

Healing Mass
Advent 2018

Comforted by the Lord

**“Comfort, give comfort to my people...
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to
her that her ...guilt is expiated.”**

A deep hunger for comfort began early in the life of George Frederic Handel, while he was still a child. As a young man, he loved music and overflowed with creativity and talent. He could sing and dance and play a variety of instruments. New melodies came to him, seemingly out of nowhere. Already in his early teens, he became the Cathedral organist in his home town of Halle, Germany. He wrote compositions for the organ and even for orchestra. By his early 20s, he had already made a name for himself in Italy, and by his late 20s took England by storm. But no matter what he

did or how much popular acclaim he won, he could not please his father, who openly made known his disdain for music and his opposition to what he called his son's waste of time.

Nonetheless, young Handel was arguably the most famous musician of 18th century Europe.

Handel's struggle to come to grips with the painful opposition of his father best explains the exquisite beauty of his most famous composition THE MESSIAH, in particular the opening song that begins with the words from our First Reading tonight, Isaiah 40:1-11, **“Comfort, Give comfort to my people, says the Lord.”**

These words of the Lord pierced Handel's heart before he set them to music. What most pained him, he finally recognized, was not his father's disapproval but the festering wound

created by his own resentment. He had been hurting himself far more than his father.

Moreover, the resentment had prevented Handel from seeing his earthly father in the light of God's mercy, and from seeing his heavenly Father in the light of Jesus, God's Beloved Son.

Handel's need for God's comfort, and the need each of us has for healing are abundantly provided by Jesus, who became one with us in our suffering in order to redeem and lift us up. The Lord extends His comfort and healing to whomever suffers unjustly; and we can be sure His mercy overflows in this Mass of Healing and Reconciliation.

Out of love of Jesus, we celebrate this healing Mass, and we pray for those who have been abused by members of the Church or by

others in society. We also pray for members of their families and their friends, that they may know the peace of Christ which surpasses all understanding.

You and I are made in God's image; male and female He created us. To look on the face of any man, woman or child is to be reminded of the heavenly Father who created us, and of the great worth of each human person (Cf. Gen 1:28).

But how easily we can lose sight of God's image in others. This happens in the sin of sexual abuse. The abuser violates the dignity of the person he abuses; and the person abused finds it very difficult to believe thereafter in his or her own dignity, and also difficult still to believe in the love of God. This is why sexual

abuse is a grave evil. And this is why the Church strives to bring Christ's healing to whomever has suffered from abuse. Allow me now to say a few words in Spanish.

Las Sagradas Escrituras no esconden los sufrimientos de Jesús, ni los de su Madre Maria, ni los de sus seguidores. En el episodio de la agonía de Jesús en el jardín, se ve que el dolor de Jesús era tan fuerte que “el sudor caía a tierra como grandes gotas de sangre (Lk 22:44).” Sin embargo, el Señor vivía el proceso entero con una actitud de amor filial por su Padre y amor por todo miembro de la familia humana, cada uno hecho en la semejanza de Dios, su Criador.

Con el Evangelio según San Juan, recordamos la escena al pie de la Cruz. Junto a

Jesús estaba su madre dolorosa, la Virgen Maria. Estando allí, Maria estaba presente en el momento más importante en la historia humana, el momento de Nuestra salvación. Fue el momento cuando el Hijo de Dios ofreció al Padre celestial el sacrificio de amor que ha redimido todo el mundo y ha restaurado la dignidad humana a toda persona.

En esta Misa, estamos reunidos en la presencia del Señor Jesús y su Madre para rezar por todas las personas que han sufrido del abuso en la Iglesia, y por todos los sobrevivientes del abuso en la sociedad, junto con sus familias y sus amigos. En la celebración de los sagrados misterios de la Eucaristía, ponemos los sufrimientos y dolores de nuestros hermanos en

las manos de Jesús, pidiendo la gracia de sanación y vida nueva.

Los sufrimientos de Jesús, aceptados por amor, son como el centro esencial del Evangelio, el punto principal del mensaje cristiano. Por eso, nosotros no estamos muy lejos de Cristo cuando sufrimos, más bien somos muy cerca del Señor, el Salvador. Por eso, el Apóstol San Pablo escribe a los Romanos (8:35ff), **“¿Quién nos podrá separar del amor de Cristo? ¿El sufrimiento, o las dificultades, o la persecución, o el hambre, o la falta de ropa, o el peligro, o la muerte? ...Pero en todo esto salimos más que vencedores por medio de aquel que nos amó. Estoy convencido de que nada podrá separarnos del amor de Dios.”**

En esta Misa, en comunión con todo el pueblo de Dios, pedimos perdón por nuestros pecados y por los abusos hechos por miembros de la Iglesia. Al mismo tiempo, tengamos confianza en Cristo y su promesa de estar con nosotros, todos los días hasta el fin del mundo. Donde esta Cristo, allí esta' la misericordia, allí esta' la esperanza y la vida. Donde esta' Cristo, allí esta' también su Madre dolorosa, la Reina de Paz, rezando por todos nosotros.

George Frederic Handel did not write THE MESSIAH to entertain people. He wrote it to lift their hearts, to help them praise the God of all consolation, to find in Jesus comfort and hope.

As we gather in pray at the Eucharist, Jesus says to us, **“Fear not, little flock, the Father wants to give you the Kingdom.”** Here, He

does not remove the Cross. What He removes is our resentment and despair. He gives us confident assurance that His Cross is the Tree of Life. We are aware, at the same time, that not all who need healing are here. So, Jesus does something else that we badly need in order to find freedom, consolation and new life. In addition to welcoming us to Him whenever we turn to Him, He also goes in search of the lost, through His Body, the Church. And when He finds the lost, Jesus **“rejoices more over [that one] than over the 99 that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.”**

What a blessing that the Lord never stopped searching and calling to the heart of George

Frederic Handel and, then once found, filled it with healing and consolation. Only a heart alive with hope could have written “The Messiah.”

What a blessing that Jesus never stops seeking us out, and that our heavenly Father constantly draws us to Himself. At this Mass for Healing and Reconciliation, the Lord invites us to receive His mercy with faith and to hear His words spoken through the Prophet Isaiah, **“Comfort, give comfort to my people... Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated.”**