

FAITH AND REASON

The Church is Christ: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which, having found it, a man sells all that he has to buy that field. The kingdom of heaven is like a trader in search of fine pearls who, having found one pearl of great price, sells all that he has to buy it" And yet, that same kingdom of heaven is like a "net cast into the sea taking up all kinds of fish..... Like a field of wheat in which the enemy has sown weeds, which are not pulled up immediately, they are left to grow with the wheat, and then at harvest time they are separated from the wheat and thrown aside to be burned" The lesson is clear.

The Church is the "treasure" the "Pearl" possessing as it does all that the human heart could possibly desire in the order of grace - the authority appointed by Christ, the fullness of Christ's teachings, the fullness of the means of salvation. And yet, we know only too well how the Church is disfigured by the sins of its members. It cannot be otherwise until the Lord returns and then, and only then, presents to his Father a "Church holy and immaculate, without spot or wrinkle".

The Saints, so highly sensitive to, and acutely aware of sin, were clearly aware of this. St Paul arrived in Jerusalem and was outraged to find that Peter and James were bending under the pressure of the Judaizers, who were insisting that gentile converts entering the Church must first of all observe some Jewish practices. Did St Paul rush off in a rage to establish another Church at Tarsus or Antioch? No, he did not! Instead, he reminded Peter that he could not force Gentiles to live like the Jews.

St Catherine of Siena realized that the Pope was involved in politics against her city - the City of Siena which she loved so much. Did she rush off into the hills of Siena to establish a purer Church?..... St Catherine firmly believed what St Irenaeus said in the 2nd century: "For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every form of grace, for the Spirit is truth" (130-220). Maise Ward of Sheed & Ward Publishing House, in her book on St Catherine of Siena said: "Too much awareness of Catholics, especially Catholics in high places, tends with most of us to dim our realization of Christ working mightily through his Church. But with Catherine, the appalling evils in the lives of so many ecclesiastics seemed only to highlight her vision of the glorious thing they were profaning".

St Francis of Assisi as he knelt amid the ruins of the church of San Damiano heard the words, "My son, go and build up my house for it is in ruins". St Francis thought that God was calling him to build up the church of San Damiano, which was in ruins. God helped him to understand that he was referring to his Church universal. Did St Francis even entertain the notion of establishing a "better" Church? No! and why not?..... Because he knew that nothing, no sin - however reprehensible, however depraved, could ever alter the fact that this is "my house".

St Thomas More lived under the worst of the Renaissance Popes. Pope Alexander VI reigned and died within the lifetime of St Thomas More. Pope Clement VII the illegitimate son of the Florentine Medicis, before whom the divorce petition of King Henry VIII was brought, contributed in some way to the loss of England to the Church by his unwillingness - extended over a number of years - to take a firm stand. Friend and foe alike had warned Pope Clement what King Henry was capable of doing (as if they needed to). When the Pope finally acted, but not on religious principle but politically and according to the wishes of Emperor Charles V, the nephew of Catherine whom King Henry was trying to divorce. In fact, there were no grounds for the divorce, but that was not the impression given correctly or otherwise. St Thomas More witnessed all this at close range. He saw the intrigue, the politics, the decadence that paved the way for what has been called a "reformation." He watched the Vicar of Christ fail so lamentably in a matter where his duty was perfectly clear to much of Europe. This event undermined the faith of many, but not the faith of St Thomas More. He gave his life, not simply in defense of conscience, but for the Papacy. For the Papacy that, as far as one could discern, was little more than an Italian Princedom, ruled over by the least reputable of the Renaissance Princes.

St. Thomas More judged the Church, the Papacy, in the context of Salvation history. He recognized the divine origin of the Church established by Christ. He recognized the Priesthood, the Mass, the Sacraments instituted by Christ and therefore of their very nature divine. Then he clearly understood that no degree of abuse however depraved, no sin however grave, no scandal however appalling, could change, undermine, destroy what is of its very nature divine!

The Church carried a message holy and divine, yet she is incarnate in the humanity of this world. It is therefore unrealistic to seek anything else from the Church except the mystery of infallibility and fallibility, sanctity and sin, courage and weakness, credibility, and the lack of it.

The Saints understood so clearly that credibility belongs to God alone, not to us. No human being is credible as long as he lives on this earth, for no one is confirmed in grace, no one is immune to failure. When we allow the sins of others, however grave they may be, to obscure the divine nature of the Church, when we walk away from Jesus who lives in and through his Church because his Church is not perfect, then we proclaim, not the truth about the Church, but the truth about ourselves - as sinners lacking in faith, hope and love. Sinners who behave as if they are saints leave the Church and walk with her no more. Saints who know they are sinners never, never, do that!... **Fr. William C. Mooney**

Be at Peace: Do not look forward in fear to the changes in life; rather, look to them with full hope that as they arise, God, whose very own you are, will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will carry you in His arms. Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same understanding Father who cares for you today will take care of you then and every day. He will either shield you from suffering or will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations... **St. Francis De Sales**

When we come into church from the outside our ears are filled with the racket of the city, the words of those who have accompanied us, the laboring and quarreling of our own thoughts, the disquiet of our hearts' wishes and worries, hurts and joys. How are we possibly to hear what God is saying? That we listen at all is something; not everyone does. It is even better when we pay attention and make a real effort to understand what is being said. But all this is not yet the attentive stillness in which God's word can take root. This must be established before the service begins, if possible in the silence on the way to church, still better in a brief period of composure the evening before... **Msgr. Romano Guardini**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday I am God's wheat and I am grounded by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ.

Monday Love grows through love.

Tuesday The fullness of joy is to behold God in everything.

Wednesday Hell is full of the talented, but Heaven is full of the energetic.

Thursday The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord.

Friday There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

Saturday Why do you ceaselessly asked to taste my delights and why do you refuse my tribulations.

Bible Verse: For the grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people as his own, eager to do what is good. **Titus 2:11-14**

Avoid worrying, then, about anything else for your children except whatever may contribute to bringing them up virtuously. For the rest, having entrusted them to God, try to see what His will for them is, to help them along the path in life He has chosen for them. Never be afraid of relying too much on Him, but rather seek always to increase your trust more and more, for this is the most pleasing homage you can pay Him, and it will be the measure of the graces you will receive. Little or much will be given you according as you have expected little or much... **St. Claude De La Columbiere**

Strong passions are the precious raw material of sanctity. Individuals who have carried their sinning to extremes should not despair or say, 'I am too great a sinner to change,' or 'God would not want me.' God will take anyone who is willing to love, not with an occasional gesture, but with a 'passionless passion,' a 'wild tranquility'. A sinner, unrepentant, cannot love God, any more than someone on dry land can swim; but as soon as a person takes his errant energies to God and asks for their redirection, he will become happy, as he was never happy before. It is not the wrong things one has already done that keep one from God; it is present persistence in that wrong. Someone who turns back to God, as the Magdalene and Paul, welcomes the discipline that will enable him to change his former tendencies. Mortification is good, but only when it is done out of love of God. ... Mortifications of the right sort perfect our human nature; the gardener cuts the green shoots from the root of the bush, not to kill the rose, but to make it bloom more beautifully... **Venerable Fulton Sheen**

When you pray, you only have to ask for two things: You should ask for the light to see the will of God, and you have to ask for the courage to be able to do the will of God... **Venerable Msgr. Aloysius Schwartz**

In His Will is Our Peace
Fr. William C. Mooney

Spiritual Direction and Confession

Email: Fr.WCmooney@gmail.com

Appointments: (904) 315-8554

Follow on Facebook: [Faith and Reason](#)

Instagram: [faith_and_reason](#)