

Love your
neighbor
as yourself

Jesus



I want to
accustom
all the
inhabitants
...to look on
me as their
brother

*Bl. Charles de
Foucauld*

September 2018

Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

I pray you are well! This year, I will be teaching the Confirmation CCD class at a local parish. This class is especially close to my heart because most of the students were in my 6th-grade CCD class, so it will be wonderful to be with them again. Please pray that we have an impactful year.

Due to the horrific and disgusting scandals that have been in the news, it has been difficult to write this newsletter. More rot and malice, especially in our bishops, is finally being dragged into the light, and it hurts to see how much suffering has been inflicted on the victims and on all who will lose faith because of scandal. Jesus Himself also suffers because of this, and it seems that the Church and her Head are covered in a miasma of corruption.

Yet, I am personally most ashamed when I take a long, hard look at myself. If I truly believe that, as St. Paul teaches, that the whole Body of Christ is wounded by sin and lifted by virtue, then I share in the Church's current woundedness. My infidelities, while not dragged into the light of the public forum, still harm us all.

The good news is that Jesus Christ conquered death and is risen, and has won for us the reward of eternal salvation, if only we would repent and believe in the Gospel. And I believe, at least for myself, that repentance is what is needed here for us all, from the Pope to the most hidden person. Any plan of accountability, reparation, or oversight without repentance is, at best, naïve; at worst, satanic. For without repentance, we cannot set out again on the path of Life, for we still have a heart of stone that refuses, at least to some degree, to love. And it is Love that we seek and are destined to dwell with for all eternity, and there can be no impurity, no stoniness of heart, in Heaven.

For myself in these upside-down times, I am taking St. Mary Magdalene as my model and patroness, for she knows both repentance and the Gospel better than most. May her prayers and example help us all, and may we all grow in fidelity and holiness despite the chaos and darkness that threatens our peace of heart.

May the peace and joy of the Holy Family of Nazareth be yours,

Matthew

Please send all
correspondence to:

Matthew Manint
325 Hiller Dr.
Biloxi, MS 39531



Prayers are needed and appreciated!
(no postal fee required)



Meditation

September 2018



St. John of the Cross, Francisco de Zurbarán

Recently, I met with my spiritual director and we were talking about the life of St. John of the Cross, who is one of the masters of the interior life – the pilgrimage of the soul as it stretches towards God through prayer and conversion of life. I had been struggling with allowing the troubling news of the Church and the widespread collapse of beauty, fidelity, and reverence in the Church to interfere with my interior life. It was incredibly difficult to set it all aside and pray.

With great patience, he heard me out and reached for a collection of St. John of the Cross's writings. Turning to the historical preface of the book, he read about how other Carmelite friars imprisoned John due to political influences and turmoil caused by the reforms of the Order that John and Teresa of Avila were spearheading. John spent nine months inside a dank cell with only a small glimpse of light, subject to the heat and the cold with only his Breviary to keep him company. His health deteriorated so badly that he knew he must escape or die. One night he made good his escape, and he and Teresa both went on to become saints and Doctors of the Church.

While he was in his cell, John composed some of the most exquisite poetry in all Spanish literature. It is not only aesthetically masterful, but is also arguably the greatest spiritual poetry outside of Sacred Scripture. John went on to write commentaries on his poetry that have served as guides on how to climb to the heights of the spiritual life.

“So,” my spiritual director said, “from an outward perspective, what was John of the Cross's environment like while he was in prison?”

“Well, he was starving, alone, suffering from the elements, and had lost all freedom.”

“And what about the inward perspective? What did he lack?”

“He didn’t lack anything, for he had God dwelling within him.”

We spoke about these things for a while longer, and I came to the realization that, in a way, the external troubles that were interfering with my prayer were like John’s cell. I certainly could not simply pretend they were not there or flee from them, but it was up to me as to whether I would allow them to bring me down or assist me in drawing nearer to God. The most difficult circumstances—imprisonment, starvation, mistreatment, isolation—were the very things that, arguably, brought John’s spiritual insights and poetry to such depth and perfection.

Amid the present sorrow and darkness, perhaps the answer is to ask God for the grace to allow the “cell” to transform our lives, turning its evil to a good purpose. For to paraphrase St. Teresa, if we have God, then we have all things, even should the very world dissolve away.