NOT PASSING INDIFFERENTLY BY THE SAVIOR

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Dear faithful, listening to the words of today's Gospel, we might think that Almighty God has suffered defeat. For several thousand years He prepared mankind for the coming of the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God, for the incarnation of the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. He chose for Himself a people whom He led out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt, with whom He made a covenant on Mount Sinai, whom He brought into a land flowing with milk and honey, who worshipped God in the Temple in Jerusalem, admired by the whole ancient world. And today He must cry out to this people through John the Baptist in the desert, the son of Zachary, clothed in camel's hair. And this at a time when the pagan Roman Empire is ruled by Emperor Tiberius, and occupied Judea is governed in his name by Pontius Pilate, to whom this strange God of Israel is utterly indifferent. And the high priests of the Temple in Jerusalem are Annas and Caiaphas, who will condemn the only-begotten Son of God to death.

And indeed, when we think of the circumstances, of the time in which the Lord Jesus came to this earth, we may arrive at some inner conviction that something with the world did not turn out right for God. After all, the Jewish people had been prepared for the coming of the Savior by the mouths of the prophets. And in spite of that, in spite of so many gifts which it received from God, it strayed from God's path, fell into spiritual torpor, indifference, lukewarmness, and finally into sin, the sin of unbelief, of idolatry, and committed deicide. When we think of all this, it can indeed terrify us, in how difficult, in how grave a historical moment the Lord Jesus came to this earth.

But we must realize that we Catholics, living 2000 years after the incarnation of the Son of God, are in no way better than those pagans and those Jews. After all, we have received from God far, far more: the fullness of revelation, the holy sacraments. God has shown us, through the Catholic Church, a clear, straight road leading to salvation. And we Catholics have despised all this; we have trampled God's grace underfoot. We have turned our backs on our Creator and Savior.

THE BURDEN OF GUILT

And so we often become slaves of guilt. Guilt which no one but the Savior is able to lift from our backs. Guilt which weighs us down. Guilt which is like a brand from which we cannot free ourselves. Just as the Jewish people cannot free themselves from the brand, from the curse which they brought upon themselves by crying out, "His blood be upon us and upon our children," so this liberation can come only through acknowledging the Savior, Jesus Christ. And we Catholics, rebelling against the will of God, rebelling against our Creator and Savior, will feel the burden of guilt upon us for as long as we do not bend our knees before the Savior, for as long as we do not allow Him to lift from our backs this burden which drives us into the ground.

As 2000 years ago, so today those few priests who have remained faithful to the religion of Christ cry out like Saint John the Baptist: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths." Dear faithful, we must realize that with the help of God's grace every man can straighten even the most crooked roads of his life. And let us not fear that the Redeemer will be put off by our wrong choices, by our sins, that He will leave us alone in this wasteland. After all, He Himself said: "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill. I came not to call the just, but sinners."

This time of Advent reminds us all of the necessity of bending our knees before the Savior. For only the Savior can free us from the brand of guilt, the brand of sin, which we carry upon ourselves. How many of the misfortunes of men today stem from the fact that they flee from the Savior, that they reject Him, and as a consequence bend beneath the burden of evil, be-

neath the burden of guilt. They seek various ways to escape from this guilt, to forget about it, but there is simply no other way than handing our guilt over to the Savior, than holy baptism, holy confession.

THE TIME OF VISITATION

Dear faithful, the just and merciful God condemns sin, but not the contrite sinner. In the year 70 after Christ, Jerusalem, according to the prophecy of the Lord Jesus, which we find in the Gospel, was utterly destroyed. And it happened as the Savior Himself said, because it did not recognize the time of its visitation. Today, my dear faithful, we should ask ourselves whether we recognize the time of our visitation. Do we Catholics, living in the twentieth century, not pass indifferently by the Savior, who was born in order to set us free? Is it not the case that we prefer to live in bondage, in the bondage of sin, the bondage of evil, instead of in the freedom which God Himself comes to give us?

Let us seek God in His Church, which is a lighthouse showing us the way to the harbor of salvation. Let us seek our Lord in the most holy sacrifice, in the Mass of all time, through which He grants us His graces. Let us not be indifferent to His saving inspirations and to the cry of those few of His priests who call us today to straighten the paths of our lives, no matter how crooked they may be, no matter how much the thought of our mistakes in life may terrify us.

Advent reminds us that there is still time to straighten the paths of our lives. This liturgical season of Advent will soon end, when the day of Christmas arrives. But the Advent of life will nevertheless go on, a time of waiting and of preparation for the meeting with the Savior. And today we wish to ask the Immaculate Virgin to become our guide through the Advent of life, that with her help, through her intercession, we may receive those graces which we need so that we do not waste our lives, so that we make the best possible use of this time given to us here on earth by God, shorter or longer, so that we, my dear faithful, may cease to pass indifferently by the Savior, who here and now is being born to tear us out of darkness and transfer us into His kingdom of light.

Awaiting the Redeemer who is drawing near, who is already close, *Dominus prope est*, let us raise to heaven the prayer which on this fourth Sunday of Advent we say at the altar in the holy Mass: "Stir up Thy might, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and come, and with great strength hasten to our aid, that Thy mercy, helping us with grace, may hasten what our sins hold back."

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Praised be Jesus Christ.