



SEVERAL TIMES DURING HER LIFE, Venerable Sister Lucia of Fatima was asked about the Third Secret of Fatima and replied: “Read chapter 24 of the Gospel of St. Matthew and chapters 10 and 12 of the Book of Revelation. It’s all there.”

As the liturgical year comes to its end, traditionally we contemplate the Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. All of us will enter eternity through the passage of death and then appear before the judgment seat of Almighty God which will determine our condition forever. Our earthly life is our probation and test, whereby God sees whether or not we truly love Him. The angels, being pure spirits without a material body to weigh them down, were given this test in an instant. Thus their test was irreversible.

For us human beings, this test lasts our entire lives, but it ends with our death. As Church Father, St. John Damascene, said: “There was no repentance for the angels after the Fall. Likewise, there is no repentance for men after death.” Hence our Lord’s

admonition, “What I say to you I say to all: Watch.” (Mark 13:37).

Our Lord also warns us that, as part of the End Times, we will have to experience a “Great Tribulation.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains it thus:

Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the “mystery of iniquity” in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their

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problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh. (CCC#675).

Many think that it has already started. So how do we prepare for what Our Lord says must come and how do we endure it? First, recognize what is in fact happening. For this we will take some inspiration from writer, Mary Eberstadt, and her book *Adam and Eve after the Pill, Revisited*. She nails it on the head with the following words:

According to one dominant paradigm shared by most people, the world is now divided into two camps: people of faith and people of no faith. But this either-or template is mistaken. Today's repaganization is driven above all by a new historical phenomenon: the development of a rival faith—a rival secularist faith that sees Christianity as a competitor to be vanquished, rather than an alternative set of beliefs to be tolerated in an open society. (Emphasis in original).

Notice how sex now predominates in our political campaigns. You make traditional Judeo-Christian sexual morality a “hate-crime,” punish those who adhere to it, and thereby eliminate it from public life.

This new rival secular faith has made many converts in the Church. She expands on this:

Secular progressivism has erected a church... It is an absolutist defense of the sexual revolution by its faithful... After all, believers are not heckled from Hollywood to Capitol Hill for feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, or clothing the naked. Bakers are not landing in court because of icing their treats with verses from the Song of Songs. The expressions of animosity now aimed against Christianity by this new secularist faith share a common denominator.

They are rooted in secularist dogma about the sexual revolution, according to which that revolution is a great leap forward for mankind from which no one is allowed to look back.

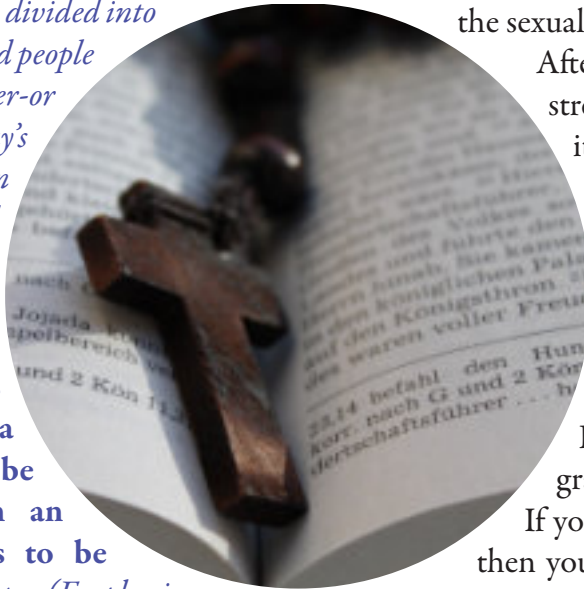
As regards these “converts in the Church” Eberstadt writes:

What they really want is to enjoy a kind of dual religious citizenship, according to which they are “Catholic” or “Christian” under certain conditions and followers of the church of secularism in any circumstances bearing on the sexual revolution.

Here in a nutshell is the “religious deception.” You CAN'T be a Catholic-Christian and support the sexual revolution; it's impossible.

After recognizing this, how do we strengthen ourselves to endure it? Immensely essential but so basic: always remain in the state of sanctifying grace. With sanctifying grace you have God's supernatural life and clothe yourself with the “armor of salvation,” as St. Paul would say. In sanctifying grace, the Devil can't touch you. If you were to fall into mortal sin, then you lose God's life, endangering your eternal salvation, and you literally give the Devil a stronghold within yourself. So get yourself immediately to the sacrament of Penance to regain the sanctifying grace essential for your salvation and put back on the armor of Christ. Remember the words of St. John Damascene above.

Next, regard your faith as a truth to be lived instead of one spirituality among many “equally valid” spiritualities. For this, prayer and the sacraments are essential. Sadly, over the past sixty some years we have made a priority of becoming “relevant” to the world. Before, there were sixty days of fasting and abstinence in the Church. Today there are two. We've canceled the obligation to attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation (especially if the day falls on a Saturday or a Monday) and moved others to Sundays.



Apparently we're too busy. Our careers and entertainment have priority. If we think that going to Mass twice a week (or worse, two days in a row!) is too much, then we're not going to survive this tribulation. Our souls won't survive. Instead of seeking to be "relevant," be a sign of contradiction to what Mary Eberstadt describes. Witness to Christ.

A great means of prayer is to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the Church's official prayer. When you pray it, you join yourself in a real way to the Mystical Body of Christ. It is for all God's people, not just the clergy and religious. You can easily find one volume copies online, and also shorter versions. If you pray Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline daily, then you will strengthen yourself immensely.

After the sacraments themselves, the Rosary is probably the most powerful devotion we have. You invoke the Blessed Mother to whom has been given the task of crushing the serpent's head. Pray

it daily.

Lectio Divina (sacred reading) isn't just meant for monks but for all God's faithful. Read a chapter a day (it's best to start with the Gospels) and add to that a few paragraphs from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Do one reading in the morning and one in the evening. Read also the lives of the saints. They show us how to live in faithfulness to Christ.

Create a "sacred space" in your home; a prayer corner. You can go online and find many pictures of one. Make this your sacred place to encounter Christ. Leave the computer and, especially, the cell phone out of it. We are embodied spirits; we need to employ our senses in our lives of faith.

Lastly, remember the words of the Servant of God, Fr. John Hardon S.J. "*Only martyrs will get into Heaven.*" We should look upon these times as a great opportunity to witness to Christ. We will suffer for a time, but then we will win for ourselves the crown of eternal glory. So, "*Watch.*" ✚