



WE LIVE IN AN AGE in which it is easy to feel isolated and alone. The temptation is to turn in on ourselves, become self-absorbed, and lose sight of what is really essential, that is, the love of God and neighbor. Once, Jesus was asked, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” And He replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.” (Matt 22:36-40)

There is a curious story in the life of the prophet Elijah. He became overwhelmed with being a prophet in a difficult time. At one point, he sat down alone under a broom tree and prayed: “It is enough; now,

O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers.” Then he fell asleep, and an angel came twice and gave him special bread and water to give him strength for a forty day and night journey to Horeb, the mount of God. On Mount Horeb, he dwelt in a cave and the word of the Lord came and said to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” And Elijah replied, “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” And the Lord replied: “Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord.”

Then “the Lord passed by” not in “the great and strong wind,” not in “the earthquake,” not in “the fire,” but there was “a still small voice.” And the Lord again

asked: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” And Elijah gave the same reply as before. And the Lord sent him on a mission to anoint a king for Syria, a king for Israel, and a prophet (Elisha) to take his place. These shall slay the evildoers. And the Lord concludes: “Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” (1 Kings 19) Note well this last line. Elijah is not the only one left who is faithful to the Lord. And note, too, that Elijah was not alone during this trial. God was looking after him. He sent his angel twice with “food for the journey” and He Himself came to Elijah and answered him.

We are never alone. God is always with us. He may be hidden from us but He is there, looking after us.

Always have on your lips, “Jesus, I trust in you.” The great prayer for our difficult times! And we have our angel. Everyone has a guardian angel. Never forget your angel, who is there to enlighten, guide, and protect you. And all the saints too! Do they seem far away? Pick up a book about a saint and meet a new friend! Or maybe just read about a contemporary faithful soul, living or deceased, and be edified by how this person navigated our trying times. There are many good Catholic books out there and other media. Even in the worst of times, places, and situations, God has His friends, and His friends lead us to God! Above all, maintain a deep prayer life, turning to God, looking to God, conversing with God. Let all that you do lead you to God and not separate you from him. God is our all; everything depends on God. God is enough (concerning this thought, I especially think

of prayers composed by St. Francis of Assisi and St. Teresa of Avila).

Our founder, Abbot William, used to often remind us that, “God will take care of you.” This is wisdom, learned from lived experience. Down the years he saw how God always took care of him and how God always took care of the monastic community he founded. “God will take care of you!” Take it to heart and it will give you great peace.

Here is an excerpt from Abbot William’s autobiography. Listen to his struggle, but see what he does with it. Learn the lesson. As he says, his prayer life was his “saving grace.”

“During the years of my journey, especially through such treacherous terrain, I certainly could have used a spiritual director. I had none. I found none in the world that surrounded me, or in the circles in which I moved. Nor was there anyone who would take an interest in directing me. In one place where I was considering an observership, I spent some time teaching in their school. The superior never once inquired how I was, or how things were going for me. It would not be expected of him to inquire concerning my prayer life. Indeed, giving time to prayer in chapel was somewhat suspect. It was not considered part of their tradition. In all this, that great aloneness of my life was prevalent. But that which was so ingrained in me, so natural to me at that point—my prayer life—I could not and would not take for granted. If it is all I have at the moment, the only thing that is left to me, it is also the best thing I could have.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola is quoted as saying that if



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the new Order he founded were dissolved, he would need only fifteen minutes before the Blessed Sacrament to be reconciled. My prayer life also was my saving grace. Just a few minutes before the Blessed Sacrament and my spirits were revived, confidence was restored. With my monastic background and my spiritual life experience under Dom Edmund at Spencer Abbey, I knew there was another tradition, very real, very deep, genuinely spiritual and supernatural. I would do my level best to maintain that tradition. It would be my saving grace in the midst of a time so confusing in my life and that of the Church.

I could cry out with Cardinal Newman:

*'Lead, Kindly Light, amidst the encircling gloom.
Lead Thou me on.*

The night is dark, and I am far from home.

Lead Thou me on.

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene.

One step enough for me.'

I did ask, 'to see the distant scene,' but it was withheld. My faith and confidence, however, remained unbounded.

I had to conclude that I was on a different wavelength and that I marched to a different drummer. Who was the drummer? He would show Himself in time. It is always in His time and in His way. He does His work according to His timetable and in His own manner. He loves to draw straight with crooked lines. But oh, those crooked lines, how often they would rend the heart."

(Abbot William, *A Calling: An Autobiography and the Founding of the Maronite Monks of Adoration*. pp. 102-103.)



Book Review: The End of the Present World

There are few meditations better for one's spiritual life than the four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. Indeed, there are many good books on that theme. What makes this book particularly special is its powerful meditations on the end of time.

Originally a series of conferences given by Fr. Charles Arminjon (1824-1885), the first half of the book is a series of meditations on the signs of the coming of the Anti-Christ, the great persecution, Christ's final victory over death and Satan, the general resurrection of the dead, and the age that will follow. Taking the Fathers and Doctors of the Church for his guides, Fr. Arminjon strings together a powerful set of images that inspire the imagination and inflame the heart.

After exhausting the subject—to the extent that one can—of the end of the world and the life to come, Fr. Arminjon turns his attention back to

more proximate things: Purgatory, Hell, and Heaven. His treatment of Purgatory is among one of the most moderate; stressing neither the pains, nor the benefits too much. His section on Hell is intended to help the reader avoid ending up there, and his meditations on Heaven plant lofty desires for it. The book concludes with two chapters on sacrifice.

If you are looking for a book full of riveting meditations that will turn your mind from the mundane to the marvelous, this is the book to get. Among the many people it has helped is Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. Reading it, it is easy to understand why. ❖

The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life by Fr. Charles Arminjon. Sophia Institute Press. 336 pages

