

Fr. Perozich comments –

To the Jews was made known a covenant with the true God, His law, and His mercy.

To the world on the first Christmas, God became man. In the paschal mystery of His passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, He established the new covenant to lead us from sin to goodness, from death to eternal life, and from isolation and loneliness to communion with God and with one another for all who would believe in name of Jesus.

In my journey as a human being, God has placed me in the world with believers and non believers. Gentiles, the nations in biblical terms, were those who are not part of the covenant given through Moses. They had their own gods, their own laws, their own beliefs.

Jesus came to the Jews and to the whole world, born into the first covenant and establishing the final covenant.

Just as the Jewish people lived among the gentiles and were influenced by them, so am I as a Christian influenced by the people in the world, their ways, their desires.

The challenge for me is to renew my commitment to Jesus, to live His commandments, and to walk hand in hand with Him in this life together with other believers.

Non believers influence me by their proximity and their lifestyles. From some in the church these past years, little is said about Jesus, redemption, salvation; rather worldly proclamations of virus/vax, lgbtq, open borders, diversity equity inclusion, climate, socialism, synodality, and other gentile non believer concepts are coming at me.

It takes effort on my part to cling to Jesus in Word, Sacrament, and Charity in order that I not be seduced by the ideas of non believers which have infected many believers.

This New Year resolution for me then will be to refocus my life on my redemption and salvation, to live in the world among competing “gospels” yet holding to the Gospel of Jesus, to enjoy the good of the world, while avoiding the seduction of gospels that claim Jesus, but really are not from Him.

“The simple fact, therefore, that a man believes, hopes, and loves does not mean that he is saved forthwith. For it makes a difference what he believes, what he hopes, and what he loves.”

“For your segregation from the Gentiles consists in leading a life different from theirs despite your contacts with them.”

*My plan and hope are to **be gathered from among the gentiles**, from those who do not believe in Jesus, and from those who claim to believe in the Lord, yet live as the gentiles do.*

Be Gathered from the Gentiles

St. Augustine of Hippo
Wednesday, January 1, 2025

We see, beloved Brethren, that you have come together today as for a feast and that for this day you have gathered here in greater numbers than usual. We urge you to remember what you sang a moment ago; otherwise it will only mean that your tongue made some noise while your heart remained still. The sounds you have produced in each other's ears, these it is for your love to reproduce with loud voice in the ears of God. Now, this is what you were singing: ***Save us, O Lord, our God; gather us from among the Gentiles that we may give thanks to Thy holy name.*** On this day the Gentiles celebrate their festival with worldly joy of the flesh, with the sound of most vain and filthy songs, with banquets and shameless dances. If what the Gentiles do in celebrating this false feast does not please you, then you will *be gathered from among the Gentiles*. . . .

The simple fact, therefore, that a man believes, hopes, and loves does not mean that he is saved forthwith. For it makes a difference what he believes, what he hopes, and what he loves. It is quite obvious that no-one in any walk of life spends his days without his soul experiencing these three things believing, hoping, loving. **If you do not believe what the Gentiles believe, do not hope what the Gentiles hope, do not love what the Gentiles love, you are *gathered from among the Gentiles*, you are segregated, that is, you are separated from the Gentiles.**

And in the face of all that separates you in soul, you must not let the physical contacts you make frighten you. For what, for instance, could be accounted a greater separation than the fact

that those people believe in demon gods, while you believe in Him who is the one and true God? That they hope in the foolish things of the world, while you place your hope in eternal life with Christ? That they love the world, but you love the Artisan of the world? Let him, then, whose faith, whose hope, whose love is different from theirs, prove it by his life, show it by his deeds.

You are going to observe the practice of giving New Year's presents like a pagan, you are going to play at dice, and you are going to make yourself drunk? How can this be a different faith, a different hope, a different love? How can you have the effrontery to sing, *Save us, O Lord, our God; and gather us from among the Gentiles?* **For your segregation from the Gentiles consists in leading a life different from theirs despite your contacts with them.** And what such segregation means, you will realize if you will but put it into effect, if you will but give proof of it.

Do not forget our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became man for our sakes, has paid a price for us. It was His price, His own, that He paid. His reason for paying it was that He wished to redeem us, to gather us from among the Gentiles. But if you associate with the Gentiles, you do not want to follow Him who has redeemed you. **You associate with the Gentiles by the life you live, by your deeds, your heart; by believing as they do, by hoping as they do, by loving as they do. You prove yourself ungrateful to your Redeemer, you do not acknowledge the price paid for you the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb.** That you may, therefore, follow your Redeemer who has redeemed you with His Blood, you must not be associated with the Gentiles by behaving and acting like them.

They give New Year's presents: you give alms! They entertain themselves with debauched singing: find your entertainment in the words of the Scriptures! They run to the theater: you go to

church! They get drunk: you practice fasting! If you cannot fast to-day, at least eat with moderation. If you do this, you have sung rightly, *Save us, O Lord, our God; and gather us from among the Gentiles. . . .*

And so, many will struggle to-day in their hearts with the words they have heard. For we said, "Do not give New Year's presents; give to the poor." It is not enough that you give only so much; give even more. You do not want to give more? Well, give at least that much. But you say to me, "When I give New Year's presents, I receive them in return." What? When you give to a poor person, do you receive nothing in return? Surely, you do not believe what the Gentiles believe; surely, you do not hope what the Gentiles hope. But if you say that you receive nothing when you give to a poor person, then you belong to the Gentiles. . . . Do not forget that rule which says, He that giveth to the poor shall never want. Have you already forgotten what the Lord is going to say to those who have given to the poor Come, ye blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom? And what He will say to those who have not given-send them into everlasting fire?

Hear the forceful reminder of the Apostle: *Bear not, he says, the yoke with unbelievers. For what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness?. . . Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? And what agreement hath the temple of the Lord with idols? And in another place, he says: For the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. . .*

For the seducers of the spirit rejoice over those seduced, and they feed upon the evil behavior and the filthy and infamous lives of those whom they have seduced and deceived.

But you, as the Apostle says, have not so learned Christ, if so be that you have heard Him and have been taught in Him. Be not therefore partakers with them. For you were heretofore

*darkness, but now light in the Lord. **Walk then as children of the light so that we, too, who preach the Lord's word to you, may be able to rejoice with you and because of you in that light eternal.***

– from *Benedictine No. 198*

St. Augustine (354-430) was born in Thagaste (in modern-day Algeria). After leading a wild youth, he became a faithful Catholic under the influence of his mother, St. Monica, and his teacher, St. Ambrose of Milan. Two of his books, "Confessions" and "The City of God," are considered among the greatest works of Christian apologetics.

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