

# SUNDAY MESSENGER



*Repent therefore, and turn back,  
that your sins may be blotted out.  
(Acts 3:19)*

## Now is the Time for Turning

It was love at first sight. He was rich, handsome, and popular. Mary was flattered when he asked her to go out with him. While in his arms, she heard him whispering to her ears: 'with me you will lack nothing'. In a few months, they were married and, then, his true nature came out. He was a control freak and abuser. Mary had to cut all her relationships. He did not allow to socialize with her friends and demanded that she stop her regular visits to her relatives. If she tried to object, his fist made it clear who was the master in the house. Even though his was turning her life into hell, Mary could not envision a life without him, neither would he let her go.

### **Come to Your Senses**

Peter in his sermon confronted the audience with their sin: "you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life" (Acts 3:14-15). Paradoxically, they were not aware of what they were doing (Lk 23:14) and acted in ignorance (Acts 3:18). And here lies the terrible power of sin. It either inflates us with ego bigger than the Himalayas or makes us so passive that we let others decide what is best for us. In both cases, without a qualm of conscience, we do or allow others to do harmful and destructive things.

Jesus said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

(Luke 24:44-47)

Paul reminds us: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it" (1 Cor 9:24). Yet, sin lets us miss the mark and so not to share in the prize of victory. Without his feet being washed by the Lord, Peter would not have a share with Jesus (John 13:8). But, that is precisely what sin does to us. It deprives us of this share. When Judas sold his Teacher, he wandered from the path of uprightness and honor. His name will forever be associated with the most revolting act of sinfulness.

A man comes to confession and says: 'I haven't killed anybody, I haven't stolen anything, and I do not remember any other sins'. The priest asks: 'then, what did you come here for?'

Our world has always refused to accept sin as the root cause of our problems. 'To err is human' and so we keep flirting with sin. Yet, by trivializing it, we shut ourselves out from the message of the Gospel. "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). This call is for our good. When, doctors order us to stop drinking, smoking and do regular exercises, we do not object. Why, then, so many question God's call to a change of life? Let us stop fooling ourselves. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

### **In Christ's Authority**

Today we hear "that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). The Greek word translated as 'forgiveness' does not only mean pardon of sins but also release from bondage or imprisonment. The phrase "forgiveness of sins" can be translated as "release from bondage of sins".

John is an extremely nice guy, but when he gets drunk he turns violent. Alcohol has imprisoned him for years but he does not want to acknowledge it. On the other hand, Mark - also an alcoholic - has not touched any drink since 2005. That year he turned to Jesus in a desperate plea to save him and his family from disintegration. Mark came to his senses and realized that only God could help him, and he was right. At the bidding of the Lord that powerful addiction left his life.

While sending us to all nations, Jesus assures us that "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" Lord (Matt 28:18). Relying on Christ's authority, the disciples performed marvelous deeds. Peter and John healed a crippled man with one sentence: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6), and Paul released a female slave from the grip of an evil spirit saying: "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" (Acts 16:18).

We can come to our senses and realize that life in bondage to sin leads to misery, but we have no power to set ourselves free. Sin will not let us go. It has to be forced to do that and the only one who has the authority over it is Christ alone.

### **Conclusion**

On Friday, September 11, 1998, President Bill Clinton, delivered his famous speech, "I have sinned". He humbled himself, acknowledged his improper physical relationship with a 24-year-old Monica Lewinsky, and asked God, his family, and the people for forgiveness. He ended his speech with these words:

*I ask you to share my prayer that God will search me and know my heart, try me and know my anxious thoughts, see if there is any hurtfulness in me, and lead me toward the life everlasting. I ask that God give me a clean heart, let me walk by faith and not sight.*

Now is the time for turning. Let us hear the call of Peter to repentance and turn back to a holy way of living. Let us firmly believe in the authority of Christ who alone can blot out all our sins and raise us up to new life.

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*May God bless all of us*