

## “TRULY ALIVE”

***“Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.” Jude 21***

Lent is a time of repentance and recommitment to the One who shed His blood to redeem us from sin, death and hell. So, how’s that working out for you?

When I see news reports of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world suffering torture and martyrdom at the hands of radical Islamic groups like ISIS, I can’t help but wonder, at times, if they aren’t the ones really alive, and we in the Western Church are dead or, at least, in a really deep sleep.

They go to church fully expecting the possibility of being shot, or having their churches burned down around them. Many of us go to church if we feel like it, or don’t have anything better to do. Many of them go to church *because* they are persecuted; they will not back down to the enemies of the Gospel. Many of us don’t go to church because we aren’t persecuted. We just don’t see “what the big deal is” with missing church. They go to church, in spite of the danger, because they are Christians. Many of us don’t go to church because we think that we’re “Christian enough” without it.

A hungry man relishes even the simplest of foods. A thirsty man is thankful for a glass of water. But we are so bloated and satiated on the comforts and pleasures of this world that we despise the richest of fare that our Lord graciously provides in His Word and Sacraments. I wonder if those twenty-one Coptic Christians who were publicly beheaded by the Islamic radicals in February, or the countless other suffering Christians in the Middle East, Africa, North Korea, China, Viet Nam and many other places around the world despise us for our apathy and indifference.

Or, perhaps, they just pity us. I know the things I am writing may sting many of you (and myself, too), and maybe even anger you, but please do not ignore the importance of what is being said. I know there are many fine and faithful Christians who daily live out their lives in Christ, and regularly hear God’s Word in church. There are also many who wish they could be in church but, because of age, health or other circumstances, can’t gather with their fellow Christians.

But there are many of us who simply aren’t that committed. We don’t really see our ongoing need for the forgiveness and life that Christ suffered and died to gain for us. If not apathetic, we are basically indifferent. So, with the very real danger of worldwide terrorism by radical Islamic extremists, and the fact that, each day, our own lives are coming closer to the grave, this is the time to repent and recommit to The Faith, and our involvement in Church. None of us knows how much longer that luxury will be available to us.

***“Our God can save us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” Daniel 3:17-18***

God grant us true repentance and an ongoing and faithful reception of His Gifts in Christ!