to those who do not believe in truth:

“Let us learn to call things by their name, with simplicity and calmness; let us stop following, for the sake of living quietly, the illusions of those who speak to us of tolerance and acceptance only when it comes to making room for error and vice; let us stop using their magic words like ‘dialogue,’ ‘solidarity,’ and ‘freedom’ which conceal the adversary’s deception and veil the exploitation, tyranny, and persecution of dissenters.”

“[C]lothed with righteousness as a breastplate” – What is righteousness? It means being conformed to the goodness of God. In the Catholic Church we speak of Justification first in order to be conformed to the righteousness of God. As the Catechism states:

1987 The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ” and through Baptism:³⁴

But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So, you also must consider yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.³⁵

1989 The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is *conversion*, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus’ proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”³⁸ Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. “Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.”³⁹

1990 Justification *detaches man from sin* which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God’s merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals.

1991 Justification is at the same time *the acceptance of God’s righteousness* through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or “justice”) here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will has granted us.

“...your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace” – The word “gospel” literally means “good news”. It is the good news that peace comes through faith in Jesus Christ, a peace the world cannot

give but a peace that stands ready to be poured out on those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We are always ready to proclaim that Jesus IS peace.

“In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one” – Faith is a grace from God but also an act of the will. We humbly submit our intellect (reason) and our will (our ability to choose) to Divine Revelation. We believe in God and all he has revealed to us. It is this faith in God, united with right reason, that keeps us from the deceptions of the evil one. One quick aside, faith is not a feeling, it is a choice. So, if you aren’t “feeling it” do not worry. Where your head goes the rest of the body will follow.

“And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” – The constant reminder of our salvation protects us from the blows we are going to receive in the battle that is upon us. Yes, faith is necessary for salvation and damnation follows if we refuse to believe and act upon this faith. But the knowledge and hope of salvation keeps us free from anxiety and steadfast in hope.

As to the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the Letter to the Hebrews states powerfully:

Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

In essence, the word of God lays bare the truth of the human heart and soul. In the light of the Word the goings on in the heart are revealed. Notice that Saint Paul mentions this as the weapon we carry. The Word, in union with the power of the Holy Spirit God gives us everything we need to prevail in our spiritual battles. This is important to know, that we must engage in this spiritual warfare. Seldom does a person grow in faith unless that faith is tested. You and I were put here in this place and in this time because God wants us here. He wants us to claim victory over temptation, sin, and death using the spiritual armor and weapons he bestows upon us. Take up your sword. The battle is ours!

Friends, here are some concrete steps to follow to armor yourselves up and gain the victory in our daily spiritual battles.

-Confession & daily Act of Contrition, keep the command center free of contagion,

-Mass every week and frequent Communion. Now that the Eucharist is available to you please allow yourselves to partake in the greatest source of strength possible if you are healthy and able to attend. If you cannot make it to Mass practice your spiritual communion.

-Bless perimeter of your home & inside doors & windows w/ exorcised salt & holy water (available at the fonts in the church).

-Daily fast specifically for conversion of sinners. We are in this together as our Love, Christ, desires the salvation of all people. Your fast need not be total, but even a small act of self-denial such as, “I really want a chocolate, but I’ll pass for the spiritual good of another.”

-Daily rosary for physical & spiritual protection. The Ugly One cannot abide the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary nor her powerful intercession.

In short, my friends, there is a spiritual battle upon us, and the outcome may not currently appear certain but make no mistake, Christ has already won! We are amidst a kind of “clean up” operation doing our best to win souls for Christ before he comes in his magnificent glory.