

**Tom Edwards Evangelistic
Assoc., Inc.**

—a ministry of lay Catholic evangelization & mission—

Forty-nine years
of
Full time outreach

The



Lent
U-Turns Permitted

Proclaiming

There are times while traveling the highway of life that one may realize that something is not as it should be. It seems to be that we are off course, going the wrong way, misdirected, spinning our wheels, getting nowhere fast. Perhaps, it's a voice from the passenger seat that's saying, "You missed the turn". Maybe, it's a voice within, "Something's wrong".

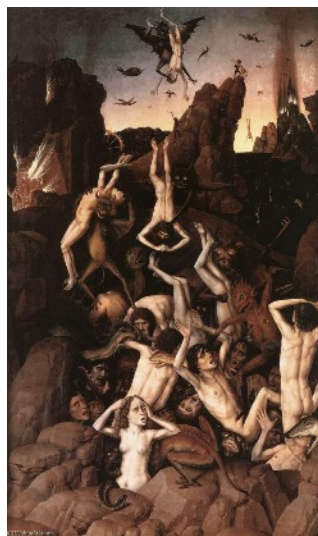
If we count ourselves amongst the ranks of "Christians", we should be aware that one of the most fundamental aspects of that identity is to be mirroring the image of God in which we were created. We also know that at a minimum, we are compelled to "grow in holiness" every day of our lives. It should be an engrained desire to have this goal as a primary force of our continued existence. The words of the Apostle Peter challenge us to the core: (I Pet. 1: 14-16) **(14) Like obedient children, do not act in compliance with the desires of your former ignorance (15) but, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, (16) for it is written, "Be holy because I [am] holy."** It means we are called to be like God Himself. We are impelled to race after holiness, to go all out for God. It means to put to death the deeds of the flesh and put on righteousness. This is so absolutely essential. Psalm 1:5-6 tells us: **(5) Therefore the wicked will not arise at the judgment, nor will sinners in the assembly of the just. (6)**

Because the LORD knows the way of the just, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin."

The Holy Scriptures leave no room for choosing to live a "pretense" of holiness. To live a life with no serious desire for growing in holiness is to travel the wide easy road that leads to destruction. One who ignores the opportunities to make a U-turn risk the peril of careening off into the deep abyss of eternal darkness.

Lent is a season of 40 days set aside to evaluate our lives and recognize the need for making a U-turn if needed. Discernment is enhanced by practicing prayer, penitence, fasting, and denial.

Liturgically, Lent often begins with a reading from the prophet Joel. Joel is the voice of God speaking to a people who have been plunged into darkness because of their wayward ways. Joel calls for a warning: **"Blow the horn in Zion,**



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JAN.-MARCH

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sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble—(Joel 2:1) When the Shofur trumpet was blown, it could signal one of two things: 1. A call to a solemn religious service. 2. A call to war. In this case, there are elements of both. A terrible invasion of Locust was ravaging Judah. The result of such a disaster is a cloud of locust that fills the air and darkens the sun. They swarm for miles. The advance columns attack all that is green. Every leaf and blade is devoured. Other waves strip the bark from the trees. The noise of the wings is heard for miles. The land in the wake of the attack is as that which is devastated by fire. All of the crops and animals die. People grow weak and die of starvation. It is a time of darkness and doom.

The distraught people ripped their clothing in despair. But the outward act of tearing their clothing did nothing to impress God. Thus, he cries out through the prophet: ***“—return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God, For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting in punishment. Perhaps he will again relent and leave behind a blessing,— (Joel 2: 14-16).***

Then, as now, God was not looking for frivolous, superficial, nearly comical pretenses of self denial or fasting—like the kid who gave up eating spinach. True repentance is an “inside job”, not a routine casual external show. True fasting deprives the flesh but feeds the spirit. If it doesn’t make one uncomfortable, it’s likely not the real deal. One has to ask of self, “Am I truly rending my heart?”

What does this Lenten cry to “rend the heart” really mean? The dictionary defines the word “rend” as this: to tear apart forcibly, to split, to break apart. In a theological sense, it means: “to distress the heart, the inner man, with grief or despair”. IT’S AN INSIDE JOB! A U-turn is accomplished by ceasing to go one way, turning around, and going in the opposite direction.

The Apostle Paul asked the Christians of his day (as well as today) a very poignant question: ***“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body. (I Cor. 6: 19-20)*** There is a time in Ezekial’s day that perverseness reached such a point that God was forced to extract His presence from the Holy Temple. It happened after many repeated and protracted warnings. God was pleading for His people to come back to Him, to make a U-turn. The Spirit of God could not stand the

filth taking place in the Holy Temple. God withdrew His presence reluctantly and by stages. He does not forsake His people hastily. After many repeated invitations to change, to rend their hearts, to make a U-turn, God departed. He moved from the Holy Place, then to the gate, then to the Eastern threshold, then across the river. He could not stay in a Holy Temple that persisted in ungodliness and thereby rejection of the Holy Spirit. God was forced to leave the people to the horrible consequences of their own devices.

There is a story about a young man who was listening to a homily by the priest. The homily was focusing on the need for one to feel the weight of their own sin. After the final blessing, the young man flagged down the priest and flippantly said: “Father, you said I should feel the weight of sin! Well, how much does sin weigh Father—20 pounds? 80 pounds? Come on Father, tell me he exclaimed in a mocking tone. The priest responded with a question to the young man: If you laid a 400 pound weight upon a corpse, what would it feel? The young man’s answer: “Well, nothing of course, it’s dead—the corpse is dead!” At which Father replied, “And so also is the spirit which feels no pain of sin or is indifferent to its burden and flippant about its presence!”

Flippancy seems to be the spiritual fashion trend of our day. Anyone remotely acquainted with the teaching of Holy Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and other Magisterial teaching should be able to easily discern that on an almost global scale these truths have been usurped by a spiritual insanity. Multitudes are embracing lies that go entirely contrary even to scientific truth which has stood throughout the ages. Huge swarms of spiritual locust have invaded all the major levers of worldly power and have darkened the minds and hearts of multitudes. These include those who consider themselves under the umbrella of Christianity as well as those entirely hostile to believers in Jesus Christ and His Word.

As we enter into the Lenten season of 2023, we must ask of self:

1. What are my priorities? Is growing in holiness in the forefront of my goals?
2. What’s my spiritual temperature? Am I running hot or cold? Or, have I fallen into the ever widening sea of lukewarmness?
3. Have I awakened from “spiritual slumber”? Am I making ready for the “final confrontation”?
4. Is there a need to make a:



Permitted



Teaching the wee ones—"How can I be Like You, Jesus?"—Ireland Elementary School



Left & Above: Encountering Christ as Lord—Kilkerely, Ireland



Life in the Spirit Seminar—Benburb, Ireland retreat Center

Reaching Out



January, 2023— Holy Spirit Healing Conference, Gainesville, FL

Finding the Way Home by Jean Marie

Have you ever waited too long to make that U turn and had to live with the consequence?

Several years ago, the kids and I were enjoying two fun filled days of skiing in Utah with my brother and catching up with my sister-in-law late into the evenings. I was pretty tired the morning we hit the road back to San Diego. After driving for several hours, I was expecting to see the Welcome to Nevada sign when instead I saw the Welcome to Idaho sign. My kids still tease me saying, "Remember when you didn't notice the mountains were on the wrong side of the road?" I made that costly mistake not just because I was tired, but also because I was content and enjoying my life not noticing some obvious signs that I was going the wrong way.

And as much as I hated making that U turn, I knew it was the only way home. The necessity for spiritual U turns in our lives also comes at us when the good Lord in His love for us gives us signs that we're heading away from our home with Him. Our reasons vary, but the result is always the same. Eyes on ourselves and we're lost. Eyes on Jesus and we're home.

Itinerary

Join us for Praise & Worship, Intercessory Prayer, Scripture Study and Fellowship. Monday nights, 7:00 PM, House of Prayer, 30 Ocean Ave., St. Augustine, FL 32080 (adjacent to the Nombre de Dios Mission and Our Lady of Leche Shrine). We also often ZOOM the meeting, just let us know if you would like to receive the link via your email. Send request to goyetomedwards@gmail.com

March 4-9, Buckeye, Arizona--Lenten Parish Mission and group meetings--
St. Henry Roman Catholic Church

March 24-28, Denton, Nebraska--St. Mary's-- Lenten Parish Mission, Life in the Spirit Seminar & special events.

May 19-31, Holy Land Study, Israel

July 11-27, Kigoma Diocese, Tanzania, East Africa--Renewal Ministries Mission--Rallies, Workshops

September 17-28--Brazil--Conferences, TV, multi-city meetings

October 4-9, Ann Arbor, MI--Renewal Ministries Country Coordinators retreat.

Oct. 12-27, Slovakia--Renewal Ministries Mission-Variou parishes, cities, towns, villages



*Tom & Jean Marie
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