

THE FEW, THE FAITHFUL A HOLY REMNANT



Ezra — Gustave Doré (1885)

*“I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Ba’al.
So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.”* Romans 11:4

*Ezra prays: “But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the Lord our God,
to leave us a remnant, and to give us a secure hold within his holy place ...”* Ezra 9:8

Not long ago the United States Marine Corps put out a recruitment add that appealed to those seeking a challenge: “The Few, the Proud, and the Brave.” It didn’t emphasize acquiring skills that could be employed in a later career nor being able to visit exotic places around the world. Instead they sought men who wanted to be what a marine was all about, men willing to rise to a challenge.

As summer ends we start off the newsletters with this challenge to be a faithful remnant during these times when, as the Russian novelist Tolstoy said, *“the good lack all conviction while the evil are full of passionate intensity.”* This issue will serve as an introduction to a succession of newsletters touch-

ing upon several of the issues which will be considered at the upcoming *Synod on the Family* and give the Catholic Church’s constant teaching and tradition over the past two thousand years. With God’s grace we will then carry on a great heritage, evident both in the Scriptures and in Church history, of resisting the temptation to “run with the herd” and instead be that faithful remnant through which God accomplishes His purposes.

To begin with we go back to the return from the Babylonian Exile. The above picture depicts the scribe Ezra prostrating himself before the ruins of the Temple of Jerusalem. 70 years of captivity in Babylon have ended and Ezra leads a faithful rem-

nant back to the Holy Land to begin anew. Note that the majority of the Jewish people taken into captivity at Babylon chose to remain there when the Persian king Cyrus permitted the Jewish people to return home. They became very comfortable in Babylon with all its amenities and did not relish a long trip back with the frugality of a pioneer life. It took a hardy person to make that trip: only a real living faith would inspire one to undertake it.

It's important to remember why the Babylonian Exile occurred in the first place. The Chosen People allowed themselves to be corrupted by the culture of the neighboring Canaanite peoples particularly in two areas: sexual immorality and child sacrifice. Almighty God warned them many times through the prophets, even through the public miracle of Elijah calling down fire from heaven on his sacrifice: a miracle witnessed by thousands including the king. Yet, the call to return to the LORD God fell on deaf ears: hence the exile.

We are confronting the same challenges today that the Chosen People had to back then: the idols of sexual immorality and the Culture of Death. The recent events in both Ireland and the United States can easily become occasions for discouragement and even despair. As one writer put it, *"A temporary insanity seems to have taken hold."* Remember all things which happen are part of God's providence. "As the world continues to spin out of God's moral sphere, we too, need to hold onto the assurance that nothing is happening without God's permission and that God can bring good out of evil, exactly as he did on Calvary." So here's our challenge: despair; surrender and become part of the herd; or be a faithful remnant.

We must start by realizing that only *extraordinary* Christians are going to survive this current demonic onslaught: ordinary just will not do. As the Servant of God Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said, *"Dead bodies float downstream; it takes a live body to swim against the current."* Remember Jesus Christ our Lord in the Gospels called us to be extraordinary. So begin by getting to know the **real** Jesus of the Gospels. A false Jesus is being created by many includ-

ing some highly placed people in the Church which bears no resemblance to the Jesus of the Gospels. In his blog, Msgr. Charles Pope writes about this:

"There is a false unbiblical notion of Jesus that emphasizes and isolates some of his teachings and traits, while excluding others. Hence there are many who reduce Jesus' moral teaching to a vague notion that we should be nice and try to get along. This not only simplifies Jesus – it trivializes him." This means that we must know our faith well for starters. The extraordinary Christian will have to give himself/herself a daily intake of the Word of God and also realizing the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Think of the time spent watching television or on the Internet, neither of which will help your eternal salvation. In fact they might hinder it. We have to know our faith in order to live it.

Prayer. A simple newsletter cannot do justice to this topic. Attending Mass once a week and leaving it at that just won't do. We must pray regularly and fervently for God's grace to survive these times. Families for example, where the rosary is prayed daily as a family, will have, as St. Paul says, the "armor of salvation." To receive God's grace (His supernatural life) we must ask for it. Try daily Mass as much as possible. It might mean putting a crimp into our entertainment schedule, but we must ask ourselves: "Is our salvation worth it?"

Essentially, to be a member of the faithful remnant means to be a martyr-witness. Martyrdom can either be "red martyrdom" — the shedding of one's blood for the faith — as every day somewhere in the world Christians are being put to death because they are Christians. Martyrdom can also be "white martyrdom" whereby we suffer ridicule, insult and exclusion because we are faithful to the Jesus Christ of the Gospels. The late Cardinal George describes this white martyrdom to which the faithful remnant are now being subjected to in his letter *"A Tale of Two Churches."*

"Swimming against the tide means limiting one's access to positions of prestige and power in society. It means that those who choose to live by the Catholic faith will not be welcome as political candidates to national office, will not sit on editorial boards of major

newspapers, will not be at home on most university faculties, will not have successful careers as actors and entertainers. Nor will their children, who will also be suspect. Since all public institutions, no matter who owns or operates them, will be agents of the government and conform their activities to the demands of the official religion, the practice of medicine and law will become more difficult for faithful Catholics. It already means in some States that those who run businesses must conform their activities to the official religion or be fined, as Christians and Jews are fined for their religion in countries governed by Sharia law." There it is. But remember, "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Mt. 5:11-12)

So back to Ezra. He led a small remnant of hardy faith-filled people back to the ruins of the temple and the promised land. He undertook a vigorous revival and the

people pledged themselves to it. From this faithful remnant the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, would come.

Let us resist the temptation to despondency and surrender. The Catholic Church will be around for a long time after the media and the courts are just insignificant memories. We have Christ's promise on it. Cardinal George concludes his letter with, "*Catholics do know, with the certainty of faith, that, when Christ returns in glory to judge the living and the dead, the Church, in some recognizable shape or form that is both Catholic and Apostolic, will be there to greet him.*" The faithful remnant.

So take heart. The enemy's Goliath today curses the Church as the biblical Goliath cursed young David and the LORD God. We all know how that turned out. The martyrs are praying for us and the monks here will be praying for you and with you spiritually every step of the way.

