

Covenant of Love

Group Outlines from Schoenstatt

A Love That Satisfies # 13

Path to Holiness

The Covenant of Love is a path to holiness. All Christians are called to holiness through the promises of our Baptism. On this path, we can discover three aspects of holiness:

Find Your Centre

Covenant helps us find our centre and not lose ourselves in the daily toil and work. Think of the great and wonderful medieval Gothic Cathedrals. The pilgrim coming to the cathedral for spiritual nourishment and strength would have looked at the windows and understood the message. For example, the rose window at the back of the cathedral (you can see an excellent example in the Cathedral of Chartres). What would the pilgrim see? At the centre of every rose window is a depiction of Christ and then wheeling around him in harmonious patterns are the many medallions, each depicting a saint or a scene from the life of Jesus and Mary. The message of the window is clear: When your life is centred on Christ, all your energies and aspirations and powers of your soul fall into a beautiful and satisfying pattern. However, when someone or something else other than Christ fills your centre – money, sex, success, ambition, pride, the human soul then falls into disharmony. Christ himself gave this same message when he says: “Seek first the kingdom of God and everything else will be given to you”. Do we arrange our day around Christ, or do we arrange Christ around our day.

Another example for centeredness is the story of the calming of the storm. Storms come up and the apostles panic and Jesus is sleeping in the boat. He remains asleep in all the noise. The sleeping Christ is a symbol of that place in the ground of our souls where we are one with God – even when there is noise and chaos all around us. Even when every part of us is agitated and afraid, that place is always a place of peace and love because Christ is there. The story doesn't end with the sleeping Christ, however. He is awakened by his disciples and rebukes the winds and calms the waves. The power that can calm the stormiest life is the inner Christ, in us – in our souls. The bottom line is: Live your life from the centre. That is where your Covenant draws strength.

I am a Sinner

Covenant life helps us have no illusions about ourselves. The true saint is the one who knows themselves to be a sinner. It is such a loss that confession today is struggling. Confession is the sacrament of healing that helps us work honestly through illusions and self-deceptions. It liberates and fills us with new peace and joy. It is such a shame that we often allow this gift to remain unopened in our lives and think we can do without it. I think it was Bob Dylan who sang; “The enemy I see wears the cloak of decency”. Part of living the Covenant is removing that cloak and coming before our Blessed Mother as we really are.

Your Life is not about You

When we lived wrapped up in our own little world and ego and aspirations, then we inhabit a very narrow space. Church scholars from the past used to call this the “*pusilla anima*” which means you have a little soul. When we forget our awful seriousness and when we can get over ourselves and we don't have to control everything and make the risky leap of faith and jump in the dark, we slowly start to inhabit another world, which scholars called the “*magna anima*” – the great soul. This title, by the way, was given to Ghandi. The term and name Mahatma means basically the great soul.

It means that we know and realise that we participate in something and in Someone infinitely greater than ourselves. We are a small part of creation and reality. My story becomes a part of His story and his story becomes “history”. Peter is told by Jesus: “when you are older (i.e. gain wisdom), then you will go where you do not want to go and someone else will guide you.” Peter laboured under the illusions that he could control everything in his life.

Covenant is the way to move from the little soul to the great soul. It means saying: It is not what I want to happen in life, but what God's wants. It is an abandonment to Divine Providence. Everything is a messenger from God – everything and everyone. God communicates his will through ordinary people and ordinary events.

Jesus tells his disciples: “That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, not about your body and how you are to clothe it. It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your Father well knows you need them”. Is this just pious poetry for us, or do we believe it and are willing to stake our lives on it. Do you want to live in the great soul or not?

Questions for Reflection

1. Do you think that striving for holiness is for people in convents and monasteries?
2. How would you define “holiness”?
3. Are there wrong ways to strive for holiness?

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