



A LIFE WORTH SAVING - OUR EASTER STORY

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)

4 April 2021

A man risked his life by swimming through the treacherous riptide to save a youngster being swept out to the sea. After the child recovered from the frightening experience, he said to the man, *“Thank you for saving my life.”* The man looked into the boy’s eyes and said, *“That’s okay, kid. Just make sure your life was worth saving”* (Author unknown). Another familiar story, “Saving Private Ryan”, asked the question, *“Am I worth it? Did I make a good life out of their sacrifices?”*

Now the Easter Story, begins with Christ’s suffering, the torments of His crucifixion, death and resurrection. Imagine if we ask Jesus, *“Am I worth saving?”* And He answers, *“You are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows...”* (Matthew 10:31). Looking back at the life and death of Jesus, there were many instances that Jesus took big risks, and one of the greatest risks was when He raised Lazarus from the dead. That led to the Pharisees seeking a way to kill Jesus. Love is demanding. It draws us outside ourselves. The greater the love, the greater our willingness to sacrifice. So when we know, honestly, what we’re willing to sacrifice for, even to die for, we are able to see the true nature of our loves. And that will tell us who we really are.

Friendship is generally a milder form of love than family, and the notion of dying for a friend might seem remote. But Someone rather famous once said that *“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). History is full of stories of soldiers who put themselves in harm’s way to save their comrades. And all true friendship requires a readiness to die, if not literally, then in the sense of dying to ourselves; dying to our impatience and our reluctance to make sacrifices for others. Pope Francis often talks about accompaniment as a key to Christian discipleship. The willingness to be with our friends when they’re not easily lovable, to accompany them in their neediness or to share in their suffering, this is the test of true friendship. Life - *all* life, no matter how poor, infirm, unborn, or limited - is a great gift, a life worth saving. We muffle our Christian beliefs to avoid being the targets of contempt. Jesus urges us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Supernatural Love

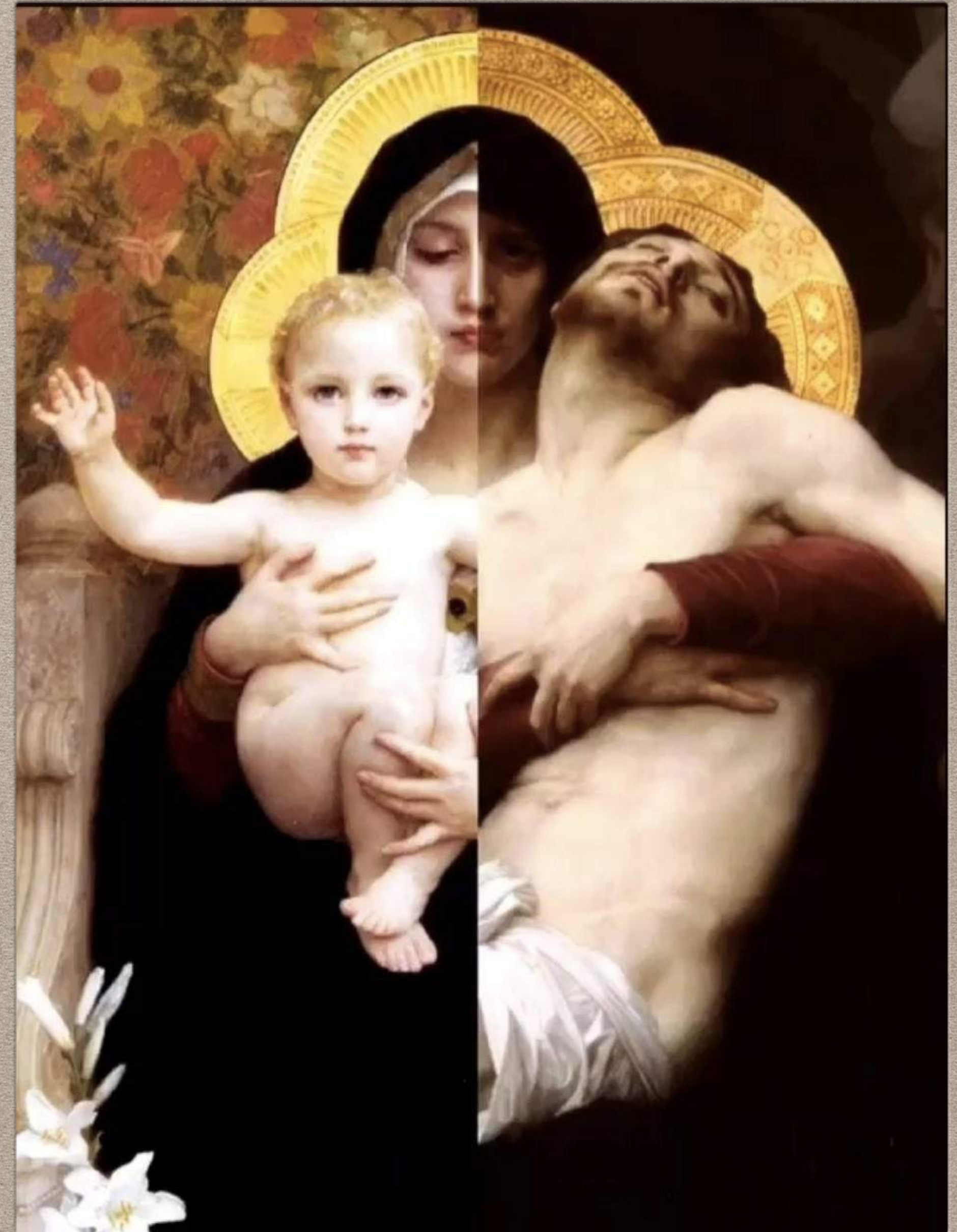
Family, friends, honour, and integrity: These are natural loves. Throughout history, men and women have been willing to die for these loves. As Christians, though, we claim to be animated - first and foremost - by a *supernatural* love: love for God as our Creator and Jesus Christ as His Son. St. Polycarp, for all his caution and prudence, eventually *did* choose martyrdom rather than deny his Christian faith.

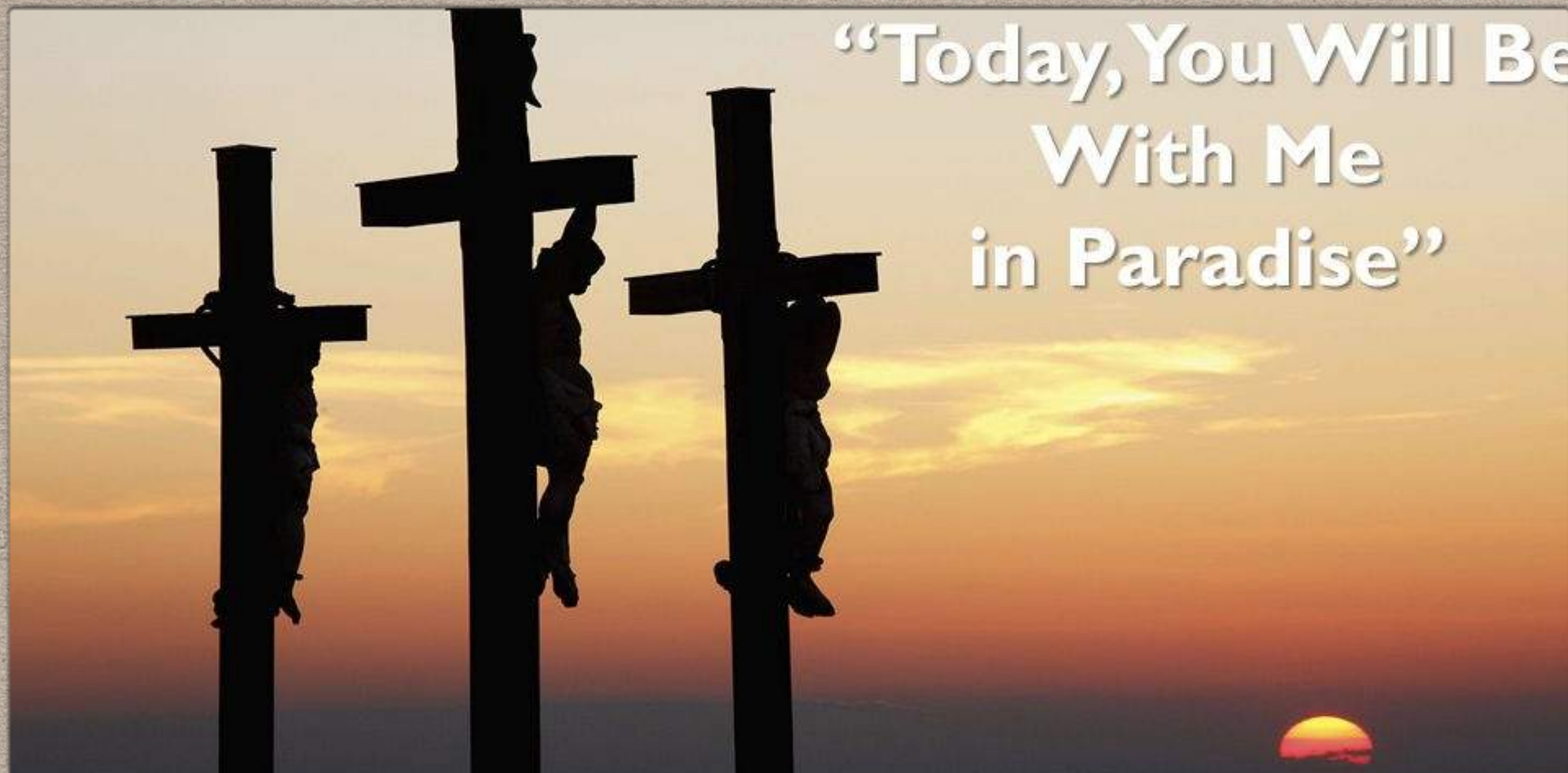
The issue at hand is this: Are we really willing to do the same; and if so, how must we live in a way that proves it? These aren’t theoretical questions. They’re brutally real. Many of us have trouble following even the minimal norms of a Catholic life: regular confession and Mass attendance, kindness to others, and a few minutes of daily prayer. If those very simple things are struggles, how can we possibly have the spiritual strength to face martyrdom? Or the judgment of a just God? Is our life worth saving? Is our life worth living? We might ask ourselves.

All of us, in all of our strengths and all of our weaknesses, are powerless to defeat God’s purpose in Jesus Christ. Our flaws, our mistakes and inadequacies, our spiritual mediocrity, and our self-sabotage are powerless in the face of God’s love. For this reason, the martyrs bear witness to the relentless love of God in Jesus Christ.

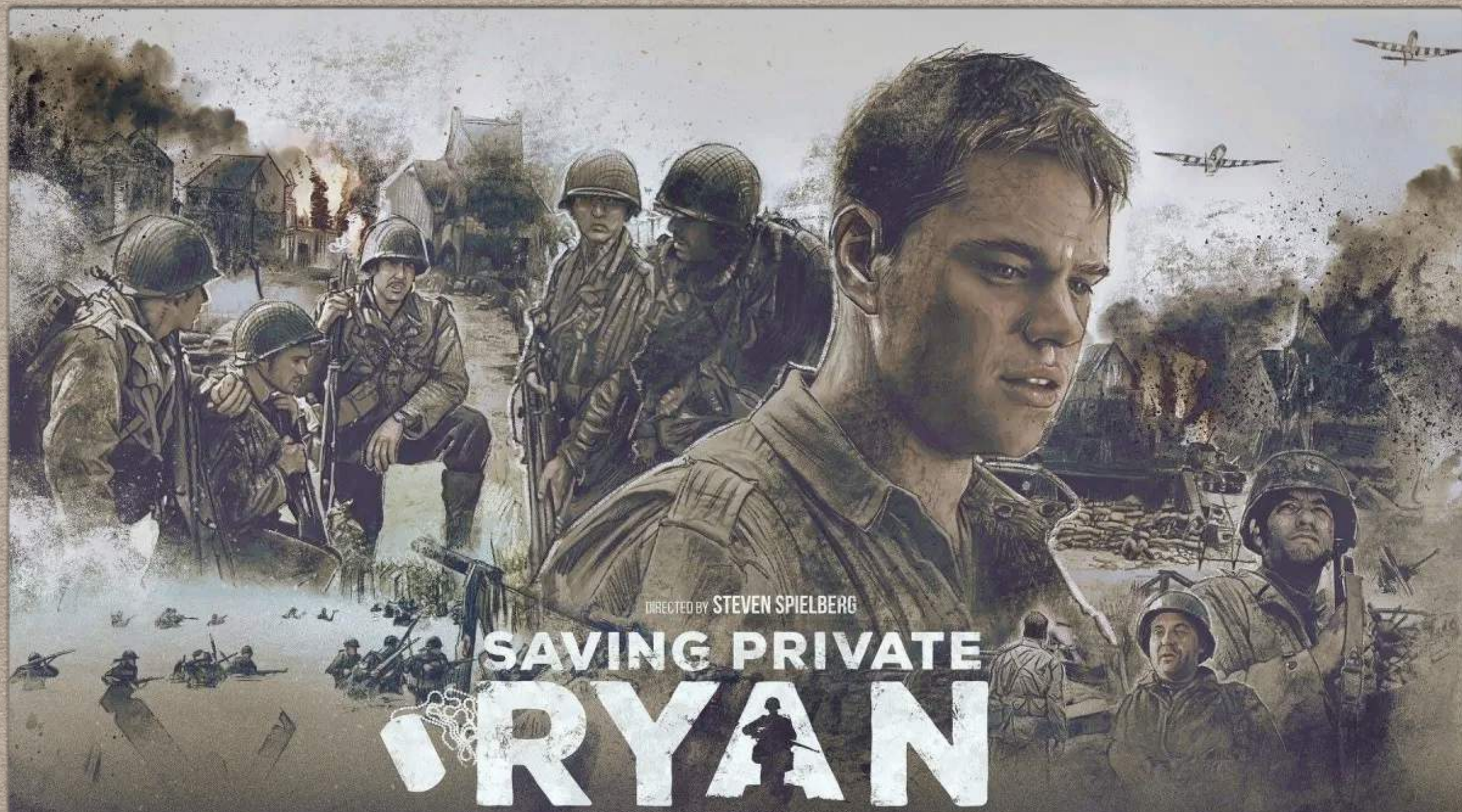
The Preface for Holy Martyrs reads: *“For You, God, are glorified when Your saints are praised; their very sufferings are but wonders of Your might: In Your mercy You give ardour to their faith, to their endurance You grant firm resolve, and in their struggle the victory is Yours, through Christ our Lord.”*

What this means is that: Those who are faithful to God will in turn have His faithfulness at life’s ending, no matter how extreme the test.





“Today, You Will Be
With Me
in Paradise”



DIRECTED BY STEVEN SPIELBERG
SAVING PRIVATE
RYAN

It's a good thing, a vital thing, to consider what we're willing to die for. What do we love more than life?

Grace illuminates nature. The supernatural love of God in Jesus Christ that gives courage to the martyrs helps us better understand the natural loves of family and friends, honour, and integrity. The power of these loves - a power that can be so great that we're willing to live and die to remain true to them - does not come from within the self. The mother does not conjure a love for her child out of her inner emotional resources. The same holds true for friends. Love's power draws us out of ourselves. It comes from what is loved, not the one who loves. Created in the image of God, the unborn child is *worthy* of a mother's love. It's the worthiness of what we love, its *lovability*, that enables us to sacrifice wealth, worldly success, and even our lives.

In today's era, individualism, materialism, secularism, sexism, relativism and schism, weakens relationships, turn us in upon ourselves, and seduces us to live without love. We are promised celebrity on social media, novel experiences in our products, technologies, and travel, and wealth in professional success. But we are not really encouraged to love. Authentic love is ordered to truth: the truth about human beings, human nature, and the God of all Creation. It's demanding and self-denying. It anchors us to realities that are deeply human, deeply rewarding, and the deepest sources of joy - but also inconvenient, and easily seen as burdens and self-sacrificing, to the point of 'saving the other'. Then we ask ourselves, "Is she/ he worth saving?"

It's a good thing, to consider what we are willing to die for. And to answer it with conviction is to become a revolutionary; the kind of loving revolutionary who will someday redeem the new generation that can no longer imagine *anything* worth dying for, and thus, in the long run, anything worth living for.

St. Paul tells us that "God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control. Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord . . . but share in suffering for the Gospel in the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:6-8). We can expect a rough road in the years ahead on a whole range of issues. But the Church, her mission, and the Easter story go on. And the greatest blessing is that we take up our life with all the energy and passion in our heart. Because it's a life worth living and a life worth saving. And the greatest blessing I can wish, for each of you, is that you take up your part in the tale with all the energy and passion in your heart. Because it's a life worth living.

Let us consider and meditate on how much God loves us. But there's even more to it. After focusing on His love, we need to accept it. We need to start with the knowledge that it's real. We're important to Him, each one of us, no matter what we've done or not done. As we accept His love, we must also decide we're going to agree with Him and apply that love inward - to ourselves. This means learning how to forgive ourselves for the past, being kind and patient with ourselves in the present and being hopeful for our future. It means we treat ourselves - and others - more the way God does. This will be the open door to the life and relationship with God that is intended for us.

Everything in life changes - relationships, jobs, fame. One minute we feel like a hero; the next minute we feel like a zero. But there's one thing in the universe that will never change: God's love. Knowing that God still loves us no matter what happens - our failures, our brokenness, our sin - provides a rock solid foundation in our life. God loves us with an extravagant, lavish love that can never be taken away. It's beyond comprehension. He loves us on our good days and our bad days. He loves us when it's raining and when the sun is shining.

God says he doesn't want us to just recognise this lavish love intellectually. He wants us to recognise it interiorly. Love is God's nature. God created the universe and everything in it for no other reason than so He could love it. And God created us so He could love us. In fact, in Jesus, God shows us what real love, His love, looks like. "God showed how much He loved us by sending His only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love . . . He sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

People can say they love us but God showed us how much He loves us, so much till it hurts. He sacrificed His only Son. When Jesus died for us, He was saying He loved us so much He'd rather die than live without us and gave us eternal life - that is the Easter story - a life worth saving.

This is what real love is, the kind of love that we can build our life upon. Real love makes sacrifices. Real love endures to the end. Real love gives all. That's the kind of love God has for us. And He's waiting with open arms to show us how to give our life for others.

REFLECTION

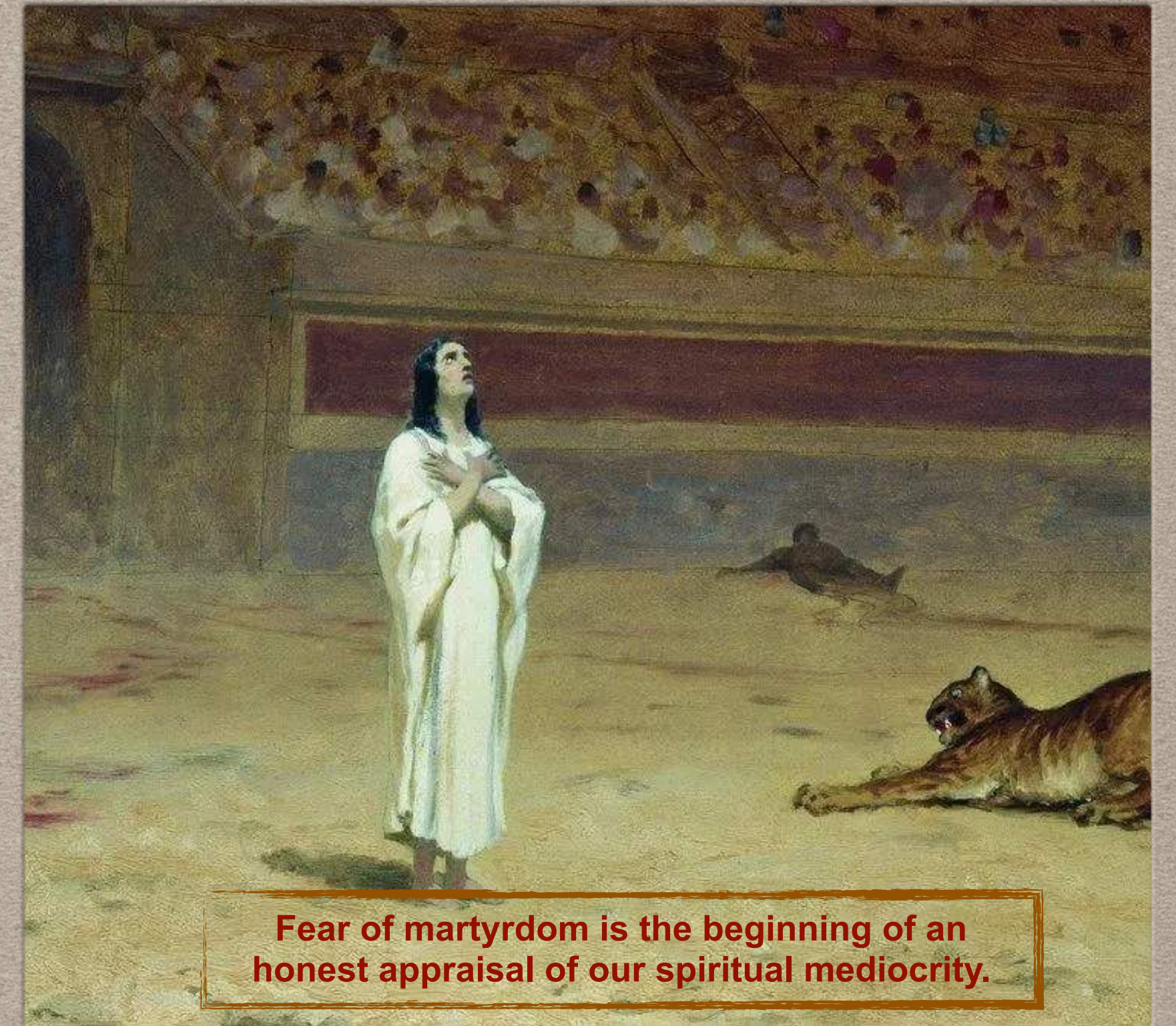
- How does it make us feel when we read, “God loves us with an extravagant, lavish love that it can never be taken away”?
- When are we most likely to doubt the love of God?
- What does God’s self-sacrificing love demonstrated in Jesus tell us about how we should love others?

And all true friendship requires a readiness to die, if not literally, then in the sense of dying to ourselves; dying to our impatience and our reluctance to make sacrifices for others.



CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY CENTRE
Encountering God • Healing Hearts • Empowering Lives

Fr. Andrew Wong, Spiritual Director & Veronica Nathan, Programme Manager/ Counsellor



Fear of martyrdom is the beginning of an honest appraisal of our spiritual mediocrity.

AN EXTRAVAGANT, SACRIFICIAL

LOVE