



LIGHT TO GENTILES - Acts 13:14,43-52; Revelation 7:9,14-17; Psalm 100:1-3,5; John 10:27-30

A great multitude, no one can count

Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one." this, he said to him, "Follow me."

REFLECTION: God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:17)

In terms of eternity, how important is what you are doing now? Maintaining this perspective can help show you what's important on your journey toward heaven. Focusing on the splendid plans God has for us can help us not get caught up in distractions or side roads that go nowhere. Consider, for example, what is in heaven and what is available here to speed us on our journey.

There, in the company of the saints and angels, God shelters us with his presence. Here, we know his presence at times when he shelters us through a near miss in a car accident or allows things to happen that prevent a questionable relationship from becoming more serious.

There, hunger and thirst are no more. Here, we can share what we have by contributing to our

local food cupboard or give as little as a drink of water to someone in Jesus' name.

There, the sun will not cause us to wither. Here, sitting a long time in an uncomfortably warm waiting room can teach us patience and hope.

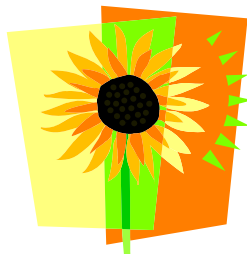
There, the Lamb seated upon the throne will be our shepherd. Here, the Lamb guides us in the Eucharist and through the church.

There, God

will wipe away every tear. Here, as we sit with a loved one in the last stages of cancer, we can wipe away tears ourselves as we minister Jesus' love.

Thanks to the redemption Jesus won for us, heaven is our inheritance, and every day brings us one step closer to our true home. What's more, every day that we live in the hope and expectation of that home, God gives us countless opportunities to manifest the glory of heaven to the world. So enjoy the trip today, knowing that the destination is amazing!

How glorious are



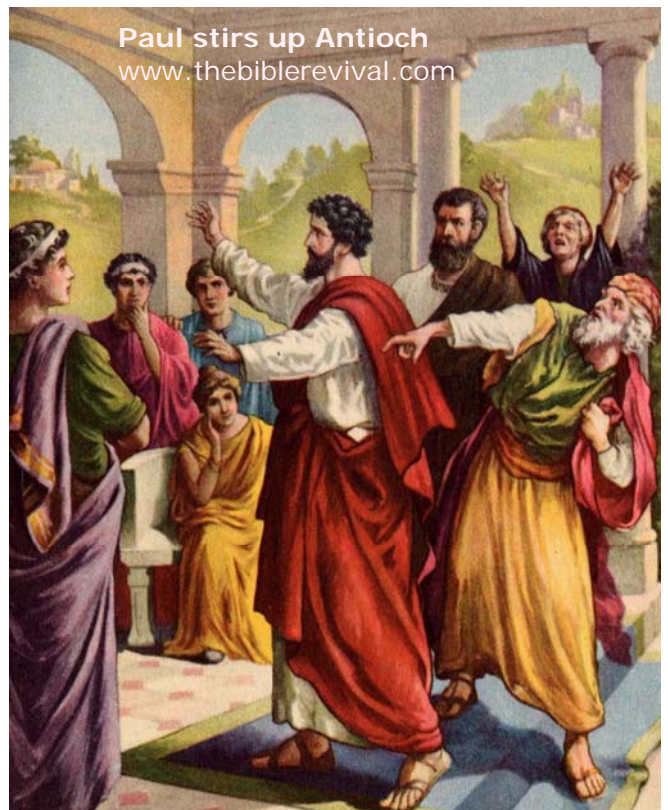
IMPORTANT NOTICE

Publishing this devotional has become a burden for lack of personnel and we wish to get feedback from those who use it in the light of a proposal to stop it by end of June 2010. So it is urgent that we hear from you. If we get a substantial number opposing this plan, we find ways and means to continue producing it. So email mymaestro@ymail.com about your sentiments NOW!

your promises, O Lord! Through your Son, we can experience an eternity of your love. Lord, I revel in this promise today, even as I take up the call to work out my salvation in you.



Paul stirs up Antioch
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Mon, April 26*Acts 11:1-18; Psalm 42:2-3; 43:3-4; John 10:1-10***The Spirit told me to accompany them without discriminating.**

(Acts 11:12) By sending Peter to Cornelius—a pagan from Caesarea—God gave him the opportunity of a lifetime. Finally, God’s plan to gather the Gentiles to himself was coming to fulfillment.

The centuries-long hatred between Gentile and Jew was about to be broken. The witness of a united church was about to shine in the world.

And God was calling Peter to be the one to break through the barrier. Peter could have stuck to his guns. He could have remained adamant in his Jewish upbringing and refused to go. But this once stubborn fisherman had been changed.

Not sure exactly what would happen, he decided to follow the Lord’s promptings and take a chance. And the result was amazing: Before Peter could even finish telling Cornelius and his family about Jesus, the Holy Spirit swept over them and filled their hearts. That’s how eager God was to inaugurate a new era of unity in his church!

What has happened to that unity? Today we see Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox divided against each other. Ancient feuds, ages-old misunderstandings, and even political considerations all conspire to keep us divided. Of course, there are doctrinal issues that need to be overcome. But as Pope Benedict XVI has affirmed, we have so much more that unites us than what divides us. If we could just keep our eyes focused on our common heritage, we would surely find a

way to resolve the differences that remain. But what about unity within our own church?

Surely we can find ways to overcome the divisions between progressives and traditionalists and between cradle Catholics and new converts.

Surely we can affirm all that we have in common—the

Eucharist, centuries of history, a common teaching, and a spiritual tradition that is as deep as it is wide. Surely we

can accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ!

Yes, there are different opinions and approaches, but we are still one body joined by a common baptism. Imagine

the impact it would have on the world if we made love our common goal! **“Lord, make**

your people one!”

Tues, April 27*Acts 11:19-26; Psalm 87:1-7, John 10:22-30***A large number of people was added to the Lord.**

(Acts 11:24) Sometimes we think of “church” as limited to our own parish or diocese.

We know in theory that the church is worldwide, but often we don’t see it. However, if we have traveled to a foreign country, attended a

World Youth Day, or simply live in a multicultural area, it becomes clear that our church extends beyond any national, ethnic, or racial boundaries.

How did it get that way? It all goes back to the events described in the Book of Acts.

In today’s passage, we see the consequences of the persecution following Stephen’s martyrdom. Those who believed in Jesus fled “as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch.”

They told other Jews about Jesus, but it was the men from Cyprus and Cyrene

among them, probably newly converted Jews, who arrived in Antioch and proclaimed Jesus to Greek Gentiles as well. Much to everyone’s surprise, “a great number who believed turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21).

It is a sign of the Holy Spirit working—then and now—that we can come together and worship the same Lord, no matter what our age, race, language, or political views.

Because the church is universal, it is necessarily diverse.

Our unity is found not in cultural or racial similarities but in the Sacrament of Baptism—in the gift of God that makes us all equal members of his family.

The next time you go to Mass, look around and make a point of greeting someone who is different from you. Try to

connect with that person with the one thing that you know you have in common—your

faith. Perhaps your parish has a sister parish in another

country that you can support or even visit. Or maybe you

can do some reading about the church in a different location—its gifts, its struggles,

and its personality. What a great God we have! He is at work gathering people “from

every tribe and tongue, people and nation” (Revelation 5:9).

Day in and day out, he is getting us all ready for heaven, where we will all be one in him, celebrating our unity and honoring our diversity!

“Jesus, as we worship you over space and time, help us to see past our differences so that we see ourselves as we truly are—one body united in you.”

Pray unceasingly!

Wed, April 28*Acts 12:24–13:5; Psalm 67:1-2,5-6,8; John 12:44-50***The word of God continued to spread and grow.**

(Acts 12:24) It is truly amazing how the word of God has spread from twelve apostles to encompass the whole wide world! It all started with Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit

fell upon those gathered in the upper room, enabling them to proclaim the wonders

of God in many languages and tongues. Three thousand

people heard the gospel that day and became believers.

Shortly after that, Peter and John healed a beggar who

could not walk, providing an opportunity to add another

two thousand to their number. After this, the apostles

began to meet regularly in the Temple area, where many

miracles were performed, and many more heard the word of God preached to them for the

first time.

With the martyrdom of St. Stephen, a persecution broke

out against the believers, and many believers were scattered

throughout Judea and Samaria. They continued to

preach the gospel wherever they went. Because of this dispersion, the word of God

spread to Tarsus, Caesarea, and Antioch. Finally, with the missionary journeys of Paul and Barnabas, the word of

God reached as far as Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, and even Spain.

Two thousand years later, the word of God continues to grow and spread as Christians across the globe bear witness to the power and love of God in their lives.

God wants to use you as he spreads his word and his love across the world—he really

does! He promises us that his word will never return to him empty, but will accomplish the purposes for which he sends it out (Isaiah 55:10-11). You can be sure that every opportunity you take to share your faith will be blessed in some way or other. You may see a person come to instant conversion. You may simply be watering a seed that someone else has planted. Or you may be planting a brand new seed yourself. Whatever the result, know that God sees every good thing you do, and he rewards it. Remember: He is even more eager than you to see people embrace the gospel. Of course he will bless your efforts!

“Thank you, Lord, that your word never returns to you empty! Teach me how to offer hope to those who need the light of Christ.”

Thurs, April 29

Acts 13:13-25; Psalm 89:2-3, 21-22, 25, 27; John 13:16-20

If one of you has a word of exhortation for the people, please speak. (Acts 13:15) Many times in Acts, Paul had opportunities like this one to share the gospel, often in a synagogue. He always told the story of salvation, but he didn't always tell it in exactly the same way. In today's reading, the story focuses on David: Paul presents Jesus as the “Son of David” fulfilling God's promises to Israel's beloved king. In other tellings, the emphasis is on Moses, the lawgiver or on Abraham, the man of faith. In all these tellings to Jewish hearers, we see God preparing his people for the Messiah. But when Paul preached to Gentiles or mixed audi-

ences, he tended to stress the way the chosen people rejected Jesus, opening the way for God to fulfill his plan to bring salvation to the whole world. Then again, on several occasions, Paul told his own conversion story (Acts 22:1-21; 26:12-23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Galatians 1:11-2:14), again shaping the story in a way that would benefit his readers or listeners.

We have all experienced God working in our lives, but there are many different ways to shape our stories, depending on the situation and our audience. We should always be asking: “What is God asking me to say to this person?” and make that a central focus when we share about our lives. Should we share about a time when God brought us to repentance, comforted us in a difficult time, or filled us with his love? Sometimes it is also good to tell ourselves stories about what God has done for us. How quickly we forget how far we have come, how clearly we have experienced the Lord! We can never wear out such stories. Whenever you tell your story, be sure to start with this one unshakable truth: “God loves me and has always acted in love toward me.” And be sure to tell your story—whether to yourself or someone else—with the assurance that “all things work for good for those who love God” (Romans 8:28). So follow St. Paul's example and his own advice: “Do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord” (2 Timothy 1:8).

“Jesus, Give me fresh eyes to see how you have been pursuing me, protecting me, and supporting me throughout my life.”

Friday, April 30

Acts 13:26-33; Psalm 2:6-11;

John 14:1-6

I am the way and the truth and the life. (John 14:6)

Jesus is the way. He is the perfect Son of the Father who did only what the Father told him to do. He didn't cling to his own vision of what his life should look like. In this, he showed us the way to live. He loved the Father with complete trust. He knew that he was in his Father's hand, and it was there that he rested. Now ascended to heaven, Jesus calls us to live the way he lived—in trust and surrender to our Father's call. He will teach us, guide us, mold us, and make us into his children. He will show us how to rest in his presence, just as Jesus did.

Jesus is the truth. Every word he spoke was the truth. When he made a promise, it was fulfilled. Every miracle he performed, every parable he told, every sermon he preached demonstrates the love our heavenly Father has for us and the way he wants us to live in love with each other. Everything that Jesus did as he walked the earth, and all that he does now as he works in and through his church, is a proclamation of this love. This truth is the foundation for the whole of creation—it is the foundation for each of our lives.

Jesus is the life. To know Jesus is to be fully alive because he has given us a share in his own divine life. Whenever we take communion, we receive this divine life into our own fallen hearts. Imagine: Jesus has chosen to live in us. He has chosen to place his own life in our hearts and to make that life the wellspring of our own lives. He comes to satisfy our deepest

**HOUSE
HOLD
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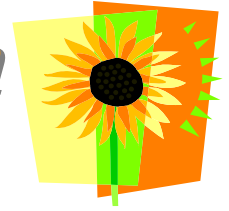
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needs and to rejoice with us at every good gift. He comes to teach us, to fill us, and to guide us.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. In him, we lack nothing. He has given us so much more than pardon for our sins. He has given us a whole new way of living, a life in union with his heavenly Father. Don't be afraid to reach out and grasp it today!

“Jesus, I love you. Open my eyes to see and know you more. Open my heart to receive your life more deeply today!”

God's voice as invitation



Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice" (Jn 10:27a). Where does God speak in our world? How does God speak?

Saturday, May 1

Acts 13:44-52; Psalm 98:1-4; John 14:7-14

Sing to the Lord a new song. (Psalm 98:1)

Some days it's hard to sing a new song, isn't it? We wake up singing the same old one: My spouse doesn't understand me. I'm afraid. So-and-so hurt me. That old song isn't always wheezed out in gripes and complaints, either. Sometimes it's intoned in a dull plainsong lacking any excitement, adventure, or joy—a monotone of routine: Go to work. Do the laundry. Cook the meals. Change the diapers. Pay the bills. Nothing new about any of it.

But every day, one thing is true: God has triumphed! His wondrous deeds and his justice, his kindness and his faithfulness mean victory over every threat to a joyful existence. His compassion and mercy are new every morning as he continually offers us a new heart and a new spirit. All because Jesus was raised from the dead, enabling us to live a new life. We have plenty of reasons to sing a new song to the Lord, a song that declares the wonderful, powerful deeds he has wrought in this world and in our lives.

So go ahead and sing! Sing of the many reasons you have to trust him. Sing a song that proclaims God's power in your life and his ability to heal you, to relieve your worry, and to free you from the chains of sin and fear. Declare his power—and his desire—to provide for your needs, to forgive your sins, and to lead you in the way of forgiveness. Sing of his generous gifts of wisdom, energy, patience, and whatever else you need to live this Christian life. Sing of that life itself, a life of peace, freedom, joy, trust, hope, confidence, and patient acceptance of things you can't change.

Sing, speak, or list such things on paper. Rehearse that list daily. Find Scripture passages that state or reinforce your new song. Sing or speak those words aloud during your prayer. Find some truth that has particular meaning in the situations you face, and repeat it frequently, whether in your thoughts or on your lips, throughout the day. Put away the old song, and sing joyfully to the Lord.

Break into song! Sing praise!!

"Lord, you are good! You have triumphed over everything that weighs me down. Your faithfulness lifts me up, and your kindness carries me through my day."

Whenever you hear a voice that sounds coercive, threatening, overbearing, that is somehow loud and in your face, you can be sure

that, no matter how religious and holy it might claim to be, it is not God's voice.

God's voice in this world is never

coercive or overbearing in any way, but is always an invitation and a beckoning that respects you and your freedom in a way that no human institution or person ever does. God's voice is thoroughly underwhelming, like a baby's presence.

Sadly whenever someone tries to teach this, immediately there are objections, often angry and bitter: What about God's judgment? What about God's condemnation of sin? What about God's anger?

Scripture does, on the surface, give us the impression that God is sometimes angry and full of condemnation and violence. But these are anthropomorphisms (a way of speaking about God that reveals how we feel about God when we are unfaithful, sinful, and violent).

God's voice does judge and it does condemn, but it judges and condemns not by coercive force, but in the same way that the innocence of a baby judges false sophistication, in the way that generosity exposes selfishness, in the way that big-heartedness reveals pettiness, in the way that light makes darkness flee, and in the way that the truth shames lies. God's voice judges us not by overpowering us but by shining love and light into all those places where we find ourselves huddled in fear, shame, bitterness, hostility, and sin.

But this is not something we learn easily. Already way back, before the birth of Christ, sincere religious people were yearning for God to come into the world in power. What they wanted, and prayed for, was a physical superstar who would come into the world and cleanse it by overpowering sin and evil and rooting them out by force. What they wanted in the longed-for Messiah was a morally superior violence that would give evil no options, but force it literally to acquiesce. What we got instead was a helpless baby in the straw who overpowered no one.

Twenty centuries later, we are still struggling to accept this. Too often the Christ we try to incarnate and preach is still that ancient, longed-for, overpowering Messiah who aims to cleanse the world through flat-out coercion.

We see this most clearly of course in Islamic extremists who like well-intentioned Christians back in the time of the Inquisition, sincerely believe that error has no rights and that, in the name of God, we must use force, violence if necessary, to bring about God's will on earth. In this view, murder and violence may be done to further God's purpose because God wants his will imposed upon this world, whether the world wants to accept it or not. But this is the antithesis of true religion.

We need to view God, always, as non-coercive, as an invitation. This has immense implications for everything to do with church and religion, from how we preach, to how we catechize, to how we

IN EXILE

BY RON ROLHEISER

Missionaries all

the first reading and the joyful tone of the hymn in the second reading.)

Reading I: Acts 13:14, 43-52

The first reading continues to be taken from Acts instead of from the Old Testament. Acts shows us the Christian community in the first years after the Easter events, and thus mirrors the impact of the resurrection experiences on the apostolic Church.

Today's reading tells of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas at Pisidian Antioch during the so-called first missionary journey.

The pattern of events is typical and is repeated in many cities during the missionary journeys: the apostles preach in the synagogue; a certain number of Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism believe, while others reject the message and stir up opposition against the apostles, who then declare their intention of turning to the Gentiles.

The proclamation of the word of God has no promise of success, but the word must be proclaimed whether people hear or refuse to hear (Ezekiel 3:5).

What matters is that the word is proclaimed faithfully. This matters even more than that it should be made to seem relevant by artificial stunts and gimmicks.

Resp Psalm: 100:1-2, 3, 5

This Sunday, formerly called the third Sunday after Easter, was traditionally known as Jubilate Sunday, especially among the German Lutherans, because of the old Introit from Psalm 66. Now, in series C, we use another Jubilate psalm, Psalm 100.

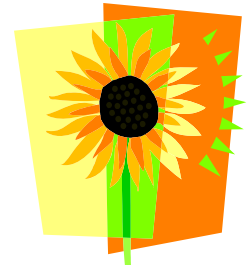
Easter is preeminently the season of joy. (Note also the last sentence of

do liturgy, to how we reach out to those who don't share our beliefs, to how we approach divisive moral issues, to how loud we turn up the sound system in our churches. God's voice is not a loud, coercive, overbearing, threatening voice, one that gets into your face whether you like it or not. Rather, God's voice invites in, beckons, leaves you free, and is as non-threatening as the innocence and powerlessness of a baby—or a saint.

We would do well to better understand this. We are, I believe, too prone inside our church circles to blame the world's resistance to God's message simply on its hardness of heart, sin, and indifference. Partly that's true, but a large part of that resistance has its root too in another source, namely, our own preaching, catechesis, pastoral practice, moral fever, and elitism. Too often, however sincerely we might be doing this, the voice we try to give to God is too-laden with coercion, threat, manipulation, violence, harshness, our own judgments, our own fears, our own wounds, and especially our own egos to bear enough resemblance to the divine kenosis and free invitation that Jesus gave voice to in his birth, life, and message.

Sometimes, after just having given a talk or a homily, I am told by a well-meaning person: "You should raise your voice more! Speak louder! You're speaking too softly!"

I don't think so! We need, I believe, to (figuratively and perhaps literally) begin more and more to lower our voices whenever we purport to be speaking in God's name because God's voice never overpowers, is never overbearing, never shouts at anyone. Indeed, as Mary Jo Leddy (a voice that speaks God's hard challenge with the correct invitational gentleness) says: We need to find the few words that are truly our own—and then speak them, clearly but softly.



Easter joy (Jubilate) is not the joy of anticipation, like that of

SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH

BY REGINALD H. FULLER

Advent (Gaudete), nor the brief moment of relief like the joy of mid-Lent (Laetare), but the exuberance of sorrow that has been turned into joy (John

16:20-22, from the old gospel of this day).

Reading II: Revelation 7:9, 14b-17

We normally associate this passage with All Saints Day, but it is just as appropriate for Easter. The joy of the martyrs is also the sorrow that has been turned into joy.

The martyrs have come out of "the great tribulation" (not merely tribulation, but the tribulation; the Seer regards their martyrdom as part of the messianic woes, a sharing of the cross of Christ).

Paschal imagery is picked up in the phrase "the blood of the Lamb" (see last Sunday's second reading, with its reference to "the Lamb who was slain"), as also the image of the shepherd who will guide the martyrs to springs of living water, an image that will recur in the gospel.

Gospel: John 10:27-30

This gospel is not from the shepherd discourse proper, which comes earlier in John 10, but is an echo of it in the next section, Jesus' discourse at the feast of the Dedication.

It is tempting, as some commentators have done, to rearrange the text and to put these verses back in the good shepherd discourse. But it is characteristic of John to return to an earlier theme and develop it further.

The earlier explanations of the good shepherd parable dealt with the gate and the shepherd, while this one deals with the sheep, their relation to the shepherd, their enjoyment of eternal life already in the life of discipleship (following), and the thrice-repeated assurance that they shall not perish nor be snatched out of the shepherd's hand (at the final judgment).

While all this is stated in typically Johannine language, its substance correctly reproduces the teaching of the earthly Jesus as recorded in the Synoptists. To hear and to respond to Jesus' word on earth is the decisive factor that will determine acceptance by God at the last judgment (see Luke 12:8-9).

The concluding sentence about the unity of the Father and the Son gives the basis for the Nicene faith, but it was meant by the evangelist, not in an ontological or metaphysical sense, as in the later dogmatic formulas, but in the dynamic-historical sense of Hebraic thought.

The Father and the Son are one because of the Father's call of the Son and his response in history, resulting in a complete alignment of the words and acts of the Father and the Son.

The history, of course, has an external background in the relation of the Father and the Son, as the prologue makes clear (John 1:1-14)

Our Spiritual Hiroshima

by Dr. Peter Kreeft

(Dr. Peter Kreeft (pronounced "kreeft") is a professor of philosophy at Boston College. He is an orthodox Roman Catholic, who has written over 45 books, and who contributes regularly to various Christian publications. Dr. Kreeft is one of the most eloquent voices for the Faith in America. This summary of Dr. Kreeft's remarks was prepared on March 9, 2008, by Joseph A. Wemboff, from memory and from extensive notes taken during the talk. Dr. Kreeft has his own website at www.peterkreeft.com.)

In the 1960s, the term "culture war" meant the conflict between the Establishment and the Counter Culture. Later, it came to mean the conflict between Science and the Humanities. The term became formalized with the publication of the book *Culture Wars* by James Hunter in the 1990s. Pope John Paul II fueled the idea by drawing the distinction between the "Culture of Life" and the "Culture of Death." The term "Culture War" is simply a euphemism for the conflict between Christ and the Antichrist, with the stakes being the fate of the universe.

Sadly, today, the Antichrist controls all of the formal and informal means of education and information in America, including the media, news reporting, publishing, music, movies (Hollywood), etc. Today, pornography generates more revenue in America than any other industry except gambling. This is not a new struggle-it has been going on since the Middle Ages. The Christian religion is now in decline, and the Antichrist is now winning, because he has convinced most people to bypass that simple word: reason. Most people today "feel;" they no longer "think."

We are living in a "spiritual Hiroshima".

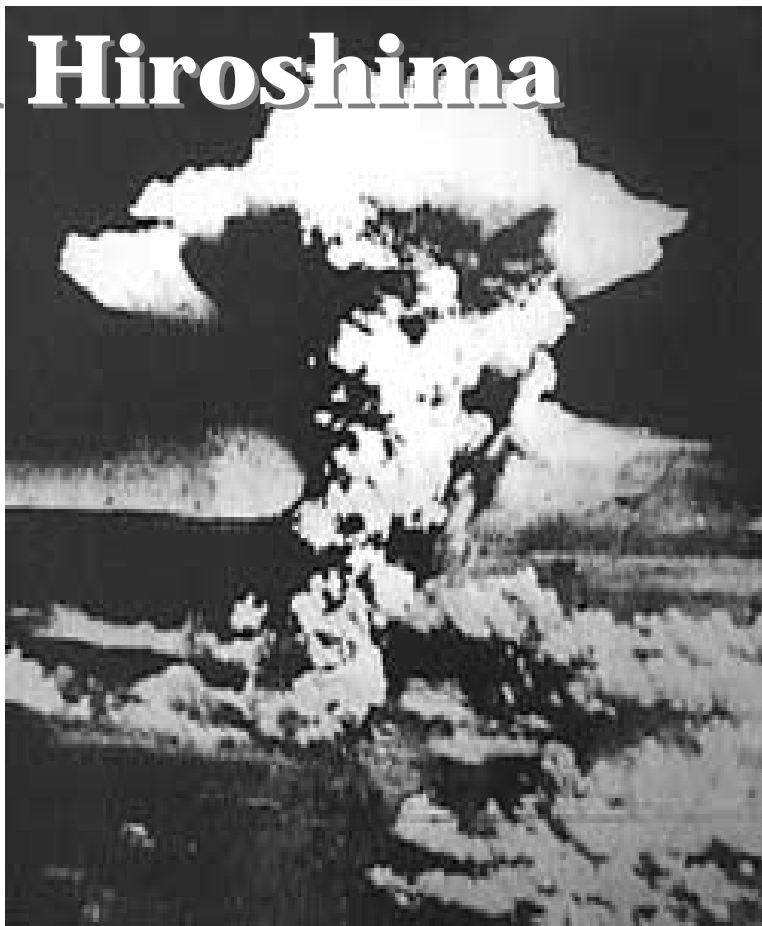
The Catholic Church is full of psychobabble. Our bishops have all the courage and behavior of rabbits. Since Vatican II, three-quarters of our nuns are gone. Sunday Mass attendance has declined from 75% to 25%. Belief in the Real Presence has dropped from nearly 100% to about 30%. The Catholic Church has lost the power to arrest the decline of our culture.

Properly said, ours is not a "Culture of Death," but a "Culture of Murder." There is the murder of marriage (divorce). There is the murder of the unborn (abortion). There is the murder of reason by militant feminists and by militant homosexuals. The cloning of humans promises to turn the "I am" of God into the "it is" of humanism. Science is promising eternal life by working to eliminate from humankind the "age and die" gene, which supposedly is not found in non-sexual species and in cancer cells.

Our words cannot defeat the Culture of Death, but God's words can. Eucharistic adoration can conquer the Culture of Death. Pope John Paul II spoke of a New Evangelization, which means not the preaching of new words, but the preaching God's timeless words to new generations of people.

It's easy to be busy; it's far more difficult to be holy. We need to start by being holy. We need to join God's jihad. There is a tendency today to substitute "spirituality" for "religion." In the Bible, the Tower of Babel represents "spirituality," while Noah's ark-with all its sights and smells and inconveniences-represents "religion." It is not easy being a Catholic.

Consider that only God, angels, and human beings are persons. God did not become angelic to redeem them, but He became man to redeem humankind. Human life is sacred for three reasons:
1) Men and women are created in the image and likeness of



URGENT REQUEST

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God Himself. 2) Human life is linked to God's life. 3) Human beings are destined to share in eternal life with God.

As portrayed in the book *Christ and the University*, the Humanities are ground zero in the current Culture War, in the battle between Christ and the Antichrist. This is because college professors now have the power over young minds that priests and saints and kings once had. The dark, black spot at the center of intellectual thought these past decades is a deconstructionism which says that truth is nothing more than "the hypocritical mask on the face of power." We are led to believe that there is no objective truth, and that all is relative. It used to be that Science was the source of deconstructionist ideas, but, scientists must deal in facts, and facts tend to be real. Now the Humanities are the major source of deconstructionism.

The only two moments of peace in history are in Genesis (before history) and in the Apocalypse (after history). All of human history in between is full of war and of spirits thirsty for the blood of children. Pro-choice people will not-indeed, cannot-listen to reason. Pro-choice people are insane and will not convert to reason-they will attempt to convert reason.

During World War II, I.G. Farben GmbH of Germany made Zyklon B, the gas used to kill so many in the gas chambers. Today, a French successor company to I.G. Farben makes the abortifacient RU-486. Either the face of evil has changed little, or the devil has a limited range of business contacts.

Since the Middle Ages, humanity has been on a slow, ever-ascending upward slope of becoming smarter, healthier, and more technologically advanced, while, at the same time, being on a slow, ever-descending slope of becoming weaker morally. God's grace will save us, but on two conditions: 1) We ask for it, which means that we must value wisdom and holiness more than cleverness and worldly riches. 2) We believe that God will deliver (not to believe is to call God a liar).

These past centuries, mankind has fluctuated between the sins of despair and presumption. Despair is represented by Camus and other Existentialists. Presumption is exemplified by Rousseau, the Enlightenment, and by New Age ideas and practices. We are entering an apocalyptic age, which might be described as *Brave New World* or as *The Abolition of Man*-each of which, ironically, is also the title of a book by Aldous Huxley and by C. S. Lewis, respectively. We should recall that the Bible predicts that the Great Tribulation of the end times will be so bad that no flesh would survive if God did not shorten the days. In the First Millenium after Christ, the Church won the world. But then, she became fat and weak. The Second Millenium has belonged to the Antichrist. We are now in the Third Millenium, and the outcome these next thousand years is anything but clear. We need to remember that this world is not our home; heaven is.

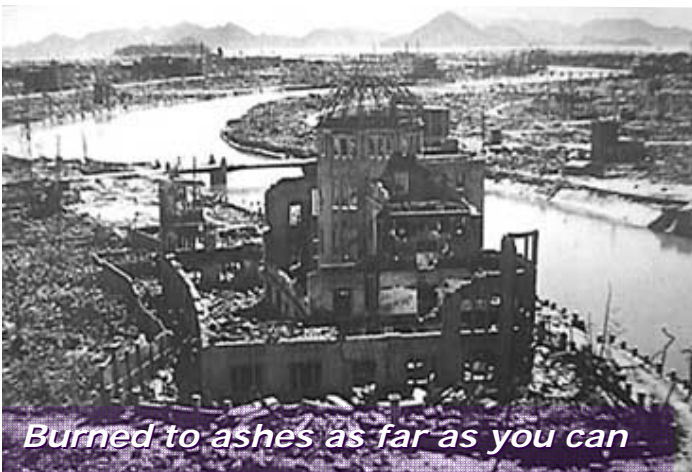


Death

Self-sacrificing love is the only way to be a self. Unfortunately, we are addicted to this world, and the Culture of Death is sustained by our idolizing this life. The Culture of Death "baits its hook" by our love of this world. Ironically, the only way to overcome the here-and-now Culture of Death is to focus on attainment of the afterlife. We must die (symbolically, to this world) before we die (literally, in this world). To be a Christian is to be a martyr, at least in spirit. The goal of "addicted" souls is happiness in this world, but, ironically, the desire to create heaven on earth leads only to the Tower of Babel. The Culture of Life must embrace symbolic death to this world, and literal death itself, as the doorway to eternal life.

Time

Technology has abolished leisure. How many minutes per day do we spend on email? How many minutes per day do we spend on prayer? The master can become a slave to his need for his slaves, while the slaves are the ones who are truly free. So it is today with modern man-we are slaves to our need for email, voicemail, texting, faxing, etc.



Who has the most leisure time in our world? Contemplatives, who spend their time worshipping the Lord of Time. We should challenge ourselves to give Him fifteen minutes a day in totally focused prayer, and gradually work our way up to even more prayer time. It will change our lives. We need to stop doing and just be. But, it is difficult, for we are addicted to our "time-saving" ways.

Abortion is the anti-Eucharist, the perfect "sacrament" of the Culture of Death.

Winning the Culture War?

First and foremost, we must have an obedient faith, and we must feed that faith through: **1) Contemplative prayer 2) The sacrament of confession 3) The Eucharist.** We must let God into the deepest parts of our lives and of our being. Please be a saint.

After Life



Questions for Bible

BY ANNE OSDIECK, SAINT LOUIS CENTER FOR LITURGY

“All who were destined for life everlasting believed in it.”

As lively and supple as our imaginations may be, some of us draw blanks when we entertain the possibility of heaven. We are so time- and matter-bound that all our visions of another world are necessarily chained to images of this one.

“Will there be ice cream in heaven?” Thus might gradeschoolers echo the question put to Jesus: “Will there be marriage in heaven?”

In the Book of Revelation, the imagery is more grand and ambitious. Whether visionary or dreamer, the narrator awes us with a scale that embraces every nation, race, and tongue, arrayed in long white robes, bearing palms before the throne and the Lamb.

“These are the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. . . . Never again shall they know hunger or thirst. . . . He will lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe every tear away from their eyes.”

But how can we adequately conceive of life everlasting, the destiny of those embraced by Christ’s life and dying? The Acts of the Apostles announces the promise of an afterlife but does not give much description of what it might be like. And Jesus, in many passages in the fourth Gospel, reminds us: “I give them eternal life and they shall never perish.”

We can only guess what such a life might be, and all our guesses will be freighted with limits of the life we now live. Moreover, the limits of earth-bound experience cannot help but foster skepticism about any future life.

In my philosophy classes, when the talk turns to our final fate and the immortality of the soul, a web of unbelief is quickly woven. “How can an ‘after’ life have any continuity with this life when all our experience is so brain-based? Our memories, our joys, the delights of every sense, the faces of our loved ones all seem so inseparable from this world and our bodies.” A telling point. Even mighty Aquinas mused that a soul, separated from the body after death, would somehow be radically incomplete, bereft of the body it informed. Surely, if we had no body, we could not speak of personal immortality. Billy and Mary are not “souls”; they are embodied souls. For Aquinas, happily, his Christian belief in the resurrection of the body answered the nagging questions of reason. Not just our souls, but our bodies are promised eternity.

This does not make things very much clearer. What on earth could such bodies be—supposedly outside of space and time? But that’s just it. They are not on earth. And the earth cannot adequately contain their reality.

To my students, then, I pose a thought experiment. Imagine us in a class-womb. We are a remarkable group of fetuses who are aware of and can talk about our condition. What troubles us is the regular and inevitable departure and disappearance of our brothers and sisters. It seems a dread experience, not only for the one who is untimely ripped from our comfortable state but for all of us. We never see them again. They’re gone. All that is left for us is mourning and memory.

The question is then posed. Could there be an afterlife, a form of

Acts 5, Verses 27-32, 40-41

1. “Almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.” Did they like what they heard? What made Paul and Barnabas decide to preach to the Gentiles? Was salvation planned for the Gentiles from the beginning or was this a change of plans?

2. How were Paul and Barnabas instruments of salvation? Are you an instrument in any way? How? What do you do when you encounter opposition?

Revelation 5, Verses 11-14

1. People suffer and yet still stand before the Lamb. How can this be? Does the Lamb take care of their needs? Does Christ have a way to understand their hardships? How about you: can you understand other people’s suffering better if you have experienced suffering yourself?

2. What resistance to the values of Christianity do you encounter in your life? When you encounter inner conflict regarding social justice and the people who suffer because of it, what do you do? What would you like to do?

John 21, Verses 1-19

1. “Jesus said: I know them.” What does the Good Shepherd know about you?

2. “No one can take them out of my hands . . . or the Father’s hands.” The sheep are safely kept. Are there forces that try to take the sheep out of Jesus’ hand? What are they? Do they sometimes take you too? When will you be free from struggle?

existence beyond this womb, so familiar and secure? Could there be another world beyond the walls of our experience?

One budding philosopher-fetus, clearly on the route to skepticism, deems it impossible. How could there be life after womb-death? Every means of sustenance—oxygen, blood and nutriment—is gone. The cord is cut. How could there be an existence without it? Every piece of evidence we have indicates that we could have no life without it.

Unfortunately, the fetuses who have passed away, do not (maybe cannot) come back to tell us what happened when they died to us and our world. They cannot report what happens on the other side because of the limitations of our lifewomb, barring their direct entry to our lives.

But let’s pretend. One does return to give an account of the other side.

I know you have a wonderful life here, but this is only preparation. You say that life without a womb is impossible, but that is only because of the womb’s boundaries. You think that there could be no food or oxygen without the umbilical cord. Yet there is. Believe it or not, you will receive food, but it will be through your mouth. And

your mouth is for much more than mere sucking, breathing, or eating. You will speak and sing, kiss and cry. And your arms and legs will do more things than you could ever imagine with your kicking and swimming around. The new world beyond your womb is connected to what you are right now, but it is wondrously different. All the gifts you have are only glimmers of what they will become.

Could it so be with us? Are we all aborning? And do those slight but awesome moments of ecstatic love and luminous insight only hint at what eyes have never seen and ears have never fully heard?