

# FAITH AND REASON

**The Transforming Power of Love:** “Anything so well ordered and perfectly created as is our earth and universe must have a maker, a master designer. Anything so orderly, so perfect, so precisely balanced, so majestic as this creation, can only be the product of a divine idea. There must be a maker, there can be no other way...” Dr Werner Van Braun. This “order” is present in plant life, in marine life, in bird life, and it is a source of endless study and fascination for scientists. This order is present in the human organism, the cells of which work, not in isolation, but for the good of the entire organism. This order is present in inner space, under the microscope. This order is present in outer space, in which the laws of physics operate. This order is not present among human beings, because it is not found in the individual person. Man must struggle relentlessly to attain the order he needs to live. Such order is attained only by constantly pursuing it.

We are all familiar with the words “treaty” “Pact” “agreements” entered into by governments. They labor strenuously over the precise meaning of words and conditions. Once signed, these conditions are binding necessities on all parties involved. One could use the word commandments when referring to such conditions. Failure to observe such conditions can have the most serious repercussions, even to the point of dissolving the treaty. One cannot have it both ways. Rights and duties are both sides of the one coin.

God made a covenant with the human family. “If you love me, keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15). John recognized the one test of love and that is obedience. It is by obedience that we express our love for Jesus. John never allowed love to be confused with sentiment or emotion. Its expression is always moral and revealed in obedience.

That is to say obedience to the divinely revealed moral order is creation. The abuse of this moral order is clearly evident in the modern world. Obedience to the law of God is the plan of redemption. The violation of this order is clearly evident in the widespread erosion of morals across the world.

If nature were indifferent to the breaking of its laws; If health did not decline with a refusal to eat; If one gathered figs from thistles; and water ran up a hill, it would be difficult to believe that a supreme intelligence had imposed law and order on a universe. If the moral order was indifferent to our infractions of it; if the breakdown of nations did not follow the collapse of family life; If the assertion that man is an animal did not make men act like animals; if the denial of God as the author of life did not produce a lawless and therefore disordered world, it would be difficult to believe that God created a moral universe, in which we reap what we sow: a universe in which the wages of sin is death (Bishop Fulton Sheen).

Aristides of Athens defended a Christian before the Emperor Hadrian in the second century A.D. in the following way.

Christians love one another. They never fail to help widows; they save orphans from those who would hurt them. If a man has something, he gives freely to the man who has nothing. If they see a stranger, he gives his home and are happy as though he were a real brother. They do not consider themselves brothers in the real sense, but brothers through the Spirit, in God. And if they hear that one of them is in Jail or persecuted for professing the name of their Redeemer, they will give him what he needs. This is really a new kind of person. There is something divine in them... **A Meditation by Fr. William C. Mooney**

**Holy Father’s prayer intention for the month of December: For volunteer organizations:** In his prayer intention for the month of December, Pope Francis prays that “volunteer non-profit and human development organizations may find people willing to commit themselves to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths of international cooperation”. The video begins with images of people forced to abandon their homes, due to natural disasters linked to climate change, war and economic crises. Commitment, the Pope says is “a word that many today would like to erase”, and yet “the world needs volunteers who commit to the common good”. As images turn to people offering assistance in refugee camps, the Pope explains that “being a volunteer who helps others is a choice that makes us free; it opens us to other people’s needs — to the demands of justice, to the defense of the poor, to the care of creation”. This, he continues, “means being artisans of mercy: with our hands, with our eyes, with an attentive ear, with our closeness”.

The Holy Father pointed out that volunteering is “not just for the people but with the people”. Indeed, he noted, “the work of volunteer not-for-profit organizations is much more effective when they collaborate with each other and with governments”. In this way, he concluded, they “make the miracle of the multiplication of hope a reality”.

Speaking about this month’s prayer intention, Fr Frédéric Fornos, SJ, Director of the Worldwide Prayer Network, pointed out the Pope’s insistence on the value of volunteer work in society and recalled the Holy Father’s words to members of the Cornelia De Lange Association whom he received in audience in May: “In volunteering, the fundamental dimension of the Christian image of God and man is involved”.

**Winter in all of Our Lives:** There is a winter in all of our lives, a chill and darkness that makes us yearn for days that have gone or put our hope in days yet to be. Father God, you created seasons for a purpose. Spring is full of expectation buds breaking frosts abating and an awakening of creation before the first days of summer. Now the sun gives warmth and comfort to our lives reviving aching joints bringing color, new life and crops to fruiting. Autumn gives nature space to lean back, relax and enjoy the fruits of its labor mellow colors in sky and landscape as the earth prepares to rest. Then winter, cold and bare as nature takes stock rests, unwinds, sleeps until the time is right. An endless cycle and yet a perfect model. We need a winter in our lives a time of rest, a time to stand still a time to reacquaint ourselves with the faith in which we live. It is only then that we can draw strength from the one in whom we are rooted take time to grow and rise through the darkness into the warm glow of your springtime to blossom and flourish bring color and vitality into this world your garden. Thank you Father for the seasons of our lives... **Author Unknown**

**Prayers for Lighting the Advent Wreath Candles:** *Fourth Week:* All-powerful God, your eternal Word took flesh on our earth when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of your plan. Lift our minds in watchful hope to hear the voice which announces his glory and open our minds to receive the Spirit who prepares us for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**If any of you should wish to act out of love, brothers,** do not imagine it to be a self-abasing, passive and timid thing. And do not think that love can be preserved by a sort of gentleness – or rather tame listlessness. This is not how it is preserved. Do not imagine that you love your servant when you refrain from beating him, or that you love your son when you do not discipline him, or that you love your neighbor when you do not rebuke him. This is not love, it is feebleness. Love should be fervent to correct. **Saint Augustine**

#### **A Thought For the Day**

**Sunday** Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion.  
**Monday** Darkness can only be scattered by light, and hatred can only be conquered by love.  
**Tuesday** Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.  
**Wednesday** Everything that is done out of Love acquires greatness and beauty.  
**Thursday** The greater the feeling of responsibility for the person, the more true love there is.  
**Friday** Death and love are the two wings that bear the good man to heaven.  
**Saturday** Open your minds and hearts to the beauty of all that God has made and to His special, personal love for each one of you.

**Love is the most necessary of all virtues.** Love in the person who preaches the word of God is like fire in a musket. If a person were to throw a bullet with his hands, he would hardly make a dent in anything; but if the person takes the same bullet and ignites some gunpowder behind it, it can kill. It is much the same with the word of God. If it is spoken by someone who is filled with the fire of charity- the fire of love of God and neighbor- it will work wonders.” **Saint Anthony Mary Claret**

**Advent:** Waiting to Encounter Mercy Incarnate: In the life of every Christian there is an experience of a personal encounter with Jesus, who called us to follow him and share in his mission. We must learn to treasure in our hearts the living memory of that call, when Jesus passed my way, gazed at me with mercy and asked me to follow him. Try to revive the memory of that moment when his eyes met yours, that moment when he made you realize that he loved you.

But do I remember it? .... Have I forgotten it? Have I gone off on paths that made me forget it? Lord help me, for you know that I want to encounter you and let me be embraced by your mercy. Mary sustains our journey toward Christmas, for she teaches us how to live this Advent in expectation of the Lord. Advent is a time of waiting for the Lord, who will visit us all on the feast of Christmas, but also, each one, in our own hearts. The merciful Lord is coming. Let us wait for him ...**Pope Francis.**

#### **Irish Blessing:**

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

**In His Will is Our Peace**

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