

## PENTECOST IV

*Dominus illuminatio mea.* . . The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life, of what, then, should I be afraid?

With these opening words of this Sun-day's introit the Church puts on our lips a profound confession of absolute faith in God. For with the power of God on our side, truly, what is there for us to fear?

The whole of today's Mass liturgy is pervaded with this sense of confidence in God, that complete trust shown by the Apostles in the Gospel account of the miraculous draft of fishes and the certitude of St. Paul in his passage on the expectation that all creation itself will be delivered from the "servitude of corruption."

Beloved in Christ, this life and all its difficulties is not simply an exercise in futile despair to be dulled by a self-serving materialism, itself a chimera of empty distraction. Such is the reality – self-induced, mind you – of modern man living without God. But for the Christian – and in *fact* – this life is a time of divine trial which, in St. Paul's words, "is not to be compared with the glory to come." If Christ be as faith teaches, if He be risen from the dead as we hold to be true, then His promise of redemption, His assurance of the glory to be revealed in the world to come ought to be – for true Christians – more than a vague platitude about which we hear from Sunday to Sunday, and be forgotten the instant reality imposes its suffering and genuine hardship.

Man's supernatural destiny is so central to God's eternal plan that the whole created order is caught up into as St. Paul says. This is the meaning of that strange passage about "all creation is groaning" in today's Epistle reading. In a word, mankind is the centerpiece of God's creative will – therefore our bondage to corruption and dissolution is shared even by the natural order itself. The most distant galaxy with its least particle of matter is inextricably bound to the fall of our first parents, awaiting with all humanity that magnificent transformation God will effect in the glorification of our bodies and souls at the consummation of the ages.

My beloved in Christ: Christians must ask themselves, "What is the key for un-locking this redemptive plan?" The answer, – *the key* – is penance and prayer, so little appreciated in our times of widespread apostasy. This is exactly what the Gradual in today's Mass has begged: "Forgive our sins, O Lord. Be Thou the refuge of the poor in their tribulation."

God in Christ – this is man's one, true hope. How often do we see Him in the Gospels using nature itself to draw attention to His divine power? and thus, to His ability for healing the very root of all human sorrow and ruin? Here I am speaking of moral evil, the source of all suffering and corruption. In using the natural order as part of His divine pedagogy, this often happened on or near the Sea of Galilee.

Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, Peter the fisherman, Peter the sailor, that un-worthy and frail person who would become the Rock on which Christ's unfailing Church would be built, once cried out in a boat rocked on that sea by

a violent storm, “Help us, Lord, for we are sinking!” Could he have known that the human cry of terror welling up in his own throat was a prophetic voice speaking for whole of the ship-wrecked race of Adam’s descendants – which is you and me?

More than once the divine hand of God in the calm gestures of the Lord Christ re-stored order in the midst of the natural calamity of suffering – even to the overturning of death’s firm clamp on human bodies. It is Jesus, my children, – God – Who saves those who call upon Him in faith, those who cry out against their drowning in the storms of this present life. That is, He comes to the rescue of those who truly turn to Him in trust with works of prayer and repentance: Save us O Lord, for we are perishing – save us, Lord, for Thou alone art our strength and refuge.

Beloved, this salvation is opened through obedience to His Church, the great net cast across the centuries by the first Fisher of Men. If Peter was astonished by the miraculous draft of which Our Lord was the cause, why do we not draw a greater profit through our own understanding of what this miracle truly means?

God is our safe harbor: Not this world, not ourselves. *God*. He is the one light by which we can walk through the shadows of this life. By humble submission to His will and providence we may find the comfort of forgiveness, the strength of virtue, the supernatural life and health which His Church imparts to those wayfaring here below.

And for this the Lord says: “Do not let your heart be troubled.” The sufferings of now – contradiction, sickness, death – are transitory, and *salutary* when accepted as means for attaching our hearts more firmly to the glory to come. Let us, therefore, by the grace of the sacraments we receive, be strengthened in our fidelity, our perseverance, in our love of God. He Who stilled the waters by the power of His creative might, leads us, through the Church He founded, along the path to salvation. Thus we should leave Mass this morning strengthened in our resolve to persevere in the doing of good, with humble submission to the trials we are called to bear. Let us seek this grace through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, our guardian angels and the company of heaven. For it is by fidelity to such that we will come to the safe harbor of true peace – the vision of God in the glory of heaven.