

Time to Pray:

To Imitate What They Contain The Joyful and Sorrowful Mysteries

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Note: The following is an excerpt from a talk given on June 6, 2009 at Cleveland, the Fatima Center's two-day Fatima Conference.

Modern man is like a squirrel on a revolving wheel. We're just going, going, going. We barely have time to do the work we are supposed to do. Obligations proliferate. The great Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said that we must jump off the wheel if we are to return to a sane life. And I am very pleased to say, I jumped off the wheel.

I retired on January 2, and what I've discovered astonishes me. I live in a beautiful place. I didn't know it. I am now able to take walks and to get to know the trees and the birds. God gave us nature to delight us, and nature is healing. But if we don't have time to look at nature, it cannot heal us.

I'm spending more time listening to good music. I found a book written by an old musicologist in 1948, the year I was born. It is an analysis of

the Mozart piano concertos for the average listener. I am getting to know them one at a time. There are 27 concertos. I suspect they will last me most of the rest of my life.

And there is the sheer joy of finally having time to pray. Most of us have to squeeze our prayer life in between these endless activities, or to pray while we are rushing here or there, or when we get up in the morning before we race off somewhere, or late at night when we find ourselves falling asleep halfway through our prayer, not because we mean to insult Our Lord, but because we are exhausted. And I realize now I should have spent more of my life jettisoning this and that activity, or not worrying about certain things.

So this old squirrel gives you one piece of advice: jump off that wheel. It is madness. And you never go anywhere.

The wheel just goes round and round, and the faster you run, the faster the wheel goes, and the faster you get nowhere at all.

Time to Pray

Perhaps the greatest joy since my retirement is that most days I have time to say all fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary in a settled, quiet place. You'll notice that this beautiful statue shows Our Lady with the Rosary in Her hands, and the Scapular. And Our Lady told us long ago — we got the message through St. Louis de Montfort — that the time will come when the faithful will be left with the Rosary and the Scapular.

Where will everything else go? We are beginning to see how certain aspects of Faith that lifelong Catholics took for granted are disappearing or becoming harder to find. At the same time, Our Lady said that She would one day help save the world through the Rosary and the Scapular. These will be the means by which Her Immaculate Heart will triumph. That is a great consolation. We know that day of triumph will come.

But how do we get there? One way is by clinging to the

Rosary and understanding the promises of the Rosary. We know that the Rosary is a great aid to salvation. Those who pray Her Rosary regularly, as She requested, increase their chances of going to Heaven.

Now we can never presume. Presumption is a sin. And the Saints never announced they were going to Heaven. In all humility, they were willing to say they hoped for Heaven, which is the hope we all must have.

Saint Teresa of Avila was shown the vision of the place reserved for her in hell. We all have a spot reserved for us down there. Whether we go there is our choice. So we don't presume we are going to Heaven. We don't despair that we are going to hell. We hope and pray the Rosary.

Michelangelo's "Last Judgment," that great painting behind the altar in the Sistine Chapel, is so filled with motion and life that it is hard for the eye to see it all. One of my favorite parts of this enormous painting is a great angel on a little cloud. The angel has a Rosary, and there are two souls clinging to the Rosary that this great angel is lifting towards Heaven.

It's beautiful: two souls being hoisted to Heaven clinging to the Rosary. When I pray the Rosary now, that is part of the image I try to keep in mind. I am going to hang onto that Rosary and hope that through the grace of God, and His angels, and the Blessed Mother, I'll be hauled up there in spite of the weight of the sins of my whole life, not to mention my flesh pulling me towards what's below.

I'm going to talk about the Mysteries of the Rosary, and I am dividing the Mysteries in this way: I am going to talk about the Joyful and the Sorrowful today, in a particular context, and tomorrow, I am going to talk about the Glorious Mysteries.

Why am I dividing the Mysteries in this way? For the simple reason that when we pray at the end of the Rosary, we ask that we may be allowed to imitate what the Mysteries contain and obtain what they promise. If we are going to imitate what they contain, then we must certainly be imitating what is contained in the Joyful and Sorrowful Mysteries. For as souls in bodies living in this world, what we know are joys and sorrows. We hope

for what is promised by the Glorious Mysteries. We hope to obtain that which comes after death, with the resurrection of our bodies (Ed. note: Here we will go straight to the Sorrowful Mysteries)

Betrayal and Scourging

The first of the Sorrowful Mysteries is the Agony in the Garden. We're there. If we are going to imitate what they contain, then we need now to imitate the Agony of Our Lord in the Garden as He knows what's about to come.

And what did He know? He knew that the great sacrifice that was asked of Him was about to be made. And He asked, "Let this cup pass from My lips. But in all things not My will but Thy will be done." That is His human nature speaking. And as human beings, even as those who are believers and devoted to Him, even as we meditate on that great mystery of the Agony in the Garden, we could say the same thing to God: "Don't make us go through this. This is going to be ugly and painful, and I don't want to." But then we must follow it by saying, "not my will but Thy will be done."

Now why does He suf-

fer this agony in the garden? Because of betrayal. One of His disciples betrayed Him. And in His agony, when He turns to the others, they're sound asleep. "What, could you not watch with Me for one hour?" Meaning His own will betray Him and even those who want to be there with Him just don't have the energy to stay awake and watch with Him. It's agony.

If we are going to meditate on what is contained there, imitate what is contained, we had better be prepared for solitary agony when we are betrayed by those we trusted. And when those we hoped to help us fall asleep, we are going to be alone.

Each one of you has your own story of betrayal by family. What has the modern world done? It has ripped families to pieces. I'm sure all of you are praying for family members. Disappointment, division, betrayal, hurt, pain — that's where we are. That's not something that is coming, that's where we are.

I am speaking to you today on the 65th anniversary of D-Day. My father fought in that war. I had an uncle who was in that landing. And I'm here to tell you those men were

betrayed. They fought. Their country called them, and they went and fought, and they returned home to a country that became increasingly socialistic, that allowed abortion, that now allows what is called "gay marriage". There is no such thing. It's madness.

And my father, God rest his soul, converted two months before he died. He would sit in a chair and say, "I never dreamed it would come to this. I never dreamed it would." That's betrayal.

The greatest of the modern Catholic writers is Evelyn Waugh and his last major novel is a three-volume work on World War II, called *Sword of Honour*. It's acknowledged by almost everyone now, by critics, to be the great World War II novel. Nobody knows it. There is a reason you don't know it. It's a masterpiece. First volume is *Men at Arms*; second volume, *Officers and Gentlemen*; third volume, *Unconditional Surrender*. They wouldn't let it be printed in America with that title. They called it *The End of the Battle*.

In that novel, he tells the truth about that war from a Catholic perspective, which is, the Western world lost. America lost. Europe lost.



Hail Mary

Who won? The Communists won. And at the beginning of the novel, the hero, Guy Crouchback, goes and prays at the tomb of one of his ancestors who fought in the Crusades and hopes he can be a Crusader for Christ fighting in this new war against evil. And during the course of the book he realizes what is going on. Who are we making an alliance with to fight evil?

As Solzhenitsyn says about the West in *The Gulag Archipelago*, your mistake was: to fight evil, you joined with evil. And you cannot beat evil by making a compromise with evil. And in the third volume of Evelyn Waugh's trilogy, the sword of Stalin is presented to the English people as a gift from Stalin for all that the English people did to help the Communists gain victory, for turning over Eastern Europe to the Communists, which brought the terrible pain and suffering of those people for decades.

And then the Berlin Wall fell, and what do we find now? It was not the end of Communism. The only thing one can say for the Communists is they've not yet allowed this phony "gay marriage" nonsense. They

won't allow it. We've sunk lower! Betrayal.

And then, Heaven forbid, the official newspaper of the Vatican claims President Obama is a moderate and praises the first hundred days of his administration. Betrayal!

But we know that betrayal goes a long way back. I won't speak about Vatican II, I can't talk about it. I get too upset. But let me just say this: Is it an accident that the abortion explosion took place immediately after the New Mass was introduced? When the Sacrifice of the Altar became the community meal around the dinner table, when the un-bloody sacrifice became the fellowship of believers joining hands and singing Kumbaya, abortion exploded everywhere. And the devil had his moment. And if the un-bloody sacrifice was going to stop, he stepped in and began slaughtering the innocents as the world returned to worshipping Moloch. Legally! And everybody sat by. Because we are nice, we wrote letters to the newspaper and signed petitions.

Our Lord said, "Behold! I come not to bring peace but a sword." God bless the crusad-

ers. God bless them. Would we had such hearts. We didn't and it is done now. We're going to go through our agony, but what comes next? The Scourging at the Pillar. We had better prepare for physical suffering. What is the Scourging at the Pillar about? Our Lord, God Himself, was scourged at a pillar. That is physical pain. An extraordinary Passion. Be prepared for it.

We are all aware of the economic crisis. I won't speak about it now, but let me just say this: we live in a world that thinks food comes from supermarkets. It doesn't. When the system breaks down and the trucks don't run, then the shelves will be empty. There is famine coming. It's coming. We are not going to have food.

From the Crowning to Golgotha

And then what? The Crowning with Thorns. Christ the King mocked. Mocked! If they would mock God Himself, what will they do to you if you profess your faith as a believing Catholic? And for all of our love of Our Lord and love of Our Lady, we still have pride in our

hearts. We can never get rid of pride.

The great T.S. Eliot said in one of his last poems, "and the only wisdom we can hope to acquire is the wisdom of humility, humility is endless." We can never be too humble in the face of God, the Three-Person God, and Our Lady. Be ready to be mocked. Be ready to be humiliated. Be ready for it.

And then what? Carrying the Cross. Now we know, we've known from the time we were little, God sends His crosses. It's a mark of His love for us. Shakespeare, in one of his last plays, *Cymbeline*, has the god Jupiter — because he couldn't mention the real God, forbidden on the stage, the revolution was that far gone four hundred years ago — say to the hero "whom best I love, I cross, to make my gifts the more delayed, delighted." The gift is coming. The reward is coming, but it is delayed. But it's coming. We must carry the cross.

And where are we going to carry it to? Golgotha. So we must be prepared to imitate what the Sorrowful Mysteries contain: to agonize, suffer physical pain, be humiliated, spat on, cursed; we must lug

that cross until we think we can carry it no farther, and then be crucified on it.

Solzhenitsyn, throughout *The Gulag Archipelago*, keeps saying that when they come for you, when they knock on your door, you won't have learned anything. The book was a warning. Hardly anybody in the West read it. They were busy reading Tom Clancy and Stephen King.

One of my favorite economic commentators—talking about the American people seeing the government print \$14.1 trillion in new money, which means we are heading into hyper-inflation with simultaneous deflation and will need a wheelbarrow to take the cash to buy a loaf of bread, if there is any bread—said at the end of his last column, “Americans are as dumb as a box of rocks.” It's true, but get ready to have those rocks thrown at you while you carry the cross, and to be pelted with them while you are nailed up there.

The Two Thieves

Now we also know, if we meditate on the Crucifixion, that there were two thieves, two sinners, one on each side of Our Lord. St. Augustine, in one of his greatest lines

ever—I've held this close to my heart for many years—says, “Do not despair, one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume, one of the thieves was damned.” When the time comes and they nail you there, what will it be? Stoning like St. Stephen? Filled with arrows like St. Sebastian? Grilled literally like St. Lawrence? Nailed up on a cross, perhaps, like Our Lord Himself? Or maybe just like those great martyrs who perished in the gulag, in the concentration camps, Catholics who went before us. We must remember many Catholics died there.

We must remember it is our lot to suffer if we are going to imitate what is contained in the Sorrowful Mysteries. The question for us is: will we stop at some point, unable to go through the Sorrowful Mysteries? Will we not want to imitate Our Lord from the garden to Golgotha? And what we must do is see it all the way through, and even then, nailed up there, are we going to be the poor thief who says: “Remember me, Lord, when You come into Your Kingdom”? Or the other thief who mocks Him? Do not despair, one of the thieves was



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saved. Do not presume, one of the thieves was damned.

Our Lady tells us it is the time, the age of Her Rosary. Be prepared to imitate what those Mysteries contain. And perhaps, as we are going through that sorrow, that pain, that suffering, that misery, we can remember the joy of innocence, of the children, and offer up our suffer-

ing for the fifty million dead American aborted babies that never got to live. And any suffering we go through will be small compared to what they went through and what your Lord and Savior went through, and we should be joyful in our hearts that we have been allowed to imitate His suffering. God keep us strong and God bless us. **FC**