

'Peace Of Soul' - - - By Monsignor Fulton Sheen

This is the eleventh of fourteen installments of "Peace of Soul," the challenging best-seller by Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, leading exponent of Catholic doctrine.
By MONSIGNOR FULTON J. SHEEN
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Chapter Twenty-One Installment XI

An overemphasis on temporal security is a compensation for a loss of the sense of eternal security. When the soul becomes poor through the loss of its wealth, which is virtue, its owner seeks luxury and riches to atone for his inner nakedness. The richer the soul, the less store it sets on the material. It is not poverty that makes men quarrelsome and unhappy, as the Communists claim; it is an overfondness for the things that money buys. Poor monks are usually friendlier and far happier than millionaires.

And it is also an error to say that, if economic conditions were good, there would be no proponents of Communism. Those who make this statement forget that: (1) Poor economic conditions are only an occasion for embracing Communism, not a cause; in some instances, economic trials are, instead, an occasion for renewed spiritual living. (2) Economic conditions were excellent in the Garden of Eden, but the first "Red" got in and made a shambles of it. (3) What makes an unstable society is not the fact that people do not have enough but that they always want more.

From this clutching at goods results a fear of death, a dread that we may lose whatever we have accumulated, that our temporal security will vanish into eternal insecurity. This fear of death, suffered by the modern pagan, differs from the fear of death of the faithful in several ways.

PAGAN FEAR

The pagan fears the loss of his body and his wealth; the faithful fears the loss of his soul. The believer fears God with a filial fear such as a devoted son has toward a loving father; the pagan fears, not God, but his fellow man, who seems to threaten him. Hence the increase in cynicism, suspicion, irreverence, strife and war; the neighbor must be killed by sword if not by word, because he is an enemy to be dreaded. The modern pagan, in refusing to continue life by the procreation of birth,

becomes the sower of death. Denying the immortality of his own soul, he refuses immortality to the race by stifling his reproductive function, and thus he doubtfully courts the fear of death.

The world fears the very things Our Lord told us not to fear. He said we were not to fear dying, nor to fear being "called on the carpet" for our faith, nor to fear economic insecurity, nor to fear the future.

But Our Lord told us what we were to fear — the consequences of judgment if we did not live right, blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, miserliness, and the denial of our faith.

The modern man has completely reversed this order of things to be feared. He takes lightly those things which the Saviour warned us to fear, but he trem-

bles at those things which the Saviour bids us not to fear. Sometimes his unhealthy fear is hidden under a cover of silence; this is particularly true of the fact of death.

The modern man seeks to forget about death altogether, or, if he cannot do that — to renege it, to render it unobtrusive, to disguise it. He feels awkward in the presence of death, does not know how to console or what to say. Everything in his attitude contradicts the Christian injunction, "Remember thy last end." For he regards all discussion of death as morbid; yet he will laugh at a comedy in which a dozen people are killed and will stay awake half the night reading a detective story about a murderer. This, too, is death, and it enthralms him; but he concentrates upon the circumstances by which death comes, rather than upon the eternal issues of death, which alone are all-important. This modern insensitiveness to death is an insensitivity to personality to the moral order, and to destiny.

FEAR OF DYING

Those who try to ignore death sometimes say that it is a fear of dying that makes men religious. Certainly this fear has something to do with faith. It is one of the factors of religion because it brings man face to face with the mystery at the heart of life. Why? Whither? Wherefore? Ignore it deny it laugh at it but each life runs up a bill which home day must be met, and with strict justice.

Animals die, and so do men, but the difference is that men know they must die. By this very fact, we men surmount death. We get above it, we transcend it, look at it, survey it, and thus stand outside it. This very act is a dim foreshadowing of immortality. Our mortality is frightening to us largely because we can contemplate immortality, and we have a dim suspicion that we have lost the immortality that once belonged to us. We ought to have it, yet we have it not. Something has interferred. We are not all we ought to be.

If death were merely a physical must, we would not fear it; our fear comes from the moral fact that we know we ought not to die. We fear death because it was not part of the original plan laid down for us. And we fear it because we have made so poor a use of our years of life. When the sense of sin is keen this fear of facing our own failings may become paradoxically acute so that the individual wants to lose himself in order not to have to live with himself. This is suicide and nihilism.

Death is a source of meditation on many of the great truths. It is a sign of evil in the world, for to the Christian, death belongs not only to the biological order but also to the moral and spiritual realms. The first record that we have of death in the Scriptures associates it with sin and a rebellion against God. Death makes its first appearance in this world as punishment. And death is, from the first, twofold: for a distinction must be made between the death of the body and the death of the soul.

Chapter Twenty-Two
The revelation of the coming of the anti-Christ means that men have refused to accept eternal values for death is not the triumph of death, but the triumph of meaning. Jerusalem has passed away because it did not know the time of its visitation. That same statement holds true for every other civilization. And so, by making an end to evil.

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15,000 Germans Plan Rome Holy Year Visit
Frankfurt (NC) — Some 15,000 German pilgrims will travel to Rome during the first half of the Holy Year, which is headed by Prince Karl zu Loewenstein. One special train a week is now being scheduled, each holiday being scheduled. The route will be either via Austria or Switzerland, depending on the choice of the pilgrims who will be allowed five days in Rome. On the way home they will be given an opportunity to stop over at Assisi. Total inclusive cost of the trip will be \$75.

God affirms the power of love over the power of chaos. This is the significance of His answer to Pilate, who said, "Know you not that I have the power to condemn you?" but Our Lord answered, "You would not have the power unless it were given to you from above."

There is only one passage in Sacred Scripture where God is said to laugh; that is in the psalm, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh and hold them in derision." The theology of this laughter is this: incongruity inspires laughter. A street cleaner in a silk hat is a laughable and incongruous sight; God's laughter is likewise provoked by the incongruity of an earthly dictator thinking that he has become a god or that his evil is eternal. Death is God's necessary gift to a universe in which evil has been let loose.

THE RESURRECTION

But if death were irremediable, the universe would not be justified. It would be a closed system. The Resurrection is also necessary — it not only gives victory over death, but it wipes away evil or corruption. Since the Resurrection and Pentecost, man can restore himself to Divine Love through the application of Christ's Redemption through the Sacraments; he does not recover immortality of body until the final resurrection. Nonetheless, all men share a profound intuition that their deaths can serve a triumphant purpose.

Why is a man less willing to die in a train wreck or an automobile accident than he is to be killed on a battlefield or as a martyr to his faith? It is not because death is less terrifying and more meaningful as soon as we rise above the level of the commonplace and lift ourselves into the realm of eternal values where, alone, death has meaning?

Death is the end of evil; we see this revealed in the faces of the dead, which are often more harmonious than they were in life, as the sleeping face is more restful than the waking.

Death will individualize and personalize all of us. Because it separates the soul from the body, it finds out each and every one in its search; it will reveal the real me as against the surface me. The soul will stand naked before God, seen at least as it truly is. And if a soul is not then clothed with virtue, it will feel ashamed, as Adam and Eve were, when they had sinned and hid from God; for it was only after their sin that they felt naked and ashamed.

This relationship between nakedness of the soul and sin is always a close one — at the judgment of our souls, in Eden, and in this life, where, the less grace men and women have in their souls, the more gaudily they dress, in a kind of compensation, as we noted earlier.

The separation of the soul from the body after death will bring another change; it will go away with the special advantages which some of us enjoyed in this life, for the body in relationship to the soul might be likened to a person driving an automobile. One man drives through life in a broken-down jalopy, another in a 20-horsepower motor, another in a 50-horsepower motor, and still another in a 200-horsepower motor, but when there is a traffic violation of the law, no one is judged by the kind of car he is driving but by whether or not he broke the law. In the same manner, at the

moment of death, when the soul leaves the body, we shall be judged not by the earthly advantages that we had — beauty or talent, or the wealth that accompanied the body, or the social advantages — but only by the degree to which we responded to Divine Love.

As Dives was separated from his five brothers by death, each of us will be separated from the group and from the crowd. Then each and every one must step forward, alone, out of the ranks.

There will be no attorneys there to plead our case, no alibis to argue that we were not in our right minds when we did wrong. There will be only one voice: it will be the voice of conscience which will reveal us as we really are.

Since we are faced with this inevitable event, how shall we meet it? The pagan and the Christian have different ways of answering. The pagan as he lives moves progressively closer to death; the Christian moves backward from it. The pagan tries to ignore death, but each tick of the clock brings him nearer to it through fear and anxiety. The Christian begins his life by contemplating his death; knowing that he will die, he plans his life accordingly, in order to enjoy eternal life.

There are two stages in the pagan's experience, human life and human death. In the Christian's, there are three, human life, human death, which is a gate to the third stage — Divine life. Christianity has always recommended the contemplation of death as an encouragement to a good life; and this is actually effective, for although we cannot go backward in time, we can go forward in time. A man can therefore say to himself, "What I am living for today, that I shall die for tomorrow."

Next Week: The psychology of conversion.

Lourdes Bishop Denounces Communism in Public School

Paris (CIP) — Bishop Pierre Marie Théas of Tarbes and Lourdes has issued a public protest against Communist propaganda carried on at a public high school in his diocese. He declared that a teacher of philosophy at a public high school is spreading Communist propaganda in his classes, glorifying Communist concepts and praising the Soviet Union.

THE BISHOP did not give the name of the teacher and the school but stated that the allegation of the bishop's superior had been called to the matter and that these refused to intervene and defend him. "Destructive propaganda" has been carried on in that particular school for several years, Bishop Théas declared.

IN HIS statement, Bishop Théas recalled that religious instruction is forbidden in French public schools under the assumption that schools must be absolutely neutral in ideological matters. The toleration or presentation of Communist propaganda in public school classes is undoubtedly a much greater violation of neutrality than religious instruction, Bishop Théas said.

Honor Priest-Pastor Friend of Longfellow

Brussels (NC) — "Art and Christianity," a Catholic organization of Belgium, honored the memory of the Flemish priest-pastor, Guido Geselle, at its last annual meeting at Heterogenbosch. Father Geselle was rector at the English College in Bruges, while the American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1802-82) was staying there at a hotel, which now houses the European College.

India Judge Vows Crucifix on Beach

Travancore, India (CIP) — A. T. Bhat, judge of the High Court at Travancore, has vowed to place a crucifix on the beach at the end of his term of office. He said he would do this to mark the end of his term of office and to signify his faith in God.

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