

Reflections

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Catholic Family Newsletter

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Bringing Light Into a World of Darkness

The True Story of the Apparitions in Medjugorje

China's Crack Down on Christians & Freedom

Children Need Tender-Hearted Dads

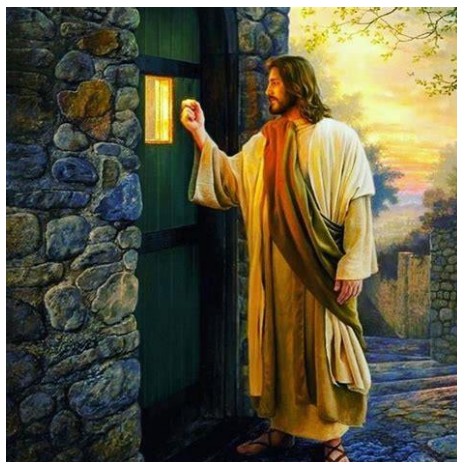
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Bible Verse for the Day: Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. Psalms 127:1

Thoughts for the Day: But above all, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your "Yes" mean "Yes" and your "No" mean "No," that you may not incur condemnation. James 5:12

What to Prayer for Today: Forgive yourself. Let Jesus in.



Blessing to All:
By: Richard Pickard

The Apparitions of the Blessed Mother, Queen of Peace, in Medjugorje



The apparitions the Blessed Mother's in Medjugorje are the most important in Marian history. Mary appeared on the feast day of St. John the Baptist. The Catholic Church celebrates John the Baptist on June 24th of each year. Our Lady appeared on June 24, 1981.

Her appearance on his Feast Day is not a coincidence. Common sense will tell you, there is a great significance to her appearing on this day. You will recall that John the Baptist was sent ahead of Jesus to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. Could this apparition of Our Blessed Mother be a sign of the times and the return of Jesus Christ in glory, with the angels for the final judgement of mankind?

Mary has said, she is preparing us for what is to come. *"Dear children! I am thanking God for each of you for responding to my call. In a special way, I am preparing you for the new times that you may be firm in faith and persevering in prayer, so that the Holy Spirit may work through you and renew the face of the earth. I am praying with you for peace which is the most precious gift, even though Satan wants war and hatred. You, little children, be my extended hands and proudly go with God."*



One of the visionaries Vicka agreed saying: "People should not be afraid if they are prepared. If we are afraid of these kinds of things, we don't have confidence in God. Fear of this kind does not come from God. It can only come from Satan who wants to

disturb us, so that we close ourselves to God and are not able to pray. With God, you can only have confidence – and strength to go through any troubles. The best preparation is to pray every day, go to Mass, and to read the Bible. ***With prayer and penance the chastisements can be lessened. I can only say: prepare. For all eternity, you will thank God if you do.***

All of this was confirmed by top Vatican Mariologist Rene Laurentine. Citing testimonies of the visionaries, he wrote to Pope John Paul II saying: "According to the visionaries, The ninth and tenth secrets are grave matters. They are a chastisement for the sins of the world. The punishment is inevitable because we cannot expect the conversion of the entire world. The chastisement can be mitigated by prayers and penance. It cannot be suppressed. After the first warning, the others will follow within a rather brief period of time. So it is that people will have time for conversion. This time is a period of grace and conversion. ***After the visible sign, those who are still alive will have little time for conversion.*** For that reason, the Blessed Virgin calls for urgent conversion and reconciliation. The invitation to prayer and penance is destined to ward off evil and war and above all to save souls. We are close to the events predicted by the Blessed Virgin. Convert yourselves as quickly as possible. Open your hearts to God. This is a message to all mankind."



Visionary Mirjana, rather ominously, has said: ***"Our Lady's messages here, prepares us for what is to come. She says "Be prepared, it is necessary to shake the world a little. Events will cause the world to stop and think. Our Lady is calling us to conversion now which means complete surrender to God. If we do that, we are not afraid,***

not even of death." The visionaries themselves have spoken about this time of grace and the coming time when the earth will shake.

The prophet Isaiah stated in Isaiah 13:13. "Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty, in the day of his burning anger."



St Pope John Paul II called Medjugorje the **Heart of the World**. It is no secret within Rome that John Paul II absolutely loved Medjugorje, once even acquiring the nickname "Protector of

Medjugorje” within the Vatican. Even eminent American intellectuals were no strangers to this reality. The great Franciscan intellectual, Fr. Benedict J. Groeschel, himself an investigator of supernatural phenomena, once admitted about John Paul II in a revealing interview: “I can tell you for a fact that the pope loves Medjugorje from afar and would go there in a minute if the theologians would let him.”

A good way for readers to know more about Medjugorje is to listen to the audio version of the apparitions created by Jack Sacco. Click on the link and when the video and audio begin, open it to fill the screen. That way you won't have to see other videos being shown on the right side of the screen.

Audio Version of the Apparitions of the Blessed Mother, Queen of Peace, in Medjugorje

A audio version of these apparitions was produce by Jack Sacco in the 1990's and is an authentic description of the events. Listen to the audio version at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaw9JTsjMxc>. This could be a life changing event for you. Open the screen to eliminate the right side with other videos.

In China, they're closing churches, jailing pastors – and even rewriting scripture



¹Todd Nettleton, the spokesman for The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), a persecution watchdog serving Christians across the globe, told Faithwire about the Chinese government’s ongoing efforts to reimagine the Bible.

“This is a project that the Chinese Communist Party announced in 2019. At the time, they said it would be about a 10-year process ... to release a new translation of the Bible,” he said, noting it would include **Confucian and Buddhist principles**, among others. “This new translation ... would really support the Communist Party.”

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) announced plans to update the Bible to ‘keep pace with the times.’ The revisions will include adding ‘core socialist values’ and removing passages that do not reflect communist beliefs,” a VOM Facebook post read. “In a textbook for high school students released in September 2020, the authors included a passage from John 8, as revised in their new version.



As the famous forgiveness story goes, the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery before them and challenged Jesus, proclaiming, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now, what do you say?”

Christ: “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

Woman: “No one, sir.”

Christ: “Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.”

¹ <https://www2.cbn.com/news/news/communist-china-reportedly-rewriting-bible-and-calling-jesus-sinner-thats-not-all>

In the Chinese government's new version — purportedly observed in a textbook published in September 2020 — the crowd disperses, but then the text states, **"When everyone went out, Jesus stoned the woman himself, and said, 'I am also a sinner.'"**

In one sense, it's just like so arrogant to think, 'I'm going to rewrite the story of Jesus'... but then you think about denying the deity of Christ," he said. "If Jesus is a sinner, then he's not God."

"The issue for the Chinese Communist Party is control. It is always about control," he said. "And they see the ... Christian message as something that would take control away from the communist party."

Rather than citizens waking up and pledging allegiance to a loving God and pondering ways to serve Jesus, Nettleton said the government's goal is for Chinese nationals to wake up every day and say, "How can I serve the party today? How can I be a good communist today?"

For anyone wondering why the Chinese Communist Party would take such troubling steps to try and diminish the Gospel, Nettleton said it has everything to do with control. China's Communist party is intensifying religious persecution as Christianity's popularity grows. A new state translation of the Bible will establish a 'correct understanding' of the text.



Wang Yi, pastor of the Early Rain church, who was arrested and detained three months ago, along with his wife. Photograph: Early Rain/Facebook

In late October, the pastor of one of China's best-known underground churches asked this of his congregation: had they successfully spread the gospel throughout their city? "If tomorrow morning the Early Rain Covenant Church suddenly disappeared from the city of Chengdu, if each of us vanished into thin air, would this city be any different? Would anyone miss us?" said Wang Yi, leaning over his pulpit and pausing to let the question weigh on his audience. "I don't know."

Almost three months later, Wang's hypothetical scenario is being put to the test. **The church in south-west China has been shuttered and Wang and his wife, Jiang Rong, remain in detention after police arrested more than 100 Early Rain church members in December.** Many of those who haven't been detained are in hiding. Others have been sent away from Chengdu and barred from returning. Some, including Wang's mother and his young son, are under close surveillance. Wang and his wife are being charged for "inciting subversion", a crime that carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison.

Now the hall Wang preached from sits empty, the pulpit and cross that once hung behind him both gone. Prayer cushions have been replaced by a ping-pong table and a film of dust. New tenants, a construction company and a business association, occupy the three floors of the church once rented. **Plainclothes police stand outside, turning away those looking for the church.**

Early Rain is the latest victim of what Chinese Christians and rights activists say is the worst crackdown on religion since the country's Cultural Revolution, **when Mao Zedong's government vowed to eradicate religion.**

Researchers say the current drive, fueled by government unease over the growing number of Christians and their potential links to the west, is aimed not so much at destroying Christianity but bringing it to heel.

"The government has orchestrated a campaign to 'Sinicize' Christianity, to turn Christianity into a fully domesticated religion that would do the bidding of the party," said Lian Xi, a professor at Duke University in North Carolina, who focuses on Christianity in modern China. Over the past year, local governments have shut hundreds of unofficial congregations or "house churches" that operate outside the government-approved church network, including Early Rain. **A statement signed by 500 house church leaders in November says authorities have removed crosses from buildings, forced churches to hang the Chinese flag and sing patriotic songs, and barred minors from attending.**

Churchgoers say the situation will get worse as the campaign reaches more of the country. Another church in Chengdu was placed under investigation last week. Less than a week after the mass arrest of Early Rain members, police raided a children's Sunday school at a church in Guangzhou. Officials have also banned the 1,500-member Zion church in Beijing after its pastor refused to install CCTV.

In November the Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church was shut for the second time in three months. "The Chinese Communist party (CCP) wants to be the God of China and the Chinese people. But according to the Bible only God is God. The government is scared of the churches," said Huang Xiaoning, the church's pastor.



Local governments have also shut the state-approved "sanzi" churches. Sunday schools and youth ministries have been banned. **One of the first signs of a crackdown was when authorities forcibly removed more than 1,000 crosses from sanzi churches in Zhejiang province between 2014 and 2016.**

"The goal of the crackdown is not to eradicate religions," said Ying Tsang, director of the Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. "President Xi Jinping is trying to establish a new order on religion, suppressing its blistering development. [The government] aims to regulate the 'religious market' as a whole."

While the CCP is officially atheist, Protestantism and Catholicism are two of five faiths sanctioned by the government and religious freedom has been enshrined in the constitution since the 1980s. For decades, authorities tolerated the house churches, which refused to register with government bodies that required church leaders to adapt teachings to follow party doctrine.

As China experienced an explosion in the number of religious believers, the government has grown wary of Christianity and Islam in particular, with

their overseas links. In Xinjiang, a surveillance and internment system has been built for Muslim minorities, notably the Uighurs.

Xi has called for the country to guard against “infiltration” through religion and extremist ideology.

“What happens in Xinjiang and what happens to house churches is connected,” said Eva Pils, a professor of law at King’s College London, focusing on human rights. “Those kinds of new attitudes have translated into different types of measures against Christians, which amount to intensified persecution of religious groups.”

There are at least 60 million Christians in China, spanning rural and urban areas. Congregation-based churches can organize large groups across the country and some have links with Christian groups abroad.

“Early Rain church is one of the few who dare to face what is wrong in society,” said one member. “Most churches don’t dare talk about this, but we obey strictly obey the Bible, and we don’t avoid anything.”

Wang and Early Rain belong to what some see as a new generation of Christians that has emerged alongside a growing civil rights movement. Increasingly, activist church leaders have taken inspiration from the democratizing role the church played in eastern European countries in the Soviet bloc or South Korea under martial law, according to Lian. Several of China’s most active human rights lawyers are Christians.

“They have come to see the political potential of Christianity as a force for change,” said Lian. “What really makes the government nervous is Christianity’s claim to universal rights and values.”

As of 2018, the government has implemented sweeping rules on religious practices, adding more requirements for religious groups and barring unapproved organizations from engaging in any religious activity. But the campaign is not just about managing behavior. One of the goals of a government work plan for “promoting Chinese Christianity” between 2018 and 2022 is “thought reform”. The plan calls for “retranslating and annotating” the Bible, to find commonalities with socialism and establish a “correct understanding” of the text.

“Ten years ago, we used to be able to say the party was not really interested in what people believed internally,” said Pils. “Xi Jinping’s response is much more invasive and it is in some ways returning to Mao-era attempts to control hearts and minds.”

China’s aim is to control all aspects of a person’s life and only the Party line matters.

**Soon all over China a new Social Credit System
Will dominate society.**

China's Ai Social Credit System to Reward or Punish Those Who Don't Conform



China has been rolling out a system that ranks its citizens based on their "social credit". People can be punished if they drive badly, buy too many video games, or steal. It's not a unified, nationwide system yet, but China plans on eventually making it mandatory for everyone.

China also claims through facial recognition technology and Ai, that they can locate any individual in 7 minutes. John Lennox, an Internationally renowned speaker and author of several books on the interface of science, philosophy and religion, further states that this system is actively in place in 13 cities in China and will eventually be throughout China.

The Chinese Communist Party has been constructing a moral ranking system for years that will monitor the behavior of its enormous population — and rank them all based on their "social credit."

The "social credit system," first announced in 2014, is "an important component part of the Socialist market economy system and the social governance system" and aims to reinforce the idea that "keeping trust is glorious and breaking trust is disgraceful," according to a 2015 government document.

The rankings are decided by China's economics planning team, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the People's Bank of China, and the Chinese court system, according to the South China Morning Post.

The system can be used for individual people, but also for companies and government organizations. The private sector, including the burgeoning tech world in China, has their own non-governmental scoring systems that they implement, as Wired reported.



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Bibles, sales of which have always been controlled in China, are no longer available for purchase online, a loophole that had existed for years. In December, Christmas celebrations were banned in several schools and cities across China.

“Last year’s crackdown is the worst in three decades,” said Bob Fu, the founder of ChinaAid, a Christian advocacy group based in the US.

In Chengdu, Early Rain Christian Church has not vanished. Before the raid, a plan was in place to preserve the church, with those who were not arrested expected to keep it running, holding meetings wherever they could. Slowly, more Early Rain members are being released. Some were released, but 25 were still in detention.

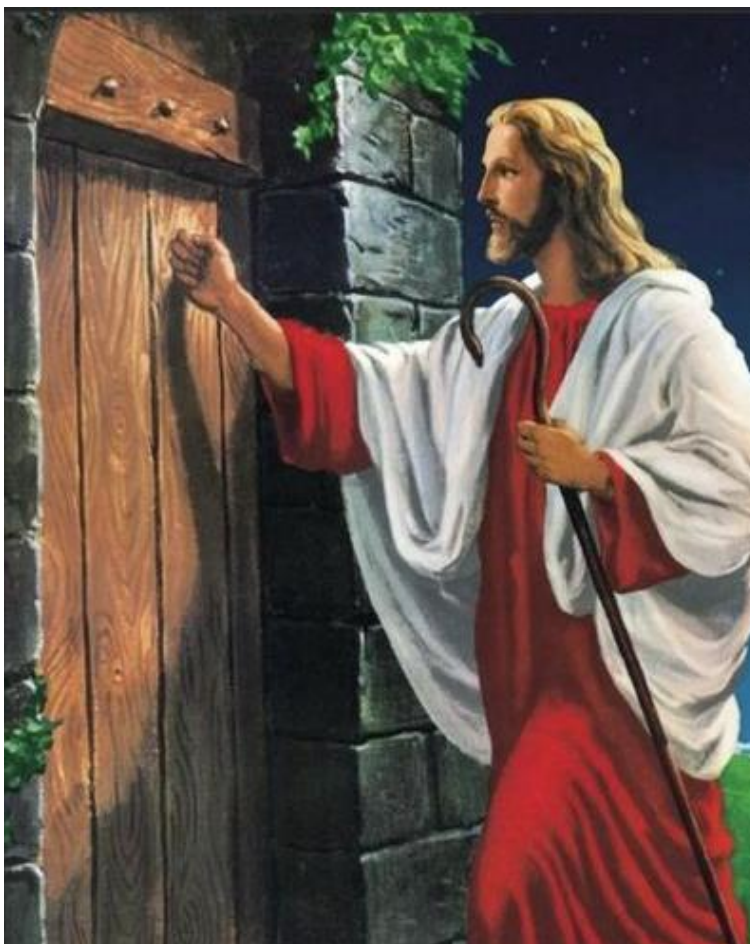
They maintain contact through encrypted platforms. On New Year's Eve, 300 people joined an online service, some from their homes, others from cars or workplaces, to pray for 2019. Others gather in small groups in restaurants and parks. One member, a student who was sent back to Guangzhou, said he preaches the gospel to the police who monitor him.

The church continues to send out daily scripture and posts videos of sermons. In one, pastor Wang alludes to the coming crackdown: "In this war, in Xinjiang, in Shanghai, in Beijing, in Chengdu, the rulers have chosen an enemy that can never be imprisoned – the soul of man. Therefore, they are doomed to lose this war."



Catholic Priests ministers to his flock. Scarred but firm in the faith.

The Sign of the Times



Wake up. Wake up. Many Souls are in Danger. Wake up...*WAKE UP*

Pray for your family each day.

Forgive others.

Don't judge.

Live holy lives

Give daily examples of being a Christian.

Jesus is knocking on your door, to wake you up. He is calling you to be holy and pray for others.

Our Children Need Tender-Hearted Dads



How often do you see men cry? Ok, besides at the funeral of someone they were very close to.

From an early age, many men are taught—either directly or indirectly—not to cry, not to show feelings, not to be tender towards their wives and children. Few men aspire to be “tender hearted,” although that’s a virtue mentioned in the Bible and many other places.

There is a real need in our nation right now for fathers who love, serve and lead their families, and who are not afraid to be tender.

I heard a story about a teenage girl I’ll call “Amber” that makes this point. Desperate to reach out to her unfeeling father, Amber got herself arrested for shoplifting. That didn’t work well, so she decided to stop eating. She developed anorexia and, later, a brain tumor that the doctors concluded was partly caused by her undernourished condition.

Amber said, “I was lying in my hospital bed, near death, with all kinds of tubes coming out of my body when my father finally came to see me. We talked about surface stuff for about an hour, and then he got up to leave. As he opened the door, I guess I just went crazy and began to scream: ‘You just can’t say it, can you!’”

She screamed even louder, “I’m going to die, and you still can’t say it!”

Her father turned around with a puzzled look. “Say what?”

After a few tense moments, it became clear to him and he broke down and began to weep. He moved to her bedside and through his tears said those words the young woman needed to hear so desperately. That started their journey toward a closer, more open and affirming relationship, and Amber's health gradually improved.

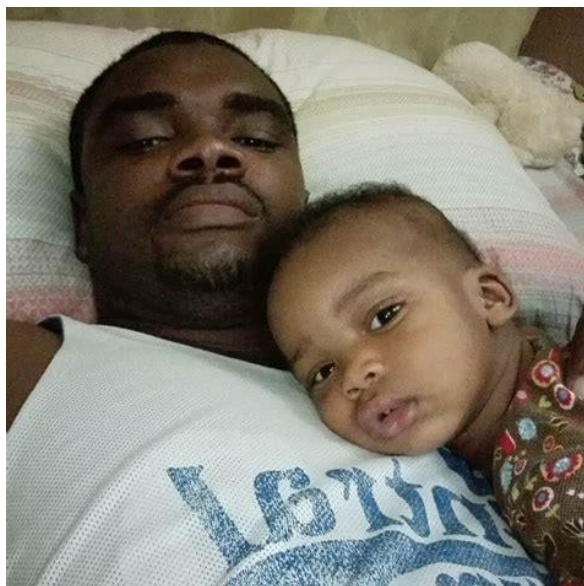
I have often heard men say, "She knows I love her." Or, "I show him love through my actions." Those may be factually accurate, but what a joke! I often reply, "They just read your mind, huh!?" Those are pitiful excuses when we all know it's best for children to hear those words regularly from their dads: "I love you." "I'm proud of you." "You're so special to me." "I'm sorry." "Please forgive me."

Why give our kids something less than what we know is best for them?



I believe our children are crying out for warmth and tenderness, like Amber, and too often we don't notice or hear their cries until some desperate situation comes along. (Of course, our wives may be yearning to hear it, too.)

Fathers, we need to be tender. Our hearts need to be knitted to our children's souls.



Real men can be gentle men. If you're in the "They know I love them" camp, then I would suggest taking a long look at your priorities and the reality of your situation. Does expressing emotion make you uncomfortable? Is it the opposite of how you were raised? Those may be valid factors, but that's really focusing on you. Being a good dad is about meeting our children's needs and doing what's best for them, even if it forces us to try something new and uncomfortable.

Dads, give it a try. It might take some getting used to, but I promise it will

have positive benefits for your children and your relationships with them. And you might feel set free from unhealthy habits and be flooded with expressions of tenderness toward your kids that you have long wanted to express.

Don't be afraid to be tender, dads.

Don't force your kids to be mind readers. Get comfortable saying those words again and again: **"I'm sorry."** **"I love you."** And much more. It could improve your relationships with your kids more than anything else.

Inspirational Music Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjbnWhXJOT4>

Open Screen to block out other videos on right side.



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<https://catholicfamilynewsletter.com/>

You are important in the salvation of your family. Pray, Pray, Pray.

**The International Catholic Family Newsletter
Is Published Monthly**

**Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to
be Christian examples in their work, home and with others,
for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.**



The Rosary is the 'weapon' for these times. - Padre Pio

St. Paul Ministry