

FAITH AND REASON

Even Small Gestures change history:

The Gospel speaks of Jesus the “true light” that came into the world, the light that shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. The Gospel spoke of Jesus, the “true light” that came into the world, the light that “shines in the darkness” and “the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn 1:9, 5). Today we see the person who witnessed to Jesus, Saint Stephen, who shines in the darkness. Those who witness to Jesus shine with His light, not with their own light. Even the Church does not have its own light. Because of this, the ancient fathers called the Church: “the mystery of the moon”. Like the moon, which does not have its own light, these witnesses do not have their own light, they are capable of taking Jesus’s light and reflecting it. Stephen was falsely accused and brutally stoned, but in the darkness of hatred (which was the torment of his stoning), he allowed the light of Jesus to shine: he prayed for his murderers and forgave them, like Jesus on the cross. He is the first martyr, that is, the first witness, the first of a host of brothers and sisters who, even until today, continue to bring the light into the darkness people who respond to evil with good, who do not succumb to violence and lies, but break the cycle of hatred with meekness and love. In the world’s nights, these witnesses bring God’s dawn.

But how do they become witnesses? Imitating Jesus, taking light from Jesus. This is the path for every Christian: to imitate Jesus, taking light from Jesus. Saint Stephen gives us the example: Jesus had come to serve, not to be served (see Mk 10:45), and he lived to serve and not to be served, and he came to serve Stephen was chosen to be a deacon, he became a deacon, that is, a servant, and assisted the poor at table. He tried to imitate the Lord every day and he did it even to the end: like Jesus, he was captured, condemned, and killed outside of the city, and like Jesus he prayed and forgave. While he was being stoned, he said: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (7:60). Stephen was a witness because he imitated Jesus.

A question could arise: are these witnesses to goodness really necessary when the world is immersed in wickedness? What good does it do to pray and forgive? Just to give a good example? But, what does that serve? No, there’s a lot more. We discover this from a detail. The text says that among those for whom Stephen prayed and whom he forgave there was “a young man named Saul”, who “was consenting to his death” (8:1). A little later, by God’s grace, Saul was converted, received Jesus’s light, accepted it, was converted, and became Paul, the greatest missionary in history. Paul was born by God’s grace, but through Stephen’s forgiveness, through Stephen’s witness. That was the seed of his conversion. This is the proof that loving actions change history: even the ones that are small, hidden, every day. For God guides history through the humble courage of those who pray, love and forgive. There are so many hidden saints, saints who are next-door, hidden witnesses of life, who with little acts of love change history.

To be witnesses to Jesus – this is true for us as well. The Lord wants us to make our lives masterpieces through the ordinary things, the everyday things we do. We are called to bear witness to Jesus right where we live, in our families, at work, everywhere, even just by giving the light of a smile, a light that is not our own – it comes from Jesus – and even just by fleeing the shadow of gossip and tattle-tailing. And then, when we see something that is wrong, instead of criticizing, badmouthing and complaining, let us pray for the one who made a mistake and for the difficult situation. And when an argument starts at home, instead of trying to win it, let us try to diffuse it; and start over again each time, forgiving the one who offended. Small things, but they change history, because they open the door, they open the window to Jesus’s light. Saint Stephen, while he was on the receiving end of the stones of hatred, reciprocated with words of forgiveness. He thus changed history. We too can change evil into good each time just as a beautiful proverb proposes which says: “Be like the palm tree: they throw stones at it and it drops down dates”.

Today, let us pray for those suffering persecution because of the name of Jesus. They are many unfortunately. There are more than in the beginning of the Church. Let us entrust these brothers and sisters to the Madonna, that they might respond with meekness to oppression and that, as true witnesses to Jesus, they might conquer evil with good... **Pope Francis**

Loving Good Things Immoderately: There is truly a fascination caused by beautiful bodies like gold and silver and other such things. Earthly honor also has its own special value as does the power to rule. This life itself possesses its own appeal. Friendship among human beings brings a sweetness through the loving bond that unites hearts.

Sin comes about only when, because of an immoderate desire for such lower things, the higher good is deserted. True, these earthly things have their delights, but they cannot be compared to the God who made them all..... **St Augustine (354-430)**

Two Commitments to Make to God every Morning: First an act of acceptance of all the afflictions you may have to bear during the day. Second is an act of renunciation of all the temptations of the devil and all the feelings of self-love and other passions that may come upon you during the day. These two acts have considerable importance because many annoyances may occur during the day, they pass on and you may not think of making an offering them to God. Many temptations and impulses of self-love creep into our actions without your taking notice of them.

By virtue of the first act, however, God will be glorified by all the pains of soul and body that will make themselves during the day if you accept them first thing in the morning out of love for him. Then by virtue of the second act, God will give you strength to resist more easily all evil temptations and to destroy more easily all the effects of self-love and other vices **St John Eudes (1680)**

Lasting Peace: Lasting peace is marked by mutual acceptance and a capacity to forgive from the heart. We all need to be forgiven by others, so we all must be ready to forgive. Asking for and granting forgiveness is something profoundly worthy of humanity; sometimes it is the only way out of situations marked by age-old and violent hatred **St John Paul II**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday The foundation of true joy is a clear conscience.
Monday Without constancy there is neither love, friendship, nor virtue in the world.
Tuesday Where two "Supremes" meet there is bound to be trouble.
Wednesday A man, who finds on satisfaction in himself, seeks for it in vain elsewhere.
Thursday Conversion in self-purification, self-realization is a crying need of our time.
Friday A little corruption in government is too much corruption.
Saturday This is no time for ease and comfort. It is a time to dare and endure.

The Church is One: The Church is one, spread abroad far and wide into a multitude by an increase in fruitfulness. In a similar way, there are many rays of the sun, but one light. There are many branches of a tree, but one strength, based in its hardy root. From one spring flows many streams and they spread out through the generosity of an overflowing abundance. Yet the unity is still preserved in the source of the spring.

If you try to separate a ray of the sun from its body of light, its unity does not allow a division of the light. Break a branch from a tree, and when it is broken, it will not be able to bud. Cut off a stream from its fountain, and the stream dries up.

In the same way, the Church, shining with the light of the Lord sheds forth its rays over the whole world. Yet, its one light that is spread everywhere and the unity of the body is not separated. Her fruitful abundance spreads her branches over the whole world. She broadly expands her rivers, generously flowing, yet her Head is one, her Source is one.

She is one mother plentiful in the harvest of her fruitfulness. From her womb we are born, by her milk we nourished, by her spirit we are made alive. The Bride of Christ cannot be an adulterous. She is unstained and pure. She knows only one home. She guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one bed. She keeps us for God. She appoints the children who she is born for the kingdom. The Church is Christ's presence among us..... **St Cyprian of Carthage (200-258)**

Prayer: Through prayer I become one in love with Christ. I realize that praying to him is loving him. For me, prayer means being united to the will of God twenty-four hours a day, to live for him, through him and with him.... **St. Teresa of Calcutta**

There is a story about a beggar meeting Alexander the Great, asking for an alms. Alexander stopped and instructed that the man be given the government of five cities. The beggar totally confused exclaimed, "I did not ask for that much" If we keep this example in mind and realize that this is the way that God deals with us, if we feel part of the Church, if we ourselves are sustained by the Rock of Peter, and by the action of the Holy Spirit, we will decide to fulfil the duties however little.

In His Will is Our Peace
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