



CHAPTER 3

By Alice de Lima

HOUSE OF PAIN

PP. 43-58

POPE FRANCIS WROTE IN HIS PRE-CONCLAVE SPEECH NOTES THAT THE CHURCH NEEDED A POPE THAT WOULD HELP THE CHURCH TO REMEMBER HER IDENTITY, TO BE A CHURCH “CALLED TO COME OUT FROM ITSELF AND TO GO THE PERIPHERIES. HE WARNED THAT IF THE CHURCH DOES NOT COME OUT FROM ITSELF TO EVANGELIZE, IT BECOMES SELF-REFERENTIAL AND GETS SICK. THE CHURCH NO LONGER GLORIFIES CHRIST, BUT SEEKS TO GLORIFY ITSELF.

THE CHURCH HAS, THEREFORE, BECAME A HOUSE OF PAIN, BECAUSE OUR CHURCH IS SICK. THE ROOT OF THIS SICKNESS IS OUR DEEP FORGETFULNESS OF OUR DEEPEST IDENTITY: THAT WE ARE MISSIONARY, THAT WE ARE A CHURCH “CALLED TO COME OUT OF ITSELF.

IF WE ARE CONFUSED ABOUT OUR DEEPEST IDENTITY, THERE WILL BE PAIN; INSTITUTIONAL PAIN, AND PAIN IN THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS. IF THE CHURCH IS TO BE REBUILT, IT MUST FIRST BE HEALED. THE FIRST STEP IN HEALING IS ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAIN.

CONFESSING PAIN AND HURTS IS NOT JUST SOME FRUITLESS EXERCISE, OR WORSE, A SIGN OF LACK OF DISCIPLINE AND SPIRITUAL BACKBONE – IT HAS DEEP BIBLICAL ROOTS IN THE TRADITION OF LAMENTATION. (1:16 AND 1:18)



TO BEGIN WITH, THERE IS THE ALL-TOO-COMMON PAIN OF SEEING SO MANY FAMILY MEMBERS AND OTHERS WALK AWAY FROM THE CHURCH. THIS PAIN IS ESPECIALLY ACUTE IN THE LIVES OF SO MANY OF OUR PARISHIONERS WHO HAVE WITNESSED THE PAIN OF SEEING SO MANY FAMILY MEMBERS WALK AWAY FORM THE CHURCH. SAINT MONICA HAS NEVER HAD SO MANY SPIRITUAL CHILDREN SEEKING HER INTERCESSION FOR THEIR FAMILY.

AMONG THE MANY TASKS OF THE SHEPHERD IS THAT OF KEEPING WATCH AND WARNING THE SHEEP OF APPROACHING DANGERS. SHEPHERDS NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND TO SOUND THE ALARM.

UNIVERSAL LITERACY, HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL WELFARE ARE THINGS WE TAKE FOR GRANTED TODAY, BUT THEIR ABSENCE IN THE PAST WAS THE CAUSE OF SO MANY OF OUR INSTITUTIONS BEING COURAGEOUSLY BUILT AND STAFFED. NOW THE CONVENTS THAT HOUSED THE MANY FAITHFUL SISTERS OF SO MANY CONGREGATIONS LIE EMPTY. THIS PAIN CONTINUES TO BE FELT IN THE WESTERN WORLD THROUGH THE INSTITUTIONAL COLLAPSE OF THE PARISH STRUCTURES OF MANY DIOCESES.

THE CHURCH TRULY IS PEOPLE AND NOT BUILDINGS – IT IS ABOUT LIVING STONES, NOT BRICKS AND MORTAR – BUT IT HURTS BECAUSE IT REMINDS US OF THE INSTITUTIONAL DECLINE WE ARE FACING.

WHAT RESERVOIRS OF PAIN EXIST WITHIN THE HEART OF ALL THE FAITHFUL, PRIESTS, LAITY AND RELIGIOUS OVER THE DEVASTATING SCANDALS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN BY



PRIESTS? THE PAIN EVERY TIME A NEW CRIME FROM THIS PAST IS BROUGHT TO LIGHT, EVERY TIME A FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP IS EXPOSED.

FINALLY, THE LOSS OF CREDIBILITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE SHAME THAT RESTS UPON THE HEAD OF EVERY PRIEST BECAUSE OF THE MISDEEDS OF A FEW TRANSLATES INTO A DULL, CHRONIC PAIN.

FR MALLON SAYS THAT THEN THERE IS THE PAIN OF PRIESTS WHO LABOUR IN THE TRENCHES, DESPERATELY TRYING TO HOLD ON TO THE PASSION THAT MADE THEM CHOOSE TO “GIVE IT ALL UP” AND BECOME A PRIEST. OUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF CONVERSION AND TRANSFORMATION SHAPED OUR SENSE OF CALLING TO THE PRIESTHOOD. WE WERE NOT GOING TO BE MAINTENANCE PRIESTS. ARMED WITH THESE CONVICTIONS, WE WERE LAUNCHED INTO THE BRICK WALL OF PARISH LIFE. MOST OF THE PRIESTS HAD TO LEARN TO NAVIGATE WITHIN A CHURCH CULTURE THAT WAS NOT INTERESTED IN CONVERSION AND TRANSFORMATION. THOSE WHO COULD NOT ADAPT TO THE NEW REALITY DID NOT LAST AS PRIESTS.

MOST SUNDAY CATHOLICS REMAINED UNTOUCHED, AND THE CHURCHES REMAINED UNHEALTHY AND IN DECLINE.

WE HAVE WITNESSED IN THE LAST 50 YEARS THE MOST ACCELERATED SOCIAL CHANGE IN HUMAN HISTORY, YET IN THE WORLD OF OUR CHURCHES, WE INSIST ON PASTORAL METHODOLOGIES THAT PRESUME BYGONE IDEAL CULTURES OF THE PAST.



KNOWING THAT THE SHIP IS HEADING FOR THE ROCKS AND FEELING POWERLESS TO CHANGE THE COURSE IS PAINFUL. ALL OF THIS AMOUNTS TO THE PAIN OF WITNESSING A CHURCH IN DECLINE, A CHURCH THAT IS SICK, A CHURCH THAT SLIDES TOWARDS THE INSANITY OF DOING THE SAME THING AGAIN AND AGAIN, EXPECTING DIFFERENT RESULTS. THE PAIN IS INTENSIFIED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE CHURCH AND TRULY BELIEVE THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY – THAT IT IS GOD’S WILL THAT THE CHURCH BE HEALTHY AND GROW.

THINK OF THE WORDS OF ST AUGUSTINE, WHO SAID, “WORK AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDED ON YOU, AND PRAY AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDED ON GOD”

THE MYSTERY OF GOD’S GRACE IS ALWAYS AT WORK IN THE LIFE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN AND IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH, AND IT ALWAYS INVOLVES SUFFERING, AS IT ALWAYS INVOLVES THE PROCESS OF DYING AND RISING. IT IS THE GREAT STORY OF THE DEFEAT OF GOOD FRIDAY FLOWING INTO THE EMPTY TOMB AND BURSTING FORTH ON EASTER SUNDAY MORNING. IT IS THE STORY OF THE CHURCH. DARE WE HOPE THAT SO MUCH PAIN AND DYING CAN MOVE US TO A PLACE WHERE WE CAN EXPERIENCE EASTER SUNDAY.

POPE FRANCIS CONCLUDED HIS PRE-CONCLAVE SPEECH NOTES, AFTER HE HAD IDENTIFIED THE GREAT CALLING OF THE CHURCH AND THE GREAT EVIL WITHIN THE CHURCH BY STATING, “THIS SHOULD ILLUMINATE THE POSSIBLE CHANGES AND REFORMS TO BE REALIZED FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS”



IN THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS, THE ENTIRE DISCOURSE ENDS IN A SIMILAR VEIN. IT IS A PLEA – NOT JUST FOR ILLUMINATION FOR THE LORD TO ACT, BUT FOR THE LORD TO HELP US TO ACT SO THAT WE CAN RECALL AND REDISCOVER OUR TRUE IDENTITY AS THE CHURCH OF GOD, MOVE FROM OUR EXILE, AND COME OUT OF OURSELVES.

CHAPTER FOUR
By Anne Colquhoun

CLEARING OUT THE JUNK

PP. 59-86

CHAPTER 4 CONSIDERS WHAT NEEDS TO BE JETTISONED, IF WE ARE TO REBUILD, USING THE ANALOGY OF DEMOLITION AND REMOVAL OF DEBRIS AS THE FIRST STEP IN REBUILDING A HOUSE. WHAT NEEDS TO BE CLEARED OUT: STRUCTURES, ATTITUDES, IDEAS OR THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES THAT UNDERMINE OUR ABILITY TO FULFIL THE MISSIONARY MANDATE GIVEN TO US BY JESUS.

IN 2013, POPE FRANCIS REVISITED THE TASK OF PASTORAL CONVERSION AND THE CREATION OF MISSIONARY DISCIPLES DISCUSSED AT THE APARECIDA CONFERENCE IN 2007 AND NAMED THREE CATEGORIES OF “TEMPTATIONS AGAINST MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP” CALLING THEM THE WORK OF THE “EVIL SPIRIT” AND HOLDING BACK THE PROCESS OF PASTORAL CONVERSION.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION HE DEFINED AS “MAKING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE AN IDEOLOGY”, INTERPRETING THE



GOSPEL APART FROM THE GOSPEL ITSELF AND APART FROM THE CHURCH. HE NAMED FOUR EXPRESSIONS OF THIS TEMPTATION:

1 SOCIOLOGICAL REDUCTIONISM, WHERE THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH IS DEFINED BY SOCIOLOGICAL CATEGORIES REDUCING IT TO AN INSTRUMENT OF E.G “MARKET LIBERALISATION” OR MARXIST IDEOLOGY

2 PSYCHOLOGIZING, A TREND FOLLOWING THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL WHERE AN INHERENTLY SELF- CENTRED PSYCHOLOGY REPLACED “THE ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS CHRIST” AS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE

3 THE Gnostic solution, which proposes salvation through the attainment of secret knowledge, essentially elitist and creating a class of “enlightened Catholics” who identify with a certain “higher spirituality”

4 PELAGIAN (AND NEO-PELAGIANISM) *, A FORM OF “RESTORATIONISM” SEEKING TO RESTORE CHRISTIANITY TO THE MORAL AND DISCIPLINARY RIGORISM OF THE EARLY CHURCH. MORE ABOUT THIS SHORTLY.

THE SECOND AND THIRD TEMPTATIONS AGAINST MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP POPE FRANCIS CALLED “FUNCTIONALISM”, THE REDUCTION OF THE CHURCH TO A MERE BUSINESS AND “CLERICALISM”, STRICT ADHERENCE TO A RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY, RESULTING IN THE LACK OF MATURITY IN THE LAITY. CHAPTER 4 THEN FOCUSES ON TWO OF THESE TEMPTATIONS, PELAGIANISM AND CLERICALISM , AS UNSPOKEN THEOLOGIES SHAPING OUR PERCEPTION OF



NORMALITY AND THE BULK OF THE “JUNK” TO BE REMOVED BEFORE RENEWAL CAN TRULY TAKE PLACE.

PELAGIANISM * CONSIDERED A HERESY OF THE EARLY CHURCH, WAS PROPAGATED BY A CELTIC MONK NAMED PELAGIUS, TEACHING AROUND AD 390-418, THAT GOD’S GRACE WAS NOT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION AND THAT JESUS’ SAVING ACT WAS AN EXAMPLE OF PURE LOVE THAT COULD BE IMITATED. GOD’S FAVOUR COULD BE OBTAINED BY OUR OWN MORAL RIGORISM OR ASCETIC PRACTICE, ACHIEVABLE OUTSIDE OF GOD’S GRACE. IT BECAME ELITIST AND AUTHORITARIAN, CONCERNED WITH JUDGING OTHERS, RATHER THAN EVANGELIZING AND BRINGING OTHERS THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS SAVED US. PELAGIUS’ MOST VIGOROUS OPPONENT WAS SAINT AUGUSTINE, WHOSE DOCTRINE EMPHASIZED THE SUPREMACY OF GRACE OVER FREE WILL. THESE CONFLICTING VIEWS WERE THE SUBJECT OF MUCH DEBATE WITHIN THE CHURCH AND WITH SAINT AUGUSTINE’S THEOLOGY OF GRACE WINNING THE DAY, PELAGIUS’ TEACHINGS BEING CONDEMNED AND RESULTING IN HIS EXCOMMUNICATION.

ST AUGUSTINE’S THEOLOGY OF GRACE REMAINS THE FOUNDATION OF CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE MYSTERIOUS INTERTWINING OF GOD’S GRACE AND HUMAN FREE WILL. OUR HUMAN CONDITION LEAVES US PRONE TO SIN AND UNABLE TO ACHIEVE WHAT IS GOOD WITHOUT GOD’S HELP. OUR HUMAN STANDARD WILL ALWAYS FALL SHORT OF GOD’S STANDARD. BUT GOD HAS NOT LEFT US ALONE; HE HAS SENT HIS SON AS OUR SAVIOUR. POPE FRANCIS CALLS THIS THE “FIRST PROCLAMATION”: “JESUS CHRIST HAS SAVED YOU. “



HOWEVER, PELAGIANISM CONTINUED TO RAISE ITS HEAD THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH ADAPTING TO A SCHOOL OF THOUGHT THAT GOD MEETS US HALFWAY. THIS TOO WAS CONDEMNED BY THE CHURCH AS NOT BEING AUTHENTIC TO THE FAITH HANDED DOWN BY THE APOSTLES. AS ST PAUL SAID, "IT IS GOD WHO IS AT WORK IN YOU, ENABLING YOU BOTH TO WILL AND TO WORK FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE". THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO BY OURSELVES THAT WILL MERIT GOD'S GRACE BUT WITH GOD'S GRACE IN OUR LIVES, WE RECEIVE THE GIFT OF SALVATION AND IT ALL FLOWS FROM THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST.

IN THE LITURGY, IF WE ARE TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE WITH OUR PEOPLE AS PASTORS AND TEACHERS WE MUST HAVE A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF MERIT WHICH HAS GAINED NEW PROMINENCE IN THE CATHOLIC VOCABULARY SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF THE NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL: E.G EUCHARISTIC PRAYER II ASKS THAT "WE MAY MERIT TO BE CO-HEIRS TO ETERNAL LIFE RATHER THAN PREVIOUSLY WHERE WE ASKED TO BE " WORTHY TO SHARE ETERNAL LIFE ."IT PLACES THE CONCEPT OF MERIT FIRMLY BEFORE US AND RECALLS THE CATHOLIC/ LUTHERAN DEBATES OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH AND WORKS, WHERE LUTHER ASSERTED THAT WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH ALONE BUT WHICH THE COUNCIL OF TRENT DEFINED, AS THE CATHOLIC POSITION, THAT WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH AND WORKS. THE ONLY WORKS COUNTING TOWARDS SALVATION ARE THOSE THAT ARISE FROM GOD'S GRACE. OTHERWISE, WE WOULD BE BACK IN THE PELAGIAN



CAMP, EARNING OUR SALVATION THOUGH WHAT WE AND WE ALONE DO.

IT IS A VERY HUMAN THING TO BELIEVE THAT WE EARN OUR REWARD BASED SOLELY ON WHAT WE DO.SO A RESISTANCE TO THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE MANIFESTED ITSELF AGAIN IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN A NEW FORM OF MORAL RIGORISM CALLED JANSENISM, NAMED AFTER A DUTCH PRIEST AND THEOLOGIAN CORNELIUS JANSEN, WHO HAD BEEN A STUDENT OF THE WRITINGS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE. JANSENISTS PUT SUCH EMPHASIS ON GOD'S GRACE THAT THEY NULLIFIED THE NECESSITY OF HUMAN FREE WILL. ALTHOUGH THAT WAS THE STARTING POINT OF THEIR THINKING, BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 17TH CENTURY, JANSENISTS HAD EMBRACED A MORAL RIGORISM THAT THEY BELIEVED TO BE THE NECESSARY EVIDENCE OF GOD'S FAVOUR AND GRACE. THEIR THEOLOGY HAD SUCH A LOW OPINION OF HUMAN FREE WILL THAT IT ENDED IN BEING ELITIST, EMBRACING THE SAME KIND OF ABSOLUTE ASCETICISM AS THE PELAGIANISM THEY HAD CONDEMNED.

JANSENISM TAUGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT IT WAS NOT ENOUGH TO BE FREE FROM MORTAL SIN TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN WOULD HAVE BEEN SO SUFFUSED BY GOD'S GRACE THAT THE PERSON WOULD BE COMPLETELY FREE FROM SIN. SO IN ORDER TO BE WORTHY OF THE EUCHARIST A COMMUNICANT HAD TO BE COMPLETELY FREE FROM SIN. AS JANSENISM SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH OF WESTERN EUROPE, THE PRACTICE OF ABSTAINING FROM THE EUCHARIST BECAME COMMONPLACE AND FREQUENT RECEPTION OF HOLY



COMMUNION WOULD NOT BEGIN TO BE RESTORED UNTIL THE PAPACY OF PIUS X OVER 200 YEARS LATER. ALTHOUGH FORMALLY CONDEMNED BY THE CHURCH JANSENISM WOULD MOVE FROM THE CONTINENT IN THE 1800S TO THE SEMINARIES OF IRELAND AND WOULD GO ON TO INFORM AND DEFORM GENERATIONS OF PRIESTS WHO WOULD BRING THIS VERSION OF CATHOLICISM TO THE WORLD IN THE GREAT WAVE OF IRISH MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES. WHO OF US IN THE WESTERN CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS BEEN UNTOUCHED BY AN IMAGE OF GOD AS DISTANT, COLD AND UNAPPROACHABLE AND A VIEW OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AS MERCILESSLY DEMANDING MORAL PERFECTION? MORAL RIGORISM AND ASCETICISM REPLACED GRACE AND MERCY ; THE MERCY OF GOD AND WAS FORGOTTEN, TOGETHER WITH THE SHEER JOY OF THE GOSPEL AND WE WERE CONDEMNED TO A MISERABLE JOYLESS MORALISM, DESTINED TO LEAVE US DISILLUSIONED WITH THE BITTER TASTE OF OUR OWN INEVITABLE FAILURE.

FATHER MALLON BELIEVES THAT MOST CHURCHGOING CATHOLICS HAVE BEEN SO DEEPLY IMPACTED BY PELAGIANISM THAT THEY REALLY DO NOT GRASP THE KERYGMA OF OUR FAITH: "WE ARE SAVED BY JESUS CHRIST." MANY CATHOLICS EXPRESS SALVATION AS SOMETHING A GOOD PERSON HAS EARNED, NOT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT GOD'S MERCIFUL LOVE. IT IS A HUMAN TENDENCY TO REDUCE THE CHRISTIAN FAITH TO SOME FORM OF MORAL RIGORISM, OR MERE ETHICS. IN PREVIOUS GENERATIONS MORAL RIGORISM MAY HAVE FOCUSED ON ISSUES OF SEXUAL MORALITY; MORE RECENTLY A KIND OF AMORPHOUS AND UBIQUITOUS CONCERN FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE. RATHER,



SUCH MORAL ISSUES NEED TO BE CONTEXTUALISED BY THE RECEPTION OF THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION. THEY WILL ALWAYS BE SECONDARY TO THE FIRST PROCLAMATION “JESUS CHRIST HAS SAVED YOU “.

FATHER MALLON TALKS ABOUT ENCOUNTERING THIS NEO-PELAGIANISM IN TWO WAYS. FIRSTLY THE TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC WHO HOLDS A KIND OF SCORECARD; I DO CERTAIN THINGS FOR GOD (GO TO MASS, BE NICE, SAY MY PRAYERS ONCE IN A WHILE) THEN GOD LETS ME INTO HEAVEN. SECONDLY, THE POST-MODERN CATHOLIC WHO BASES HIS/HER UNDERSTANDING OF GRACE AND SALVATION NOT ON SCRIPTURE BUT ON HIS/HER SENSE OF ABSOLUTE AUTONOMY AND FUNDAMENTAL NICENESS.

THEREFORE, THERE ARE THREE CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEO-PELAGIANISM OF OUR TIME.

FIRST: IF SALVATION IS “GETTING MY CARD PUNCHED “SO THAT I CAN MEET THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR SALVATION, IT WILL BREED A CULTURE OF MINIMALISM. WHEREAS A TRUE COVENANT FAITH, ROOTED IN A PERSONAL COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN THE MIDST OF A COVENANT COMMUNITY CAN NEVER DO ENOUGH OR GET ENOUGH. IT IS A RELIGION OF EXTRAVAGANCE ROOTED IN A GOD WHO PROCLAIMS HIS INSATIABLE THIRST FOR US. IT IS ONLY THIS KIND OF FAITH THAT CAN YEARN FOR AUTHENTIC HOLINESS; THIS KIND OF FAITH THAT SEEKS TO GIVE ALL AND DO ALL.

SECOND: PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE THEMSELVES TO BE JUSTIFIED BY THEIR OWN ACTIONS OR “NICENESS” WILL NEVER KNOW THE SHEER AUDACITY OF GOD’S MERCY. THE



GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION WILL NEVER BE FULLY GRASPED AND, CONSEQUENTLY, THE JOY THAT IS THE HALLMARK OF THE AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN LIFE WILL NEVER BE KNOWN OR COMMUNICATED TO OTHERS.

THIRD: IF WE CANNOT MOVE BEYOND THE BARE MINIMUM OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE WE PERCEIVE AS REQUIRED TO EARN OUR OWN SALVATION AND IF THE GOOD NEWS IS UNDISCOVERED, WHY ARE WE SURPRISED THAT MANY IN THE CHURCH SHOW EVIDENCE OF LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR THE CALL TO THE NEW EVANGELISATION? BECAUSE OF NEO-PELAGIANISM BEING SO PRESENT AMONG THE FAITHFUL AND EVEN AMONG THOSE IN MINISTRY, IT IS ENTIRELY UNDERSTANDABLE THAT WE WOULD SUFFER FROM A DEEP IDENTITY CRISIS ABOUT OUR MISSIONARY NATURE.

HOW DO WE TAKE OUT THE JUNK OF PELAGIANISM ? WE REMOVE THE JUNK WHEN WE MAKE A CLEAR COMMITMENT TO THE FIRST PROCLAMATION “JESUS CHRIST HAS SAVED YOU “.THIS PROCLAMATION SHOULD BE PRESENT IN EVERY HOMILY, IN EVERY CLASS AND IN EVERY TALK.

“I AM A SINNER WHOM THE LORD HAS LOOKED UPON” WAS POPE FRANCIS’ RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION “ WHO IS JORGE MARIO BERGOGLIO ?”. IT WAS THE CLEAREST, MOST AUTHENTIC DESCRIPTION HE COULD OFFER. IT IS HIS FUNDAMENTAL IDENTITY AND IT IS OUR FUNDAMENTAL IDENTITY.

CLERICALISM

THE ADHERENCE TO AN OVER RELIANCE ON THE RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY, RESULTING IN A LACK OF MATURITY IN THE



LAITY, WAS DESCRIBED BY POPE FRANCIS IN 2013 AS” IN THE MAJORITY OF CASES, IT HAS TO DO WITH A SINFUL COMPLICITY; THE PRIEST CLERICALIZES THE LAY PERSON AND THE LAY PERSON KINDLY ASKS TO BE CLERICALIZED “.

WHEN RUNNING THE ALPHA COURSE IN HIS PARISH, AS A WAY FOR HIS PARISHIONERS TO HEAR THE KERYGMA, EXPERIENCE JESUS PERSONALLY AND HAVE A NEW VITAL EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, FATHER MALLON MET RESISTANCE FROM SOME. ONE PARISHIONER SAID “LOOK, FATHER, I AM JUST NOT THAT RELIGIOUS “; THE PARISHIONER WAS PUSHING BACK BECAUSE OF AN UNSPOKEN AGREEMENT THAT HE, THE PARISHIONER, WOULD DO THE BARE MINIMUM OF HIS RELIGIOUS DUTY AND THAT PEOPLE WHO WERE “ THAT RELIGIOUS” WERE PRIESTS AND NUNS, WHO WERE CALLED TO HOLINESS AND MISSION AND THAT IT WAS THEIR JOB TO EVANGELIZE. THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL SPOKE ABOUT THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS AND MISSION, BUT IN PRACTICE ORDINARY CATHOLICS JUST DO NOT DO, OR ARE UNABLE TO DO, THESE THINGS. FATHER MALLON CALL THIS CLERICALISM. BUT IF BY VIRTUE OF THEIR BAPTISM ALL CATHOLICS ARE CALLED TO HOLINESS AND MISSION, CLERICALISM IS ULTIMATELY A SUPPRESSION OF THE BAPTISMAL IDENTITY. PRIESTS AND NUNS BECOME SUPER – CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE SUPER-POWERS TO DO WHAT ORDINARY CHRISTIANS CANNOT. THIS LEADS TO TWO OUTCOMES; THE ISOLATION OF THE CLERGY AND THE IMMATUREITY OF THE BAPTIZED.

FATHER MALLON CONSIDERS THAT THIS CULTURE CONTRIBUTED TO THE SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS WHICH HAS CAUSED SO MUCH DAMAGE TO THE CHURCH. THE LAITY



WERE BLINDED BY A RELIGIOUS CULTURE THAT COULD NOT ADMIT HUMAN DEFECTS IN ITS LEADERS, WHILE THE CLERGY WERE IMMOBILISED BY THE NEED TO PROTECT THE REPUTATION OF THE CHURCH AT ALL COSTS, BECAUSE TO ALLOW THE EXTENT OF THE ROT TO COME TO LIGHT, WAS TO CALL INTO QUESTION THE ENTIRE SYSTEM.

WHILE SERVING AS A VOCATIONS DIRECTOR, FATHER MALLON OFTEN HEARD A CANDIDATE DESCRIBE AS A RELIGIOUS CALLING A DESIRE FOR A DEEPER PRAYER LIFE, TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEOLOGY, TO SERVE OTHERS AND TO HELP OTHERS COME TO KNOW CHRIST. THIS STRUCK HIM AS NOT A CALLING TO PRIESTHOOD BUT AS A CALLING TO LIVE OUT HIS BAPTISMAL CALL, WHICH SHOULD BE THE DESIRE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN. IN THE PAST OUR CATEGORIES IN CLERICALISM MADE NO SPACE FOR ANY CHRISTIANS WHO WANTED TO LIVE OUT THEIR BAPTISMAL CALLING TO THE FULL. SO IF SOMEONE WAS “THAT RELIGIOUS” THEY WERE SENT TO THE SEMINARY OR THE CONVENT, BECAUSE ORDINARY CATHOLICS JUST DID NOT DO ALL THAT WAS REQUIRED TO LIVE OUT THEIR BAPTISMAL CALLING.

SO WHAT DO ORDINARY CATHOLICS DO? FATHER MALLON’S ANSWER IS THAT THEY PRAY, PAY AND OBEY. THEY BECOME INVOLVED IN THE ORGANISATIONAL NEEDS OF THE PARISH AND THEY “PRACTISE” THEIR FAITH BY “ HEARING “ MASS ON SUNDAY. FOR MOST CATHOLICS THE BIBLE IS UNDISCOVERED TERRITORY. CLERICALISM OF THE PAST HAS LEFT MOST CATHOLICS IN SPIRITUAL INFANCY AND DID NOT EVEN BEGIN TO EQUIP THEM FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY.



EVEN IN THE ATTEMPT TO CHANGE IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE LAITY TURNED TO THE ONLY CATEGORIES OF MINISTRY KNOWN IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH, CLERICAL IN NATURE. SO FOR LAY PEOPLE BEING A LECTOR AT MASS, GIVING HOLY COMMUNION OR PRAYING PARTS OF THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER WERE CONSIDERED TO BE THE SUMMIT OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. THE TRUE LAY VOCATION WAS STILL IGNORED. THE "LAY APOSTOLATE " OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL BECAME THE " LAY MINISTRY", DEEPENING THE IDENTITY CRISIS BY LOSING THE " APOSTOLATE", THE GOING OUT AND THE SUBSTITUTION OF " MINISTRY", AS INWARD FACING. IN MANY PARISHES TODAY, MOST CATHOLICS ARE UNAWAKENED, PASSIVE CONSUMERS OF "RELIGION LITE ", IGNORANT OF THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THEIR FAITH, UNABLE TO FIND THEIR WAY AROUND A BIBLE AND WITH AN EXPERIENCE OF PRAYER THAT REMAINS LARGELY UNCHANGED FROM WHEN THEY WERE CHILDREN. WE WOULD NOT SO READILY ACCEPT CONTINUED IMMATURITY IN OUR CHILDREN, SO WHY DO WE HAVE SUCH TOLERANCE FOR LIFELONG PARISHIONERS STUCK IN SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY?

PART OF THE SOLUTION IS TO REDEFINE HOW WE THINK OF PASTORAL CARE, USUALLY THOUGHT OF AS GIVING CARE TO THE SICK, DYING OR GRIEVING, ALL IMPORTANT PASTORAL ACTIONS. BUT THE FIRST TASK OF THE PASTOR OR SHEPHERD IS TO FEED THE SHEEP, SO THAT THEY CAN GROW TO MATURITY. THAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PASTORAL CARE, TO BRING PEOPLE TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY, USING THE CHARISMS OR GIFTS THAT GOD GIVES TO THE CHURCH AS A



WHOLE, TO EQUIP IT FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY, NOT WITHIN THE CHURCH BUT GOING OUT TO OTHERS.

IN THE EARLY CHURCH, BEING A CHRISTIAN WAS A RISKY THING, BUT WITH THE PASSING OF TIME, TOLERANCE OF THE CHURCH GREW AND IT BECAME SOCIALLY RESPECTABLE AFTER IT WAS EMBRACED BY THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE. HOWEVER, THIS SOCIAL RESPECTABILITY LED TO SPIRITUAL DECLINE AS IT BECAME EASIER TO BE A FOLLOWER OF JESUS. THAT IN TURN LED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOVEMENTS WHICH CHOSE TO EMBRACE THE AUSTERITY OF SEMI – HERMETICAL LIFESTYLES, NOTABLY SAINT BENEDICT WHO SET UP A MONASTIC MOVEMENT THAT WOULD SPREAD OVER MOST OF THE KNOWN WORLD AT THAT TIME AND WITHIN 400 YEARS WOULD BECOME THE FOUNDATION OF MODERN EUROPE. FROM THIS POINT ON, THERE WAS CREATED A SCHISM IN THE HEART OF THE CHURCH BY WHICH THOSE WHO SOUGHT TO BE AUTHENTIC DISCIPLES “JOINED THE CHURCH “THROUGH THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OR ORDAINED MINISTRY AND ORDINARY CATHOLICS WHO WERE “JUST NOT THAT RELIGIOUS” “WENT TO CHURCH “.

AFTER 300 YEARS OR SO, THE POPULARITY OF CHRISTIAN CULTURE HAS NOW ENDED AND IT IS ONCE AGAIN UNPOPULAR TO BE A CHRISTIAN. THEREFORE IT MUST BE A TIME OF REDISCOVERING THE ESSENTIAL IDENTITY OF ALL THE BAPTIZED TO BE MISSIONARY DISCIPLES, CALLED TO KNOW JESUS AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN. IT IS TIME FOR ALL WHO FOLLOW JESUS TO HEED THE CALL TO MATURITY AND TO BE EQUIPPED FOR SERVICE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH THAT TAKES THEM FAR FROM THE ALTAR FROM WHICH THEY ARE SENT EVERY SUNDAY.



IN THIS CHAPTER WE HAVE REFLECTED ON TWO OF THE MAJOR OBSTACLES TO FORMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES: PELAGIANISM AND CLERICALISM. WE HAVE LOOKED WITH HONESTY AT THE ACUTE NEED FOR RENEWAL IN OUR CHURCH AND HAVE CLEARED THE FLOOR OF THE JUNK THAT HINDERS OUR ABILITY TO TRULY RECEIVE AND LIVE THE GOSPEL. NOW WE CAN GO OUT FROM OURSELVES, INVITING SOME TO RETURN AND OTHERS TO ENTER FOR THE FIRST TIME.