

**Question:** Is it true that we are living in the End Times, and that many cardinals, bishops and priests are taking many souls with them to hell?

**Answer:** In answer to your question, that *we are living in “the End Times”* and awaiting a “new Pentecost” ought not come as a surprise to us, as several modern pontiffs and theologians have used these expressions with increasing intensity in the last few decades. In point of fact, Jesus revealed to the 20th century Polish mystic St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) that in preparing the world for his coming, “*Before the Day of Justice, I am sending the Day of Mercy.*”<sup>1</sup>

As for your question of *many prelates going to hell and taking souls with them*, let us recall that while God predestines no one to go to hell (CCC, 1037), the Council of Florence acknowledges that humans who do not abide by the true faith are lost. The Church moreover teaches that at the moment of death the soul’s judgment is “immediate” (cf. Councils of Florence and Lyons, and CCC arts. 1022, 1035), and it acknowledges the existence of hell and its eternity (CCC, 1035). And throughout the writings of several Church-approved mystics, it is revealed that there are souls who are indeed lost in hell for eternity (cf. F. Kowalska, *Diary of Divine Mercy*, entry 741; cf. Luisa Piccarreta, *The Hours of the Passion*, 1pm hour, 2pm hour, 7pm hour, 10pm hour and 11pm hour; etc.).

Furthermore, it is incorrect to assert that the sinful actions of one person (e.g., cardinal, bishop, priest, etc.) are the *direct cause* of the loss of the soul of another. However, it is correct to affirm that one person may be the *direct cause* in depriving another of God’s special or extraordinary graces (e.g., an evildoer’s immoral actions may frustrate the flow of grace into the soul of another – cf. 1 Cor. 12:26)<sup>2</sup> and *indirect cause* of another’s possible damnation (“possible” because each person’s free and intended choices directly decide his/her own destiny, and not those of another).

When combined with fasting and penance, prayers become more efficacious in the conversion of sinners and even the salvation of hardened souls at moment of death. An example of such prayers comes from the Diary of St. Thérèse of Lisieux who prayed for the conversion of the notorious and unrepentant killer Henri Pranzini prior to his death by guillotine for his murderous crimes. Thérèse read what happened in the paper the following day after his death and recorded how, when he was about to put his head into the guillotine, “He turned, took hold of the crucifix the Priest was holding out to him, and kissed the sacred wounds three times!” If a hardened sinner can be saved at the moment of his death on account of a special grace necessary

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<sup>1</sup> St. Maria Faustina, *Diary, Divine Mercy in My Soul* (Stockbridge, MA: Marians of the Immaculate Conception, 2000), entry 1588.

<sup>2</sup> Sin has an interpersonal dimension: one person’s sins necessarily impact another. St. Paul suggest this when he affirms, “*When one member of the body suffers, all suffer*” (1 Cor. 12:26). At Fatima, when Mary opened the earth and revealed to the three shepherd children a vision of hell, she affirmed, “*Many souls are going to hell because there are not enough people to pray for them.*” Thus actual sin has an interpersonal dimension.

for salvation through the prayers of one young holy nun, all the more is this possible through the prayers of holy anointed prelates who, by virtue of their sacramental vocation, are entrusted by God with thousands of souls. Consider the following statements of the Church that apply to both priests and laity:

*“Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more” (Lk. 12:47-48).*

*“Once you have supernatural life, once sanctifying grace is in your soul, you can increase it by every supernaturally good action you do: receiving Communion, saying prayers, performing the corporal works of mercy. Is it worth increasing sanctifying grace once you have it; isn’t the minimum enough? Yes and no. It’s enough to get you into heaven, but it may not be enough to sustain itself. It’s easy to fall from grace, as you know. The more solidly you’re wed to sanctifying grace, the more likely you can withstand temptations.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“God gives priests a special grace to be ministers of Christ among the people. They perform the sacred duty of preaching the Gospel, so that the offering of the people can be made acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Spirit... Through the ministry of the priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ... Priests should help men to see what is required and what is God's will... as every man has received grace, he must administer the same to others...” (Presbyterorum Ordinis, 2).*

It is an established scriptural and early-Church teaching that all humans are endowed with a free will and, no matter how much one may condition the free will of another – through sin or scandal – it remains essentially free. Certainly, an individual’s invincible ignorance (due to their not having been properly educated or informed by those in authority of the nature or consequences of their moral actions) lessens the culpability of that individual’s materially sinful action (Lk. 12:47). Moreover God mercifully weighs all such conditionings and ignorance of the human will that impact an individual’s choices, while ultimately holding each individual responsible for his or her own personal choices and actions in life (Jb. 34:11; Rom. 2:6; Mt. 6:27). So, if one should affirm that *prelates are taking other souls to hell with them*, it is not to be understood solely on account of their failure to live holy lives, but more specifically on account of the special graces their holy lives acquire and upon which the salvation of hardened sinners – who with their own free-will failed to merit salvation – depends.

While one cannot minimize the great and traumatic consequences of sin and scandal that impacts souls and leads them away from God, one must never lose sight of St. Paul words who

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<sup>3</sup> Article entitled, “*Grace: What it is and What it Does*”, bearing the *Imprimatur* of Robert H. Brom, Bishop of San Diego, August 10, 2004 and *Nihil Obstat* of Bernadeane Carr, STL, Censor Librorum, August 10, 2004.

affirms, “*all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose,*”<sup>4</sup> and the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, Blessed Dina Bèlanger, St. Padre Pio and others add, “*even sin.*” The fact that God can draw good even from man’s evil acts, without condoning the evil, is made evident in the writings of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, where Jesus reveals that original sin was permitted to bring about a *greater* good:

*“My Redemption ransomed souls from sin... To their wounds and deformities I attached the diamonds, the pearls and the jewels of My pains in order to hide all of their evils and clothe them with such magnificence as to surpass their original state. Therefore, it is with reason that the Church says, “Felix culpa”, because with sin came Redemption, and My humanity not only nourished mankind with its Blood, but clothed it with its own Person and adorned it with its own beauty”.*<sup>5</sup>

*“My daughter, do not fear, you have more help than Adam had. You have the help of a humanized God and all his works and pains for your defense, for your sustenance, for your cortege, which he did not have. Why then do you fear?”*<sup>6</sup>

Jesus tells Blessed Dina Bèlanger:

*“The glory that my Father has received since the Redemption is, in spite of human sinfulness, far greater than if humans had never sinned, because the reparation that I offer my Father is infinite, and it makes up infinitely for all the sins of the human race. Each time a soul unites itself to Me to glorify my Father, it gives him infinite glory through Me”.*<sup>7</sup>

Jesus reveals to his chosen mystic Sr. Mary of the Holy Trinity:

*“The soul that regrets her sin and makes reparation for it gives Me a greater proof of love than a soul that has avoided sin”.*<sup>8</sup>

The prophet Ezekiel and the Magisterium reinforce this teaching:

*“I will be... more generous to you than in the beginning; thus you shall know that I am the Lord.”*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:28.

<sup>5</sup> Luisa Piccarreta, volume 14, February 26, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., volume 19, July 18, 1926.

<sup>7</sup> Dina Bèlanger, *The Autobiography*, third edition, Sillery 1997, p. 343 [entry of June 14, 1928].

<sup>8</sup> *The Spiritual Legacy of Sister Mary of the Holy Trinity*, IL: Tan Books 1981, p.303.

<sup>9</sup> Ez. 36:11.

*“Father, in restoring human nature you have given us a greater dignity than we had in the beginning.”*<sup>10</sup>

Lastly, St. Padre Pio assures us that God can obtain good even from evil:

*“And in truth, given that the Lord can obtain good even from evil, for whom will he do this, if not for those who have given themselves to him without reservation? Consider the work of this great mercy: It converts our sins into good... Tell me, therefore, what will he not do with our afflictions, whatever they are, be certain that, if you love God with all your heart, everything will be converted to good. Even if at that moment you cannot understand where this good should come from, be more than ever sure that it will come, without a doubt.”*<sup>11</sup>

In light of the preceding, while it is incorrect to affirm that others (e.g., cardinals, bishops, priests, etc.) are the *direct cause* of another’s damnation, one may safely affirm that others may be the direct cause in depriving another of God’s special graces (e.g., an evildoer’s immoral actions may frustrate the flow of grace into the soul of another) and *indirect cause* of another’s possible damnation (“possible” because each person’s free and intended choices directly decide his/her own destiny, and not that of others).

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<sup>10</sup> The Liturgy of the Hours, Vol. II, Catholic Book Publishing Co., NY, p. 791.

<sup>11</sup> *Padre Pio Counsels, Collection of maxims, words of wisdom and advice*, Meditation 89, p.111, <http://www.padrepio.ie/thumbnails2.htm>.