

ROGATE / THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Text: St. John 16:23-33

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Please allow me to make one thing perfectly clear, it is by the Name, JESUS CHRIST, who is the SON of the living God, the Stone which was rejected but has become the Chief Cornerstone; in His Name alone is to be found salvation, and in no other, *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus....”* There is no other way to heaven. There is no one else to worship, save the devil himself. There is no other name in which one should pray.

But this is not the message of the world, indeed, it is not even the message preached in all of Christendom. The message we and our children are bombarded with every day, from nearly every source, be it television, radio, newspaper, magazine, internet, or what have you, is that there are many paths to heaven and eternal life, and they are all equally valid. This message claims that there is a pantheon of acceptable gods to choose from. And if you make any claim to the contrary, well, you are just ignorant and uninformed at best, or at worst, you are a hateful bigot.

Spiritually, our world is not much different from those of the days of pagan Rome. One method used by the Emperors of ancient Rome to subdue and pacify conquered people was to allow them to keep their religion and their gods. This practice eventually led to various gods and religious customs being absorbed into Roman religious customs and practices. All religions were deemed acceptable as long as no one religion made any exclusive claims. One could bow down to one’s god or gods, as long as one was willing to bow down to the gods of Rome as well.

So it is even today. Christians can worship whom they want, how they want. Just do not make any claims that the Christian God is the One True God. Christians can worship whom they want, how they want. Just do not make such a public display of your beliefs; your faith is to be practiced in your church alone. Christians can worship whom they want, how they want, as long as they also worship at the altar of ecumenism and multiculturalism, *and* as long as they recognize that the one true god *is not* the God of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things, the God who became incarnate and suffered and died for you. No, they must also worship and recognize the true gods of the world—tolerance and wokeness, which in themselves, are actually extreme intolerance, the type

of which until recently, was only seen amongst communists, fascists, and fanatical religions!

This false god has slipped his nose under the tent flap and crept into the tabernacle of Christianity such that no longer is it tolerable to make an exclusive claim to the truth of Holy Scripture. No longer is it permissible to point out error and heresy wherever and whenever error or heresy is found. To do so is seen as unloving and unchristian.

But friends, if we hold the whole Church to that standard, then we must excommunicate Sts. Peter, Paul, and all the Apostles, and even JESUS CHRIST, Himself, for making such exclusive claims about the Church and the Truth of Holy Scripture. For did not St. Peter in speaking of JESUS before the Sanhedrin preach, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* Did we not hear St. Paul, even this very morning, preach, *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man CHRIST JESUS....”* And was it not JESUS Himself, who said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the FATHER except through Me.”*

No, our culture, and many of our churches in this great land, really are no different than the religions and cultures of the ancient world. So it is that, in our society today, snake oil, acupuncture, herbal teas, and howling at the moon are deemed acceptable attempts to deal with incurable diseases. Science fiction is preferred to science. While overt paganism is alive and well in the world, covert paganism and latent superstitions reside in the hearts of the people in our churches where a part of us believes that dancing around a fire and peering into tea leaves somehow has spiritual power.

Popular opinion among us says that anything is possible, and truth should not be allowed to get in the way. We can believe what we want about any subject, but nothing should be held dogmatically or rigidly. Thus, nothing should be held to the exclusion of other possibilities or opinions. To be so rigid is seen as folly or ignorance since only fools and bigots are so uncompromising in their beliefs. Along, then, with the concept of absolute truth is gone the concept of any actual reality.

Therefore, when the pseudo-religious find themselves in any kind of crisis, their first thought is to call together all the clerics of all the religions of the world and have each of them pray to their myriad gods, hoping that one of them will hear their cries for help. They behave like a patient diagnosed with a terminal disease who goes from one health food store to the next and hangs on every word of every wacko in the business of pseudo-health hoping that one of them will have a cure.

Even if Jesus' Name is invoked, prayer in such a context is not prayer in JESUS' Name at all. For JESUS will not share the stage. He is not just one god among many. He

is not regional or ethnic. He is not just the white man's God, or a god forced on so many ignorant peoples subjugated by white men of European descent. Nor is JESUS satisfied to be simply the chief god, the god of gods, like Jupiter, Zeus, or Thor. He is the only God! There is no other! To pray to any other god, to pray in any other name, is rank idolatry and prayer to demons.

JESUS is the only Name under heaven given to us by which we are to be saved. JESUS is the only One, the only God who has promised to hear our prayers. All other gods are idols of stone, wood, metal, or man's feeble imagination. They cannot hear and they cannot save.

JESUS, the One True God, hears our prayers by His grace. He has made us His people. But, He is also everyone's God. It is just that not everyone knows it yet, but in the end, they will. For every knee shall bow, those in heaven, and those on the earth, and those in hell, and every tongue shall confess that JESUS CHRIST is LORD.

Thus, true Christian prayer is unique in all the world. For when we pray to the FATHER, through the SPIRIT, in the Name of JESUS, God's SON, we are confessing that JESUS is LORD; that He is the great I AM.

That confession cannot stand next to Rabbis who hold that JESUS is nothing more than a bastard child of a poor Nazarene peasant woman who was executed for the criminal He was; that JESUS was crucified until He was dead and that He remained dead. Nor can that confession stand next to a Muslim Mullah who understands JESUS to be no more than a man and a prophet of Allah who was sorely misunderstood and did not make atonement for the sins of the world, and whose FATHER does not hear prayer in His Name. Prayer in JESUS' Name cannot stand with those Christians who would hold JESUS did not rise from the dead, was not born of a Virgin, and was not the SON of God. Nor can prayer in JESUS' Name stand with witch doctors and shamans in buffalo skins peering into the intestines of animals. By definition, prayer in Jesus' Name must condemn such demonic lies.

For our JESUS is the real God and He will tolerate no other. He will not share your heart with the gods of this world. The One who is, who gave His life to make you His, hears and answers your prayers. For we have a God who is not like us, whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways, but who is good, and whose mercy endures forever.

Prayer in JESUS' Name is prayer heard by God through His death and resurrection, who bestowed that same Name upon you in Holy Baptism, and it is prayer conformed to the prayer in Gethsemane. For God's will is always good, and is always done. And even when it seems bad, such as the FATHER not removing the Cup of wrath from His Son,

even when it means suffering shame and hatred from the world, heavenly hindsight will reveal it as always perfect, just what God's children needed.

Pray then for what you will. You do not need to worry about forming the perfect request. For even before you ask your FATHER knows what you need. He provides what you need not because you pray, but because He loves you. You pray, "*Lord, have mercy,*" and He does have mercy on you. You pray, "*Create in me a clean heart O God...*" and He does. You pray, "*Our FATHER,*" and He is.

Through CHRIST JESUS, God is your FATHER and He, Himself, loves you. Here is comfort for a lost and hurting world! He is the message we so desperately need. We need the Truth boldly proclaimed. We need the promise of the true God who does not randomly hear some and ignore others, but who welcomes petitions from His children through His SON and by His Name!

You are not alone in prayer. For God speaks in His Word. With that Holy, inspired, inerrant Word, prayer is not a one-way conversation. In the Bible, God reveals His will for you. He reveals and demonstrates His loving mercy and kindness. Our God of grace, who speaks in His Word in Holy Scripture, answers your prayers. He provides friends, family, food, and all things needed for this body and life.

But most significantly, He who provided the ram in the thicket that Isaac would go free has provided His SON as a perfect sacrifice in your place and delivers that same SON to you through Word, Water, and His very Body and Blood. By these means, He provides. He forgives. He renews. He strengthens and encourages. He hears your prayer and He answers, "*I forgive you all your sins.*"

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

✠ ✠ ✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠ ✠ ✠

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