

Fr. Perozich comments —

The Catholic Church is the place where I find joy in the midst of the suffering world around me.

Over the years, I have had inspirations for (I'm not saying all were from the Holy Spirit) to guide my parishioners in writing and preaching when I was an active pastor. Two bishops hated it, one in particular because it does not agree with what the opinions he has written and has spoken in public, the other who never spoke much about anything.

Now I find clarity in the writings of others which stimulate comments and analysis from my own experiences in the church.

Enough of these articles from others show the wounds of the church, many of which are inflicted by its own members and leaders in hierarchies of church, government, education, science, business, and other societal bodies. The articles are painful and depressing, but necessary to show that God's grace and joy in the Holy Catholic Church are far beyond the power of these men and women to alter or to destroy mother church.

Today, I share with you an inspiration once again that is all mine, a reflection of the JOY OF BEING CATHOLIC through the grace of Jesus.

Reflection, a recalling of the experiences of prayer and life, shows how God leads and how men either cooperate or fail to cooperate with His grace.

These past two weeks found me in my own diocese of San Diego assisting a faithful pastor while his parochial vicar is away. The people there were better formed in the Catholic life and faith than some in other parishes, which makes it more joyful for me.

Pope Francis said that we could not say the traditional Mass in Latin, but he did not say that we could not say Latin in the Mass. Not a few people told me that they were delighted to hear the doxology, the introduction to the Lord's prayer, several of the call/responses, the prayer before communion, the final blessing and dismissal in Latin once again. They say it gives them an increased sense of reverence.

St. Vincent Ferrer advised the clergy, "When you treat virtuous and sinful acts in you sermons and exhortations, use simple language and sensible idioms. Give apt and precise examples whenever you can."

Trying to incorporate his advice into the homilies has elicited the reaction from people that they like the clarity of teaching and the application to their lives of God in the Sacred Scripture and Tradition of the church. It is joyful to get that response from the faithful.

In just two weeks here, I felt like a pastor again. I actually celebrated 6 of the 7 sacraments save Holy Orders which is beyond my power as a priest.

At my last large parish each year we would do 450 baptisms, 600 first communions, 80 weddings, 250 confirmations, innumerable anointings and confessions.

The people I meet come from different strata of economic levels, ethnic backgrounds, education, yet they are fervent in their relationship with Jesus.

I was able to baptize a baby girl at Mass. The child's father was a life long Catholic of Hispanic parents. Her mother was a well educated convert to the faith who was being led by her husband to a deeper relationship with Jesus and the Church in his role as father, husband and head of the family.

More than a year ago, I had dinner at the home of a very fervent Catholic family. Their son and daughter-in-law are expecting their sixth child. On that occasion I met a young man who was being formed by the influence of this Catholic family.

This man asked that he receive the same mailings that I send out. On May 9, with the pastor's approval, he is coming into the church with eyes wide open to the wounds and joy of life in the Catholic Church and all the grace and love that Jesus offers. He will be fully initiated, Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist for the first time. He will be equipped to lead his wife and children as a Christian father and husband is supposed to do as head of the family.

The joy of being God's instrument in the lives of others to bring them to Jesus far exceeds the pain caused by wounded members of the church. This joy is not only for priests, but for every Catholic who takes the faith seriously. The faithful Christian never knows how much his fidelity changes the lives of others as can be seen in the examples I shared.

As Fr. Bevil Bramwell OMI says below, "Because he is glorified and risen, he is here regardless of what we think or do. This means that the hostile world, which has been allowed to run its course for a little time yet, is still lethal in many ways. But like a boat in a storm or a fortress on a hill, the Church is where Jesus' presence makes it a refuge."

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The Nails Still Go In

Bevil Bramwell, OMI

Sunday, May 8, 2022

The events in Eastern Europe are bringing us face-to-face with the mystery that is at the core of our faith: There is a mysterious connection between suffering and salvation.

This is not mere pious sentiment. Rather, it is the mystery set in motion by the Death and Resurrection of Christ. Its origins lie in the relations of the Divine Trinity, where the Father eternally pours himself out as Son (Salvation), and the Son eternally returns everything to the Father (Suffering).

To be sure, though, when these happen in the midst of the ups and downs of human history, then their meaning takes on a somewhat different appearance.

This deep mystery is currently right in front of us in a number of ways. Christ came to save us in a hostile world, where suffering is part of living. He also came to change that hostile world, so that suffering takes on a special, colossal meaning for everyone. And he maintains his bond with us through it all. "I am with you always . . ."

The "world" is hostile to us as Christians and to humanity in general. Jesus said: "If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you." (John 15:19) There is a glorious protection and power that comes into the world with the Resurrection. It is this power, the power of the Resurrection that alone guards us and reassures us in the present, and opens the future to the Heavenly Jerusalem.

This is the change that Jesus wrought: he is with us, and we are safe with him in the Church. So, despite the secular denigration of the Church and despite even the people in the Church who are struggling to diminish it, Christ is with us in a way that is only brought out by the Easter Season.

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Jesus said to his Father: "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one." (John 17:15) The Evil One is still our main opponent and just as Jesus had to walk the way of the Cross, in a

world that was plotting his demise, so do we. We are not greater than the Master. If ever there was a special time when we approximate to Christ, this is it.

So we live in a curious situation, in the world but not of the world. This means that there are still nails being driven into human flesh. We know that personally in many cases. Then, of course, there is the spectacle of the war going on in Europe. The bodies in the streets, the grieving people, the mass graves, the blown-up buildings, and the crematoria are all back.

In our middle-class world, we can often fool ourselves that we have everything under our control.

The routine – of Mass on Sundays, donations to charities, helping others when it's convenient for us to do so – has suddenly been changed and revealed its narrow limits.

We face forces far greater than our comfortable world has allowed us to see for many years. In reality, we have always been challenged by these titanic forces. They lie just below the surface. Remember Benjamin Franklin's words to the woman who asked what the Founders had wrought at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia: "A republic, if you can keep it."

These forces are not so apparent once we settle into comfortable lives. But now, with the horrifying news from Ukraine, these forces stand uncovered before us.

That we have a republic carries with it all kinds of obligations under international law, including such things as helping countries to defend their right to sovereignty, and the justice necessary to carry on their daily life. Pope Benedict once reminded the German Parliament:

"Without justice – what else is the State but a great band of robbers?" as Saint Augustine once said. We Germans know from our own experience that these words are no empty specter. We have seen how power became divorced from right, how power opposed right and crushed it, so that the State became an instrument for destroying right – a highly organized band of robbers, capable of threatening the whole world and driving it to the edge of the abyss.

The horrible contingencies of life that many people in the developing world deal with daily are now present in the first world. And as we take up our duties in the faith, as bystanders and more, we are back with Jesus and at the knife-edge on which he walked daily. And let us hope, to borrow some of his words: "This. . . is not to end in death, but for the glory of God." (John 11:4)

