



# Allocutio



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Allocutio: Holiness: opening the door to God's impact

One of the great tragedies of our time is the loss of a sense of God. Perhaps this is contributed to by the fact that people live more in an urban artificial setting than in a rural setting surrounded by nature. It is a real challenge to us all. But before looking "out there" it may be worth looking at my own connectedness to God. Because people will be touched by those in whom they sense a real holiness. That is what I was saying in discussion last month. It is why Frank Duff saw that the fundamental object of the Legion was the glory of God through the holiness of the members themselves before anything else.

What is holiness? It certainly does not mean external practice or actions. They may manifest themselves as a consequence but in themselves they are not the heart of holiness which is a condition in a person due to the action of God on them. Often people get hung up on the externals without looking at the deeper reality behind the concept and in that way do damage to it.

Holiness is a condition of the inner soul of each person caused by the Holy Spirit. It comes because the person is connected to the true God who changes the soul to be like God himself. By the working of the Holy Spirit in the deep soul the soul has a relationship with God which changes them just as any contact in life has its impact on us. Because the soul is in touch with God and is moulded by God the effects in the person make them become truer images of God.

For example since God is the great giver of life a person who is becoming holy loves life and respects life everywhere and sees in all life a sign of God's work. Since God is the ground of all reality and truth the soul who is being touched by God will be a person more and more of truth. Their lives will be ones of utter integrity and anything contrary to the truth will be abhorred by them. They will hear Christ's words, "I am the truth" and will not desire to be part of any lie. And since God is love the sure sign that a soul has connection to God is that charity in thought word and deed will express itself in them. There will also be an acknowledgement in that soul that God is the Lord and that I must obey him.

There is no greater model of holiness than Our Lady. Her soul was so connected to God that she was the greatest life giver of all, bringing nothing less than God into this part of his Creation. In her truthfulness she acknowledged that it was He who is almighty who was doing great things for her. Her charity is obvious from the start. While this year we will not celebrate officially the Visitation none the less her act of charity to Elizabeth, her concern for the couple in Cana and her solidarity at the foot of the Cross all manifest her deep inner heart of charity. And her whole life is one of submission to God, "Be it done unto me according to thy word" and "Do whatever he tells you".



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Genuine holiness is never of our own efforts. There are so many examples in the Bible and in the history of God's people of this. Our own St. Patrick was going one road until disaster struck and he was taken into captivity. But in captivity he met God who deeply touched his inner soul and changed him. And because of that deep inner change he became an instrument of God. Some were called early in life by God, Jeremiah, Samuel, Catherine of Siena, Therese of Lisieux. Others were called later after eventful lives: Augustine, John of God.

I say that holiness is a work that God does in us. That is true. And like Mary we must be very humble before God and make sure we are not carrying out some agenda of our own but are open to him doing what he wants in us. Be wary of a voice that is really an expression of middle-class or working class or politics or personal vendetta that tempts you to make it the basis of a religious movement. We must be humble and acknowledge that without God we can do nothing right. Humility also means that we hear that voice of God: nothing is impossible for God. So even the mountain in front of you, the habitual sin that is so hard to break, be humble and trust God.

Mary illustrates one other aspect of holiness. God cannot and will not begin his work in a soul until that soul gives him permission. God placed before Mary his project but did not move until, in modern parlance, she signed the bottom line. Note that he even gave her space to clarify the meaning of what she was being asked to sign up to. God cannot begin his work in us unless we open ourselves up to him.

How do we make space so that we can have a relationship with him? How do we open our souls to him so that he can impress his being on us? Everything we do in our life as Legionaries is aimed at that: our prayers, our work, our gathering around his Mother in our assemblies.

Everything that happens "out there" is a barometer on how much people open up space in their lives to the touch of God. The world reflects the inner realities in people's lives. If the television has replaced God then it will bear its fruits. I heard this week that Pope Francis hasn't looked at TV for 25 years. A man who keeps his inner heart for God! We might benefit from taking to heart those words spoken to Peter when he asked Jesus about John, "What does it matter to you if he lives for ever; you follow me!" That is what we want to do. Open the door to Jesus in our lives and follow him. Let us open the doors of our hearts and let God in and make his Temple in us.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill