

Second Sunday in Advent, 2008

“What things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope.”

(Rom. 15:4)

In this year of St Paul we are celebrating the “living word of God”, since it was Paul who was chosen by Christ to preach His name and declare His teaching amongst us.

Our Holy Father has published a most beautiful prayer to St Paul for all of us to use in this Holy Year. Everything that the Pope teaches and publishes is available to all those who wish to obtain the relevant documents. Perhaps it would be useful to refer to what is called the “Crisis of Obedience” — this is not something new; as far back as 1956, Pope Pius XII issued an apostolic letter advising all Pastors to see that the faithful were able to say and to sing their own parts of the Mass in Latin. This was at the time of changes in the Holy Week ceremonies which required the faithful to join the celebrant in the singing of the *Pater Noster*. At every Wednesday audience, our Holy Father leads those present in the singing of this prayer (the words being provided in Latin on the back of the tickets)



But let us get back to St Paul. After the words I quoted at the beginning, this great Apostle goes on to justify his use of the Scripture by the general principle that everything in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and particularly everything therein that refers to Christ and His sufferings, is for our instruction. The message of the Old Testament was intended ultimately for believers in Christ, and the coming of Christ in the flesh has made its meaning plain in myriad passages where the ancient Jews had failed to understand it. In innumerable narratives and sayings the Old Testament, when understood in the light of the Incarnation, shows the value of patient endurance and gives a firm groundwork for hope; indeed God is called the God of peace and consolation. And so the Apostle prays that God may give the Romans the grace of perfect harmony of thought and sentiment — so that all may mould themselves on Christ and conform their conduct to His will.¹ The will of Christ is that all should unite in praising God, His Father, with one heart and one soul.

Here we have St Paul's insistence on unity. In the Church of Christ there is no room for discords and feuds. Divisions and quarreling imply denial and rejection of the Spirit of Christ. In a time like the present, when the Church is criticised and

¹ Phil:2

threatened on so many sides, there is urgent need of harmony and mutual forbearance among Catholics. Dissensions among ourselves and lack of loyalty and obedience to our spiritual Shepherd and Guide are noted and rejoiced over by the enemies of the Church — who seem not to notice the good things that happen in the Church.

On January 2nd 1991, Mother Teresa of Calcutta appealed to President Bush and President Saddam Hussein to avoid going to war. It was a wonderful letter of Christian teaching and practical consideration of all the effects of war; but it went unheeded and unreported by the news media. In June 1991, in the midst of all the dangers of that conflict, that little nun opened a house in Bagdad for the homeless and the suffering, and sent letters home describing the work of her Sisters; but the media ignored it.

And the Church is reaching out to all peoples. Last week there was a meeting of international scientists in the Vatican, televised and reported by the global Catholic network EWTN. In the front row was the famous Professor Stephen Hawking — he had attended to listen. After the Pope's lengthy address, the Holy Father went directly to Professor Hawking's wheel-chair, placed his hand on the good man's head, and remained some time in conversation. We must be prayerfully alive to what is happening in the Church; and we must seize every opportunity the church offers for the power of union in prayer — as for instance these Holy Years, the Year of the Immaculate Conception and the Year of St. Paul, celebrating the Living Word of God.

Pope Benedict tells us that “Mary's greatness consist in the fact that she wants to magnify God, not herself ... She knows that she will only contribute to the salvation of the world if, rather than carrying out her own projects, she places herself completely at the disposal of God's initiatives. Mary is a woman of hope: only because she believes in God's promises.” There is the way for us to be one with Christ; to look out upon the world and mankind as He did, and as His Mother did from the Cross of suffering according to God's way of arranging things. We must pray our Rosary humbly; begging our blessed Mother to obtain for us the grace to look upon her divine Son through her eyes, so that we may be one in mind and heart with Him, and His Mother.

Mother Teresa's letter to Presidents Saddam Hussein and George H Bush, January 2nd 1991, before the first Iraq War

Dear President George Bush and President Saddam Hussein,

I come to you with tears in my eyes and God's love in my heart to plead to you for the poor and those who will become poor if the war that we all dread and fear happens. I beg you with my whole heart to work for, to labour for God's peace and to be reconciled with one another.



You both have your cases to make and your people to care for but first please listen to the One who came into the world to teach us peace. You have the power and the strength to destroy God's presence and image, His men, His

women, and His children. Please listen to the will of God. God has created us to be loved by His love and not to be destroyed by our hatred.

In the short terms there may be winners and losers in this war that we all dread, but that never can, nor never will justify the suffering, pain and loss of life that your weapons will cause.

I come to you in the name of God, the God that we all love and share, to beg for the innocent ones, our poor of the world and those who will become poor because of war. They are the ones who will suffer most because they have no means of escape. I plead on bended knee for them. They will suffer and when they do, we will be the ones who are guilty for not having done all in our power to protect and love them. I plead with you for those who will be left orphaned, widowed and alone because their parents, husbands, brothers and children have been killed. *I beg you please save them.* I beg for those who will be left with disability and disfigurement. They are God's children. I beg for those who will be left with no home, no food and no love. Please think of them as being your children. Finally I plead for those who will have the most precious thing God can give us, life, taken away from them. I beg you to save our brothers and sisters, yours and ours, because they are given to us by God to love and cherish. It is not for us to destroy what God has given to us. Please, please let your mind and will become the mind and will of God. You have the power to bring war into the world or to build peace. PLEASE CHOOSE THE WAY OF PEACE.

I, my sisters and our poor are praying for you so much. The whole world is praying that you will open your hearts in love to God. You may win the war but what will the cost be on people who are broken, disabled and lost.

I appeal to you — to your love, your love of God and your fellow men. In the name of God and in the name of those you will make poor, do not destroy life and peace. Let love and peace triumph and your names be remembered for the good you have done, the joy you have spread and the love you have shared.

Please pray for me and my sisters as we try to love and serve the poor because they belong to God and are loved in His eyes, as we in our poor way are praying for you. We pray that you will love and nourish what God has so lovingly entrusted into your care.

May God bless you now and always.

*God bless you,
M Teresa, MC*

Later that year, Mother Teresa opened a home for handicapped children in Baghdad and began a mobile clinic. On June 23rd 1991, she wrote the following.

My dearest children all over the world, every one of you Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, Co-workers and Lay Missionaries of Charity ...

It is one real living miracle of God's tender love that we were allowed by the Government of Iraq to come in and establish the Missionaries of Charity convent in the heart of the city of Baghdad in the house they have given us ...

The fruit of the war is so terrible. One cannot understand how any human being can do that to one another — and for what? Let us pray that our works of love bring peace, unity and joy.

For the present there is a great shortage of food & medicine and as hundreds & hundreds of houses have been destroyed, I do not know how long it will take to rebuild — so let us include Iraq in our daily prayer ...

Looking at the people — the Old Testament becomes so alive. Tomorrow we go to see *Babylon*. Who ever thought Missionaries of Charity will come to these places — to proclaim the Works of God through works of love? I never thought that our presence would give so much joy to thousands of people. So much suffering everywhere ...

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