GOD DOES NOT HAND US ANSWERS ON A PLATTER

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Dear faithful, one very often hears from various people that God is absent from their lives, that He does not act, that He takes no interest in them whatsoever. They are left here on earth to themselves. They are unable to know God's will. And today's Gospel teaches us how God acts in human life, how He educates us human beings.

And look: Saint John the Baptist instructed his disciples that Jesus is the awaited Messiah announced by the prophets, God who became man, and he stated plainly to them that he himself is not the Messiah, but that he was sent to prepare the way for the Saviour. "He must increase, but I must decrease," Saint John the Baptist declared to his disciples. But they do not understand this. They do not grasp this answer of John's; they do not believe it. And so Saint John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to the Lord Jesus to ask Him: "Art Thou He that is to come, or look we for another?"

And of course the Redeemer was perfectly aware of what plan Saint John the Baptist had. So He does not answer directly, as John's disciples expected, but points to the great works that He performs, which the prophet Isaiah had foretold, and which should be a clear sign to the scribes that the Messiah has indeed come. And indeed, when John's disciples hear the words of the Lord Jesus, the veil immediately falls from the eyes of their souls. They immediately recognise in the Lord Jesus the Saviour, the Messiah.

ASYMPTOMATIC CATHOLICISM

And so indeed, dear faithful, we have this trait: we would like to receive from God solutions, answers to the questions that torment us, served up on a platter, so that we should not by any chance have to make any special effort in our lives. A whole mass of Catholics would like such an asymptomatic Catholicism, a Catholicism in which one does not have to use one's reason, in which no effort is needed. And it is because we are not ready for that effort, for the use of reason, that there are, my dear ones, so many among us who are blind, people sunk in the darkness of error, in the darkness of sin.

My dear ones, He who instructed John's disciples does not cease to instruct us, to lead us toward the knowledge of truth. God very rarely intervenes directly in human life. But even when He does not, He nevertheless acts unceasingly through His grace. And every man here on earth receives from God enough grace to be able to save his soul. But it depends on us alone whether we make use of this divine grace, so that it may enlighten our reason, so that it may strengthen our will, and so that in this way we may arrive at the knowledge of the truth, of the true God, and love Him and serve Him.

Just like the disciples of Saint John the Baptist long ago, every man faces the necessity of making a choice. Will he use his reason to discover the truth? Or will he remain a fool, a witless fool?

MIRACLES AROUND US

Dear faithful, when we open the eyes of our soul, we will then realise that we are witnessing all the time that which made the disciples of Saint John the Baptist believe. Perhaps we do not realise it, but these miracles, even greater miracles, are happening ceaselessly around us, in our own lives too, even if we do not think about it day to day, even if we do not realise it.

For behold, even today the blind receive their sight, when the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ, fills our soul. The lame walk, when they rise from spiritual paralysis and, supported by God's grace, climb the mountain of Christian perfection. The lepers are cleansed whenever, following the example of Saint Mary Magdalene, sinners fall at Christ's feet and repent of, and weep over, their sins. The deaf hear when a man opens his soul to the voice of God's call-

ing and begins to follow it. The dead rise whenever those who have committed a mortal sin recover the life of the soul through the sacrament of holy confession. The Gospel is preached to the poor when we, the poor in spirit, without any merits of our own, have the honour, the privilege, of standing at the foot of the Cross when we hear Holy Mass.

But do we Catholics living in the twenty-first century see all these signs of God's action? Do we believe that the Lord Jesus is the Redeemer, the only Redeemer of every man? Do we want to perceive that God is at work in this world, in our own lives too? Or do we rather, my dear ones, prefer to switch off our reason and despair at how lonely we are, how God takes no interest in us?

PREPARING THE WAY

Dear faithful, through this Advent that we are living, we should prepare ourselves not for a lavishly laid table, not for a mountain of presents, but for the coming of the Saviour. Each of us is called to this and has the possibility of spending all eternity with the Lord Jesus. But do we think about this every day? Are we in any way interested in this offer of God's? Is our eternity entirely a matter of indifference to us?

Every man, whether priest, farmer, policeman, teacher, entrepreneur, father, mother or student, all are called to come, with the help of God's grace, to know the true God, to love Him and to serve Him faithfully. Each of us, my dear ones, ought to make an examination of conscience on how he fulfils the duties of his state, his daily duties of life, by the conscientious performance of which we can be sanctified, that is, draw closer to God.

My dear ones, let us no longer be like a reed shaken by the wind. Let us no longer be witless Catholics, Catholics who expect ready-made answers, ready-made solutions: "Jesus, You see to it, I will sit and wait." Let us finally believe that near, very near to each of us is He who was sent to save mankind. Christ the Lord comes unceasingly to scatter the darkness of our lives through the light of His grace.

And after the example of Saint John the Baptist, let us prepare the way for the Lord Jesus also into the hearts of other people, our neighbours. Let us consider whether we do not often sin by wordiness, instead of simply giving a good example and drawing others to God through our good deeds. For each of us is called to prepare the way for the Saviour, the way to human hearts.

On this second Sunday of Advent, together with the whole Holy Church, let us raise to heaven the words of prayer: *Stir up, O Lord, our hearts to prepare the ways of Thine Only-begotten Son, that through His coming we may be able to serve Thee with purified souls. Amen.*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.