

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

As I write this article, I am just hearing about the school shooting in Oregon (October 1). These tragedies – which are becoming more and more frequent – highlight the fact that there is evil in the world. As a people we are drifting away from the love of Christ, and now being a Christian is a dangerous thing in America.

I would guess that we all want this evil to end; we want it fixed. The problem is too big for us, though! The Good News (and I mean REALLY Good News!) is that God has already conquered evil. Jesus, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, came and took evil upon Himself, and then He destroyed it by His Cross and Resurrection.

But there is still evil in the world, even if it loses in the end. The question I have heard asked over and over again is, “What can **I** do?” When asked to answer the question of “What is wrong with the world?” the usually wordy G. K. Chesterton responded simply, “I am.” I think he gets at the heart of the matter. Two things need to happen: 1) we need to beg God for help (through the intercession of the Saints, and the protection of the Holy Angels); and 2) we need to face the evil within ourselves, and surrender it over to Jesus. We will never be able to conquer the evil “out there” until we have surrendered the evil in our hearts to Almighty God.

The young man in the Gospel today faces this. He asks how to inherit eternal life. Jesus answers with the commandments. The young man pushes harder, and Jesus “hits him between the eyes” – “**Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have reassurance in heaven; then come, follow me**” (Mark 10:21). The rich young man walked away. He was not ready to deal with the things that kept him from God. He had to face his own demons – an attachment to wealth and worldly things – and give them to Jesus.

Now, I’m not saying we have to give everything away – that was the specific call of Jesus to this young man. We do, however, have to look to what is keeping us from getting closer to God. You see, the God of the universe created everything! He made all of the stars, all of the planets and moons. He made galaxies and He made quarks. And in all of this, He didn’t need our help. **The one thing He needs** is our cooperation to come into relationship with Him. (Don’t get me wrong, He often asks for our help, but strictly speaking, He doesn’t need us for anything but this.) The beautiful thing is that He so longs to come into relationship with us that He will pursue us even when we have run away. The question is whether we let Him catch us? Do we let Him into our hearts? Do we surrender all to Him so that He can take down our “walls”?

What am I saying? It comes down to this: I cannot change the heart of a twenty year old in Oregon (God rest his soul, and the souls of all he killed), or anyone else for that matter. All I can do, is get as close to God as I can, and then: **pray** for God to change hearts; **offer my sufferings** in union with Christ’s suffering for the world; **be obedient** when God asks me to reach out to others in love through action and word. Remember that alone, each of us is nothing, but as the saying goes, “with God, we are an overwhelming majority.” With God, all things are possible!

My brothers and sisters, let us pray asking God to conform our hearts to His. Let us ask God to draw us close to Him through His infinitely merciful love. Let us ask for the protection of the Holy Angels for ourselves and others. I encourage you to pray the St. Michael prayer each day (see below) for protection for you and your family, as well as for help to get closer to God, so that God may conquer the evil in our world and in our hearts.

**Saint Michael, the Archangel,
defend us in battle,
be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
and do thou, O prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God,
thrust into Hell Satan and the other evil spirits
who prowl about the world for the ruin of souls.
Amen.**