

January 2013

Dear Friends,

As we begin another year it is good for us to ponder the question that Our Blessed Lord posed to Simon Peter, "Who do you say I am?"

Let us ask Our Lady to truly reply with faith, the words of the Apostle, "You are the Christ the Son of the Living God"

If Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Christ for us, then our lives should show him to the world. The early Church attracted converts from the pagan world, because of the goodness and love shown by the early Christians. Through the centuries we have seen the witness of countless holy men, women and children who have offered their lives for Our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen this in the history of the Third Order. Countless laity lived their baptism by the Franciscan path. Their Catholic Faith was real to them. It was about real relationships to real persons, the Lord, Mary and the saints.

St Francis entrusted the Order to Our Lady and knew the power of her intercession. The Mother of God calls us to live in this relationship to the Holy Trinity and offers us her maternal help and guidance. Given to us by Jesus from the cross, to be our Mother how can we refuse her love and intercession for us. The Blessed Virgin intercedes for us to remain faithful To Christ and to allow the Holy Spirit to live through us in the gifts of baptism and confirmation. Please God! We seek to co operate with the Lord to work through us, sustained by the inspiration of St Francis and St Clare. We hope to be instruments of the good news of salvation in a world where so many are ensnared by false hopes and lies, the gods of pleasure, wealth and lust which lead to eternal darkness. Only the Gospel of Christ can bring true human fulfilment and freedom for all, and to experience their dignity as children of our Father in Heaven.

Only Christ is the way, the truth and the life not crystals, card reading, mediums, gurus, tree spirits, new age etc. He founded one Church which is the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Yes in this world, she is wounded. We are all aware of shortcoming betrayals and failures and the terrible scandals of some her clerical and religious members. Now more than ever, our Seraphic Father, would want his children to pray for the sanctification of priests and religious, and that these horrors will not afflict future youth and their families .Our Lady stands as the Image of the Church calling all us not to look sideways, and give way to the voices that call us away from the Cross. The Blessed Virgin calls us to keep ourselves united with Christ's Church and to keep our eyes on Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, crucified and risen. This is what St Francis did, when so many in his time turned away from the Church, because of scandal and internal corruption.

Let us pray, when the Caesars of his world demand our adoration, we kneel only before Christ the King, not political or social agendas, which oppose the law of God. Do we witness to the Gospel of life? Do we defend the unborn, the elderly. Do we care for the poor and oppressed in our world? Do we support the traditional Jewish/Christian understanding of Marriage as revealed to us by the Word of God? Are we concerned about how many millions of people still go without food in our world and yet others have so much and so much food is wasted. Surely Christ weeps!

In many of our families we see so many of our loved ones, who have drifted from Christ. What can we do? Pray! Pray! Pray! and pray. Yes only God can judge. Only He can see into the soul, but we must never presume salvation. He is Merciful, but how many have closed their souls to His grace and the forgiveness of sins. In our society when sin is no longer recognised. Our Lord did say “Go and sin no more” That is why more than ever we need to entrust our loved ones and those who have left their Fathers House, to the Divine Mercy of Jesus Christ and to the care of Our Lady. We often don’t like hearing these words, as often we have just want everything to be nice and we feel good. But the words of Christ from the Gospel are not always to comfort, but also to challenge and indeed rebuke! Let us not ceasing praying for others to return to Christ and the sacraments!

St Maximilian Maria Kolbe a Conventual Franciscan, was concerned for our times and stated through our entrustment to Our Lady the Immaculata, we will be guided to be faithful to Christ, when so many reject and oppose Him. The Blessed Virgin Mary calls us to pray, do penance and to show the mercy and love of Christ. “Father forgive them for they do not know what they do.”

St Maximilian urged all to pray daily this prayer to Our Lady for those opposed to the Kingdom of Christ; “O Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to you and for all who do not have recourse to you, especially for the enemies of Holy Church and those recommended to you”.

So as we begin the New Year with the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, let us entrust all of humanity, to Our Lady’s maternal care.

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