

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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Disciples not Consumers

THE HOST APOSTOLATE
WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG

14, GOATBECK TERRACE,
LANGLEY MOOR,
COUNTY DURHAM DH7 8JJ
thehostapostolate@gmail.com

It is often said that we live in a consumer society. This is usually to emphasise that we like to have the ability to buy anything that we desire, that we enjoy doing that and that it is a sign of achievement to be able to indulge in this activity as often as we like. We speak of ‘shopping (or retail) therapy’ as a means of cheering ourselves up if things are difficult for us. We think nothing of exchanging an item for something better whether it still works or not, simply because we want to, or because we want to be considered as fashionable or with the times. That is to speak nothing of thinking of those who simply cannot do so in many countries of the world. Recently I came across a very interesting comment which challenges this assumption...

The danger of loss of faith in God is not that one will believe in nothing, but rather that one will believe in anything.

Gilbert K Chesterton

Many times, in recent and past ‘Encouragements’ I have mentioned the worsening situation in the world on many counts. There are, of course, areas of hope and the coming Jubilee ‘*Pilgrims of Hope*’ calls us all as Christians to endure and to move forward without fear, there are areas in the world where there are great signs of hope as the Church expands and grows. Many of these are in places where there is serious threat to life and existence, and we can count on many martyrs. However, we live in a divided world and in many places, especially in the west, the church is not only losing hope but the numbers of people who truly are disciples wanes. Our churches are showing signs of a massive decrease in numbers of people who attend and even greater loss of those willing to participate fully in the life of the church, through prayer, helping to support and offer practical help. What I think is even sadder, is that many shake their heads and say that it is the sign of the times and that there is nothing that can be done. This fatalistic approach does nothing to engender courage and hope. Further, we are called to become not only passive

disciples, but to spread the faith and teach and encourage others. When was the last time that you mentioned things of God to someone in your family, parish, or workplace? When was the last time you prayed for the Church in your area and asked the Lord for help to make it grow and acknowledged the part you have to play, however small.?

It seems that we have become more like consumers. We take what the church has to offer in a passive way. We attend church on the required Sundays. We say a few prayers with little conviction. We offer alms when called to do so. And believe that ‘being kind’ is the summit of our call. We take what we personally agree with and like, and reject other parts which challenge us; rejecting the teaching of the church. We prefer not to inform ourselves and delve into Scripture as it does not give us instant gratification and it just may be too challenging. This not only robs us of a growth in faith, but it starts to make us consumers. *Thus, like consumers in the material sense we go to the next thing that takes our interest and, and the next, and so on, till there is nothing left.* Having arrived at that place we ‘jump ship’ and justify this quoting the decline in the numbers and interest, as well as the faults of the Church.

The fault then is shifted onto others and not our own heart.

The title of this Encouragement was acquired from a courageous Iranian woman who became a Christian at great personal cost to herself and her family, including arrest and persecution, finally having to flee. She sees clearly what is happening and not only pleads for her own country but the many who face persecution for their faith. She is a source of encouragement to people in the West to stay and grow in faith as the world is hungry for the Gospel.

‘Do you want Our Lord to give you graces? Visit Him often...’ St. John Bosco

There are many people who are finding Jesus and become fearless in their faith. We owe it to these, to new believers, to also grow in faith and to be able to support and teach as the need arises. Have we left this to those we consider fit to do this, our leaders, priests, and those we consider that have a special call? But we are all called to spread the Gospel. Yes, we can do this with the way we live, by our lives. Words that, however eloquent, do not go with our actions, will be of no value... But actions however good, that do not have, at their core a fundamental realisation of our mission and belief will also be simply the actions of a nice person but not a believer.

There are among us people whose love of God shines out to others. Their actions speak of the motive for their actions, as deeply rooted is the love of God in their eyes and lives. For them there is no distinction between Martha and Mary. Their lives are a prayer they do not just say prayers.

Early this month is the feast of Corpus Christi...The Body and Blood of Jesus. Instead of giving up, why not plead for the restoration of faith - both personal and community? One source of this the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. He understands our doubt and fears, our struggles and sense of failure and despondency... but if you cannot, for a variety of reasons, come to the Table of the Lord, try sitting quietly with him during exposition and plead



your case. If you cannot find the words to say, then just be still. Those who are well on their journey know too well the power of His Presence at such times. We have all experienced the emptiness that comes from not praying together or missing liturgical

celebrations during Covid. Many have not returned as a result. There may be more such times to come so I finish with these words given long before Covid....

‘**T**here are times of enduring bitter trials and persecutions. All manner of things will be sent to try you and My Holy Church. Can you swallow the pill of persecution?’

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And what will you do when it is impossible to adore Me in the Eucharist - when the Churches will be closed and the tabernacles empty and desecrated? Will your love for Me endure? Will you be able to make a spiritual bond with Me so strong that nothing will break the bond? You have already suffered the loss of frequent Adoration before Me in the Sacred Host. Adore Me in the Tabernacle. Then Adore me in your heart. This is the time of courageous endurance.’

Rosebuds (2nd Dec. 1999)

Halina Holman ©

Pope Francis

‘It is not possible to Love Christ but without the Church, to listen to Christ but not the Church, to belong to Christ but outside the Church, For the Church is herself God’s great family, which brings Christ to us.’

Rome 2015

If you say to Him sincerely, “Make me see!” you will certainly obtain what you desire, because He wishes nothing but your happiness. He has His hands full of graces, seeking someone to distribute them to; Alas no one will have them. . . .

Oh, indifference! Oh, ingratitude! My children, we are most unhappy that we do not understand these things! We shall understand them well one day; but it will then be too late!

St. Jean Marie Vianney

Feast Days in June

1st St. Justin

2nd Sunday, The Body and Blood of Christ

3rd St. Charles Lwanga and Companions

5th St. Boniface

6th St. Norbert

7th The Sacred Heart of Jesus

8th The Immaculate Heart of Mary

9th Tenth Sunday in Ord. Time

11th St. Barnabas, Apostle

13th St. Anthony of Padua

16th Eleventh Sunday in Ord. Time

20th St. Alban, First Martyr of England

21st St. Aloysius Gonzaga

22nd Ss. John Fisher and Thomas More

23rd Twelfth Sunday in Ord. Time

24th The Birth of St. John the Baptist

27th St. Cyril of Alexandria

28th St. Irenaeus

30th Sunday, St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles

