



COME FROM LEBANON

Last Friday was the memorial Feast of **St Charbel Makhlouf**. His name means 'God's Good News.' Born in 1828 and he died at the age of 70 in 1898. He belonged to the Lebanese Maronite church, was beatified by Paul VI in 1965, then canonised by him in 1977.

At his funeral his superior said of him, ***"Because of what he will do after his death, I need not talk about his behaviour"***. Like **St Therese of Lisieux**, his public ministry was to begin after death. A few months after his death a bright light was seen surrounding his tomb. The superiors opened it to find his body still intact. Since that day a blood-like liquid flows from his body. Experts and doctors are unable to give medical explanations for the incorruptibility and flexibility of his body. In the years 1950 and 1952 his tomb was opened and his body still had the appearance of a living one.

Thomas Merton, the American Cistercian Hermit, wrote in his journal: "Charbel lived as a hermit in Lebanon—he was a Maronite. He died. Everyone forgot about him. Fifty years later, his body was discovered incorrupt and in a short time he worked over 600 miracles. He is my new companion. My road has taken a new turning. It seems to me that I have been asleep for 9 years—and before that I was dead."

The Office of Readings for his memorial, quoting St Ammonius, a 5th century companion of St Cyril of Jerusalem, can help us to understand the most critical reality facing the church in the Western World, how to evangelize? How can we fish in the waters of this modern world, and harvest the crop which is ripe for reaping? How to create a new 'court of the gentiles' in which modern man who has no faith, can enter in dialogue with the God?

The path which leads to the evangelization begins first of all with personal conversion – it also corresponds to the different stages in Christ life; quoting St Ammonius: silence, quietude, prayer and withdrawal from the world leads to interior silence; interior silence leads to self-knowledge and the unmasking of the works of the enemy within us; self-knowledge leads to a fight with the evil one by which we overcome him through grace; overcoming the evil one leads to a profound inner healing of our souls by which the Divine power comes to dwell in us - habitually; being healed of our infirmities, with the Divine power dwelling in us, God can – at the right time - now send us into the world to heal those who like ourselves are sick. This is the **New Evangelisation!**

Most of us during this pandemic, have been locked up for 4 months with lots of opportunities for silence, quiet and prayer. What was your experience? In the second reading on Sunday, St Paul says that to those who love God, God turns *everything to their good (Romans 8:28-30)*, even a pandemic. Maybe you who are reading this are called to be an apostle - but not yet - because the work of silence and quiet is not yet complete; the inner healing needed is only partially done; pray to St Charbel, who like St Therese of Lisieux, was sent after his death to do his best work, ask him to give you the hope that you can be healed; that you can win the battle with chastity, with money with all the false idols of this modern world; and being healed, you can be victorious ; that the Father comes with Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, to make his home in you, as they did in the apostles at Pentecost. That we be sent to the world to evangelize, with a renewed heart, full of joy at the miracles God has done in us.

I attach the reading from [St Ammonius as an Appendix](#). Read it and pray that these words may become flesh in your life.

St Charbel Makhoulouf pray for us. Our Lady of Lebanon pray for us.

Fr David Falcon



Second Reading of Office of Readings 24th July
From the letters of St Ammonius, hermit
Those close to God have become doctors of souls

You also know, my dear brethren, that ever since the transgression came to pass, the soul cannot know God unless it withdraws itself from men and from every distraction. **For then the soul will see the adversary who fights against it. And once it has seen the adversary, and has overcome him every time he engages it in battle, then God dwells in that soul, and all the labour is changed to joy and gladness. But if the soul is overcome, then there come upon it grief, boredom, and many other kinds of heaviness.**

This is why the holy fathers also withdrew into the desert alone, men such as Elijah the Tishbite and John the Baptist. For do not suppose that because the righteous were in the midst of men it was among men that they had achieved their righteousness. **Rather, having first practised much quiet, they then received the power of God dwelling in them, and then God sent them into the midst of men, having acquired every virtue, so that they might act as God's provisioners and cure men of their infirmities. For they were physicians of the soul, able to cure men's infirmities.** This was the need for which they were dragged away from their quiet and sent to men. **But they are only sent when all their own diseases are healed. For a soul cannot be sent into the midst of men for their edification if it has some defect of its own. And those who go before they are made perfect, go at their own will and not at God's. And God says in reproof about such, 'I sent them not, but they ran of themselves' (Jeremiah 23:21).** For this cause they are neither able to guard themselves, nor to edify another soul.

But those who are sent from God, do not want to go away from their quiet, knowing that through it they have obtained the divine power; but **in order not to disobey the Creator, they go for the spiritual edification of men, in imitation of Him. For as the Father sent His very Son from heaven to heal all the infirmities and sicknesses of men (as it is written, 'He took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses' Isaiah 53:4), thus all the saints who come among men to heal them follow the example of the Creator of all, that so they might be made worthy of adoption as sons of God. And as the Father and the Son are, so these should be, unto the ages of ages.**

See, beloved, I have made known to you the power of quiet, and how it heals on all sides, and how God wills it. That is why I have written to you, that you may be strengthened in what you are doing, and know that it is in quiet that all the saints grew, and for this reason the divine power came to dwell in them, and made known to them heavenly mysteries; thus they drove away all the oldness of this world. And he who is writing this to you has by means of it attained to this measure.

Many monks at the present time **have been unable to persevere in quiet because they could not overcome their self-will. For this reason they live among men all the time, since they are unable to despise themselves and flee from the company of men, or to engage in battle.** Thus they abandon quiet, and remain in the company of their neighbours, receiving their comfort thereby, all their lives. Therefore they have not been held worthy of the divine sweetness, or to have the power dwelling within them. **For when that power looks down upon them, it finds that they receive their comfort in this present world and in the passions that belong to the soul and body. As a result it cannot overshadow them any more, for love of money, human vainglory, and all the soul's sicknesses and distractions, prevent that divine power from overshadowing them.**

Show yourselves strong in what you do. Those who depart from quiet are unable to conquer their passions or to fight against their adversary, because they are subjected to their passions. **But in your case, you overcome the passions, and the power of God is with you.**