

My Father's House

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Holiness And the Faithful Remnant

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The Path that Few Chose to Follow

Jesus says to His followers, be holy as I the Lord am holy. He calls us to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect. To be so pure of heart that we do not even look with lust, to be humble as He is humble, to be poor in spirit as He is pure in spirit, this is the type of holiness that would bring light to a world darkened by sin.

Jesus is the Light

John tells us that Jesus comes as the world's light, but men prefer the darkness to the light because their deeds are evil. He even came into His own, but even His own rejected him. Most men and women prefer the darkness of serious sin to the light of a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus. Most tend to live in the kingdom of this world rather than in the Kingdom of God which He comes to bring.

How Bad Are We?

One time one of his disciples asked Jesus a very thought provoking question. "Lord, are they many who will be saved or few?" In other words, Lord, how many men and women are really bad and how many are really good. Some would say off the top of their heads that most people are good and a few are really bad. That's not what Jesus said, however. He said, "Try to enter into the narrow gate for few there are who find it." Could He be right? Is it true that few people find the path of holiness, righteousness and virtue. Just a few?! Could He be exaggerating?

First, A Look at History

Looking back from the point of view of a Monday morning quarterback, we can see that He was right. Right from the beginning, he was right. Adam and Eve grievously sinned. So did Cain. In fact, sin so quickly multiplied by the time of Noah that only He and His household were good. So God sent the flood to wipe out all the descendants of Cain -- the Canaanites. Just a handful out of so many were good -- just the faithful remnant. Things did not get any better after the flood. By the time of Abraham six generations later, Abraham could not find ten just men to save Sodom and Gomorra, so down fell fire and brimstone to wipe out the multitudes.

Abraham and Sarah

Abraham and Sarah were basically righteous, but certainly not perfect. They were better than most in their time. Remember Ishmail? A wild man, Ham who committed incest with his

own mother, the daughters of Lot who committed incest with their own father, the sons of Seth being immoral with the Canaanite women -- every where one looked there was immorality, license and violence. Nevertheless, there remained a tiny but faithful remnant.

Moses and the Few

In the time of Moses, God destroyed the wicked Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Even the chosen Israelites went evil in the desert where after making the golden calf, they were slain at the hands of the Levites and so punished that not one of them entered the promised land.

Wicked Cities

Whole cities went wicked. Babel, Sodom, Gomorrah, Babylon, Rome, even Jerusalem became wicked. Jesus predicted the demise of Jerusalem along with the demise of Bethsaida and Capernaum. Jesus asked the question, "When the son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Civilizations Fall From Within

Nineteen civilizations have come and gone. Sixteen of them, according to Arnold Toynabe, the great historian, have corrupted from within. And many of the historians have studied the fall of the Persians, the Syrians, the Greeks and the Romans.

Rise and Decline

Gibbons wrote of the decline and rise of the Roman Empire. And William Shire wrote of the rise and decline of the Third Reich. And when the contemporary historians compare the abuses and evils that led to the fall of the Roman and the Nazi Empires to the evils of today's society.

Twentieth Century Worst of All

With the entrance of the 20th century, Satan seems to have almost full sway over the minds and hearts of men. More millions of people have been murdered in this century than all previous history. Russian, Chinese, Nazi, Serbian, and Fascist brutality are now even documented on film.

Modern USA

Even here in America, a nation founded by our Founding Fathers as a nation under God, the situation is not much better. From 1900 to 1941, even known sin in America has doubled. From 1941 the start of the Second World War through the Korean War, sin has doubled again. In 1963, our supreme court took God and the Ten Commandments out of public schools and since that time, SAT scores have plummeted, and drugs, promiscuity, AIDS, venereal disease and violence have escalated. Then with the infamous Roe vs. Wade, we began killing our own children enmasse to the tune of almost 60 million babies. That's twenty times more than in all our wars. 60 million innocent babies we have slaughtered. Now our own president and some Democratic senators vote that we be allowed to suck out the brains of babies in the very process of being born. Barbaric, inhuman, diabolical, horrific to be sure.

Judges and Lawyers

From 1941 to 1989, we had no less than five and as many as eight Free Masons sitting on our Supreme Court. It was primarily they who undermined this Constitution and this way of government that had been based on the laws of nature and the laws of nature's God. (Words found not only in Blackstone's commentary on the law, but in our Declaration of Independence.)

Because of a false interpretation of Thomas Jefferson's principle of separation of church and state, most judges and lawyers now suppress religion in the political, legal, educational, and public forum. God has become odd man out.

Divorce

And then there is divorce. 65% of all new marriages break up in the first five years. It has become epidemic. Pornography, with the advent of the Internet, has become mainstream -- that is, most Americans are in to it. Even our most prestigious newspapers are filled with gossip and calumny and tend to highlight bad news over good news.

The Clinton Affair

Our own president is pro-abortion even pro-partial birth abortion, pro-sodomy, and pro-same-sex marriages, pro-infidelity, pro-deceit, pro-cover-up, pro-immorality, and pro-military attacks.

The Expected Outrage

You would expect an outrage from the majority. You would get one if there were a moral majority. According to the polls, the majority of Americans accept it all. They accept abortion on demand, promiscuity in the theaters, lies in the political forum, adultery in the Oval Office, and the whole cover-up by Washington spin doctors. As a nation, we are sinking lower and lower.

Where are the Few?

Can you find a moral outrage from the chosen people who are Jews? Not in general. Few are the rabbis who speak out for life and for holiness. Can you find the outrage among Christians? Yes, somewhat. We have Focus on the Family, the Promise Keepers, the Christian Coalition, the American Center for Law and Justice, the Rutherford Institute, and the Bill Gothard Institute. Yet even here, the majority of Americans are more for planned parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union and for the politically correct gospel of equality than for the truth and holiness of the Gospel of Jesus.

What About Catholics?

Catholics were called to be the "pillar and standard of truth" and holiness. Are they? Statistics show that incidences of immorality, abortion, birth control, divorce, promiscuity, pornography, and sodomy are about the same as the general public.

In 1960, 60 percent of all Catholics supported all the moral teachings of the Church. Today, it is 5 percent. Some studies show less. In 1960, 78 percent of Catholics went to Mass on Sunday. Today, it's 29 percent - just a remnant.

A High Standard

Even that is not a high standard of holiness. If you went to Mass every Sunday and said your night prayers, that is still less than one percent of your life. Even if you gave ten percent of your time, talent and treasure -- that is, if you loved God with ten percent of your mind, ten percent of your money, ten percent of your energy -- you would still be reaching the standard of holiness prescribed in the Old Testament. Jesus, however, encourages us to bear fruit 30, 60 and 100-fold in order to be considered the good seed of His Kingdom. That means we have to love God with at least 30 percent of our time, 30 percent of our talent and 30 percent of our treasure in order to be truly considered as one of His followers.

The First Step is the Hardest

In order to make Jesus Lord of our lives, we have to surrender our lives to Him. We have to make an act of the will to commit everything to Him.

This first step is the hardest. We have to let go of all control so that we can live by His Spirit.

Second, we have to daily walk in union with Him by meditation, prayer, daily reception of the Eucharist--if at all possible, a life of humble obedience, a gentle obedience and forgiveness.

Third, we have to receive confession frequently so that we can live without sin and guilt on the one hand, and bitterness and hatred on the other.

Fourth, we have to get away for special times with the Lord--that is, to make a retreat or Life in the Spirit Seminar.

Fifth, we have to join a prayer group or fellowship group--that is, some Christian support system of like-minded people who will support us in our Christian values and challenge our growth to holiness.

Sixth, we have to have a deep and abiding devotion to Mary, Our Mother, asking her always to lead us into a deeper and more personal relationship with Her Son.

Seventh, we have to be loyal to our Catholic Church, which Jesus said is the pillar and standard of truth. We have to follow the leadership of this wonderful pope, John Paul II, who has led us along the path of holiness for the past 20 years.

Eighth, we have to evangelize--that is, to realize that we are the hands of Christ, the eyes of Christ, the body of Christ. We are His light to a dark and broken world. If we do these, we will be part of that tiny minority on the narrow road that leads to life eternal.

Pope John Paul II's Pentecost Eve Address

"The Church wishes to spread Christ's fire in human hearts"

In Jerusalem, almost 2,000 years ago, on the day of Pentecost, before an astonished and mocking crowd, due to the unexplainable change observed in the Apostles, Peter courageously proclaims: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God ... you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up" (Acts 2:22-24). Peter's words express the Church's self-awareness, based on the certainty that Jesus Christ is alive, is working in the present and changes life.

The Holy Spirit, already at work in the creation of the world and in the Old Covenant, reveals himself in the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery of the Son of God, and in a way "bursts out" at Pentecost to extend the mission of Christ the Lord in time and space. The Spirit thus makes the Church a stream of new life that flows through the history of mankind.

With the Second Vatican Council, the Comforter recently gave the Church, which according to the Fathers is the place "where the Spirit flourishes" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 749)), a renewed Pentecost, instilling a new and unforeseen dynamism.

Whenever the Spirit intervenes, he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history. This was the unforgettable experience of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council during which, under the guidance of the same Spirit, the church rediscovered the charismatic dimension as one of her constitutive elements: "It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the people, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts according as he wills (cf. 1 Cor 12:11), he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank ... He makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*, n 12).

"You are tangible proof of the Spirit's outpouring"

The institutional and charismatic aspects are co-essential as it were to the Church's constitution. They contribute, although differently, to the life, renewal and sanctification of God's People. It is from this providential rediscovery of the Church's charismatic dimension that before and after the Council, a remarkable pattern of growth has been established for ecclesial movements and new communities.

Today the Church rejoices at the renewed confirmation of the prophet Joel's words which we have just heard: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2:17). You, present here, are the tangible proof of this "outpouring" of the Spirit. Each movement is different from the others, but they are all united in the same communion and for the same mission. Some charisms given by the Spirit burst in like an impetuous wind, which seizes people and carries them to new ways of missionary commitment to the radical service of the Gospel, by ceaselessly proclaiming the truths of faith, accepting the living stream of tradition as a gift and instilling in each person an ardent desire for holiness.

Today, I would like to cry out to all of you gathered here in St. Peter's Square and to all Christians: ***Open yourselves docilely to the gifts of the Spirit! Accept gratefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow on us! Do not forget that every charism is given for the common good, that is, for the benefits of the whole Church.***

By their nature, charisms are communicative and give rise to that "spiritual affinity between persons" (*Christifideles laici*, n. 24) and that friendship in Christ which is the origin of "movements". The passage from the original charism to the movement happens through the mysterious attraction that the founder holds for all those who become involved in his spiritual experience. In this way movements

officially recognized by ecclesiastical authority offer themselves as forms of self-fulfilment and as reflections of the one Church.

Their birth and spread has brought to the Church's life an unexpected newness which is sometimes even disruptive. This has given rise to questions, uneasiness and tensions; at times it has led to presumptions and excesses on the one hand, and on the other, to numerous prejudices and reservations. It was a testing period for their fidelity, an important occasion for verifying the authenticity of their charisms.

Today a new stage is unfolding before you: that of ecclesial maturity. This does not mean that all problems have been solved. Rather, it is a challenge, a road to take. The Church expects from you the "mature" fruits of communion and commitment.

Church's Pastors must judge authenticity of charisms

In our world, often dominated by a secularized culture which encourages and promotes models of life without God, the faith of many is sorely tested, and is frequently stifled and dies. Thus, we see an urgent need for powerful proclamation and solid, in-depth Christian formation. There is so much need today for mature Christian personalities, conscious of their baptismal identity, of their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world! There is great need for living Christian communities! And here are the movements and the new ecclesial communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium. You are the providential response.

True charisms cannot but aim at the encounter with Christ in the sacraments. The ecclesial realities to which you belong have helped you to rediscover your baptismal vocation, to appreciate the gifts of the Spirit received at Confirmation, to entrust yourselves to God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation and to recognize the Eucharist as the source and summit of all Christian life. Thanks to this powerful ecclesial experience, wonderful Christian families have come into being which are open to life, true "domestic churches," and my vocations to the ministerial priesthood and the religious life have blossomed, as well as new forms of lay life inspired by the evangelical counsels. You have learned in the movements and new communities that faith is not abstract talk, nor vague religious sentiment, but new life in Christ instilled by the Holy Spirit.

How is it possible to safeguard and guarantee a charism's authenticity? It is essential in this regard that every movement submit to the discernment of the competent ecclesiastical authority. For this reason, no charism can dispense with reference and submission to the pastors of the Church. The Council wrote in clear words: "Those who have charge over the Church should judge the genuineness and proper use of these gifts, through their office no indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good (cf. 1 Thes 5:12; 19-21)" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 12). This is the necessary guarantee that you are taking the right road!

In the confusion that reigns in the world today, it is so easy to err, to give in to illusions. May this element of trusting obedience to the Bishops, the successors of the Apostles, in communion with the Successor of Peter never be lacking in the Christian formation provided by your movements! You know the criteria for the ecclesiality of lay associations found in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (cf. n. 30). I ask you always to adhere to them with generosity and humility, bringing your experiences to the local churches and parishes, while always remaining in communion with the Pastors and attentive to their direction.

'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel'

Jesus said, "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!" (Lk 12:39). As the Church prepares to cross the threshold of the third millennium, let us accept the Lord's invitation, so that his fire may spread in our hearts and in those of our brothers and sisters.