



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ®
* *Knights of Malta* *

Chancellor's Update

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Signs of the Times

A Gift in the Theater

In the early part of the Twenty-first Century Christians and others were wandering about aimlessly without leadership or at best with poor leadership. Under similar conditions in times past art, music, sculpture or literature initiated a renaissance of culture. So it happened that a famous actor, who had recently experienced a spiritual rebirth, and who believed that contemporary culture had lost the central theme of Jesus' mission, decided to share his understanding of the redemption of the human race with his contemporaries.

Using his talents as an actor and producer and using the latest special effects available in the film industry, he produced a cinema of the last twelve hours of the life of Jesus Christ. It was laudable that he used his own talents and money to produce the film, but most admirable was his perseverance to complete his project in spite of the harassment, negative publicity, bigotry, and, yes, even persecution that he endured.

While others under similar circumstances would have given up, this man continued. Does this indicate that perhaps something else was happening here? Could the Holy Ghost have decided that since the transmission lines to the bishops had been turned off at the human end, it was time to reach people by another means? Could he have decided to use a very contemporary medium, namely films, and then to select someone who had name recognition, acting, directing, and producing talents and a zeal from his personal beliefs? The response from the audiences has been encouraging.

"The Passion of The Christ" incorporates the earliest promise of the Redeemer in the Garden of Eden into the film. The flashback to the Last Supper from the Cross on Calvary proclaims the meaning of His mission. Catholics should recognize this as the very meaning of the Mass.

We salute Mel Gibson for his faith, his use of his talents and his perseverance to give us a gift and something that was sorely needed in today's culture.

The Flip Side of the Coin

While positive things are happening, many evil events never seen publicly during the past century are occurring. Innocent souls may consider such events new to man's history, but they did occur before as described by Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Romans.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those men who in wickedness hold back the truth of God, seeing that what may be known about God is manifest to them. For God has manifested it to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen – his everlasting power also and divinity – being understood through the things that are made. And so they are without excuse, seeing that, although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless minds have been darkened. For while professing to be wise, they have become fools, and they have changed the glory of the incorruptible God for an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.

Therefore God has given them up in the lustful desires of their heart to uncleanness, so that they dishonor their own bodies among themselves – they who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever, amen.

For this cause God has given them up to shameful lusts; for their women have exchanged the natural use for that which is against nature, and in like manner the men also, having abandoned the natural use of the woman, have burned in their lusts one towards another, men with men doing shameless things and receiving in themselves the fitting recompense of their perversity. And as they have resolved against possessing the knowledge of God, God has given them up to a reprobate sense, so that they do what is not fitting, being filled with all iniquity, malice, immorality, avarice, wickedness; being full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity; being whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, irreverent, proud, haughty, plotters of evil; disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy. Although they have known the ordinance of God, they have not understood that those who practice such things are deserving of death. And not only do they do these things, but they applaud others doing them (Romans I v.18-32).

Lenten Intention

For we know that our old self has been crucified with him, in order that the body of sin may be destroyed, that we may no longer be slaves to sin.... But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live together with Christ (Romans VI v. 6 –8).

We pray that we and others will draw closer to Christ as we meditate on His Passion, whether the source be the Bible, the Stations of the Cross, the movie described above or books of meditation. We pray also that this holy season will be a time for us to weep over our sins and once again “put on the new man”.

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