

Catholics: Now is the Time for Repentance

In today's Gospel (Mk. 9: 2-10), Elijah and Moses, now Saints in heaven, are speaking to Jesus in a vision on earth (Mk. 9: 2-10). Two Saints who are already in heaven are communicating with Jesus. This is one of the reasons why the Church believes in the communion of the Saints in heaven. Christians do communicate with the Saints in heaven. It begins with Jesus. They (the Saints) now intercede for us, before Jesus in heaven. Luke's Gospel (9: 28-36), shows Moses and Elijah are speaking to Jesus and they are telling him about his death that will take place in Jerusalem. This is Jesus, who is God, depending on two Saints in heaven to inform him of his impending death. What do you think they are telling Jesus about his death?

I believe they are encouraging Jesus! Giving him strength and courage to go through the sacrifice upon the cross; because this is the only way humanity and the world can be saved. Now if Jesus can depend on the wisdom of these Saints already in heaven, what about you and I who are sinners? Those of us who care for the elderly at the time of death, will remember that a few days before our loved ones pass from this world, they sometimes call the names of their relatives who have already died. Locally we say they are coming to get them....smile. There are some similarities with this experience and Jesus' encounter with these two Saints - Moses and Elijah.

Consequently, we can pray and celebrate Masses for our deceased brothers and sisters so that they may rest in perfect peace with Jesus Christ - 2 Mac. 38-46. The Book of Maccabees reminds us that a collection was taken for the dead soldiers and sent to Jerusalem, so that prayers could be said to forgive the dead soldiers of their sins. They did this because they believed their dead soldiers would rise again at the appointed time. They believed in a splendid reward for those who died as believers.

During these 40 days of holiness and sacredness, let us remember our deceased friends and relatives in prayer, and have Masses said on their behalf. It is very important - in Jesus - to pray for the living and the dead. Both the living and the dead exist in Jesus. Saint Paul reminds us that either in life or in death, we belong to the Lord. The Holy Mass is the most powerful form of prayer. According to the late Pope Saint John Paul II, the Mass is the source and summit of our Christian life. Let us visit our priest and have Masses said on behalf of our deceased brothers and sisters, that they will continue to be purified; that those who are still in purgatory (1 Cor. 3: 12-15) will be delivered and enter the beatific vision of Jesus Christ - the saviour of the world.

All this is possible under the presumption that at the time of death, we are in a state of grace in God's love. Should we be in a state of mortal sin, and not repent in the sacrament of Confession, before the point of death, then, our prayers are no longer effective to help the deceased person. Our prayers can do nothing for someone who dies in a state of mortal (deadly sins). Mortal sin is a wilful and conscious rejection of God's infinite love for us. How do we know if we are in this state? There are three conditions necessary to commit a mortal or deadly sin. The first is to go against or disobey one of the Ten Commandments. The second is to be *aware* of them and yet ignoring them. The third is to willingly decide to disobey the commandments. In other words, to know something is wrong and still do it. Whenever we do this, we are in deadly territory. We remove ourselves from God's infinite love. God bathes us in His unconditional love. We are the ones, who walk away from this love. To commit a venial sin is to act in a way that is not charitable, or not to help someone who is in need.

At this point, God makes the final decision. According to the Teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC articles 1083,1087), there is a Hell. If we wilfully and persistently reject God's love, we will go there. God is love. God condemns no one. We condemn ourselves by rejecting totally Jesus' dying love for us. Therefore, it is very critical for us to receive the Sacrament of Confession regularly; to be purified in the love of Jesus. The fear of Hell should not be the main motive for experiencing Jesus' warm embrace in the Sacrament of healing/confession. Our main reason for the Sacrament is to experience Jesus' infinite and unconditional love for us! It is this love that moves us to experience Jesus in the Sacrament and not fear! It is only in the Sacrament of Confession that Jesus' blood washes away our mortal sins. It is very important to ensure that before our loved ones leave us, they do get the opportunity for a Priest to administer the Last Sacrament (Sacrament of extreme unction - Viaticum). Now is the time for repentance in the love of Jesus!

Everything is possible in God. We cannot underestimate the power of Jesus Christ. He is the only person who has defeated death! He rolled the stone away..... Amen! (Since I am writing this article in the season of Lent we cannot acclaim Alleluia!)

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