



# 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

## “Set Apart” A Breached Garden Wall

*“God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love you have demonstrated for His Name by having served and continuing to serve the holy ones.  
(Hebrews 6:10-12)*



“... the love you have demonstrated for His Name by having served and continuing to serve the holy ones.”

**Think of it.** We demonstrate our love for God by serving *His holy ones*. What is more, we are encouraged to be imitators of them.

Let's sort this out a bit.

## **Who are His “holy ones”?**

It is vital for us to know, for we, who are to serve them, are to be imitators of them! Who, then, are they? It is a sad indictment of us that we no longer know the answer. Is it not true that, as you had read the question just put to you, you are uncertain; you had questioned yourself, unclear of who, precisely, these “holy ones” are.

Our parents would have lingered less on the question, and our grandparents would not have hesitated at all. They knew.

## **Set Apart**

His “Holy Ones” are just whom you suspect them to be ... but have been taught to dismiss. They are — *or should be* — our Priests, our Consecrated and Cloistered Nuns, our Friars and Monks, our *recognizable* Sisters. Those who have renounced all things of this world and devoted themselves to God alone, and in God, to us for

our salvation. Oh, yes, there are countless lay men and woman who lead holy and exemplary lives for “the sake of the Kingdom,” who have renounced themselves, taken up their Crosses and follow in Christ’s footsteps. Most often we do not see them ... or recognize them ... for in their humility and self-effacement they are hidden from the world and known but to their confessors and few others. And, of course, to God. These we do not know and therefore cannot serve.

However, there are some, as we have said, to whom God has called to the Priesthood and Religious Vocations. We have clear expectations of them, for God Himself does. They are to be His face, his hands, his voice in the world. Their vocation is particularly difficult in a way not experienced by the “hidden ones”, for we *expect* holiness of them. They, too, have been set apart by God for Himself. These are God’s holy ones ... “*set apart*”, as the word “holy” etymologically indicates; an etymology which also implies “*that [which] must be preserved whole or intact, that [which] cannot be transgressed or violated,*” \*

As our Church here in America and elsewhere moves toward redefining itself in terms of a militantly “correct” egalitarian and democratic vision, the notion itself of “being set apart” has become more and more marginalized. As the distinction between Lay and Religious becomes increasingly permeable, each assuming the role of the other, it effectively becomes increasingly meaningless. Our priests and

nuns, seemingly humiliated by their association with Jesus Christ and contemptuous of their own vocation, attempt to become more and more Lay, secular, indistinguishable, “less set apart” from the laity, while certain of the more “progressive” laity, astutely observing the obvious vacuum crying to be filled, clamor to fill the void the Religious have left and eagerly become “Ministers of this and that” ... in other words, to be “set apart”. The reversal of roles would be comical were it not tragic.

This emerging “Egalitarian Church” is one in which God has no favorites: there are no sinners, and therefore there are no Saints. All are on a level playing field, including God Himself. The concept of “set apart” becomes repugnant to its democratic instincts, and so it abolishes all that is “set apart”, which is to say, it abolishes the “holy”.

## **Trading Sanctity for Democracy**

The problem – to the consternation of not a few – is that the Church is *not* a democracy, but a Theocracy: a hierarchy from God to the Angels to the Saints to the Sinners. Each has their place. Some are immutable, unchangeable. Men cannot become Angels. They cannot hold a plebiscite and vote themselves Angelic. There is an ontic distinction, a distinction in nature that is not susceptible to democratic

change. Some are less so: sinners can become Saints. Men can become Priests. Women can become Nuns. The fact of the matter remains nevertheless clear: it is not a democracy devoid of distinctions. Men are not women, and women are not angels and Seraphim are not Cherubim, and theologians are not God, and apart from a few notable exceptions, men and women are not demons. *All* are set apart. Theologically, it is what we understand as the “Divine Economy”.

### ***But not all are set apart by God and for God***

Even among those chosen, the thistle grows with the grain – and even threatens to choke the Garden altogether. How few worthy Priests and Nuns we find today. How few are faithful to and zealous of their vocations. Finding the garment of holiness ill-fitting and not at all to their liking, they toss it aside and adorn themselves as the world does. They cease being “set apart” – *but keep the titles for the prerogatives*. “Priests” in tweed jackets and no collars, “Sisters” in Wall Street power suits, whole Communities indistinguishable from the profane and “stylish” world around them. It is, after all, condign, for they *are* no longer “set apart”. It is, in a word, logical: the ineluctable conclusion to premises that have replaced promises.

***Nevertheless – some remain.*** They will always remain. A fragment. A remnant of

the beautifully embroidered train of the King that has been dragged through the mud. By and large, you will know them when you see them. They will look like the “**holy ones**” we had once known, our parents had known, our ancestors had known for 2000 years.

*They do not look like the world because they are not **of** the world.* Ever faithful to their Spouse, they have held to His Word ... *they are not of the world.* And for this, the world – especially their own more “progressive” counterparts – hate them. It must be so. *“If they hate you. remember that they hated me first”* (St. John 15.18)

These are the “Holy Ones”. It is these, serving *us*, whom we ourselves are called to serve, for in serving them, we serve God. Serve the Spouse, and you serve Him to Whom they are Espoused.

And all the willing and voting, the “Federations”, and social devices of women and men cannot make it otherwise. God Himself has willed it, and it is He Himself Who sets them “apart” ... *for Himself* ... and, ultimately, through their holy lives and prayers, for *our* sake.

This vexes us. Even angers us. It is the same malice that Cain knew when He saw God’s predilection, His special love for Abel. And our solution, the solution of the

“Egalitarian Church”, is effectively the same as Cain’s response to God’s special love for Abel: kill the beloved, abolish it, outlaw it, extinguish it, stamp it out. *All* must be acceptable and equal in God’s sight. None set apart. None “special”. It offends us. It is not ... “correct.”

This was also the response of Jacob’s 11 sons to Israel’s predilection for Joseph.

It was so from the beginning.

It remains so now.

How, then, shall we serve His “*holy ones*” who serve *us* day and night, in sleepless vigils, foodless days, in real poverty and prayer?

*Sow the Garden!* Encourage vocations to *authentic* Religious life. There is nothing more beautiful this side of Heaven. And you know it. Your children, your sons, your daughters, your friends, those you love most ... those most dear to you ... send them! *To the Garden!* God’s Garden. The place He has "set apart", for those whom He has "set apart" to be holy ... even as He is Holy.

Are these the *only* “holy ones”? No. Of course not. But they are the most conspicuous. Now more than ever we need conspicuity, a standing out and *apart*

*from the insipid, the monotonous, the indistinguishable ... the inconspicuous in  
Christ who, having made terms with the world, and have become an effrontery to  
God.*

Geoffrey K. Mondello  
Editor  
Boston Catholic Journal



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