



# Priestly People

WE ALL ARE THE PRIESTLY PEOPLE OF GOD. TOGETHER, WE ARE LEADERS IN RESPONDING TO THE EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF PRIESTS AND BROTHERS.

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## Dear Priestly People

It seems strange to begin a Christmas letter with scripture quotes from the book of Lamentations. But these are strange times in our Church requiring extraordinary graces.

I invite those reading this edition of "Priestly People" to reflect on the following passages from the Book of Lamentations - 5:1-22. In them we hear a plea for the redemption of the people.

"Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us,  
look, and see our disgrace..."

"The joy of our hearts has ceased, our dance has turned into mourning..."

"Lead us back to you O Lord, that we may be restored: give us anew such days as we had of old."

Redemption begins in the heart of God and becomes manifest in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It continues when we recognize our sinful ways and return to our Heavenly Father, ultimately seeking reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance.

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child into a sinful and broken world in need of redemption. Each day the Savior who came to save us and set us free makes His Divine Presence known and felt in our lives. We are a sinful and broken church. We are a church in desperate need of healing. And we are God's beloved children, sisters and brothers of the Lord Jesus whose birth we believe brings hope, peace, healing and joy to the world.

We are a church that has known triumph and tragedy. We have survived the trials and tribulations of the last two millennia because we trusted in God's Divine Providence and in the words of his Son Jesus who said that the gates of hell would not prevail against

his church. We have had Popes who became saints and bishops who have failed us. We have walked in the footsteps of the Lord led by priests who have been selfless, kind and caring shepherds. And we have been wounded by priests who have abused our bodies and our souls by breaking sacred trust.

Even before his birth in Bethlehem, Jesus, while still in the womb of Our Blessed Mother, knew the sufferings we all experience in our humanity. The Holy Family had to flee to Egypt for their very survival. From then until now people have fled the ravages of war and poverty, abuse and neglect, terrorism and genocide. And there are those who have fled and continue to flee from the church they once loved because they have been hurt and are angry and disillusioned.

But we are a church that desires peace and justice. We seek the grace of divine healing. From among us God raises up prophets who exhort us to relieve suffering and preach the good news of the Gospel. For far too long we have forgotten the One who calls us and we have forsaken the mission given to us when we were baptized. We have become slaves to the ways of the world and forsaken our true vocations. We have chosen to worship the gods of clericalism, power, money, sex, alcohol, drugs and self-will. We have refused to walk humbly with our God.

Today there are prophets of doom and gloom who see catastrophe at every turn. Many would say they have plenty of reason to take a dim and pessimistic view of the Catholic Church. They hear our preaching and teaching and they watch how we live. They see incongruities that leave them scandalized, incapable of trust and unwilling to accept the status quo. And then there are those who believe that we, as a church, are trying to do everything we can to follow the Lord

and preserve all that is sacred to us. Jesus faced all the same things we might feel discouraged and upset by. He was persecuted and reviled yet he did not flee from His mission. Instead He generously gave himself as a sacrificial lamb so we could enjoy the gift of salvation.

For many people Christmas is a time for mangers and carols, lights and trees, shopping and gift giving, food and festivities. But it is also a time for faith, church, prayer, family and friends. It is not a time to flee from the church. It is rather, a time to embrace the church in her humanity and call her to accountability and conversion of heart. This call to radical conversion must come from all believers, laity, religious, priests and bishops. It has already been shouted out to the world by our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who continually reminds us what our true vocation is.

As we look at the mangers in our homes and parish churches let us reflect on the profound reality that the church is a family of faith where we are all supposed to feel and be welcome and safe.

Once again I suggest we read from the book of Lamentations - 3:1-33.

When we are embarrassed by the failures of our shepherds, when anger and hurt overwhelm us, when we feel like fleeing and following those who have given up not only on the church but also on God, let us remember the following.

“The favors of the Lord are not exhausted,  
his mercies are not spent;

They are renewed each morning,  
so great is his faithfulness.

My portion is the Lord, says my soul;  
therefore will I hope in him.

Good is the Lord to one who waits for him,  
to the soul that seeks him;

It is good to hope in silence  
for the saving help of the Lord.”

Let us thank our Heavenly Father for the gift of His only Son who wants us to be as safe in our family of faith as He was in his holy family. And as we look at the image of the baby Jesus let us remember that there is nothing more sacred than the innocence of a child. In God’s eyes we are all his children, no matter how old we get, no matter how flawed, broken, and sinful we are. Let us walk always in faith with hearts full of hope, and with souls ready to love God and one another.

Thanks for supporting us in our ministry as we do our part to sanctify the church through our prayers and good works for Christ in His Priests, helping to make the church a safer, healthier and holier Family of Faith.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your families.

Thank you & God bless you!

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