

Encouragement Encouragement

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RESPONSE...A CHALLENGE

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Dare you be a Christian...? These words may make you feel awkward or even dismissive. You may think that 'I am a Christian, no need to be daring'. You may feel that you observe the precepts, pray much, go to Church at the appointed times... are kind considerate, and generally able to call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ. You may even think that as you are 'Baptised' then of course you are a Christian. But is this really enough..? Of course, all the things mentioned form part of what being a Christian can be and should be.

It was at Antioch that the followers were first called Christians. The word Christ means the one 'chrismed', thus anointed. How very exact and accurate the title that was given is and was, for we are the anointed ones. Anointed by sacrament and grace we are bidden to take the Good News far and wide. We are redeemed people grace by belonging to the Body of Christ, a united people. One definition would be to say that we are called to be, a saint, a believer, a disciple and a lover. But how do we feel when we see these definitions how do we respond? Do we question the 'titles' or do we search deeply into our heart to see if they apply to us.

We live in very troubled times. Our world is full of disease and conflict. There are bombings in many countries, catastrophes either natural or manmade, civil unrest and religious intolerance. There are environmental issues which threaten our very existence. The world is divided by poverty and wealth, hunger and fill, education and a lack of it. Chins are stroked as to what to do about it and plans are drawn up to try to remedy the situations but though great efforts are made in many areas (reduction in child poverty globally, vaccination etc.) - things appear to be worsening.

There are billions of Christians in the world today. There are in fact 2.2 billion Christians in the world, by far the greatest religious group. Of these 1.2 billion are Catholic including Uniates and 800 million are Protestant (50.1% are Catholic, 36% Protestant, 11.9% Orthodox and 1.37% other denominations). That is clearly a huge number of believers who, if they had a mind to follow the Gospel with their lives, could bring about change and improvement. There is a saying that bad

things happen when good people do nothing. ("The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing", Edmund Burke).

In recent times in this country we have had many bombing incidents. These too have devastated whole communities in Europe and Asia and Africa. It is simply wonderful to see the response of people who not just donate money, though this is obviously important, but things of need and their time and effort to give support. One young woman interviewed recently touched my heart when asked why she was there (London fire...) and was her own family okay she replied, 'I had to be here, to do anything I can, I brought water, food blankets and all the clothes that I had... As for my family, I will check on

them when I have done this first'.... Heroic words indeed. There is indeed an increasing realisation that we are 'one family' and this can be seen in these situations that require charity and compassion. Time and time again people rally round at a time of catastrophe.

However, does it require a desperate sudden situation to make us react and act? Do our daily lives not require these small acts of charity and kindness? Our goodness lies in doing small things lovingly hidden and unannounced that no one knows about. Mother Teresa of Calcutta often use to say this. She of course like so many Christian founders set about improving situations in their own environs, often starting in a small way and the Lord Jesus has enabled the increase. But it is still left to the few to carry out these acts of mercy as a commitment and a life's journey...

There is one more way in which we can build the Kingdom of God and that is by **responding** to things that happen in such a way that they can be prevented from happening again and thus make for a more just and peaceful society. It is in in this area of commitment that the labourers are indeed few. Of course, this work may never find approval or reward. This area of work requires much risk taking and commitment. This type of work is mighty challenging and requires the kind of zeal that is shown by St Paul. It most certainly can lead to martyrdom. Whether this requires the proclamation of the Gospel directly as seen in Missionaries of any denomination or Social Action, it often marks the participants who carry the wounds of Jesus such as



rejection and abuse. Prophets were never welcome ... but we are called to be so by our Baptism. There are so many examples of these wonderful men and women who each in their own sphere have influenced and changed life for people for the better.

Some are better known than others for example Dorothy Day who founded the Catholic Worker Movement and worked for Racial Justice. There is Martin Luther King who did the same. Ven. Catherine (Katya) Doherty who set up 'Friendship Houses' as well as working for racial justice and then went on to found a movement and Apostolate, Madonna House with husband Eddie, introducing 'Poustinia (a place of prayer)' to the West. Sister Helen Prejean, who is an advocate against the death sentence. Sr. Thea Bowman who led the fight against discrimination from her wheel chair. There are many priest and bishops who have taken up this mantle or added their name to church causes or like Bl. Bishop Oscar Romero were martyred for this cause. From his Cathedral pulpit Archbishop Romero became the voice of the voiceless poor. There, in a society of cover-up and lies, he spoke the truth of what was happening in the countryside; he denounced the killings, the torture. There are many more such. There are several Church documents on social justice starting with Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (Capital and Labour) in 1891, followed in more recent times by many more issued by all the recent Popes.

So next time somethings happens that requires compassion, love and care... *do not pass by*. Give, if that is what is required, pray constantly for those who are involved, learn more about the situation but ask yourself can I change things in this area of **challenge** in any way? It may be something very small like a children's playground or getting people to speak together who are drawn apart. It may be writing to MPs or contacting others of like mind to change the status quo.

Remember that Jesus challenged the establishment... He had no time for hypocrisy. Always start with yourself. The Kingdom of God is built by little people... yes, you and me....
Halina Holman

Reflection

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in Heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted.

(Matthew 5: 11)

Papal Prayer for July:

That our brothers and sisters who have strayed from the Faith, through our prayer and witness, and witness to the Gospels, may rediscover the merciful closeness of the Lord and the beauty of Christian life.

Pope Francis

'Read in this light, the prophetic text leads to one conclusion: we need knowledge, we need truth, because without these we cannot stand firm, we cannot move forward. Faith without truth does not save, it does not provide a sure footing. It remains a beautiful story, the projection of our deep yearning for happiness, something capable of satisfying us to the extent that we are willing to deceive ourselves. Either that, or it is reduced to a lofty sentiment which brings consolation and cheer, yet remains prey to the vagaries of our spirit and the changing seasons, incapable of sustaining a steady journey through life. If such were faith, King Ahaz would be right not to stake his life and the security of his kingdom on a feeling. But precisely because of its intrinsic link to truth, faith is instead able to offer a new light, superior to the king's calculations, for it sees further into the distance and takes into account the hand of God, who remains faithful to his covenant and his promises.'
Lumen Fidei 29th June 2013

Constitution on the Laity

In the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission. Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world.. .

The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head; incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself. They are consecrated for the royal priesthood and the holy people not only that they may offer spiritual sacrifices in everything they do but also that they may witness to Christ throughout the world. The sacraments, however, especially the most holy Eucharist, communicate and nourish that charity which is the soul of the entire apostolate. Vatican Council 1965

Feasts in July

1st St. Oliver Plunket, 2nd St. Thomas, Apostle
4th St. Elizabeth of Portugal, 6th St. Maria Goretti
11th St. Benedict, Patron of Europe
12th St. John Jones, 14th Camillus de Lellis
15th St. Bonaventure
19th St. John Plessington
21st St. Lawrence of Brindisi
22nd St. Mary Magdelene
24th St. Charbel Makhlouf
25th St. James, Apostle
26th Ss. Joachim and Anna, Parents of Our Lady
29th St. Martha, 31st St. Ignatius of Loyola

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