

Homily
Memorial of Saint Catherine of Alexandria
November 25, 2022

My wife and I have recently been remodeling our home. Nothing major; we took down a wall between the dining room and living room to open the space up; we painted and replaced carpeting; we replaced and installed new light fixtures; we replaced our dining room and living room furniture. It was long overdue. For fifteen years, our home was very nice, but it was time for a change. I kept my promise to my wife; we made things like new.

Jesus promised to make all things new. On the road to Calvary, carrying the cross, already bruised and battered, Jesus told His mother, "Look, I make all things new." In today's first reading from Revelation, the One who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." We know Jesus keeps His promises.

Our Responsorial Psalm refrain tells us, "Our soul has been rescued like a bird from the fowler's snare." Another promise Jesus gives us. He tells us of God's mercy and forgiveness. We only need to ask, to seek that forgiveness. It is already there if only we seek it.

Absolution in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is relieving; it removes a burden that nearly crushes us. Every time I hear those words of my confessor, "I absolve you from your sins..." I am relieved and refreshed to the point of feeling nearly weightless.

God knows us. He knows every thought, every concern, every fear, every joy. As Matthew tells us in today's Gospel, "Even all the hairs of your head are counted." God tells us to not be afraid. In knowing us, He cares for us, loves us, wants us to be with Him. He tells us, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

Ironically, it is you and me; only we can destroy our own soul and body by denying Christ. "Everyone who acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father."

Saint Catherine of Alexandria did just that, and then some. According to the Legend of St. Catherine, this young woman, a princess and scholar, converted to Christianity after receiving a vision at the age of 14. At the age of 18, she debated 50 pagan philosophers. Amazed at her wisdom and debating skills, they became Christians – as did about 200 soldiers and members of the emperor's family. All of them were martyred at the hands of the emperor Maxentius, including Catherine, who was tortured first. She was then sentenced to be executed on a spiked wheel. Catherine touched the wheel and it shattered. An executioner was ordered to behead her. He had three attempts that left her alive, but barely. She laid in the street for three days, smiling and praising God.

The fourth century was tough on Christians. How would you judge the 21st century on Christians? Are we as tough as Catherine?

Known as the virginal spouse of Christ, Saint Catherine of Alexandria is the patron saint of students, teachers, philosophers, unmarried women, librarians, lawyers and apologists. Today, pray to her for strength and courage to acknowledge Christ and proclaim the Lord's grace, love and truth!