

Fear at the End

When we are born, there is a great deal of excitement. A new life has entered the world, and a journey has begun. At the end of life, there is sadness and fear of the unknown. Actually, we look at life as being on a ship. When the ship leaves the dock, horns are blasting, bands are playing, and people are waving. When the ship arrives, people are sad after having fun, food, and making new friends. But, we have it backward. When a ship leaves the dock, it is heading out to sea. It is heading out into dangerous waters. In the book of Genesis, at the beginning of creation, we have the separation of the waters on the first two verses: "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth and the earth was without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters." Without form or shape is the biblical way of describing chaos. Creation brought order out of chaos. Yet, chaos did remain in the world. Chaos was found in the water.

In Matthew's chapter 14, we have another story of our Lord mastering chaos. Once, He stilled the waters, which made the apostles note that the wind and sea obey Him. In this story, He walks upon the water. Peter, filled with faith and awe, gets out of the boat, and starts walking to Jesus. Peter was walking on water! He then noticed what he was doing and began to sink. In the beginning, his focus was on Jesus, and then he turned away from Jesus to focus on himself and then is when he started falling into chaos, and he panicked. When Christ reached out to him, his focus on Christ returned, and he was able to get into the boat.

Returning to the cruise ship, there should be all the partying when it returns because it arrived back safely. The same should be true for us. When we are born, we are heading out into chaos. The Church immerses us into that chaos in the mystery of Baptism. In the early Roman Church, Baptisms were performed in Roman baths because many of them had artwork dragons at the bottom. This was the last chance that the serpent of the Garden of Eden could get them. The newly-baptized died in their natural state and were raised out of the chaos in a supernatural state. They were then clothed in their resurrection garment. They could now go into the world as one who has "put on the person of Christ." This transformation is what we celebrate in the three Mysteries of Initiation.

Seventy times in the New Testament, we are told not to fear. Three Hundred Sixty-five times, we are advised not to worry. This is where my work comes in. I work in hospice with people who are dying. This past Friday, I met with two members of our Church who are dying, both will probably be long gone when this is published. One is worried that he will get into heaven or whatever is there if there is a there there. Eighty years of going to Liturgy and he was not convinced of what is to come. He is being forced out of the boat into chaos and not seeing Jesus standing over the chaos. He is scared of death and Hell. When asked how he was doing, the other responded that he was good because he

woke up on this side of the grass. I then asked "if you didn't wake up this morning, where would you be?" He said "in heaven". Then I responded, "and you said this was the good side." He commented that he never thought of it that way. We went on to discuss death. He told me that he is forced to accept it. But, it was not the medicine that put death in front of me, but Jesus and he accepts Jesus.

Both of these men had committed serious sins in their past. Both had gone to confession. It was the second that believed in the power to forgive sins by Christ. In the words of absolution, "May Christ our true God ... forgive."

The second man had faith in Christ and still focused on Christ amid chaos. The first man was like Peter. He stepped into chaos and then looked at himself and started sinking into the chaos, which frightened him.

To this second man, who spoke of his loving mother, I asked if there was anything he could do that would make his mother stop loving him. He said "No". God is like your mother. God will always love you. God is like the waiting father in the story of the Prodigal Son, in love waiting for you to return.

This is where this story gets interesting. The question is raised. Does God love everyone? The Hebrew Scriptures have the story of Elijah telling the pagan priests that their gods may not accept their offerings because they are sleeping. To many people, even today, they feel that God is not paying attention to them, so God is slumbering, and if they die, they are damned. Elijah assures the Jews, and us, that our God is always aware of all His people. We confuse God's love with human love, even that of mothers. Human love has a beginning and can have an ending. People fall out of love. Some people love a whole lifetime, and we think of how fortunate they were. People spend significant portions of their life looking for love. The Hallmark Channel is successful because its audience is looking for love, and the movies give them hope that someone is out there for them and people who have the love which just needs a romantic kick, or those whose spouse has passed, like the memories that are sparked.

It is the Church as the Bride of Christ (see Ephesians 5:25-32). God is faithful in His relationship, but the bride (The Jews and, by extension, the Church) is not. (See Hosea). Christ and His Church are in a conjugal relationship. As these were found in the Old Testament, they are seen as a familial relationship as St Paul described by using the term "love". St John tells us that God so loved that He sent His only-begotten Son. This Son not only loves the Church but was willing to be sacrificed on the Cross for her.

What causes some people to have problems with this when dying, is that they say that God loves the Church, but they are not Church. They are sinners who have left the Church, so are outside of God's love and are going to Hell. They forget the Prodigal Son, Hosea, and Jesus' statement (John 12:32) "when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to Myself." The death and resurrection of Christ is not a one-time event but a universal event. As the priest elevates the Body and Blood of Christ and says,





"Holy Things for the Holy," all people are raised up with Christ. We forget that we are Holy. All have sinned. All have fallen short (Romans 3:23.). Jesus died and rose for all humanity. As we read in I Timothy 3:10: "because we have set our hope on the living God, Who is the savior of all, especially of those who believe." As Peter stepped out of the boat in faith, he believed. And he didn't stop believing when he focused on himself. Then in the hope, he accepted Christ and was saved. The same is true for us. Just because our faith is weak, it does not mean we do not have it. Hope is our grasping out to Christ in those moments that lead to our salvation.

This leaves us with the question of those who do not believe. Can they be saved? This is one of the earliest questions the Church addressed, and answered, and with the rise of some Protestants' different opin-

ion, that makes many Catholic ask the same question.

The first response came in the age of the Apologists in the second century. Christians knew good people who did not even hear of Christ and wanted them to be in heaven. St Justin the Martyr pointed out philosophically that in Genesis' creation, "God *said*." The second person of God is the *Logos*, (the Word), so the *Logos* is involved in creation. There is an order to the universe. There is a morality in nature, which is called Natural Law. A person who follows the laws of nature unknowingly is following Christ. They are Christians, even if they do not know it. Therefore, they are saved by the redemptive works of Christ, even if they existed long before He was born in Bethlehem.

St Clement of Alexandria explains the same idea differently in his *Stromata*: "The

savior also exerts His might because it is His work to save which accordingly He also did by drawing to Salvation those who become willing by the preaching to believe in Him wherever they were. If then, The Lord descended to Hades for no other end but to preach the gospel. He did descend into it..." So, all who came before Christ could be saved by the preaching of Christ.

No matter how ignorant we are of Christ's teachings, no matter what sins we have committed, no matter how we have distanced ourselves from Christ and the Church, we are told (Romans 8:39) "nothing can separate us from the love of God in the waiting Father. The Father waits for the sinner and the unbeliever. He will come to us through the Good News, the laws of nature, or the words of a stranger, but He will come to lead us home".

Fr Jonathan Morse

What's Wrong with This Picture?

It may have been seen as cute or amusing—it may have been placed on this car to elicit gasps of disbelief. Or, it may have been used in all seriousness.

We may never know the intention of the person(s) responsible for its presence on the SUV.

But we might see it as something foreign to all that is expected of someone who is living not for the spoils of this world, but for the spirit of all that our faith offers for the unspoiled Life to come.



His Beatitude: "*The number of faithful tomorrow will depend on how much space for youth we have in our parishes today.*"

"In the parish they pay attention to many things: to the leaking roof, to the lamps that need to be replaced, to the benches that are not soft enough ... But sometimes no one pays attention to a young man, with his problems, questions, doubts about faith, and moments of crisis."

This opinion was expressed by His Beatitude Sviatoslav in online communication with young people during the festival "Wind of Hope."

"It is very important that in each of our parishes there is a youth pastorate. We often say that each of our parishes should have a youth space," the Primate of the UGCC emphasized.

"I know that if our young people create space, they know how to organize it themselves. I would like us to understand that the number of faithful in our parishes tomorrow will depend on how

many young people we have in our churches today," said His Beatitude Sviatoslav.

According to him, the UGCC wants the Church Tradition to be interesting and trendy for young people. "I was taught that culture changes every seven years. And sometimes we need to explain to young people in a new way what may seem self-evident to older people," the leader of the Church said.

"Who knows the language of modern youth, or of youth customs? Who is better oriented in youth culture than you—young girls and boys? Be spiritual translators who will interpret the cultural treasure of our Church into the modern youth language of your city, your country!" called out His Beatitude Sviatoslav.

The UGCC Department for Information

America Needs Hrushiv

America is proceeding into a tumultuous election with fanatics on both sides, claiming that the election will not decide the Presidency. We had the passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a hero to many and a villain to others. We sit here amid a pandemic where hundreds of thousands have died worldwide, and the arguments of how to end this have no common agreement. There are peaceful protests for some and violent riots for others, leading to deaths from coast to coast. Police Officers are treated as heroes and enemies. When and how will peace come to the American homeland?

Ukrainians have not found peace at home because of Russia's desire to maintain the old Soviet controls over people and places. Ukraine suffered the world's worst nuclear disaster at Chernobyl. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church suffered persecution, which gave rise to many martyrs and saints. Remembering this brought a Polish Pontiff into Ukraine to celebrate. The previous visit of a Pope was to die in exile.

In 2017, His Beatitude Sviatoslav led a Patriarchal Pilgrimage to Hrushiv, telling those gathered, "We would like to remind you, that on April 26, 1987 AD in the village of Hrushiv, Lviv region, on the balcony of the local church the Mother of God appeared to a 12-year-old girl, Maria Kizym. The news quickly spread among people. Tens of thousands of people from various corners of the then-Soviet Union began arriving at Hrushiv. The miracle in Hrushiv manifested the UGCC coming out from the catacombs, collapse of the Soviet Union, and independence of the Ukrainian State." Atheistic communist military officers documented this apparition. What brought about this miraculous event?

The Church recognizes apparitions but does not demand that people hold them as a matter of faith. They are worthy of our consideration, though.

The relationship with the Holy Theotokos is logical. If we love Jesus, we would love His Mother. Our Lord created the relationship when He told John to "Behold your mother." Mary became, by Jesus' command the Mother of the Church and, therefore, our Mother. The relationship is then over two thousand years old. There come times when people like to celebrate their relationship or renew it in their names. Prince Yaroslav the Wise, during the consecration of the "Golden Gate" and the Church of the Annunciation beside this Gate built in 1037, solemnly dedicated the whole Ukrainian nation to the protection of the Most Holy Mother of God and at the same time proclaimed her as the Queen of the Ukrainian people.

In 1792, Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore consecrated the United States to Mary under the Immaculate Conception title. In 1846, the American bishops at the Sixth Provincial Council chose Mary under the same title as the country's patroness. On May 1,

2020, Bishop Benedict and the clergy of the Eparchy of St Nicholas in Chicago, as well as other Ukrainian eparchies in the United States and Canada, reconsecrated themselves to Mary, under the title of "Mary, Mother of the Church." Acknowledging Mary's maternity during the pandemic, we are in the pattern of asking her to intercede with her Son on our behalf.

It is fitting then that as our country is in turmoil, to turn to our heavenly Mother in prayer. As Ukrainian Catholics, since Our Lady has helped our homeland, it is fitting to turn to Our Lady of Hrushiv to take care of our adopted land.

It is fitting then we should listen to the words of Our Lady to Maria and those gathered.

The wicked world is feasting on depravity and impurity. Many lies are proclaimed against the truth. The innocent are condemned. Many come as false messiahs and false prophets. Be diligent. Be on your guard.



Happy are they whose lives are blameless and who walk in the fear of the Lord.

My children, all of you are dear to me. I make no distinction of race or religion. You here in Ukraine have received knowledge of the One, True, Apostolic Church. You have been shown the door to Heaven. You must follow this path even though it may be painful.

The eternal God is calling you. That is why I have been sent to you.

As Christ, our true God, has sent His Mother to bring Good News to Ukraine; it would be fitting for Ukrainian Catholics to raise many prayers to Our Lady to intercede with her Son for the United States, especially now. As we pray, let us use our prayers to evangelize this nation. May Americans find the Truth in the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Fr Jonathan Morse