

Zapped

by the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Dear Friends of the Heart of Christ,

We are all on a journey. There is no one on the face of this earth who will not leave it at one point in the future. No matter how many wonderful technological advances improve our life or looks, eventually our bodies wear out and stop working. The Church pauses during this month of November to exhort us to pray for the faithful departed and to remind us that our bodies are not made to last forever. Only our immortal souls, created by God, are made for his everlasting Kingdom, our true home. There and only there will we be completely and permanently enveloped by the love and peace of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. While here on earth, we have the ability to direct our paths to the Lord and his Kingdom or to avert our paths in another direction. And many of us, even those with good intentions, chose paths that lead us astray and away from God's truth. Remember, the Lord has not created robots. Therefore, with our God-given liberty we can use our free-wills to make a choice for God and his ways or against God and his commandments. There are no in-betweens. As Jesus tells us: "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters (Mt 12:30).

As we travel along life's pathways, many, many circumstances arise that require us to make choices. How do we make them? Are we inclined to make our decisions according to our individual impulses or for personal gain for ourselves, family or friends, or for social and financial advancement? Or are the criteria for the choices we make in life according to the laws of God, to the movements of the Holy Spirit, to fair and altruistic treatment of others, to the moral and ethical values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Looking back over our spiritual journeys, I'd propose that many of us are *tempted* to make our decisions according to the first method. Aren't we all inclined to put ourselves "first?" The following true story is a good example of what can happen in this regard.

In his recent book, Dr. Rajiv Parti shares his story of how his speciality, heart surgery anesthesia, and its lucrative benefits propelled him to the realm of greed and self-absorption. His expertise in the medical world that has made so many advances in technology had a deleterious affect on his spiritual life. He relates how he grew to see his patients not as people who required his dedicated services but as numbers and dollar signs and stepping stones to his own advancement. His ultimate goal was using them to obtain a huge house, luxury cars and his own prestige. Then the Sacred Heart of Jesus zapped him. And he "died." In 2010, two days before Christmas, he was rushed to the hospital with a severe infection caused by a recent medical procedure. The infection had spread to his blood and he clinically "died" from it. He relates: "My world turned dark." He saw himself hovering above his body and experienced great fear. "I was drawn in," he explains, "as if on a moving sidewalk that took me to the edge of this flaming canyon... I was on the lip of hell. I tried to turn and I couldn't. I tried to move back but couldn't. Every time I took a step back, an unseen force moved me forward, leaving me with a horrific view of the most agonizing place one could ever imagine." Then he heard a powerful voice speak these words, "You have led a materialistic and selfish life." Shame filled him for he knew how true it was. He had seen his patients as profit centers who could give him wealth and prestige in exchange for his services as an anesthesiologist. These stories are related in his book, *Dying to Wake Up*. They illustrate so well that it is not only sins like murder or adultery that violate God's laws. It is also how we treat others. We are all susceptible to selfishness and motivated so readily by personal profit. And someday, we will all have to face the consequences of our decisions.

So there are occasions in our lives when the Lord needs to zap us to get us back on the right track. To zap, in this case, means to strike with supernatural power. Have you ever wondered if the Lord, in his infinite wisdom, has ever zapped you or someone you know with his supernatural power? Think back over the years. Were there times when you were on the verge of doing something really "stupid" and then something happened to keep you from making a serious mistake? Perhaps as time went by

you realized, with gratitude, how you were prevented from committing a big blunder in your life. Now you can only breathe a sigh of relief to the good Lord for alerting you. Or perhaps the Lord really had to zap you hard (or someone you love) to bring you to your senses. How true it is that sometimes our all-knowing Lord has to wake us up by allowing misfortunes to come our way in order to save us from ourselves.

In today's world we are constantly bombarded by the latest materialistic fads, entertainments and fast talk. Agents of the world's values want to persuade us that they have the answers to our unfulfilled desires, our fervent hopes and our pressing problems. They want to tell us how we should think and act to become a relevant and productive child of the universe. Such meaningless rhetoric is forced upon us whenever we express the least doubt about whether it is really good for our souls. This is when we truly have to latch on to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and put all our trust in his power to overcome the ways of the world and its temporary fixes in our lives. Turning to the Heart of Jesus, think of the sage advice of St. Margaret Mary: "You should be careful not to resist the Sacred Heart nor to place any obstacles in the way of His design." Translated, this means that we are to be open to God and his way of doing things, because if we really want only what God wants, then he will take care of things. Margaret Mary gives us further advice as we face life's perplexities. She says, "Let your occupation be to love Him." This is so important to keep in mind because the Sacred Heart can use the power of our love for him to change things. Yes, we have to trust in the Lord, believe in his presence among us, make time for him during our day and follow his lead, making sure that his gospel counsels and commandments are the lights that guide our ways. But we should never, ever underestimate the power of our love for him and the power of our prayer that appeals directly to his Sacred Heart.

In our busy, complicated lives, it's so easy to forget that our God is love and supremely cares about each and every soul. Yet, God's ways are not our ways. What may appear to be disastrous in our eyes, can easily be turned around and used for good in God's providence. And God does indeed work in strange and mysterious ways. A Catholic mom by the name of Sondra Abrahams recounts her engrossing story after a devastating experience. Raised a Catholic, she eventually fell away from practicing her faith, except for a continued devotion to the Blessed Mother and the rosary. At age 30, she had major cancer surgery and received a new drug to help her with her recovery. Only, her body totally rejected it and she was rushed to the hospital, going into cardiac arrest. "Suddenly," she says, "I was pulled through the ceiling and felt myself going from one dimension to another." She describes it as being yanked through her body and pulled into a tunnel where she could see a little tiny light ahead. Everything in her wanted to get to that light and as she got closer and closer, the light became brighter and brighter, to reveal that the light was Christ. Then Jesus put his arms around her. She declares, "He wasn't a spirit; He was real... I remember and could feel his love—a consuming love. It was in every pore of my being. I felt his love and compassion." Then she was shown a review of her life and every time she did something good, she could feel his love and joy; but when she did something bad, she felt his intense hurt and pain. Sondra says, "He showed me my whole life. But he never stopped loving me. His mercy is enormous." The Lord asked her if she was satisfied with her life. She told him "no" and he said that she would have more opportunities. Then Jesus showed her hell, purgatory and heaven. After these experiences, she looked down and saw the filth of her soul. When Sondra told Jesus she loved him, she was slammed back into her body. She had been "dead" for two minutes, but her experience completely changed her into a fervent disciple of and evangelist for Christ.

After her near death ordeal, Sondra says that numerous deceased souls came to ask for her prayers. She did not know, of course, who she was praying for. One night a soul came to her and requested prayers because he said the prayers people had been saying for him stopped. His name was Victor. Soon after this experience, Sondra was interviewed on a TV show and announced during the show that whoever was related to Victor needed to keep praying for him. A short time later, she received a call from two sisters in New York who said Victor was their dad and that the day she had been on TV was their dad's death anniversary. They had indeed stopped praying for him but started up again. Later, they found out that he had eventually been released from purgatory.

Recently I completed the reading of a book entitled: *Tears of Repentance: True Experiences in a Greek Taxi Cab*. The book was written by a Greek man who had a gradual but thorough conversion back to the life of faith in Jesus Christ in the Greek Orthodox Church. One day on the job driving his taxi, a priest flagged him down. The priest was carrying a Holy Chalice, on his way to give communion to the sick. Thanasi, the cab driver, who was living a very worldly life, humbly asked to kiss the Holy Chalice. At that moment, he says, a crack formed on the surface of his hardened heart. For many days afterward, he could not get the Holy Chalice out of his mind. So deeply entrenched were his sins into his existence, that it took some time before things really started to change. But the voice of his conscience had been awakened and he heard it saying to him: "Thanasi, what are you doing? What course are you on? Where are your footsteps taking you? What are these things you are doing?" From a life that was filled with lust, cheating in his job and chronic sin, the Lord zapped the heart of this taxi driver to become an ardent follower of his who now uses his taxi business to spread the saving word of God among his clients. The book is filled with true stories of men and women caught in the problems and dilemmas of everyday life who are gently helped to sincere repentance by the transformed taxi driver.

Our world is badly in need of being zapped by the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Surrounded by convincing voices that tell us they have the answers to all our problems, we are led into believing that the doctrines of our secular world are the way to happiness and peace. But beware of such enticements. How we need to be focused on the Sacred Heart of Jesus at this time in our history. He is the true way to happiness and peace and will triumph in the end. +

This talk on Sacred Heart spirituality was given in our Gathering Room on November 6th 2016. If you would like to attend similar presentations by the sisters, our next talk will be held on Sunday, December 4th at 4:00 p.m.