

Fr. Perozich comments —

“As G.K. Chesterton once observed, ‘Christendom has had a series of revolutions and in each one of them Christianity has died. Christianity has died many times and risen again; for it had a God who knew the way out of the grave.’ “ — Eric Sammons

I was formed in the Church during a flourishing time in the 1950s and 1960s. I was taught that God, the Supreme Being Who made all things made me to show forth His goodness, to know to love and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him in the next, from my Baltimore Catechism.

Churches were full of worshipers, divorce was uncommon, abortion rare and illegal, pornography uncommon.

As the church opened her windows to the world in order to bring Jesus to the world, it seems as if some in the church brought the world into the church, making Catholic believers more secular rather than converting secularists to Jesus.

We are where we are today, but with hope.

In retirement from pastoring, not retirement from priesthood, I still joyfully celebrate reverent liturgies with a homily that I hope rouses the faithful to the hope to live through the current decline in belief, doing our part in our lifetime, toward a future flourishing as was my formational experience.

The church offers salvation from sin for righteousness, from death for eternal life, from isolation and loneliness to full communion with the Holy and Immortal Trinity and with one another.

These profoundly fulfilling offerings need to be experienced and presented to the world so that when the power, greed, lust, vengeance, failed attainment of utopias promoted even by some church leaders from the rich and powerful in the world of immigration, climate, communism, sacrifice of freedom for safety, and on bring disappointment and disillusionment, then the light of Christ and the life of us who follow His way will illuminate the path to Him in His Holy Catholic Church once again so that all enjoy our hope in His salvation.

The Church Always Rises

ERIC SAMMONS



We live in a time of death and decay. Our culture is on life support—we can't even say what a woman is. Our Church—the Body of Christ—is, by all appearances, in a state of rapid decline; most outside observers suspect membership in the Catholic Church will be negligible in the Western world by the end of this century. It's hard to argue with them based on current trends.

So does a Catholic have any reason for optimism today? Is there any silver lining showing that the future for the Church might actually be bright? To be blunt: not really. Our

decline is real and there's no program or synod or pope that will pull us out of it. But there is still reason to *hope*.

Our hope is not sunny optimism. Our Lord promised that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church, and many take that to mean that the Church will always grow and be strong. But I would argue that Our Lord defeated the gates of hell by going into the land of the dead and crushing them. It took death to defeat those gates. So the Church can decay, even “die,” as her Lord died, but she will always rise again, because the Risen Christ is her Lord.

Man-made religions are based on victory and human achievement. Islam caught on and spread like wildfire because Muhammad was a successful warlord. Anglicanism took over England because King Henry VIII was a powerful monarch who could impose his will on his people by force.

Catholicism, on the other hand, was founded on apparent defeat: the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. By all human appearances, the movement behind Jesus was over on the evening of the first Good Friday. What was the point after all? The Romans and the Jewish leaders silenced this would-be King of the Jews.

Yet we know that was not the end of the story. He is Risen! Our Lord passed through death to life; he broke the chains of death and rose again.

The Church likewise must pass through death. This has happened before, and it will continue to happen until the Second Coming.

In the 4th century, the Arian heresy swept through the Church, with most bishops declaring for Arius and against Christ.

In the 10th century, Rome was overtaken by the “pornocracy,” when the papacy became a plaything of corrupt and powerful Roman families.

In the 16th century, Protestantism decimated Catholic numbers throughout Europe, as whole countries were lost to the Church.

And now in the 21st century we see vast swaths of Catholics leaving the Church, not for another, more exciting religion, but for a bankrupt and decrepit secularism that still looks more attractive than the local parish.

These past “deaths” did not come without long-term consequences. Arianism continued to dominate among the Gothic tribes for centuries. The 10th century pornocracy created a weakened papacy that helped contribute to the (still existing) Great Schism between East and West. And the Protestant Revolution remade Europe from the cradle of Catholic civilization to a conglomeration of secular nation-states.

Likewise, our current crisis will have lasting repercussions. Generations of families are likely lost to the Faith because Church leaders decided to imitate the world for the past 60 years. The loss of cultural influence has created a society that isn’t just post-Christian, but increasingly anti-Christian.

Yet there is still hope.

Again, this is hope, not sunny optimism. It does not mean things will turn around tomorrow. They probably won’t. Hope is founded not on our achievements, but on the central event of human history: the Resurrection of the God-man Jesus Christ. If Christ was not raised, we’d have no reason to hope. If Jesus were still in the tomb, nothing we do would have meaning. As St. Paul wrote, “If Christ has not been

raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:17).

Hope founded on the Resurrection is far more powerful than human optimism.

When the Catholic Church in England was at its lowest point during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, when just attending Mass was a capital crime, the Church produced some of the greatest witnesses to the Faith in her history, including St. Margaret Clitherow and St. Edmund Campion. It was precisely during the death of the Church in England that these saints were raised to such glorious heights. Like Good Friday, what looked like the defeat for the Church was actually a profound victory.

A Jesuit priest who lived through that dark time maintained his hope. In 1585, Fr. William Weston wrote after arriving in England, “But God’s word is not in chains. In the midst of tribulation, sorrow and weariness our mother Jerusalem is not sterile, and ceases not to bear her children” (quoted in *Faith of our Fathers: A History of True England* by Joseph Pearce). Fr. Weston had hope even in the midst of worldly defeat.

We can have that same hope today. We live in dark times, but as St. John the Evangelist reminds us, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). In this time of darkness, decline, and despair, Catholics have every reason to be hopeful, for we serve the Risen Christ who will raise us up after we pass through death.

This hope is not found in bishops’ conferences or Vatican halls or diocesan chanceries. It is found in the homeschooling family laying the groundwork for future holy vocations. It is found in the quiet witness of pro-lifers praying and counseling in front of the local abortion clinic, day in and day out, in good

weather or bad. And it is found in the father who loses his job for refusing to bend his knee to anti-Catholic wokeness, but offers his suffering up for the salvation of souls.

During this Easter season we will continue to see many signs of defeat and death all around us, even in the Church. But we can cling to the hope upon which our faith is founded: hope that in spite of death—and even *because of death*—the Church will one day rise again.

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By [Eric Sammons](#)

Eric Sammons is the editor-in-chief of *Crisis Magazine*. His most recent book [Deadly Indifference](#) (May 2021) examines the rise of religious indifference and how it has led the Church to lose her missionary zeal.