

Onward Christian soldiers!

Learning the Faith, *commando* style

RECENTLY at the Fitzroy Falls Christian Convention Centre, the 7, 8, 9 year old boys at a Catholic Family Homeschoolers' Camp had three memorable religion lessons from Mr Brian Curtis. He and his wonderful wife are blessed with six sons and a daughter. Of himself, he said, "Luckily, I have been a boy, and there is nothing better to concentrate the mind than knowing there is an enemy to fight and you need to use all your strength and weapons."

At the Grand Finale Concert on the last night he and the boys did a brief revision. Yet so memorable! The other children in the audience of 150 went home animatedly quoting its Gospel message and actions.

Moreover, he involved his audience, thus: "When I point to you, you shout, "Yeah, Yeah!"

He began, "I bet you're thinking, what a bunch of empty-headed, weak legged, flea infested creatures!" He jabbed his finger at the audience: "Yeah, Yeah!"

"Well, you'd be wrong."

Then to the boys. "Come on soldiers on the stage, show 'em our lean, keen fighting team!"

"Soldiers! let's teach this crowd a lesson. Repeat after me: If you want to fight the good fight, you gotta use your weapons." Audience, on cue: "Yeah, Yeah!"

He announced the weaponry: "Prayer! Fasting! Almsgiving." "Yeah, Yeah!"

"Got it? Once more time... If you want to fight the good fight, you gotta use your weapons — Prayer! Fasting! Almsgiving." "Yeah, Yeah!"

"But what does it mean? Let me break it down. **PRAYER** — it's very important! It's life and death! Remember St Alphonsus, Those who pray" (boys' hands together) "will surely be saved" (boys' arms high in victory salute) "and those who don't" (boys' arms crossed and looking sour) "will surely be lost" (boys with looks of terror collapse in an untidy heap).

"We will show you one of the greatest weapons in your armoury — the Rosary." (Boys waved Rosary beads.) "It's like the ultimate in Swiss army knives — useful in all sorts of tough situations. Now if you've got a big problem, I mean **BIG PROBLEMS**, you need to use this old-fashioned style..."

"Soldiers! On your knees! Straight back! No wriggling. No fiddling. Hands together. Focus on the Lord Jesus." (All with actions — of course.)

"And if your eyes keep bouncing and your mind wandering, look at a holy picture. And if you ain't got that? Look at the crucifix. And if I ain't got that? Close your eyes and keep'em shut."

More actions and more "Yeah, Yeah!"

"Remember," (dangling the Rosary beads) "this is a multipurpose Swiss army knife weapon! This wonderful masterpiece is so good, Jesus asked His mother if He could borrow it! Remember St Faustina? She had a vision, angels of God's vengeance with balls of fire ready to strike the earth, and our dear Heavenly

Father so sick of all the terrible sin, so St Faustina tried to pray to stay God's hand, to buy us more time. Nothing was working, the angels were getting closer, but then she had an inspiration, calling on the most powerful thing on earth and in Heaven, the source of grace and mercy, the Body and Blood, soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and His sorrowful passion, you know the prayer: 'For the sake of His sorrowful Passion...'"

The boys responded, "Have mercy on us and the whole world."

"Suddenly, the angels lost their strength, the passion of Jesus was too powerful, even the most terrible sins were washed away in its torrent of mercy. Yeah, that's power — the chaplet of Divine Mercy, prayed on your mobile multi-purpose weapon."

Again, the boys brandished Rosary Beads.

"And when we're too tired to pray, or too scared! Just hang on to your Rosary. And you know? When you're hanging on to your Rosary, who is hanging on to you? The Lord Jesus and His Mother Mary."

"But sometimes you've just got **NO** time. You need grace and need it fast! You know, when temptation strikes in an instant, you need something real fast. Like the time your sister said something really rude, and you're about to give her a good piece of your mind, 'You little...' Quick! you need a prayer, an **ARROW PRAYER**" (i.e. pious ejaculation). "Or the time you brother just flicked his Wheatbix in your face on purpose, and your fist is telling you: 'Payback Time!' Quick, you need a prayer, an arrow prayer."

"Arrow prayer: say it fast, say it when you're angry, say it in your heart or out aloud. And if you really need to get close to the Lord Jesus fast, squeeze your crucifix, feel a little of the wounds I His hand by squeezing it hard. Yeah, arrow prayer, with extra punch!" (Yeah yeah!)

"It sounds easy, but it's not! A lot of times, when you need to pray, that is the last thing you think of doing. You've got no strength, no desire. Do you know what your problem is? You love your gut too much — you need mortification, your arms are too weak to pray. Mortification — that's **FASTING**."

"And if you love your gut" (Yeah, yeah!) "and got bad curiosity" (Yeah, yeah!) "fight it with fasting."

"When your Mum says, 'Have another biscuit, sweetheart?' No, no! self-denial. Or she says, 'Darling, have another piece of chocolate cake?' No, no! self-restraint!" (Yeah, yeah!)

"What about some squashy broccoli?"

Sanctification! Eat it." (Yeah, yeah!)

"And some soggy brussel sprouts? Offer it up! Eat it." (Yeah, yeah!) "Remember what Our Lord and St Paul said, Eat what is set before you."

"And it's not just food you know. You need to fast from *other pleasures* that make you weak, fat and flabby. You know, like playing video games—

yeah, you've got to learn to say no, turn it off! And what about that precious TV or movie *Aww Dad*, it's OK if it's not rated PG! — say NO! — fast from it — no more *Spiderman TV* — you've got to learn fasting from other pleasures! Not just the gut, but the eyes! "Mortification — and the best of all, Do what you're told, when you're told, with a smile on your face! Remember, The Lord loves a cheerful giver."

"You've got it? (Yeah, yeah!)"

"But that is not all. What about money? — you must love that? (Yeah, yeah!) "Gotta learn to give it away." (Yeah, yeah!)"

"ALMSGIVING!" (Yeah, yeah!) "*What if I've got no money? OK, share your stuff!*"

"*Share my stuff, like what? — Like your bike. My bike! And like your rip-stick! — My rip-stick! And like your McDonald action figures? — My McDonald action figures! Gotta learn to give it away! (Yeah, yeah!) Almsgiving.*"

"Have you ever seen someone trying to fight with no hands - useless, pathetic. You can't fight if your fists are full of possessions. Why are the saints such great champions? They have no possessions and so their hands are free to fight with weapons."

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LATER, in a comment on the concert, he said, "There were a few shocked crestfallen faces at the military motif. Did they think me a gung-ho crazy freak?" At the concert he vividly augmented his three lessons with a real live tug-of-war. It began with just one smaller boy pulling against a hefty lad from the audience. In spite of his arrow prayer, the small boy was too weak. He called for help: "I need back up."

With more smaller boys helping, all saying arrow prayers, they finally won. "See — our prayer is more powerful when others join in." (Yeah yeah!) "God wants us to involve others in our praying."

They did it again, but this time the hefty lad let go the rope suddenly. The smaller fellows collapsed in a struggling heap. "See — a really big problem might not go away even with all that prayer. The Lord Jesus might not want us to overcome it, but to accept our cross with Him."

The tug of war episode climaxed with all the smaller boys picking up the big fellow and carting him off! His comment was, "The Lord wants us to pray for the extra strength to pick up the cross and carry it."

"Of course, God sometimes says 'no' to our particular requests — perhaps for someone's sufferings to be eased or a child to get better. And they die. But the prayer was not wasted. It was part of God's mysterious Providence that permitted this suffering for a very good reason — the salvation of a soul. Just like Jesus's suffering in the Garden in the First Sorrowful Mystery, 'Not My will but Thine be done.'"

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Corrigenda

IN *Handouts* n. 74 on *Ecumenism*, in the last *Book News*, I blunted the full import of "no salvation *outside* the Church", making it "no salvation *without* the Church." This latter is true, but inadequate. (See the foot of column 2 on page 1, also the top of page 2.)

The only way to be saved is to die in the state of grace. This includes having the virtue of faith, at least implicitly, to believe in the Gospel. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:16.

Since "God wills all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4), the great theologian, St Thomas Aquinas, considered it was possible that God gives even unbelievers at their last moment an invitation to "repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15), and thus to have the intention, at least implicitly, to join the Holy Catholic Church.

We simply do not know who is offered, and who accepts, such a grace, and thereby avoids Hell.

Thus even professing atheists could be saved (as per *Lumen Gentium* §16) but not as atheists.

The corrected version of *Handouts* n. 74 is herein.

Father James Tierney

The Lord's Prayer

WHEN we say, 'Hallowed be Thy Name,' we are counselling ourselves to desire that His Name, which is always holy, may be held holy also among men; that is, that it may not be treated with contempt: and this for the benefit not of God but of men.

When we say, 'Thy Kingdom come,' which will certainly come whether we wish it or not, we arouse our desire for that Kingdom, that it may come for us, and that we may be worthy to reign therein.

When we say, 'Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' we are asking Him for obedience for ourselves, that His Will may be done in us as it is done in Heaven by his angels.

When we say, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' we mean by 'today' this present time. We are asking either for sufficiency, by expressing its principal part, signifying the whole by the name 'bread'; or for the sacrament of believers, which is necessary at the present time in order to obtain the happiness not of this present time but of eternity.

When we say, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,' we are advising ourselves both as to what we should ask for, and what we should do to be worthy to receive it.

When we say, 'Lead us not into temptation,' we counsel ourselves to make this petition lest we be abandoned by His help, and either be deceived into consenting to some temptation or be so downcast as to give in to it.

When we say, 'Deliver us from evil,' we bring ourselves to reflect that we are not yet in that happy state where we shall suffer no evil. This last petition in the Lord's prayer has such a wide scope that a Christian may in any trouble express his pain by it, pour forth his tears, begin from it, linger over it, and end his prayer at this point.

It is necessary by these words to impress the realities themselves on our memory. For whatever other words we may say — whether the devotion of the one praying precedes and forms the words to express itself, or accompanies the words and grows from them — if we are praying in the right way, we say nothing that has not already a place in the Lord's Prayer.

St Augustine, *Liturgy of the Hours* vol. III pp. 668-669