

Meditation: Second Joyful Mystery

Soon after our Lord was conceived in the womb of His Blessed Mother, she, in her great charity, left in haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who, herself, was with child. Our Lady was to be the bearer of salvation, bringing Jesus the Savior into her cousin's house. As soon as our Lady spoke, the infant in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy: St. John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb by the power of Christ Who was dwelling in Mary; her voice and presence being the sanctifying instruments. And so it is meant to be with us: we are meant to bring Jesus, the Prince of Peace, into the lives of others, thus aiding Him in the redemption and sanctification of souls. But we cannot do this unless Christ be formed first within us. Yet it often happens that beginners in the spiritual life, who, perhaps have just experienced the first taste of a little spiritual consolation, feel themselves called by God to "convert" the world and save the Church by their "inspired" words or feverish activity. And so they run around "preaching from the housetops," usually (almost always) causing more damage than any real good to souls. The great St. Paul spent three years in retreat in the desert wilderness, living a life of solitude, prayer, and contemplation alone with God, before he attempted to start his mission. He first had to completely conquer himself in Christ before he started to conquer the world for Christ. Like St. Paul, and like Mary, we too must first have Christ spiritually formed within us before we can go spreading Him around. And to the degree that we ourselves are united interiorly with Christ, to that degree will we influence others for the better. One cannot give what one does not have.

By all means let us be on fire with a great love for souls, burning with zeal for their eternal salvation. By all means let us go out of our way for others, even at the cost of a little personal inconvenience, in acts of mercy and charity. By all means let us be generous and kind to others, but let us put first things first: The soul of the apostolate is the interior life of the soul. Zeal for the sanctification of others begins by zeal for the sanctification of ourselves, that is, the rooting up of vice and the cultivation of virtue. Unless we abide in Christ, that is live in and with Him all day long, we cannot accomplish any true, lasting, supernatural good. Without Christ we can do nothing. Many decades ago, Fr. Winfrid Herbst wrote what can be applied equally well today: "The heresy of our age is activism, that feverish agitation which characterizes so many of our well meaning workers in the vineyard of the Lord, but which leads to the neglect of the interior life. True fruitful activity has its deepest root in the close union of the soul with God." Is it possible that the chief longing of many of our modern-day "defenders of the Faith" is not so much that the fire of divine love be cast upon the earth, but that they get the credit for