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The Guadalupe Workers

I suppose that if, twenty-one hundred years ago, I had been a disciple of Christ, I might have been profoundly discouraged by the whole experience. The population, as a whole, was not significantly changed; the Romans were still in charge; making a living was still a daily grind sort of thing. If God had sent his Son now, in the 21st century—well, it never would have worked. We folks of the computer age, the Google age, the Amazon Prime age, expect immediate results. Immediate results, though, are not essentially what the Incarnation is about. The Incarnation and the sacramental system are an infusion of divine life, the infusion of grace, into a poisoned body. One has to trust, beyond all other trusts, that the Word has been made flesh. One has to see the light of grace dancing behind and around all our daily toil. None of us do-gooders have to claim that we are going to set the world on fire—because it already has been set on fire.

Sometimes as I stand in front of the abortion clinic, without a doubt one of the darkest places on the face of the earth, and all my words and efforts seem pathetic and wasted, I have to re-root myself in what I know to be true: the Word has been made flesh and dwells among us. Grounding myself in this truth, and knowing that the consequence of this simple truth is the existence of a whole new dimension to reality, I remind myself that the Wind blows where it will; in other words, that the effects of grace are not obedient to our statistics and graphs.

We are the Guadalupe Workers; and in identifying ourselves as those who “work,” we are nodding to the Gospel of John, in which the word “work” is critical throughout the entire public ministry of Christ—especially the 14th chapter, wherein Jesus promises his apostles, “I solemnly assure you, the man who has faith in me will do the works I do, and greater far than these.” This is an astonishing promise—so astonishing that I eventually decided that I have to accept it at face value, or reject everything else Jesus was and that Jesus taught. In other words, either the promise is true or it isn’t. If it’s true, then I too can heal the sick, release the possessed, raise the dead.

Is there some other explanation for John 14:12? Is it some sort of scriptural anomaly? No, of course not, because it is completely consistent with everything else we are taught and have accepted as true. We are taught that the Church is the Body of Christ; and if it is, then logically we should be doing the works of Christ. We are taught that Christ gives us his life through the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist; if that is so, we should be doing the works of Christ. We call God our Father, claiming that by baptismal graces we are of the same nature as He; well then, we should be doing the works of Christ.

The nature of this work is different from what we moderns usually consider. We are told to set concrete goals; to use “data-driven” methods; to keep statistics monitoring our output. The effects of our work, though, are not in the realm of cause/effect analysis. Because our work is effective in the order of grace, which itself is the life force of God, then the good of our work flows into the entire Mystical Body. Our love must be so great that it overflows into action; and our love must be so great that it moves us to trust—to trust the beginning and the end of that love, the Triune fountain of life.

So, there is this place on the west side of Detroit where men and women agree not only that they are killing their own children, but will usually display an overall indifference to that fact, if they are not in fact even a little bit boastful about it. There is this place where men and women acknowledge God's existence, but they will claim, essentially, that God is on their side in the destruction of the innocent. There is this place where men and women will threaten and verbally abuse the only people who, perhaps, ever really loved them.

It seems a hopeless work. And at every step of the way, bringing these mothers back to life, we are tempted to consider it hopeless. Yes, Idalia's baby was born a few days ago; yet the baby's father has molested his own teenage daughter and many times beaten Idalia. And while the baby and Idalia are now safe, we cannot take them back to that house.... So now what? Maybe it's too much...unless we believe in the Incarnation...unless we believe that the Kingdom of God is at hand:

Live on in me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him will produce abundantly, *for apart from me you can do nothing.*