

HOM 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday 2023 A Jan 15

In one of his recent weekly blogs, Monsignor Charles Pope of the Washington DC Archdiocese, gave five reasons for why we need a Savior.

- 1) The first is because we tend to stray from God and even get separated from Him Who is the source of our being and of all that is good. Monsignor Pope cites the Prophet Isaiah as an example of this from the Old Testament. Speaking for the Lord in reference to God's Chosen People, Isaiah writes: "*Ah! Sinful nation, people laden with wickedness, evil race, corrupt children! They have forsaken the Lord, spurned the Holy One of Israel, apostasized!*" (1: 2-4)

Monsignor Pope uses the analogy of an electric fan to help us see what happened with the Israelite people ages ago, and what is happening today to what used to be a Christian culture in the West. When the fan is running and is then unplugged, its blades continue to turn and move the air...for awhile...until it stops. Today, our culture has disconnected from God, its power source for good, and many of the good things that were done when connected to God are continuing for awhile, but that is ending. Without connection to God, the good will stop and give way to what is not good.

Pope writes, for example, that "*Increasingly, we cannot even get a consensus on the most basic moral issues: that killing infants in the womb is wrong, that homosexual acts are disordered, that promiscuity is unhealthy for the body (individual person) and the culture.*"

So, we need a Savior, the monsignor contends, to reach out to us and draw us back to Himself, the source of goodness.

- 2) The second reason we need a Savior, writes Pope, is that we do not realize how desperate our situation is. Again, he quotes Isaiah who, speaking for the Lord to the Israelites, says: "*Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot to the head there is no sound spot: wound and welt and gaping gash, not drained or bandaged, or eased with salve.*" (1: 5-6)

An example of this total sickness today, is that transgenderism is promoted, even by some of the brightest, most educated people there are. When asked if she could define what a woman is – what makes a woman and woman in terms of e.g., chromosomes or anatomy -- the newest US Supreme Court Justice, who is a woman, could not give an answer. It's that bad. And, it's not just that bad, it's insane when nature, i.e., reality, is denied. It's evil when people reject nature's God and seek to step outside the universe God made into an imaginary, man-made universe – the metaverse. Yet, this is happening all around and we hardly notice it or its harmful consequences.

One writer describes it this way:

*The next wave of innovation and technology will allow individuals to immerse themselves in a world of their own creation....They will be capable of being whatever they want – be it on the moon, on top of buildings, or 'in a field of unicorns'. This (metaverse) platform can be inhabited by extraterrestrials, angels, demons, or anything following the fantasies involved. People will do superhuman things where acts will seemingly have no consequences. While it will not change what exists, it powerfully creates the lie that one's imaginings are more real than reality"*

That the best and the brightest among us wrongly try to ignore the nature God has given us in favor of an imaginary one of their own making is a clear example and convincing indication of how depraved things have become and how desperately we need a Savior.

- 3) The third reason we need a Savior, according to Monsignor Charles Pope, is that (*despite the recent blessed mass outpouring of prayers for the injured NFL player*) due to the now seemingly entrenched societal turning away from God, our beloved country – our cherished homeland -- is heading for ruin, like so many other great empires and powerful nations down through history that have fallen – or even like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah that were destroyed. And this will be the fate of the land we love unless healthy values, healthy families, a healthy culture, and a return to the Lord are restored.
- 4) The fourth reason we need a Savior, writes Monsignor Pope, is because our sacrifices – meaning our Masses – like the sacrifices of God’s Chosen people in the Old Testament -- have become disconnected from worshipping God and serving our neighbor. In the Old Testament, right up to the time of Jesus, God’s people were offering empty sacrifices to the Lord – *paying Him lip service while their hearts were far from Him* as Jesus said. Prophets like Isaiah, speaking for the Lord, had also admonished God’s People for not extending their worship of God to doing good works for their neighbor. “*Cease doing evil, learn to do good, make justice your aim, redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow,*” Isaiah exhorts the People, speaking for the Lord. (Isaiah 1: 10-19) In brief, Pope points out that today our liturgies in many cases glorify man rather than God and do not draw us into humble obedience of God as they should.

I would suggest further that most Catholics do not know or appreciate that the pinnacle of the Mass is the saving oblation of Jesus for the life of the world that is made present for us in the Mass so that we can participate in it. Yet, this is our faith and the teaching of the Church. In today’s Gospel reading, when John the Baptist points to Jesus saying: BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD, he is implicitly referring to the saving sacrifice of Jesus that is made present in the Mass.

John is thus implicitly pointing to the one acceptable sacrifice that is pleasing to the Father – Jesus’ self-offering unto the Cross of obedience and love – which is perfect obedience to the Father’s will and unsurpassable love for all people, seeking their true good, their salvation.

**This is the one sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world...to the extent that people join in Jesus’ saving oblation...and strive live this out day to day.** Let me repeat that: *The Mass makes present the one sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world to the extent that people join in Jesus’ saving oblation...and strive live this out day to day.* It is this saving sacrifice that was prefigured in the Old Testament by the Passover Lamb whose blood was applied to the door frames of the Israelites’ homes so that they would be spared the deaths of their first-borns, and be freed from oppressive slavery under the Pharaoh. Following God’s instructions given by Moses, the Israelites then ate the roasted flesh of that lamb, and later manna in the desert, both prefiguring the Eucharist by which we consummate our oneness with Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God.

That oneness with Jesus begins with Baptism. In pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God, John the Baptist also declares, according to what the Father made known to him, that He, Jesus, the Lamb of God, will baptize with the Holy Spirit, meaning that by His obedient life, death, and Resurrection, Jesus will pour out, to and through His Mystical Body, the Church, in the sacrament of Baptism, the grace of the Holy Spirit.

This fulfills what John the Evangelist recounts in the Prologue of his Gospel account that *any who accepted Jesus would be empowered to become children of God.* In other words, anyone who accepts Jesus and is baptized receives the Holy Spirit for the first time, thus washing away original sin and all

personal sins to that point, and uniting the person to Jesus as a member of His Mystical Body, the Church, and so making that person a child of God in oneness with God's only-begotten Son.

This baptismal oneness with Jesus is brought to fullness – to perfection -- through Holy Communion. In the sacrament of His Body and Blood it is consummated as a nuptial oneness with Jesus – in His self-offering to the Father and to us -- when we deliberately, freely, formally, and without reservation, reciprocally offer ourselves to and with Jesus to the Father unto the Cross of obedience and love, for the salvation of all the willing, beginning with our family and friends.

The Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, and also His Bride, thus becomes in the end, the Wife of the Lamb, as John the Evangelist states in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation (21: 9). (This is the only time that the Church, heretofore referred to implicitly and frequently as the Bride, is referred to the as “Wife” of the Lamb. She, the Church, in all her members, is at last, then, perfectly and forever one with Jesus, and distinctly who she is, in her oneness with Him in His saving sacrifice and His divine glory.

- 5) The fifth and last reason we need a Savior, as stated by Monsignor Pope, is that God desires everyone – all the willing -- to be saved...and so do we as His sons and daughters in Christ, especially those we hold dear. (Note the words of Isaiah in our first reading, again speaking for the Lord: *“It is too little for you to be a servant to Israel. I will make you a light to the gentiles that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”*)

And the only way this can be accomplished is by our oneness with the Savior Who lays down His life for the salvation of Man in the Sacrament of the Eucharist so that we and all the willing can join Him in this and be united with Him forever in His eternal self-offering to the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in praise, thanksgiving, and loving obedience. In the end, there is either oneness with Jesus, the Lamb of God, in the communion of life and love of the Most Holy Trinity -- and the eternal blessedness beyond imagining that goes with this -- or there is eternal desolation apart from God – what is called hell.

Brothers and sisters, if you believe that we all need a Savior, and that the only Savior is Jesus Christ – and not someone who is merely a powerful politician or an extraordinary philosopher, teacher, preacher, counselor, scientist, entrepreneur, or doctor, here are the words to pray silently and sincerely at every Holy Communion, striving to live them out in-between: I AM ALL YOURS O MOST LOVING JESUS THROUGH MARY YOUR MOTHER WITH THE HELP OF ST. JOSEPH.