

Of Seeds and Flowers

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HOLD ON, WHEN YOU WANT TO LET GO! Hang in there!!!

THE GIFT OF LENT IS HERE!! FEBRUARY 14TH. Lent is a special season of preparation to prepare our hearts for Easter. Some of the first words from Jesus were, **"Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand."** The word for **"repent"** in Greek, used in the New Testament is **"metanoia"** which means to change your mind about things, about reality, about your life, what you believe and value. However, the word Jesus most probably used was the Aramaic word **"shub"** which is much stronger. **"Shub"** means change the direction you are going. If you are heading north in your life and it isn't working, turn and head south. - or at least, east, or west. Lent is a time to **"shub"** it!!



If you're looking from a sign from God, this is it!!!

John, in his gospel, never uses a noun when he writes about *faith*. He always uses the verb, which in Greek means **TO BELIEVE INTO** the Son of God. In John's view, faith evidently is more than a way of just existing in the world, more than just a way of MORAL BEHAVIOR. IT IS A TOTAL WAY OF LIVING, TOTAL COMMITMENT TO THE WHOLE TRUTH. This living is a share in God's being - a share in the way God lives. To live is to grow. Paul writes, **"I live now, not I, but Jesus Christ lives in ME."** **"TO BELIEVE INTO"**. To DARE to be different. - not to compromise with the world. Not, **"to go along to get along"** as so many churches have done.

I had a professor in the seminary who used to regularly say to us: **"Sons, if you are too busy to pray you, are too damn busy."** And I say to you: **"If you are too busy to pray or read the gospels on a regular basis YOU are too damn busy."** Busyness is the enemy!! If you are not impressed, overwhelmed, or shocked by the message of the four gospels you are either numb or dead. THE FOUR GOSPELS, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, HOLD THE **FULL SOLUTION** TO ALL SOCIAL ILLS - NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL. The problem is, as Chesterton so eloquently put it, Christianity or the gospels have never been fully tried. If you are not using PRAYER and the Scriptures, especially the gospels, on a regular basis, you need a new tool bag. Lent is the time to fill up your bag! **"God loves us as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us as we are. When we are stressed or unable to bear the burdens of life it is often because we have misplaced our priorities."** Mother Teresa - Lent = **"PRIORITY TIME"**



TRUE STORY

Gloria and her family made Sunday Mass a very special event. The church she attended was beautiful, the music was good, the pastor's homilies were inspiring. The family dressed

special, and they all went to Sunday brunch afterward. She enjoyed Sundays so much she wanted to share it with her friends. So, one week she invited a Baptist friend of hers to Sunday Mass. On the way there Gloria was eloquent in praising her church, the Mass, music, homilies, the decorations (it was Easter season) etc. Everything was perfect that Sunday. After mass she couldn't wait to ask her friend what she thought of her first experience. Her response wasn't what she expected.

"You Catholics are hypocrites," she said. Gloria calmly asked her friend what she meant. **"If we Baptists believed that Jesus is truly present in that little box (tabernacle), we would enter and leave the church on our knees, never turning our back on Him. When we first walked into your church the noise level, with talking and laughing, reminded me of being in the stands before an Atlanta**

'Going to church on Sunday can no more make you a Christian then standing in a garage can make you a car.' Garrison Keillor

Braves baseball game. And the way some people dressed. More like going to a church carnival than coming into the presence of the Lord." Is Gloria's Baptist friend, correct? How do you show up? What is it like in your church? How do you prepare for Mass, Sunday worship?

The Catholic Bishops have spent 28 million dollars to promote Eucharistic revival, but you can't buy a revival. True revival requires a change of heart, a change of spirit, soul, life. It is ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD that change people's lives. Education or re-education are never a substitute for Spiritual transformation. "SHUB". "METANOIA". Transformed people....

This is a prayer that will do it. I've been praying it every night for the past 5 years. -and needing it!! My pride is ALWAYS IN THE WAY.

"Lord, I don't like the way that I am. I've tried to live independently of you. I've tried to run my own life and I just haven't succeeded. I am not the kind of person I would really like to be. I'm sorry that I've left you out of my life. I'm sorry that I have hurt so many people and failed so many others-including myself. I don't want to be that way anymore. I ask you to forgive me and heal me. I need you and I want to share my life with you, Jesus, I accept you as my Lord and my savior. Come into my heart and share your life with me. I want you to be the most important person in my life. Jesus, show me your face that I might love you. Let me experience your presence and your power in

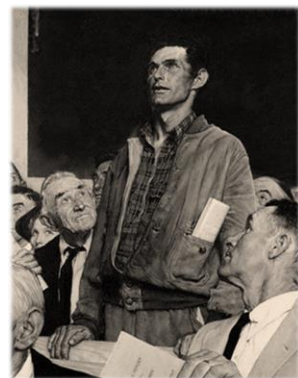
my life. I thank you for sending your spirit to me that I might have the POWER TO LIVE this new life with you. STIR UP YOUR SPIRIT in me. RELEASE YOUR SPIRIT in me. BAPTIZE ME WITH YOUR SPIRIT that I may experience your presence and power in my life, find new meaning in the Scriptures, find delight and comfort in prayer. Fill me with your Spirit. I want to receive all you have to give me. Amen.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS™



One day a messenger of King Louis IX of France barged excitedly through the door. **"Your majesty," he shouted, "you must come to the church at once! A great miracle is occurring there. A priest is saying Mass and after the consecration of the bread and wine Jesus is visibly standing by the altar."** To the astonishment of the messenger, the saintly monarch calmly replied, **"Why? I always see Jesus every time I receive the Eucharist."**

Transformed people, transform people!



A REMNANT CHURCH

The Catholic Church is now in a state of humiliation and chastisement. We are quickly becoming a REMNANT CHURCH, A REMNANT PEOPLE. The church of the few but of the FEW AND MOST FAITHFUL PEOPLE. It is a time of humiliation (we learn humility through humiliation) and chastisement for the Catholic Church, and some other churches as well, and Christianity too, but also a time when the seeds of a genuine renewal are germinating. Some lukewarm Christians are regaining their first love, and other Christians are firming up their faith and becoming stronger in their belief and commitment. We will all be a part of a MUCH SMALLER CHURCH but a church of more honesty, deeper prayer, and commitment. It is good to be a part of a genuine REMNANT. -to carry on with confidence, joy, and courage amid the growing darkness. HOLD ON. There is light at the end of the tunnel.



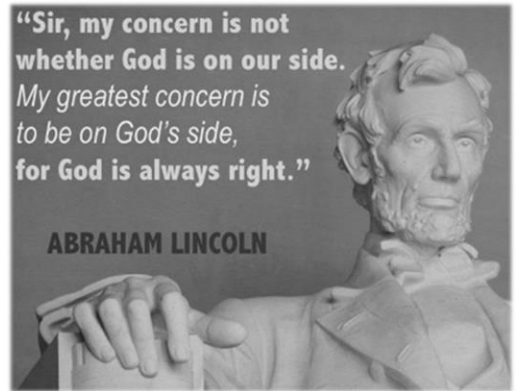
The Church, in good times, was like a bucket filled with living water (Remember the woman at the well) and if any pollution invaded the living water there was always enough fresh living water to fix up the problem. Now there is a hole in the bucket, and no matter what the leaders try to do to fix the hole, the water keeps leaking out. The hole has been caused by church leaders who have not properly shepherded their flock. The hole is getting bigger and bigger. The bucket keeps leaking and there is not enough fresh water (Wisdom, vision, holiness, repentance coming from church leaders) to fix the problem, the leak.



PRAYER, serious prayer is the ONLY power that can provide us with the grace and peace to endure this irrational, unwise, immoral, deceitful world. Jesus prayed for at the Last Supper, "If you find that the world hates you, know that it has hated me before you. John 15: 18. Pull down the shades and trust that the Creator of this world is still in charge.

"Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side. My greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



Less than 40% of Americans now believe in an organized religion and the percentage is worse for people under 30. Only 17% of Catholics celebrate eucharist weekly. 25% of Catholics read the Bible once a week, 10% several times a year. Pew Research Center. Sadly too, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, that I attended for 8 years, and that prepared thousands of priests for over a century, has been closed and sold for 5 million dollars. -a remnant church! 3400 Catholic parishes now have no resident priest! Cultures and institutions are seldom murdered; they usually commit suicide, SLOWLY!

We are all united to God but only some of us know it. Most people doubt it or deny it. Our ego wants to be self-made, not other made which is the whole problem with people becoming humble and being dependent on God/grace.

God gives us the GIFT OF OLD AGE AND RETIREMENT so we can spend more time deepening our relationship with Him. What a gift!! More time reading the Scriptures, spiritual books, more time for the quiet/Centering Prayer (contemplation) that transforms our whole being. NO MORE EXCUSES, SENIOR FOLKS! The church, the world needs us!

Hanging on to resentment is like letting someone live rent free in your head.

"It is not so much the things you know that hurt you as the things you "KNOW" that 'AIN'T SO" - Will Rogers

Could the following words from the book of Revelation in the Bible, **IN ANY WAY,** be a part of explaining or understanding the present disfunction in the world, our country and in the personal lives of many people? ***"Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. Although the dragon and his angels fought back, they were overpowered and lost their place in heaven. The huge dragon, the ancient serpent known as the devil or Satan, the seducer of the whole world, was driven out; he was hurled down to***

earth and his minions with him."

Rev.12: 7-9 PLEASE, DO REMEMBER that at the end of this very same book in the Bible that St. John, the author, writes, "I myself, give witness to all who hear the prophetic words of this book. If ANYONE ADDS TO THESE WORDS, God will visit him with all the plagues described herein. IF ANYONE TAKES AWAY FROM THE WORDS of this prophetic book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and the holy city described here." Rev. 22: 18-19.

These words just can't be dismissed, as, ***"The devil made me do it."*** Do we just cut this section from the Bible with a scissors, and make up a new Bible with Elmer's glue? This is a hard question. Don't dismiss it until you seriously try to answer it!!!! - and then we might have, at least, a true PART of the explanation for our present sickness.

"Never tear down a fence until you know why it was put up in the first place." - either by God or man. - G.K. Chesterton



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