



# Boston Catholic Journal

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## Choosing to be Hated for Christ



"They will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of My Name" (Saint Luke 21.16-17)

**You can be loved for His Name – or hated for it.**

**Ultimately you must choose.**

**"You will be hated by all because of My Name"**

**Is this still as true today** as it was 2000 years ago?

Are we naïve in taking Christ at His word – as so many of today's "progressive" Catholics (clergy and laity alike) appear to suggest? In our militantly secular society, are these words as prophetic to us as they were during the great periods of persecution that the nascent Church suffered under Diocletian? In a word, what is the cost to a Catholic ... to being a Catholic?

How likely is it that we, "will be hated by all because of His Name"? Until very recently, it had not been our experience to be the object of malice *because* of Christ ... for Christ's sake, for His Name. The social and political climate up until now --- which is to say, until the totally unanticipated emergence of Islam as a violent, and increasingly viable anti-Christian alternative to the stultifying decadence of the West --- and our rather *casual* association with Christ and His Church engendered nothing greater than an occasional distaste as for some disagreeable pudding. In fact, our experiences had largely been positive --- *not in light of the authentic Christ* ---but rather, in light of the god we had created in our own dissolute image and christened as our postmodern "Redeemer".

You are quite familiar with the *post-Conciliar* Church and the stunted image of Jesus Christ that emerged from it. He is non-judgmental, extremely sensitive to all our perversity, and *totally* understanding --- that is to say, possessed of that consummate understanding that reconciles all contradictions --- readily expunging any distinction between good and evil. Indeed, He understands us almost as well as our psychoanalysts and social workers before whom our conduct is not interpretable in terms of right and wrong, good and evil ... or even sane and insane. "All-understanding", in this context, we must realize, has nothing to do with "*understanding*" at all --- at least in any epistemological sense. It is much closer to, if not really synonymous with, "*All-accepting*".

Jesus, "*our Jesus*" (as distinct from the historical Jesus), is an "all loving", "*unconditionally* forgiving", highly emotional, and totally avuncular deity – and who could possibly be hated for the sake of so innocuous a being? As was apposite for the social milieu of the 60's, He was effectively construed as a Flower-Child despite its Haight-Ashbury prototype having fallen into well deserved disrepute in the ensuing years. As the historical Jesus was unrecognizable on the Cross 2000 years ago, He remains, apparently, unrecognizable today.

For the past 50 years or so, we have, in a sense, made Him up as we have gone along, embellishing this and trimming that until we no longer remember the Original --- the "stuff" from which we began endlessly re-fabricating Him closer to our hearts (and often our loins) desires.

## **Hated for His Name ...?**

Today, at best, we are politely *tolerated in spite of* the Name of Christ --- although if there is a living to be made off it, we can earn theological degrees by "correctly" articulating the endlessly unfolding metamorphosis of Jesus as the whims of our culture demand --- even take jobs in Catholic schools and social agencies, become His "Lay Ministers of this, that, and the other" – and even get paid for them, often rather handsomely!

The "modern Catholic", where possible, makes his *living* off the Name – certainly not his *dying* on its account. Like those who basked in His glory upon His Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem, we strum our guitars and clash our cymbals, robustly singing His praise and proclaiming His Name when it wins us the adulation of the masses. But on that lonely Way to the hill of all our Crosses, littered with insult, abuse, shame and phlegm--- where its *costs* to be His disciples --- we flee, lest we "suffer for the Name", still less die *for* it... and *because* of it! <sup>1</sup>

The priest in the aisle (in the style of today's Talk Show Host), the bishop at the pulpit, the comfortable (if diminishing) congregation in the pews, understand this. Fearing that the authentic challenge of Christ, the inescapable contradiction of Christ to the world and all that is around them, will alienate the faithful, they bring to them a Christ with no Cross, a promise with no price, a victory with no battle, the certainty of salvation without the scandal of any sin --- lest under the prospect of that fearful shadow of the Cross the faithful bolt, leaving the hireling with no flock. Who, after all, wishes to learn the most fundamental fact that they must suffer for Christ ... as Christ suffered for them? The days of the Martyrs, after all, had ended long ago, no?

The problem with this routine encounter, however, is that *it is not what Christ promised His followers*. And His track record in the way of things prophetic, such as the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD by the Romans, for which He was scorned even on the Cross --- has been pretty good; in fact, unerring!

The "Flock" have largely been left to fend for themselves since the shepherds have been away on more ... pressing ... errands at the Chanceries around the world. So *many* "commissions" to attend to! For peace and justice, women's empowerment, animal rights, planet-earth issues, photo-ops, and lately even commissioning women "Ecclesial Ministers" (the latest novelty concocted by the bishops, as you count them --- and in case you never heard of them --- there are about 30,000 --- they are "co-workers with the bishop" since he is off ... well, commissioning others to do *his* work. It is an odd kind of work: "working" to get others to do "your work" ...)

## **The Wolf at the Gate: a Crescent-shaped Scimitar Rising in the East**

The Flock is largely untended and have grown quite disorderly, and without direction have wandered into dangerous paths. Many have been lost altogether. But more worrisome still is the untended Gate. The hireling, as we have said, has fled --- to hire more hirelings, who really care nothing for the sheep. The wolf knows this. In fact he is already at the Gate. What is more, he is ready and willing to exact a *real cost* for "the Name of Jesus" --- which you must disavow or lose your head --- quite literally. Do you doubt the scarlet zeal of Islam? You had better pull your head out of the sand before losing it! <sup>2</sup> Islam is the fastest growing "religion" today. In fact, CNN, the doggedly secular news outlet, tells us in the article, "[Fast-growing Islam winning](#)

converts in Western world" that "In the United States, for example, nearly 80 percent of the more than 1,200 mosques have been built in the past 12 years." And the converts come from the West!

The Gate has been let open. Unguarded and unguided, the sheep are lured or stray to other pastures (or deserts) because "they no longer hear the voice of the shepherd" --- your bishop --- and subsequently "no longer recognize it."<sup>4</sup> The teachings of the Church, of Christ --- the *authentic teachings* of the *authentic* Christ --- are no longer transmitted, taught, or proclaimed with any sense of urgency ... or even certainty. Your children do not know Christ, still less His Church. When Christ spoke of "the fields white to harvest"<sup>5</sup>, He was speaking of your children ... of you! Of your bishops and priests ... not of a Mullah with scimitar-as-scythe in his hand, ready to reap what he did not sow, and for the reed that does not bend, cut it to the root!

It has become entirely too comfortable to be a Christian these days. But a change is coming ... it is at the door ... and the *cost* of being a Catholic, a Christian --- long deferred and spent in dissolution --- will be called to account with a new master at the table where the bishops left the keys ... and a ledger with long debits.

*While you can* ... you can be loved for "The Name" -- or hated for it. Ultimately you must choose. But you cannot choose the terms. They have already been chosen for you ... by Christ Himself, Who *promised* that those who followed Him would be hated by the world ... not loved by it ... just as He was.<sup>3</sup>

Don't take my word for it. Take Christ's.

So where do you stand on the matter, and more importantly, beside *whom* --- "the world" ... or Christ? Take a good inventory of your own situation vis-à-vis "the world", and make the assessment yourself. If "the world" lauds you, takes you its bosom as one of its own --- if you are *loved* and not *hated* for the Name of Christ, if you are not disdained and marginalized because you belong to *Him* and not to the world --- you have much to be concerned about, despite the false assurances of those "of the world" who say that they are "in Christ" and see nothing of the contradiction.

Smug in our assurances that it will not cost us our blood<sup>6</sup>, we in the West know nothing --- *yet* -- - of the cost of being a Catholic. Archbishop Ignatius A. Kaigama of the Archdiocese of Jos, Nigeria, who has ... far fewer "committees" and less pressing errands ... than our own bishops, knows better. His flock is little and loses everything for the sake of Christ. We are many and have much and loose Christ for the sake of anything.

We do not have to go to Africa to know the cost of being Catholic. Relax. In time --- but ineluctably --- it will come to us.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 5.41 "So they [the Apostles] went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His Name"

<sup>2</sup> **From the Koran:**

- **Sura 4.89:** "They desire that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved, so that you might be (all) alike; therefore take not from among them friends until they fly (their homes) in Allah's way; but if they turn back, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take not from among them a friend or a helper.
- **Sura 8.12:** When your Lord revealed to the angels: I am with you, therefore make firm those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them.
- **Sura 9.5:** So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful
- **Sura 17.16-17:** When we decide to destroy a population, we send a definite order to them who have the good things in life and yet transgress; so that Allah's word is proved true against them: then we destroy them utterly. How many generations have we destroyed after Noah? And enough is thy Lord to note and see the Sins of his servants.

<sup>3</sup> Saint Matthew 10.22: "... and ye shall be hated of all on account of My Name."

<sup>4</sup> Saint John 10.5 and 10.27: "My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me ... But a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers."

<sup>5</sup> Saint John 4.35

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 12.4

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