A. The Battle Lines Are Drawn

In urging sinners to repent, St. John the Baptist warned that the Lord “will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire” (Mt. 3:12). This sorting-out process has been occurring throughout the Church’s history, and is now intensifying or approaching a climax. The parable of the weeds among the wheat (Mt. 13:24-30) reminds us that for a time evil persons will be present in the world, persecuting the righteous, but eventually they—the chaff—will be separated from the wheat and thrown into the fire as an act of Divine Justice.

The battle lines are being drawn more clearly every day, as shown in part by the deep political divisions in our country. President Trump is maligned as the most unqualified and temperamentally unsuited man ever to occupy the Oval Office, or viewed as America’s last and best remaining hope to break the power of the Deep State and restore our nation to greatness. Never since the Civil War has our nation been so divided; furthermore, the devil is pulling strings and trying to orchestrate events behind the scenes, hoping to hurt God by lashing out at, and even destroying, His children.

In his 2017 book The Paradigm, Jonathan Cahn claims the unexpected election of Donald Trump was actually foretold or foreshadowed hundreds of years before Christ by events in the books of 1st and 2nd Kings, with the actions or roles of the historical characters Ahab and his wife Jezebel, Joram, and Jehu corresponding to Bill and Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and Mr. Trump. As president, Donald Trump’s administration has been much friendlier to Christianity than was Barack Obama’s, and several alleged visionaries claim the Lord intervened in 2016 to prevent supporters of Hillary Clinton from stealing the election. Jesus allegedly told John Leary, “I have given you your President as a temporary reprieve from the previous administration that was destroying your country. If you people do not repent of their sins, and change their lifestyles, then what little gain you have achieved, will be taken away from you. Listen to My words and heed My warning from My prophets, or you will face worse natural disasters than you have now. If you continue on your current path, all Christians will be persecuted for proclaiming My Name...” (August 8, 2018).

B. Warnings and Promises from Heaven

The locutionist Ned Dougherty was allegedly told by Our Lady, “The last centuries have seen the increase in demonic activity and behavior within the very confines of my Son’s Church to the point now, as has become readily seen, that many of the very priests, bishop, and cardinals who have been charged with the preservation of my Son’s Church are now exposed as the very followers of the evil one, who is attempting to destroy my Son’s Church” (September 3, 2018). The South American visionary Pedro Regis was allegedly warned by Mary, “You are living in the time of the Great Spiritual Battle. Wicked men will act to lead you from the truth; they will confuse my poor children and many will walk like the blind leading the blind” (May 15, 2018).

Furthermore, a visionary known as Elaine was allegedly told by Our Lady, “My Son Jesus is clearing the threshing floor, both in the Church and in the world. The chaff is easy to identify in this process. However, know this, O good wheat of my Son: you will be ground and sifted. This will not be an easy process for the good in my Son’s Church. However, it is necessary. At the end of this process, you will emerge as the Spotless Bride my Son desires... As it was with my Son, all will seem lost. And, as with my Son, this Heavenly Mother will never leave your side. I will accompany you, dear Church, for the length of this painful journey. This Mother of Sorrows will ever be at your side. This Mother will also become the Mother of Triumph, along with her Son’s Church, His Bride. After her death, she will arise, a beacon to the world, triumphing over the powers of darkness in this world. After darkness engulfs the earth, the Light of Christ will shine in His Church, drawing all men unto her. There will be peace. Therefore, I am here to tell you, my children, not to lose hope within yourselves, even when all hope seems lost. My Son promised to be with His Church ‘even unto the end of time’ (Mt. 28:20)” (August 28, 2018).
This alleged message from Our Lady makes several important points. First, Jesus is clearing His threshing floor, separating the wheat from the chaff. The battle lines are being drawn, and everyone must choose a side; the days of a relatively safe, unchallenging Christianity are over. Second, in this era of 24 hour news coverage and social media, “the chaff is easy to identify in this process.” However, it is not our duty to judge; even Church leaders and public figures guilty of grievous sin remain precious in God’s eyes, and we have the duty of praying for their conversion. Third, we will be “ground and sifted”; this will be painful but necessary, for it’s an opportunity to become like gold tested in fire (1 Pt. 1:7) by bearing our share “of the hardship the Gospel entails” (2 Tim. 1:8).

Fourth, even if all seems lost, Jesus and Mary will be with us, and will never abandon us; their assistance will enable us to stand firm. Fifth, we will see the coming victory of the Church—part of the promised Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary—when the darkness of hatred and sin is finally and definitively overcome by the light of Christ. We are not to lose hope, for even when all seems lost, the power of God will accomplish something wonderful and amazing in our world.

C. Specific Ways of Standing Firm

A careful reading of the signs of the times, and information from various alleged heavenly messages and private revelations, gives us some important advice on how to stand firm in our faith during these confusing, frightening, and unsettled times.

First, we must avoid the extremes of complacency on the one hand and discouragement on the other. The devil is happy to see us demonstrate either of these mistaken attitudes, for doing so means we aren’t fulfilling our spiritual duties. Instead, we must ask the Lord to give us wisdom, courage, and strength so as to be authentic disciples of Jesus in these difficult times.

Second, we must avoid judging others, including Church leaders who have committed despicable acts. Because of human sinfulness, at no point in the last 2000 years has the Church been free of imperfection—but at every single moment of the last twenty centuries, God’s saving grace has been available through the Church’s sacraments, despite the failures of her leaders and members. Anger serves God’s purpose only if we’re willing to leave all judgment to Him.

Third, it’s important to stand up for our religious freedom while it still exists. Embarrassment and outrage over the sexual abuse scandal shouldn’t cause us to remain silent when the Church is under attack. Also, we must vote only for pro-life, pro-religious freedom candidates.

Fourth, we must be on our guard against being led astray, for there will be efforts to deceive the elect (Mt. 24:24). We must be wary of anyone—even Church leaders—contradicting the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and we must pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Fifth, we must rely upon Scripture and the Eucharist. Regularly reading the Bible will enlighten and encourage us, and make it easier to discern the truth and recognize false teaching. Receiving Holy Communion while in a state of grace will more closely conform us to Christ and give us the strength to resist temptation and bear witness to our faith.

Sixth, we must offer sacrifices—no matter how small they may be—for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls; God can use everything we offer—including our joys and our sorrows, and life’s burdens and blessings—as long as it’s given with a generous and trusting heart.

Lastly, we must pray: for peace in the world and for all victims of violence; for our national and religious leaders; for the moral and spiritual renewal of our country; for the purification of the Church; for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ; for our loved ones who have fallen away from the Faith; and for our own spiritual growth and fidelity in the face of opposition and danger.

Prayer can be powerful and effective—especially the Mass, the Rosary, and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. These and other prayers, including our own simple conversations with God throughout the day, are important ways of making a difference in the world and of living out our vocation to become saints—and saints are needed in today’s world more than ever before. Through God’s grace, we can stand firm; we must stand firm, and we will stand firm. The Lord is about to separate the wheat from the chaff, and we are each given a role to play in the process. If we’re ready and willing to fulfill it, God’s Name will be glorified and we will be forever blessed.