



THE MISSION OF SAINT MARY MAGDALENE

Father Alan's Blog

For the Tenth Sunday After Trinity - August 8, 2021

"And as Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it."

St. Luke 19:41 (NIV)

On the wall of Mother Teresa's home for children in Calcutta is engraved the following poem she is purported to have written, entitled, "Do It Anyway":

*"People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered.
Forgive them anyway.*

*If you are kind,
people may accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.*

*If you are successful,
you will win some false friends and some true enemies.
Succeed anyway.*

*If you are honest and frank,
people may cheat you.
Be honest and frank anyway.*

*What you spend years building,
someone could destroy overnight.*
Build anyway.

*If you find serenity and happiness,
they may be jealous.*
Be happy anyway.

*The good you do today,
people will often forget tomorrow.*
Do good anyway.

*Give the world the best you have,
and it may never be enough.*
Give the best you've got anyway.

You see,
**in the final analysis it is between you and God;
it was never just between you and them anyway."**



In today's Gospel Lesson (St. Luke 19:41-46), we find Jesus in the process of making His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. Only a few short moments before, as He rode on a donkey's colt down from the Mount of Olives, Jesus had experienced crowds of jubilant people spreading their cloaks on the road in front of Him. And as Jesus passed by, the people, according to verse 38, were waving palm branches and praising God:

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Nevertheless, in verses 41-42 we read:

“As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes.’”

For God had indeed come to His “Chosen People” in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, but they failed to recognize Him, and, in the end, they rejected Him.



This is not the first – or only – time that we read in Holy Scripture about our Lord lamenting over the “Holy City”. In St. Luke 13:31-35, for example, Jesus was teaching the people in all the towns and villages of Perea, a region north of Judea through which Jesus was passing at the time as He made His final march toward Jerusalem. While standing on a hillside, Jesus receives a message from some Pharisees in the form of a death threat from King Herod Antipas of Perea. (No doubt, the Pharisees were trying to frighten Jesus into leaving the area and going south to Judea.) Undeterred, in response our Lord exclaims in verse 33:

“In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day – for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!”

One can imagine our Lord Jesus then physically turning toward His “Holy City” as He laments for its inhabitants in verse 34a:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you...”



Being a prophet does not necessarily mean being someone who can

tell the future; rather, being a prophet more accurately means being a “messenger of God” – whatever the cost. What’s more, if we were to read (in the Old Testament books that bear their names) about the callings of, perhaps, two of the more well-known of the biblical prophets (Jeremiah, in chapter 1 of his book, and Isaiah, in chapter 6 of his), we would readily see that:

- ☞ **the two of them felt completely inadequate for the task; and**
- ☞ **neither one actually wanted the job.**

Can anyone REALLY blame them? For being a prophet was a lonely job, and it meant having to go to the very centre of a difficult situation and deliver a hard line. Consequently, it made a person extremely “unpopular” with other people. For example:

- ☞ **it got one in trouble,**
- ☞ **or beaten up,**
- ☞ **or stoned,**
- ☞ **or thrown into a cistern to die of starvation,**
- ☞ **or kidnapped into exile,**
- ☞ **or, most often, it got one killed.**

(In Isaiah’s case, tradition has it that he was **sawn in half**.)

And what, exactly, was the difficult message that Isaiah and Jeremiah, and other courageous men like them, such as:

- † **Hosea,**
- † **And Amos,**
- † **And Micah,**
- † **And Zephaniah,**
- † **And Zechariah,**
- † **And Malachi,**

What, precisely, was the problematic message they were preaching

that caused God's Chosen People" to hate them so? Well, how about this for starters:

- ☞ **Love for the unloved; and**
- ☞ **Justice for the oppressed.**

Even Moses – a full 1,400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ – urged the nation of Israel (in Deuteronomy 10:18, and, again, in 27:18) to give special consideration to:

"... the persecuted, the slave, the widow, the orphan, the hungry, and the foreigner in their midst..."

The Israelites, however, did not want to hear it; instead, they blamed God for their current problems, and they swept their guilt under the carpet by getting rid of their accusers.



Not much has changed, either. For people – even those OUTSIDE the Church – have always had a real problem with being told that:

- ☞ **their behaviour is lacking; and**
- ☞ **they are falling woefully short of God's holy standards.**

And 2,000 years ago, Jesus knew that just such a difficult situation awaited Him in the so-called "Holy City" of Jerusalem because of the faithlessness and unrighteousness of her people. Jesus knew that it was a situation in which He would die; hence, His telling comment in St. Luke 13:33:

"No prophet can die outside Jerusalem."

And Jesus had long since set His face toward Jerusalem. And

although, in today's Gospel Lesson, Jesus was still five days removed from His ultimate destination on Calvary's cruel cross, He could readily see the need, and the pain, and the danger, that awaited Him in God's "Holy City".

So, how did Jesus respond?

- ✝ **First, Jesus lamented; and**
- ✝ **Secondly, He WEPT.**

Jesus agonized for His people to choose to follow Him, to have faith in His love for them - a Divine love called "agape" that could also help them reach out to all others. However, because of His love for His people, Jesus would not - **could not** - make that choice for them. For humanity had been created in His image, meaning that people had all been given free will and the freedom to make choices, and humanity was exercising its choice by turning away. And now, as verses 34-36 so poignantly bear witness, the reality of the fate that would befall His children was enough to break Jesus' heart:

"The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

(Jesus' prophecy against Jerusalem was fulfilled within only two generations in AD 70, when the Romans, under General Titus, used an earthen ramp to besiege the city, ultimately destroying it and its temple. Thus:

- ☞ **By failing to recognize God (that is, Jesus) in their midst, and**
- ☞ **By blaming Him for their current problems, and**
- ☞ **By turning away from Him, and**
- ☞ **By seeking to remove Him from their lives, and**
- ☞ **By nailing Him to a tree,**

The people had, unwittingly, condemned Jerusalem to destruction **from within** because their years of hedonistic faithlessness had led to:

- ☞ **self-reliance, and**
- ☞ **selfishness, and**
- ☞ **greed,**

Which, in turn, had resulted in widespread:

- ☞ **neglect, and**
- ☞ **poverty, and**
- ☞ **disease,**

And, eventually, would lead to the total ruin of their “Holy City”.)



And today, Jesus still weeps for His people. And many people still blame God for the situations in which they find themselves. And they still murder His prophets – if not physically, then spiritually, which is still obliterating the Spirit of the Sixth Commandment (Exodus 20:13):

“Thou shalt do no murder.”

All because modern day prophets – clergy and laity alike – still make the choice to be obedient to God’s calling by accepting the challenge to be the bearers of God’s loving message of repentance and salvation from sin to His people.

So, what, exactly, is “The Message”?

- 1. To hold up a “mirror” (if you will), and**
- 2. To ask people to have the courage to take a long, hard look at *themselves* – specifically at their thoughts, words, and deeds.**

(Understanding, of course, that the messenger holding the mirror has already spent a great deal of time struggling with his or her own “reflection”.) But, regardless of the message’s truth, many so-called “church people” do not like it, and they will do anything to stifle it.

To begin with, they try to “change the channel” by complaining about:

- ☞ **church laws,**
- ☞ **or doctrine,**
- ☞ **or liturgy,**
- ☞ **or the length of services and sermons,**
- ☞ **or the offering of Bible Studies,**
- ☞ **or the frequency of fellowship events.**

And if that does not work, these people will then seek to discredit and destroy God’s messengers and their ministries by making false allegations against them, such as accusing God’s messengers of:

- ☞ **lying, or**
- ☞ **doing a poor job or, even,**
- ☞ **stealing from the church coffers.**

Mean-spirited pew-warmers such as these literally relish the opportunity to talk behind the backs of God’s messengers and spread malicious stories about them, by gossiping among themselves (and among any others who choose to listen to them). In admonishing people like this, Jesus Himself declares (St. Luke 16:15):

“You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.”

And when all else fails, and God’s Message is still being proclaimed, and mean-spiritedness no longer holds sway within a worshipping community, in a last-ditch attempt at regaining “control”, such people resort to “voting” with:

- 👉 **their feet, or**
- 👉 **their wallets, or**
- 👉 **both,**

By refusing to support the ministry and by leaving the church and “taking their money elsewhere”.

People with this mind-set (or, more accurately, “heart set”), need to understand that their thoughts, words, and actions are working like **a cancer on the Body of Christ**. And those who possess such an unholy attitude need to seriously consider why they even entered a House of God in the first place. If they can honestly rationalize to themselves that they are endeavouring to be earnest seekers of God (and of His Kingdom on earth), then I would strongly suggest, for the sake of their eternal souls, that their behaviour change **immediately**. For as Jesus forewarned His 72 disciples when He commissioned them to be His messengers to the people (St. Luke 10:10-12):

“Whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’ I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.”

Furthermore, if any such people choose to enter a House of God to intentionally cause “mischief”, then they need to realize that they are merely causing short-term pain for others, but, in the long run, they are wreaking eternal havoc for themselves. Because they are not fighting against “flesh and blood” (that is, against men and women), but, rather, against the God of all creation Who sent them, as Jesus went on to assure His 72 messengers (St. Luke 10:16):

“Whoever listens to you listens to Me; whoever rejects you rejects Me; but whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.”

In short, therefore, I really do not give “a snowball’s chance in Hades” for such people’s chances.

What a pity – all this time, and talent, and energy, spent in fighting the will and the work of Almighty God, instead of choosing to be earnest seekers of Jesus Christ and learning how to become His faithful servants unto the world, one that is still full of those who are:

- 🕯️ **persecuted, or**
- 🕯️ **enslaved, or**
- 🕯️ **widowed, or**
- 🕯️ **orphaned, or**
- 🕯️ **seeking safe refuge; or**
- 🕯️ **hungry, or**
- 🕯️ **sick.**

(For instance, it is tragic beyond words to realize that in the short time it took to read this blog, more than 250 of the world’s children died because of malnutrition and disease.)



In St. Luke 13:35b Jesus was referring to the inhabitants of Jerusalem when He warned:

“You will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.’”

Well, it happened – just as He said it would – on that first Palm Sunday, as Jesus wept over the tragedy of a lost opportunity: that the people were being visited by their Saviour – God’s long-promised Messiah – but they did not realize it. Perhaps, they did not even care to. And as a result, instead of receiving Him, they **killed** Him.

Nonetheless, we will have another opportunity to “get it right”, because it will happen again, when, on “The Day of the Lord”, Jesus Christ returns to judge not only “the world” in general, but also the inhabitants of the “New Jerusalem”:

- † His “Body”,
- † His “Bride”,
- † His “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church”,

in particular.

However, whereas the Jews that assembled for the Passover nearly 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem missed the Divine opportunity to be saved from both earthly and eternal destruction, my earnest prayer is that, on the glorious day of Jesus Christ’s second coming, none of us will share the same fate.

Because we have truly been about the business of persevering in our daily attempts to “Do It Anyway”, by living, and proclaiming, and spreading God’s Message to our increasingly desperate and hurting world.

And then, our Lord Jesus will no longer weep for His people.



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