



Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

A Dark and Deadly Belief

GUILT & SHAME

Habiliments of the dead

“I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.” (Isaiah 42.6-7)

Blessed words! Hope beyond measure! *Listen ...*

“to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.”

How many of us live in the tomb from which Christ called Lazarus!

Bound by our fears, our shame, all the sins that we have spun around us like winding

cloths upon the dead, binding us to the point of paralysis, throttling our voices, covering our eyes, smothering us to life — *we are as the living dead.*

The mess we have made of our lives! The sins of which we are guilty! The shame that burns on our faces! We dare not approach the exit from the tomb, dare not venture out into the light, but like leprous dead we tie the cords around us more tightly with every passing year ...

Prisoners of our Guilt and Shame

Is there a fate worse than this? A greater mutilation? A death more terrible? To die before we die? *To imprison ourselves in our guilt when God Himself calls us out?* The light, we fear, will do more than blind us who are so accustomed to darkness and death — it will *reveal* us — *uncover* all our shame, our guilt, our lies, our deceit, *our sin!*

Only this long-held and deadly belief is worse than the living death we have chosen! It is *this* pain, this *mistaken* anticipation of *greater* pain still, that keeps the rock across the exit of our tombs!

But what has God told us?

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow.”

God has seen your sorrow! You are forgiven! **Forgiven!** It is past, done, forgotten, erased. *They are no more!* ... *“Behold, I make all things new!”* (Apocalypse 21.5)

We who live in the dungeons that we have carved out of the guilt and sin in our lives; we who dwell in a darkness that knows no light because it knows no forgiveness — must begin to understand that the Light has come! It is Christ Himself! And He bids us come forth! He calls us to leave the death we have chosen, to sunder the cables of sin that stake our hearts to an unforgiveness that is only our own ... not Christ's! To throw off the habiliments ... habiliments of the dead that have no place upon the living.

Yes, you were once dead in sin — but no more! If the Son of Man sets you free, you

are free indeed! If He forgives, who can condemn? If He remembers no more, who will recall what is no more?

Do not look at men! Do not look at those surrounding the valley of death in which you have set your tomb — fix your eyes upon Him Who stands in the midst of it — at the very gate of your tomb ... and Who calls you out! He sets you free! When you emerge, all the burial clothes that you have wound so tightly around yourself will fall to your feet ... and you will step out, and know Life — for Christ Himself calls you forth from the dead!

There are two deaths. One is holy and one is not

There are those who, for the sake of God, die to themselves for the Kingdom, while yet alive, and *live*... these are the holy.

And there are those who, for the sake of men, die before they die, never knowing life, and while yet alive are *dead*. This is the ugliness of sin that mutilates us and brings corruption even to living flesh!

Christ calls you! ... both from that death before you die ... and to that death before you die.

He calls you to be free from *all* fear, for indeed:

“If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.” (St. John 8.36)

Do not worry, then, if you are found naked when the shroud falls to the ground: you will be clothed ... in glory; the glory of Jesus Christ Himself.

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