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A Blessing, a Curse ... and a Choice

"If you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when his glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed: for that which is of the honor, glory, and power of God, and that which is his Spirit, rests upon you."

1 Peter 4.13-14



"If you be reproached for the name of Christ ..."

When was the last time that you were, that I was, reproached, rebuffed, censured, suffered, for the name of Christ?

In order to suffer for it, you must be identified with it. And if you are identified with the name of Christ, you are identified with His Holy Body the Church since – despite the protestations of those who have never read Scripture but are perfectly prepared to make competent pronouncements on it – the two are inseparable. Right? Christ, the Head of the Church, and the Church His Body. Hence, when Jesus threw St. Paul down from his horse on his way to Damascus to persecute the Church, Jesus asked, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ... I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. (Acts 9.4-5).

So ... when was the last time we were persecuted for being part of His Church?

Until fairly recently, the most likely source of persecution and suffering for the sake of the Name probably came to you from ... the Church!

If you suffered, very likely it was not the consequence of *departing* from Church teaching ... but for *holding to it*. Increasingly the Church became cozy with the world, and largely it was that segment of the world that was socially connected and "socially correct" on largely abhorrent issues, the world as "progressive" (unconstrained, uninhibited), "open" (unprincipled), and intolerant of intolerance ...

If it was in vogue, it found a niche in the Church, however inimical it was to the Church. The one remaining mortal sin, fidelity to authentic Church teaching, was systematically rooted out in seminaries and schools of theology – in Catholic colleges at large – and the remaining adherents, as much as possible, stamped out as the last vestiges of the contagion of Christ and the scandal of objective morality.

The once persecuted, became the persecutor, predated not another's fold, but its own.

It is a perverse paradox that a Catholic faithful to the Magisterium of the Church is more likely to be tolerated by non-Catholics and non-believers ... than by fellow "Catholics", especially those in any position of responsibility within the Church (stipend or salary included) and in the vanguard, not of spiritual, but of social "progress" within it, particularly in the area of sexual ethics and moral theology.

Ask yourself this: when was the last time you were reproached for your ... accommodating views on abortion, contraception, gay marriage, advocating women's ordination, pornography as a privacy issue, obscenity as free speech? And who reproached you?

The answer is brief: respectively, never and no one.

Say it is not so.

It is far more likely that it was a Priest, a "Sister", a Deacon, a theologian, a teacher at a Catholic college, even a parish councilor, who scathingly reproached you for your "intolerance", your "outdated thinking", and your "blind" fidelity to the teachings of the Church. You were marginalized as an anachronism, a by-product of a time gone by who lacks the perspicacity to recognize that such fidelity is defunct.

Hmmm ...

Some will, indeed, do, receive the blessing St. Peter promises in today's reading. I do not think that he would be surprised at the source of this inverted rancor ... after all, Christ promised that ones most vituperous enemies would be within one's own House. I do, however, think that he would be surprised, if only in the way of contrast, by the tolerance of the world without toward those not tolerated within.

Without, within, it matters not. The promise still holds: "If they hate you, know that they hated me before they hated you."

Do you still seek God's blessing? Will you pay that price?

Inevitably you must choose: either the benediction of the world or the blessing of God. The one *will* cost you the other – despite the carefully nuanced pretensions and long-cherished illusions of many.



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