

Watch and pray!

“Watch and pray!” Jesus cries out. “Be on the alert! The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Could you not watch one hour?”

This cry of Jesus must go forth from this place as a prophetic word for the Charismatic Renewal. One hour! One hour to be with Jesus. One hour to strengthen the bonds of love, friendship and intimacy with the Lord. If we're not faithful to spending at least one hour a day watching and praying, how will we ever be able to endure what is to come? Our visit to Gethsemane is a call to intimacy with the sufferings of Jesus. In the early days of the Renewal, during moments of exuberant praise and joy, I would sense the Lord Jesus approach me, place his arm around me with great intimacy and say, “Get on your knees and pray. This joy is not for you. In order for others to know this joy, you must pay the price.” It wasn't a harsh word, but rather a sign of intimacy and friendship.

Brothers and sisters, if we want others to know the joy of the outpouring of the Spirit, we must get on our knees, uniting our sufferings to those of Jesus and be willing to pay the price.

Get Ready!

“In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for noble use, some for ignoble. If anyone purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work” (II Timothy 2:20-21)

On the Duquesne Weekend, when David Mangan and I told our advisor that we wanted to renew our sacrament of Confirmation, he asked us this question, “Are you ready?” The Lord still has much to do with and through us and he wants us to get ready. How?

First of all, by humility and purity of heart. If our hearts are not purified, we can find ourselves praying, “My name be hallowed. My kingdom come. My will be done.” It can be much more subtle than that for us in the Renewal, but when we speak more about our own ministries, our music, our communities, our movement than we do about the Lord Jesus Himself, then we are in trouble. We must be careful that our names and our titles don't become our chief preoccupation so that we expend more energy trying to preserve our own positions and advance our own causes than we spend lifting up the name of Jesus. I love this passage from Isaiah, “Your Name and your title are the desire of our souls. O Lord, it is you who have accomplished all that we have done” (Is. 26: 8).

Pope Francis has been warning about spiritual worldliness which affects not only the clergy but us in the laity as well. On Pentecost, he gently chided that instead of chanting his name, “Francis. Francis,” it would please him more to hear, “Jesus. Jesus.” A concrete way to grow in humility and purity of heart is to appropriate the blood of Jesus in the sacrament of reconciliation. Before I stand up to speak to others about the Lord, I always try to make a good confession and let the blood of Christ cleanse me. I'm so aware of how easy it is to spoil his work by my vanity and pride. Let his blood cleanse you when you receive him in the Eucharist.

Get ready to be useful for the master of the house.

Settle It Now!

St. Alphonsus Ligouri tells us that we should determine ahead of time to accept the manner of our death. "If we live, we live to the Lord and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's (Rm. 14:8). Settle it now.

Blessed John Paul II wrote "The believer who has seriously pondered his Christian vocation, including what Revelation has to say about the possibility of martyrdom, cannot exclude it from his own life's horizon." Does this mean that you and I are going to die martyrs? I don't know? Will some of us in the Renewal shed our blood for Christ? Possibly. But whether we shed our blood or not, every one of us will be called to be a martyr, a witness.

Years ago I wrote an article entitled, "Of Motherhood and Martyrdom", when I was bearing a child just before my 40th birthday. I encountered much hostility during that pregnancy from those who do not value human life. Today, to choose to be a mother is to choose to be a witness. Today, to choose to be married - one man and one woman for life - is to be a witness. You who are celibate, priests, religious: to choose to be faithful to your life's commitment is to be a witness.

We need to settle it now. Today would have been my mother's 90th birthday. She was living with us at the end of her life and she died in my arms. After they took her body away I knelt in our bedroom where she expired and kissed the floor. I knew that Jesus himself had been there. I knew that the Mother of Jesus had been there. Don't we ask her in every Hail Mary, "Pray for us now and at the hour of our death?" I remember it was a very solemn moment as I said to the Lord, "I don't know how much time I have left on this earth. It may be days, weeks, months, years, decades. But however long it may be, I want to live it all for you. Use me for your Kingdom."

Tremble!

"Tremble before him all the earth" (Ps. 96:9).

In this Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus said, "I am he," the guards fell to the ground like dead men. Tremble before him all the earth! On the Duquesne Weekend when I entered the chapel on February 18, 1967, as I knelt before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I trembled before his majesty. During this prophetic consultation there were moments when I trembled. The Lord says, "This is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Is.66:2). Trembling before the Lord refers to much more than a physical response; it's a spiritual response that acknowledges his holiness. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:30).

What is Jesus saying to us today? "My friends watch and pray. Get ready by purifying yourselves in my blood. Settle it now. Alive or dead, you belong to me. Be in awe of me. Tremble before me. Be afraid of touching my glory and spoiling the beauty of my work. Keep your head to the ground just like I did when I knelt in this Garden and said, "Not my will, but yours be done."

St. Philip Neri, used to teach his followers to pray this way, “Lord, keep your hand on my head this day or surely, this Judas will betray you.” Let us go forward with no illusions about ourselves. We are nothing, proud nothings and less than nothing. If the Lord in his great mercy has accomplished anything through us, our prayer groups, communities, ministries, publications, through ICCRS, through the many expressions of the Charismatic Renewal around the world, to him and to him alone belong all the glory, all the honor and all the praise. Amen.

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