



Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

A Dark and Deadly Belief

GUILT & SHAME

Habiliments of the dead

“I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.” (Isaiah 42.6-7)

Blessed words! Hope beyond measure! *Listen ...*

“to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.”

How many of us live in the tomb from which Christ called Lazarus!

Bound by our fears, our shame, all the sins that we have spun around us like winding cloths upon the dead, binding us to the point of paralysis, throttling our voices, covering our eyes — smothering us to life, **we are as the living dead.** The mess we have made of our lives! The sins of which we are guilty! The shame that burns on our faces! We dare not approach the exit from the tomb, dare not venture out into the light, but like leprous dead, we tie the cords around us more tightly with every passing year ...

Prisoners of our Guilt and Shame

Is there a fate worse than this? A greater mutilation? A death more terrible? To die before we die? **To imprison ourselves in our guilt when God Himself calls us out?** The light, we fear, will do more than blind us who are so accustomed to

darkness and death — it will *reveal* us — uncover all our shame, our guilt, our lies, our deceit, our sin!

Only *that* long-cherished and deadly belief is the pain worse than the living death; it is *this* pain, this mistaken anticipation of *greater* pain still, that keeps the rock across the exit of our tombs!

But what has God told us? *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow.”* (Isaiah 1.18) You are forgiven! *Forgiven!* It is past, done, forgotten, erased. *They are no more! ... “Behold, I make all things new!”* (Apocalypse 21.5)

We who live in the dungeons we have carved out of the guilt and sin in our lives; we who dwell in darkness that knows no light because it knows no forgiveness — this week begin to understand that the Light has come! It bids us come forth! It calls us to leave the death we have chosen, to sunder the cables of sin that lacerate our hearts! To throw off the habiliments ... habiliments of the dead that have no place upon the living.

Yes, you were once dead in sin — but no more! If the Son of Man sets you free, you are free indeed! If He forgives, who can condemn? If He remembers no more, who

will recall what is no more?

Do not look at men! Do not look at those surrounding the valley of death in which you have set your tomb — fix your eyes upon Him Who stands in the middle of it — at the very gate of your tomb ... and calls you out! He sets you free! *When you emerge all the burial clothes that you have wound so tightly around yourself will fall to your feet ... and you will step out, and know Life* — for Christ Himself calls you forth from the dead!

There are two deaths of two deaths. One is holy and one is not.

There are those who, for the sake of God, die to themselves for the Kingdom, while yet alive, and *live...* these are the holy.

And there are those who, for the sake of men, die before they die, never knowing life, and while yet alive are *dead*. This is the ugliness of sin that mutilates us and brings corruption even to to living flesh!

He calls.

Do not worry if you are found naked when the shroud falls to the ground: you will be clothed in new life. In Jesus Christ Himself — in Whom death is no longer ...

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