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January 1, 2015

Letter to Friends and Benefactors

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Blessed Christmas, Happy New Year and Paradise at the end of your days !

Yes: Paradise, Heaven, the Beatific Vision to all our readers! This is our deepest and constant wish for all of you: that when the “Divine Thief” will come, at a time known to Him alone, to ask each one of us for an account of our life, we may not be “found wanting” (Dan. 5, 27) but rather ready wearing “the wedding garment” of grace and merits to enter “into the joy of our Master”!

As we begin another Annum Domini (A.D.), it is an ideal moment to look back and to look ahead on the map of our life. To look back, not simply at the year just ended, but at the days of all our life which “have passed more swiftly than the web is cut by the weaver” (Job 7:6), and to seriously ask ourselves, “What have I done for the Lord up to now?”

When we ask a Wiseman, in the East and in the West, both at the natural and at the supernatural level about life, and how to live it, we find a certain convergence on the idea that most people do waste a lot of time, very precious time that never returns. There was a lot of wisdom in the old Romans, such as this one, which finds many echoes in Sacred Scripture:

“It is not that we have a short time to live, but that we waste a lot of it. Life is long enough, and a sufficiently generous amount has been given to us for the highest achievements if it were all well invested. But when it is wasted in heedless luxury and spent on no good activity, we are forced at last by death’s final constraint to realize that it has passed away before we knew it was passing. So it is: we are not given a short life but we make it short, and we are not ill-supplied but wasteful of it... Life is long if you know how to use it.

You are living as if destined to live forever; your own frailty never occurs to you; you don’t notice how much time has already passed, but squander it as though you had a full and overflowing supply — though all the while that very day which you are devoting to somebody or something may be your last. You act like mortals in all that you fear, and like immortals in all that you desire... How late it is to begin really to live just when life must end! How stupid to

forget our mortality, and put off sensible plans to our fiftieth and sixtieth years, aiming to begin life from a point at which few have arrived! (Seneca (4 B.C. – 65 A.D.), *On the Shortness of life*)

A certain devil, Screwtape by name, also understood this very well as he was training a junior on how to drag souls to everlasting hell (*what would he say today with the internet, blogs and rumors!!*):

You no longer need a good book, which he really likes, to keep him from his prayers or his work or his sleep; a column of advertisements in yesterday's paper will do. You can make him waste his time not only in conversation he enjoys with people whom he likes, but in conversations with those he cares nothing about on subjects that bore him. You can make him do nothing at all for long periods. You can keep him up late at night, not roistering, but staring at a dead fire in a cold room. All the healthy and outgoing activities which we want him to avoid can be inhibited and nothing given in return, so that at last he may say, as one of my own patients said on his arrival down here, "I now see that I spent most of my life in doing neither what I ought nor what I liked". (CS. Lewis *The Screwtape Letters*)

Wasting time, as is clearly explained here, is not just doing nothing, sheer idleness, but it also means doing the wrong thing, running "in the wrong direction – *praeter viam*" as St Gregory would say.

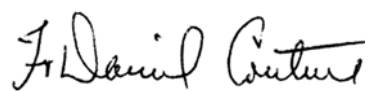
At the beginning of this New Year of the Lord, let us examine at least that single point: am I wasting time? Do I have all my priorities right, in order? Spiritual life? Study of my faith? Some apostolic activities? For example, many don't find their 15 minutes to say their daily rosary, but find hours in browsing the internet or watching movies. It is rarely – although it can be, I do admit, for some – just a question of time. It is mostly a question of will. When we want to do something, we do find time, we make time for it, we willingly sacrifice secondary things for it.

"See therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly: not as unwise, but as wise: redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. 5:16).

As dear old Fr. Urban Snyder used to say: "Sow time in order to find time!", an ideal way to put this into practice is to take five days to do a good retreat, an Ignatian retreat if possible, to examine "*sub specie aeternitatis* – under the eyes of eternity" what we have done and are doing with the precious time the Good Lord is giving us. The full 2015 retreat schedule, for men and women in Canada, is now available in our priories and chapels. How many retreatants, cradle Catholics as well as converts, have testified that they have learned more in these Five Days than in their whole life as Catholic! This is not surprising since, as Pope Pius XI wrote, "St. Ignatius learned from the Mother of God herself to fight the combats of the Lord. It was as if from her hands that he received this most excellent code, which is the name we can give it in all truth, of which every good soldier of Jesus Christ must make use." (*Mens Nostra*).

"Go, and do likewise!" (Lk 10:37)

Truly yours, in the service of Jesus and Mary Immaculate,



Fr. Daniel Couture
District Superior