

12th Sunday of Ordinary Time: Cycle A

Shortly after the conclave concluded, the Papal Blessing was given from the balcony and the crowds dispersed, Father Raniero Cantalamessa, a Franciscan priest, little known at the time, stood in the piazza of St. Peter's Square, below the window of the Papal apartment & cried out, "*Corragio, Papa! Corragio!*" "*Have courage, Holy Father! Have Courage!*" We know throughout his reign, our Holy Father, now Saint John Paul II frequently reminded us "*Be not afraid!*" It is a theme that describes how he lived his life & he encouraged us to do the same.

"*Be not afraid!*" It's a phrase of hope...but how does it apply to our lives? Every so often we encounter an obstacle, a challenge, or a change to the plans *WE* made...it upsets us...it tests out faith. When we depend solely on human solutions, the challenges seem bigger.

Other times we remain silent. When the voices of good people fall silent, false thinking spreads...corruption occurs. The Irish philosopher, Edmund Burke said, "*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.*" John Paul II says, "*Be not afraid!*"

There may be times when we allow ourselves to fall into a trap and ask, '*...what harm could come from watching this movie or TV show? What damage could come from one more click of the laptop mouse or one more tap of the smart phone screen?*' So much of what is only one click away contains themes which tear at our moral fabric. These tears break down our ability to resist sin, and we find ourselves back on the slippery slope. We forget the words Our Lord taught us, *and we allow ourselves and others to be led into temptation.*

Perhaps we choose silence because we are afraid of what people will say or think, we avoid drawing attention to ourselves... remain quiet and follow the crowd. But think..."*Is it possible to be Catholic, and not draw attention to*

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yourself?” Said another way; “If we were accused of being Catholic...is there enough evidence to convict us?”

Our Lord tells us, *“Fear no one! ... What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.”* (Matt 10:26-27) Christians do not belong in darkness, we’re people of light! When we *live* the Gospel message we rarely need to speak. Our actions speak for us. We live in a world where decent behavior continues to erode; our well-formed conscience is not always permitted to be our guide; getting up each morning and choosing to love both God and neighbor seems to be an extraordinary act, instead of doing what Our Lord asked of us. We hear that we should search for teachings a bit more progressive than these spoken 2,000 years ago. But for a short time each week, we leave that world behind...to be refreshed and renewed by words that were indeed spoken 2,000 years ago...*and if we allow them*, they are just as alive today as the when they were first spoken.

Blessed John Henry Newman, perhaps the world’s most influential English speaking theologian was *not afraid*, he was a *man of courage*. Blessed Newman spent the first part of his adult life as an Anglican priest, poet and theologian. A brilliant man! He was an accomplished scholar at Oxford and vicar of the University Church. He had influence, power, prestige & fame. However, when he proclaimed from the rooftops what he heard whispered, he had no choice but to leave his past behind and resign his position at Oxford. His prestige & power was gone, but he could do without that, for he knew fame would benefit him in *this* world, *not* the next. He was not afraid of those who could harm the body, but not harm the soul. He embraced a *healthy fear*, that *Gift of the Holy Spirit...* ‘*Fear of the Lord*,’ which is fear wrapped with *profound love & respect*.

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Think back through your own lives, what are your Blessed John Henry Newman moments? I'll share one of mine. I was in New Orleans for a conference. My associates from the office decided to participate in some of the less honorable activities New Orleans has to offer. I decline the invitation to join them. I did not want that tear in my moral fabric. I did not want a bad decision to weaken my marriage vows. I did not want to compromise my relationship with God. While my employment didn't end that day, my climb up the corporate ladder did. I was penalized in this world, but I am hopeful God will smile on me in the next.

Embrace the light! Reject the darkness! Fear neither life nor death. Try facing difficulties joyfully...do not run from challenges that require effort or sacrifice, face them with delight. Ultimate faith in God allows us to endure illness with serenity and remain calm when our future is uncertain.

Have faith in Him whom we come here to worship. He values every one of us more than He does all the sparrows, for we are eternal. *He is Our Father, we are His children!* Participate in His plan, live in a state of grace, allow nothing to come between God and us. “...acknowledge Christ!” “...if we deny Christ before others, He will deny us before His Heavenly Father.”^(Matthew 10:32-33)

I turn your attention to another papal conclave held after the passing of John Paul II. This is the conclave opened by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger where he said, ‘...it is our special responsibility...to believe as adults believe. Being an adult means having a faith which does not follow the waves of today's fashions or the latest novelties. Being an adult is loving what is true and standing with it!’

I will leave you with the words of Father Cantalamessa; *Corragio! Have Courage!* In the words of Saint John Paul II; *Be not afraid!*