

La Semilla

the hope
of the harvest is in the seed

Summer 2019

THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMES THE WORLD

by Padre Tim



Fr. Daniel had suspicions, because her voice would drop off whenever they came to "forgive". Every Tuesday he brought Holy Communion to the elderly and feisty Betsy. Always a coughing spell or a need to clear her throat at that same point,"as we forgive those who trespass against us". So, the retired priest helped her to forgive some pretty deep anger and resent-

Manuel & Nalleli, with their children (l-r. Carolina, Josue Manuel and Aylin), form a domestic church. By their lifestyle and decisions they are strengthening the culture and Mother Church.

ments. Betsy's line of thinking may raise a smile, precisely because it is understandable. When we think in a similar vein, the whole scenario is like an elephant in the room. Maybe I can fool God and get this past Him. Or another angle, surely the Heavenly Father already knows, but at least I'm not compounding it by making a rash profession of something I am not living.

How about you? Do you need to clear your throat nowadays when you say the Creed? "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the *er, cough, cough, cough*, the communion of saints... ". To say, "I believe in God; I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son...", these are easier than saying, "I believe in the Church". The sex scandal has been long and arduous since Lent of 2002; and now more recently, anger-provoking, disillusioning and disappointing. The response of the Church seems so anemic, blind and out of our control. The official response is not the response I want to own and not something for which I'm willing go to the wall.

And the pressure is being applied increasingly. A personal example-- I noticed that wearing

my Roman collar in the airports on several recent trips has been a challenging decision. Bearing witness as a priest has the (spiritual) feel of starting at a glaring

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disadvantage. Everyone in the States who loves the Church feels the disappointment and anger at our inept response.

The resolve and momentum which was building up for the Fall General Assembly of the USCCB was completely derailed by the meeting with the presidents of the bishops' conferences in Rome in February 2019. We have painted ourselves into the very precarious corner of having to rely on the secular media and courts for a semblance of justice, which we ourselves are unable to muster. This in contradiction to Paul's

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scathing critique of the Corinthians (1Cor6: 1-6).

"I believe in the Church". This is the battleground now, already being vied for in our hearts. Therein lurk images of our leaders being cowed by the media in Covington Kentucky after Nick Sandmann was singled out for the international spotlight (and the endless

aftermath) without any preparation. Images of a vulnerable, elderly lady, just like the one in front of you in the pew, viciously and mercilessly harassed in the public eye along with three teenage girls praying at an abortion clinic in Philadelphia. They were victimized by a public official, State Congressman, Brian Sims. In your heart, you cannot feel safe

sending your children to a pro-life event. The media complicity and manipulation is designed to make us feel far outnumbered and out-gunned and above all intimidated. That is precisely the strategy of our spiritual enemy.

Pope emeritus Benedict XVI poses an insightful question in his reflections on the crisis published on April 10, 2019. After analysis of the remote origins of the scandal and on the formation of priests in the 1970s and 80s, he asks what we should do:

What must be done? Perhaps we should create another Church for things to work out? Well, that experiment has already been undertaken and has already failed.

Only obedience and love for our Lord Jesus Christ can point the way.

Concluding that the basis of our problem is a crisis of faith, he goes on to remind us that a self-made Church will not renew nor instill hope. "Rather, what is required first and foremost is the renewal of the Faith in the reality of Jesus Christ given to us in the Blessed Sacrament." Benedict reminds us of the parables of the net full of good and bad fish; of the weeds and the wheat growing together. These parables, he clarifies, describe the Church then and now. To realize and proclaim this is a necessary service to the truth.

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The next generation is observing from us how to live a communion of persons in a culture of life and love; how to express a living faith which overcomes the world.

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The idea of a better Church, created by ourselves, is in fact a proposal of the devil, whereby he wants to lead us away from the living God, through a deceitful logic by which we are too easily duped. No, even today the Church is not just made up of bad fish and weeds. The Church of God also exists today, and today it is the very instrument through which God saves us.

Another temptation which needs to be identified and rejected is the notion to quit the Church altogether. A personal relationship with Jesus is always a relationship in communion of persons; always deeply personal, never private. Baptism in Jesus is always membership in the Church. A personal relationship with Jesus is not private nor exclusive.

Pope Benedict's analysis of the

root cause of the sexual scandal points to a crisis of faith. He mentions martyrdom (which in Greek means giving testimony) and reverence for the Eucharist as solutions to strengthening our faith. These we can express in several ways that can be drawn out beyond what the pope emeritus mentions.

Living a Culture of life and Love

Our battle is living in an aggressive culture, one allied with death and hostile to life. Cultures are formed and strengthened (or corroded) by individual decisions. Decisions and actions aimed to honor the Lord and promote the Good build up the culture of life and love. It is ideal and helpful when our leaders show the way with courageous leadership and wise direction. But such decisions can arise initially from the ranks, especially when inspired by the Holy Spirit.

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As we each live our vocation, especially in the domestic church where the attack is aimed, let us be aware of the crucial moment in which the Lord has placed us to give testimony (*martyrion* in Greek).

Faithfulness to our relationships and daily duties

Included here is faithfulness to prayer and the Sacraments. Benedict XVI points us back to reverence and awareness of Jesus present in the Eucharist as a way of strengthening our faith. He sees that a direct indication of the fervor of our faith can be observed in our devotion and reverence to Christ both in the liturgical Sacrifice and His presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. But consider that this should also draw us to a deeper understanding of Matrimony. Our reverence for Jesus present in this Sacrament and in the union of two persons needs to be contemplated. Marital love is a counter-cultural sign which is always needed; is difficult to express on every level in our culture of death; and yet shines as a beacon of purity and light, both human and holy. Consider



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the witness, the literal martyrdom of Jamie Schmidt, the fifty-three-year-old wife and mother of House Springs, Missouri. She gave her life for that Sacramental love and those relationships last November. Let's keep her cause in the forefront of our culture of life.

Love for our Brothers and Sisters

Our love for one another, those who are joined to us in Christ also touches the heart of the matter. For those who are in the minority, there is a human solidarity and strength which comes from or common identity as Christians. But spiritually, beyond the human bond, this is all the more true. Surpassing solidarity we share a

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bond called communion. Jesus himself, when summoned to family and natural bonds of love, responds with a call to a higher priority and a deeper loyalty. "Who are my brothers and sisters? (Mk 3:32-35; Lk 8:20-21). Without neglecting to call us to generosity to all persons, as the lesson of the Good Samaritan indicates, and even love of our enemies, the New Testament calls us specifically to a priority of loving those who are brothers and sisters in the New Covenant. Paul and the other NT authors reiterate this point, which is fading in our society and which engenders narcissism and a generic understanding of relationships. (Jn 13:35; 15:12,17; Gal 6:10; 1Tm 5:8, 10; 1Jn 3:14;)

Being missionaries

A missionary spirit is essential for any Christian and especially any Christian group, church or domestic church. Our faith deepens and spreads when we are living and speaking of the Lord's life in our midst. If we are speaking to one another of the Lord's works it can train and motivate us to give a credible testimony to strangers and even enemies. A culture of life and love is attractive, accenting the Beautiful and the Good in human relationships and natural circumstances.

Pray with the authority and victory in the name of Jesus the Lord

The eyes of our hearts need
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LEAD A LIFE WORTHY OF THE CALLING

by Martha Velasquez

Semilla: How did you hear about the mission we have for family life?

I arrived at forty years old. A married couple, who invited me, said that I could deepen in my vocation. I was serving in the parish and thought, "what more was needed?" I finally acceded to their invitations, accompanying them to a Sunday Mass. At that time, serving the Lord was a small slice of everything I wanted for myself. I had no concept of serving the Lord by the offering of my life, that is, living my vocation. I can say I knew the Lord and had a prayer time, but did not have a

faith which could listen, a faith that could experience His love. I was not walking daily in that relationship, listening for Him to lead me.

At *Seguidores de la Cruz (SDLC)* I could see the women giving themselves to the Lord; single men and women and married couples as well, were interested in a living their lives for the Lord in their vocation. The married women were focused on living their vocation as wives and mothers absorbed in their relationship with the Lord. This way of giving oneself

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to perceive the spiritual realities and pray with the authority of Jesus Christ the victor. St Michael the Archangel is a great warrior whom we need to invoke with understanding and confidence. In humility and fear of the Lord we need to learn to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and observe his fruits in our lives and relationships. Those fruits exclude intimidation, isolation, and confusion, some of the strongest attacks we are experiencing in our society. In a crisis of faith, being faithless or

fearful is not an option: *But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.* (Rev 21:8)

The culture is changed by each decision that you and I make. As for the injustices coming against us, I was recently advised that vengeance, for the Christian, is charity.



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was attractive to me, it was captivating.

I also experienced deeper friendships; what I have come to know as true friendship. I had previously many acquaintances, some I knew pretty well. But tasting true friendships drew me in. At our activities, I was getting to know people more deeply than I was accustomed to. They would speak about experiencing the love of God in their lives. They quite naturally spoke to me on a deeper level, opening themselves personally-- their feelings, their values, their decisions. They were interested in me and asked how I was experiencing the Lord with a genuine desire to hear from me, willing to take time to listen and show an honest interest in me.

Semilla: What changes have you seen through being part of the mission?

After four years I have seen a

big change in my profession and know that I have been led by the Lord. I was an engineer and am now teaching. Working in an office was not a good environment for me. I was not moving forward in living a holy life, and the cultural current was definitely pushing me farther back. I was dragging my feet in making decisions about the direction of my life. Being a teacher is like breathing more freely and breathing fresh air. I've always had a heart for kids and now I can "let it rip" as a teacher.

I see another big change in my ability to speak and make decisions based on the truth, and the loving response in my relationships. I had been living as an adult, in my own estimation. I had been making decisions based on my intelligence and common sense or prudence. But now I have gone beyond those basics to include putting steps of discernment after the natural prudence.

It requires prayer and listening to how the Lord

Martha (centered in photo) talking with several of the Jovenes at El Rancho Nazaret.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (Eph 4:1)



Other members of the Solteros, friends of Martha, growing in their vocations and friendships. L-R. Yohali, Pablo and Diego.

is leading. It also means asking for input and advice from trusted friends. These are people who know me and the kind of culture that I want to live-- the culture I have told the Lord I will embrace. This is new in my life. I am living much more in peace and am confident I'm serving the Lord's desires. Even small decisions can belong to the Lord Jesus.

As far as speaking the truth in love to others, there has been a radical change. My family of origin has a strong Christian bent; principally Evangelical Christian, which as you know, in Mexico is at odds with Catholicism. I could not really live or express freely my faith in my house. When I moved in with another single woman from SDLC, we could live the culture we are embracing in

SDLC. We had to make agreements living together: how to divide responsibilities and chores; when we would eat together, work together as a team; how we would show hospitality together, etc.

Living the perspective of vocation also opens your eyes to spiritual battle. Our life in Christ is a battle, and to live a culture of life and love requires work, a battle mentality. My family does not understand the culture I am taking on. I mentioned that my mother is very committed and not afraid to put forth her viewpoint. I have had to defend my faith and learn to make decisions led by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes you have to ask yourself and the Lord, "who are my brothers and sisters?" (Mt 12:48f).

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Keep the dialogue open-- a key for parents teachers and mentors of their adolescents.

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has been consecrating myself to Jesus through Mary. I love my family very much, and I don't hold against them their questions. But I have to be solid on why I am making my decisions and defending certain customs and values. While my love has grown for my family, an interesting aspect is that my priority has now become my family of faith, my brothers and sisters in SDLC.

Semilla: Have you always been comfortable around children?

Yes, ever since I can remember. And I have always had a heart for kids who are on the streets. Since childhood, I dreamed of having a school and helping these kids out. The change from engineering has given me a freedom to touch their hearts through teaching at the Christian school where I am. Teaching is a way of seeing the whole person and helping them get in touch with their own dignity.

Here at the mission I serve the *Jovenes* (youth 15-16 years

old). Oh, I am passionate about them. It is amazing when you can see their faces click "on" and their attention is captured with something we are presenting. Or when you see a very timid guy, who doesn't say "peep", start picking up momentum of self-confidence and participating with no self-consciousness, just getting lost in an activity, being himself. Or seeing love for God grow in them; that is what I love to see. That is what it is all about.

There was a girl who did not see any problem with allowing women the freedom to abortion. I took the opportunity to explain the beauty and dignity of life in God's plan. I was able to show both sides of the issue and that the truth is reasonable. She was pushing the circumstances of

rape, so I observed that the child is the least culpable of any of the persons involved, totally innocent. So that there is no grounds to take away the child's right to life. I left it at that for her to reflect. She mentioned that she understood both sides of the dilemma. Keeping the dialogue open is nearly always better than shutting doors to communication permanently. They have to be left free. Of course there are some limits, but generally there is not the need to bring things to a confrontation. The key is to touch the heart of each one you talk to.

Semilla: What is an impressive miracle you have seen?

I'm teaching at the private school and our director at school
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Adolescence-- time of discovery, change, hope, mystery.

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is a woman of faith. We work well together and trust one another. She made it very clear that we are free to evangelize and to speak openly of our faith. The kids rely on me for questions and when they are looking for direction. I always give them an invitation to put things into the hands of Jesus Christ-- to see the circumstances from His perspective. The director assigned a young adolescent to me who was totally dysfunctional. I had observed that he had no self-esteem and was badly abused by his mother, who lived as a single mother with several children. This boy was twelve years old, anti-social and aggressive with everyone. I knew he had suffered a lot in his childhood and that his father abandoned the family

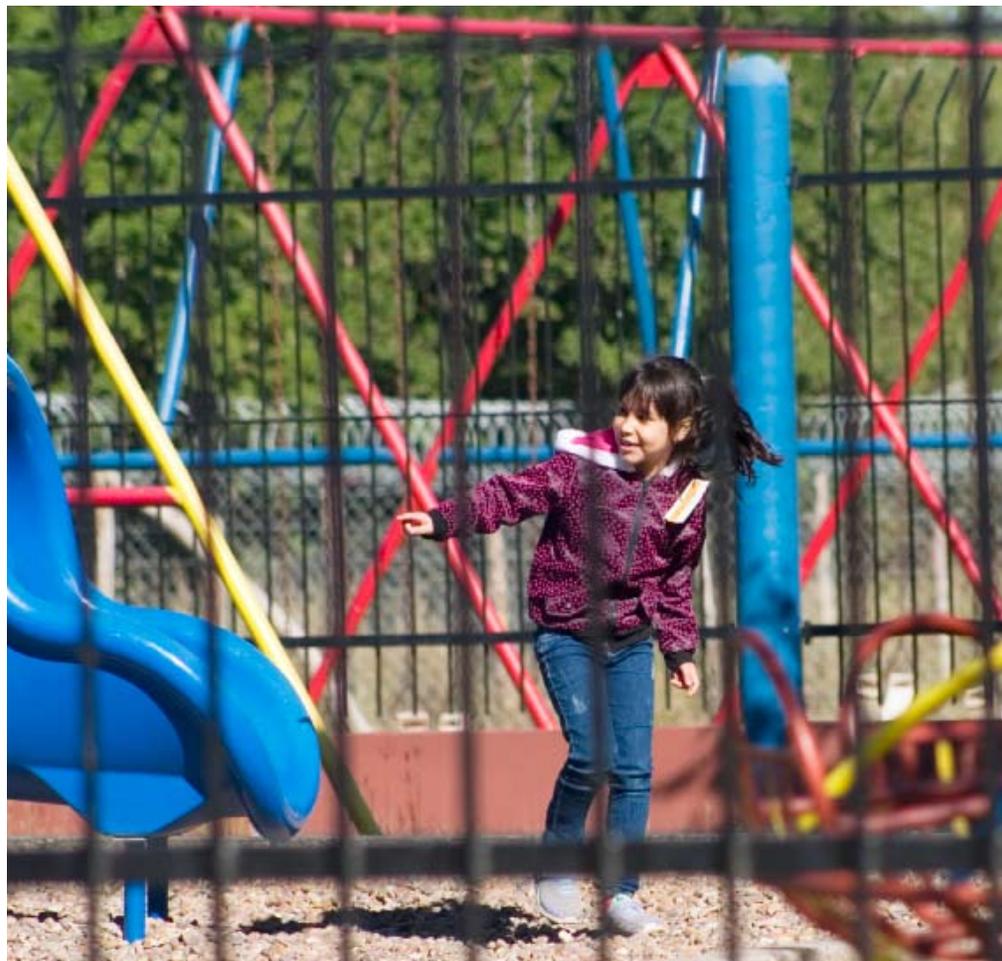
several years ago. We had some rapport, because I would take the initiative when he was arriving to school or during breaks.

When he became one of "mine", I ramped up my prayer for him. I knew he could disrupt the class-- he could bother the whole school and put everyone on edge. I sat him down and mentioned how I saw him fitting into our group: he is big and stronger than most of the kids, so I wanted him to be looking out for us all any time we were crossing the street or traveling as a class. I had some specific tasks and roles on a daily basis I thought he would be best at, and wanted to ask if he could step up and help in these ways. His response was positive, but tentative and wary. We had some pretty big hiccups in the whole

transition, but from the start he began to pay attention and sit still which was a major change. In time, he did well on his first two tests he showed interest and amazing aptitude.

Everyone noticed the change and I just kept giving the credit to the Lord Jesus and to his positive response.

After two years he has now earned



the outstanding student of the year award, which encompasses grades, leadership and social bearing. This is the biggest miracle I have seen and there are many. So far beyond anyone's expectations of him, he is a new person. His mother also has made so much progress because of his transformation. She has major problems, but worrying about him has been almost completely lifted off her shoulders. And she

has begun to rely on friendships and relationships at the school. The Lord is good.



Adolescence-- time of discovery, change, hope, mystery.