

Catholicism Is About Swords

by Father John A. Perricone

*Saint Bernard Preaching the
Second Crusade by Émile Signol*

It may seem like a lifetime ago, but some may recall the habited Catholic nun who spoke at the Republican National Convention last August. She held up her Rosary and exclaimed: “This is our most powerful weapon!” With lightning speed, a post appeared on social media (full disclosure: that term is as foreign to me as Swahili. I merely know it as an abstract term describing a popular way of communication amongst most Americans) from a priest. He moaned that the good nun’s declaration was an unfit statement for Catholics: “Too bellicose,” he moaned, “we are a religion of peace.” Such gauzy drivel has been filling the heads of Catholics for some half-century, gaining traction because it pours from the lips of those in authority. It has enfeebled the Church and left the Faithful enervated, susceptible to any stray intellectual virus concocted by the cancel culture.

This unchecked malady besetting Mother Church has left our Catholic patrimony dimmed. A Trojan Horse has invaded the walled City of Christ’s Bride, looting and plundering the Church’s rich inheritance of doctrine, moral law, liturgy, and tradition. And as the enemy rolled out from the horse’s belly, they sacked and effaced with singular purpose. Many Catholics found themselves helpless and destitute. Indeed, generations of Catholics watched in horror as the honor of God and His Church were mocked.

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By the grace of God, many Catholics have risen from their dazed shock and have seen the Big Lie burying the truth of God. They have recognized that the Faith is not about a fay peace but of manly war. We have been fashioned by the grace of the Holy Spirit to raise not white flags but gleaming swords. Effete surrenders do not mark us, only the dust of war. The dear Father of that epicene remark should read and reread Matthew 10:34 and know that Our Savior means what He says when He thunders, “I have not come to bring peace but the sword.” And not a stack of biblical criticism can change that. Our Faith is about swords, not hand holding.

Swords first wielded at ourselves, our sins. The first warfare is the interior one where we march into battle declaring war on anything that keeps us away from God. This is the meaning of Saint John of the Cross’s *nada*, *nada* as steps leading souls in the Ascent of Mount Carmel. Each level of that mountain is a *nada* (nothing), a stripping of all that magnifies the self and its conceits. In the summoning prose of Father Gerald Vann:

It is so easy to lose vision and love. God gives you an insight into reality, a glimpse of himself, which would take you deep into his love and far in his service: but the superficialities call to you, the world unlit by vision calls to you, and you may roll a great stone between you and what you saw, and go your way, and the vision is lost. But

He rolled the stone: it must always be ourselves, it is never God, who will erect the barrier: the only obstacles are those we make ourselves. God is always pursuing us with his love; it is we who try to escape, to blot out the vision. We blot it out by prolonged, deliberate disobedience; we blot it out by open rebellion, by hatred, to which prolonged disobedience can lead; we blot it out by becoming hardened in indifference, which means indeed a

gradual closing of all avenues to the greater world of eternity, a severing of all our roots, a stifling of all the deepest elements in our being, so that in the end, unless we turn back again, desolation inescapably follows, the mover of immovable separateness and loneliness of hell.

This first sword of Catholicism in the past half century has been turned into a welcome mat for the zeitgeist. Theologians eager to spread the gospel of accommodation have reworked the battle against sin into a softer therapeutic of self-affirmation. Calvary is embarrassedly shunned, so that “spirituality centers” could reign. *Mea culpas* are traded for “have a good day,” and contrition disappears

to make room for “accompaniment.” True compassion, shown in rescuing those entangled in the web of sin, becomes an exercise in managing the web more effectively. Purveyors of this bogus Catholicism earn the damning words of Saint Cardinal Newman, “we like to abandon ourselves to the satisfactions of religion, we do not like to hear of its severities. The age, whatever its peculiar excellencies, has this serious defect, it loves an exclusively cheerful religion, it is determined to make religion bright, sunny, and joyous.” At which point we have no religion but only parlor games.

The second sword follows directly from the first. When Catholics become serious about their sanctification, they must become equally serious about the activity of conquering evil in the world and in our beloved Church. Every prayer reaches its consummation in action, action to spread Christ’s love where it has become suffocated by the lies of the age and the *trahison des clercs*. For every Rosary, there must be the conquest of an enemy of Christ. Our motto must become the one forged by Saint Dominic to his friars: “*contemplare et allis tradere contemplate*” (*contemplate and then pass the fruits to others*).

This counsel has already been taken to heart by increasing numbers of Catholics. In a twist of Divine Mercy, the very crisis in the Church has galvanized many into warriors, spurring them to heroic action. Growing numbers of the faithful will not stand idly by any longer. They are banding together in small pockets of resistance to stand with the Angels, again pealing *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. Catholics, young and old, bright and ordinary, are steadily recalling the courage of Catholic martyrs who, facing vicious enemies, dauntlessly shouted *Viva Cristo Rey!* With characteristic Catholic hearts, they do not react harshly to shepherds who sleep. With hearts trained on the heart of their King they refuse to wag their fingers at guardians who cheered the Trojan Horse while expelling the Savior’s faithful little ones. No. They have risen simply to be about the work of restoring the beauty of God’s Holy Church. The late Thomistic scholar, Dr. Frederick Wilhelmsen, voiced all of this with lyric expression: “Catholicism is the Mexican Father Pro blessing his Marxist firing squad in Mexico with the stumps of his arms after the barbarians had finished cutting them off. It is Spanish soldiers charging Communist trenches with fixed bayonets and rosaries.

Catholicism is about an army marching through history chanting the *Te Deum*. Catholicism is about swords.” It is also about Saint Athanasius striking the heretic Arius at the Council of Nicea for denying the divinity of Christ. It is Saint Ambrose denying entrance to Emperor Theodosius into his Milan cathedral for perpetrating the Thessalonican Massacre of 10,000 citizens in 389.

More and more Catholics must enlist in this supernatural struggle. More must raise swords of holiness and truth. Swords against our reservations, hesitations, and rationalizations to surrender in silence. Swords of doctrine against the mendacity of those who have trimmed our glorious Faith for too long. Bright, glistening swords raised bravely, unafraid of any foes, no matter where they be found, no matter their title, no matter their official attire.

In the 1970s, in the teeth of the Great Terror, a lone gallant Catholic, Brent Bozell, created an intellectual Catholic journal named *Triumph*. He intentionally gave it that name to tweak the noses of the regnant Catholic Left plunderers. That crowd loathed what they called the Triumphalism of

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pre-Vatican II Catholics. By that they meant Christ’s Victory over the world through His Catholic Church. Their position? To grovel before the unredeemed world. To imitate it. To become a part of it. To comfortably fit in. To make *their* agenda the agenda of the Church. It was a vertiginous time, when every Catholic certitude was mocked. Mr. Bozell decided to stand in defiance of the Great Betrayal. He did this by decisively proclaiming that Catholics *do* stand for triumph. We are indeed members of a Triumphant Catholic Church, who alone administers the fruits of Christ’s Triumph.

Fellow Catholics, join the Triumph. Stand with Mother Church who now kneels in her Gethsemane. But not for long. For faithful Catholics are rallying under the *vexilla regis*. Under Christ’s banner, only one thing lies ahead. *Triumph*. ✠



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