

Homily. 1 Advent. 11.29.20
November 29, 2020
Saint Bernard Church
Dcn Tim Sullivan

THE WARNING

Today's readings are all about the warning.

From the First Reading (Isaiah)

“Why do you let us wander, O Lord, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?”

“Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down...”

“Would that you would meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways! Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful.”

“...Our guilt carries us away like the wind.”

“You have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our guilt.”

The Responsorial Psalm (80)

“Rouse your power, and come to save us...Look down from heaven and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted...Give us new life, and we will call upon your name.”

The Gospel (Mark 13)

“Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come...Watch therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming.”

The Bible makes over 100 references to warnings. And a common theme in the Bible is that warnings from God or the prophets are so often ignored by the people.

There is a book out now called “The Warning,” written by Christine Watkins. The basic theme of the book is that numerous mystics around the world, including Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are saying that there will be a warning given at the same time to all of humanity. Every person on earth will receive from God a clear and specific knowledge of the consequences of their sins. Following the warning, there will be some time for every human to repent and to get right with God. If not enough people do this, there will be a terrible chastisement that will affect the whole earth.

A few weeks ago, in Wichita, Kansas, there was a conference to train people to respond to those who are awakened and enlightened by the warning and who want help conforming their lives to what God wants from every one of us.

Mary has been warning the world since her appearance at Fatima in 1917. She warned at that time, that a new, terrible war would break out and that the errors of Communism in Russia would spread if enough people did not pray and make reparations for the sins of humanity.

In the 1960's, the Blessed Mother appeared to 4 young girls in the tiny village of Garabandal, Spain. She told the girls that there would be a warning from God to every person of the true state of their souls. Mary told one of them that the warning would take place during her lifetime. This girl is now over 70 years old.

Speaking of warnings, what about the spiritual significance of Hurricane Katrina in 2005? What about the burning of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris? And what about covid 19? Saint Bernardine of Siena, Saint Bridget of Sweden, Saint Louis de Montfort, Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint John Bosco have all said that wars, plagues and famines all result from the infidelities and apostasies of nations, especially when they are promoted by those who are leaders in the Church.

Is God using the hurricanes, the burning and closing of churches, and covid 19, to tell humanity that we need to change our ways? Surveys show that a majority of believers in God think the coronavirus pandemic is a wakeup call from God.

It's not hard to make a case that the world could use some divine intervention. What used to be vices are now considered a normal part of life: sex outside of marriage, contraception, abortion (over 62 million abortions, just in the U S), no fault divorce, homosexual acts, gambling, drugs. Even a large number of lay Catholics and some clergy think that several of these behaviors are now okay.

Mary also said at Garabandal that Catholics don't think enough about heaven and hell. That raises a couple of questions. Do we know what it takes for us to get to heaven? How often do we think about heaven and hell?

We talked about this a couple of weeks ago with our RCIA group, people that are interested in becoming Catholic.

I gave them this hypothetical question: "If you were to die today, and as you approached the pearly gates of heaven, St. Peter called out to you and said, 'Why should I let you in?' What would you say?"

Let's think of it this way. If the warning took place today, what sins in your life do you think would be revealed? If you died today and approached heaven, and Saint Peter questioned you about specific decisions you have made in your life that went against the moral teachings of the Bible and the Church, how would you defend yourself?

Would we have a good defense if we said there were some issues where we disagreed with the Church, or that we were just doing what a lot of other people were doing?

And what really motivates us to do the things we do, maybe even the things that seem to be so good?

I received a warning several years ago at the end of a five-day, silent retreat I attended before I was ordained a deacon. This turned out to be a powerful, intense experience for me, as during the retreat I was able to have conversations with our Blessed Mother. Well, on the last night of the retreat, each of the persons on the retreat was given an opportunity to say something about what they experienced during the five days.

When I got up and gave my comments, I had something like an anxiety attack. Afterward, as other people were leaving the retreat center, I went to the chapel. I asked Mary, “Why was God giving me this anxiety?” She said to me, “Because you were just showing off.”

Wow. I almost started laughing. What if we had a buzzer with us that went off every time our real motivation for doing something wasn’t as good as we thought it was? What if when we did something we thought was good or generous our real motivation was to have an award ceremony for ourselves?

The warning, if it comes about, might reveal these internal motivations that might seem hidden to us.

There’s a passage in the Gospels that doesn’t get much attention, Jesus says in Matthew 11:12 and Luke 16:16 “The kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone who enters does so with violence.”

Jesus is warning us that there is a real, spiritual battle going on all the time for our souls. We have to realize that we are in this battle. We have to arm ourselves, with obedience to the Bible and the Church, with prayer and fasting, with a spirit of repentance and a desire to make reparation for the sins of humanity. We have to make full use of our spiritual weapons, the rosary, Confession and especially the Eucharist. The Chaplet of Divine Mercy is most appropriate for our times.

Today’s Scriptures call us to think about the warning. We need to not have any fear of the warning but to understand it as an expression of God’s love and concern for each of us.

We need to think about what God sees in us that we don’t see. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us what we need to know about ourselves. And we need to make a deep commitment to reform all the aspects of our lives that need to be changed. We have to think about where we want to spend eternity. We have to be conscious of that decision every day.

If we haven’t been asking ourselves these questions, we need to do so. It’s time.