

Glorious Repentance

‘John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All the people of Jerusalem went out to him, confessing their sins...’ (MK 1: 4, 5)

I went to Thailand the second week of Advent in order to repent. Again. Strengthened by our 40-day fast, I told everyone I met en route that I needed to start the Church year with Christians like my friend Sue who have to fight for their faith. We Americans are way too well-fed. We are fat cats, bored and listless, who can barely paw off familiar rats.

On the other hand, Thais face the triple threat of entrenched sexual immorality, Buddhism’s deadening passivity, and the ‘saving face’ culture that smiles at a multitude of sins. These sins threaten the integrity of the Thai Church; pedophiles and adulterers hide in the folds of her lousy religious garments. Tolerating serious sin can render the Church here small, ineffective, and prone to destruction.



But my friend Sue knows better. No stranger to sin herself, she is a better friend of repentance. An older relative poisoned Sue for most of her childhood through sexual abuse. She coped by hating her womanhood while seeking comfort in women and in Thai Buddhism, a quest for nothingness. Dark and darker.

Jesus sought Sue out through a host of Spirit-filled messengers. He gave her the grace to repent and to live daily in the light of His truthful love. She now lives passionately to recover human treasure from the darkness of sin in Thailand.

These treasures are among the most glorious I know. Their witness of living fully and unreservedly for Jesus shames my divided heart and invites me to die again. They reveal my petty concerns and compromises then rouse me to repentance.

The saints who compose Sue's healing army have to fight for freedom. They pay a huge price for uncovering a host of abuses (many church-related); they must repent over and over until lifelong patterns of adultery are overcome. In the process, they shatter a decidedly un-Christian culture of shame by going boldly to the throne of grace in order to confess and conquer veins of sin that have darkened family-lines for generations. The choice becomes clear: live for Jesus or the pagan gods. Choose this day whom you will serve (Joshua 24:15).

They are shining gems of Jesus' redemption. Their way forward is nothing less than the Cross realized through confession and repentance to Jesus and to one another. The call must be true and direct, like the Baptist himself; anything less will not break the power of sin. Such repentance ushers in the Light that rises on these ones gloriously.

While flying over the region where Sue ministers near the Lao border, I noticed the landscape growing more brown and dry. The pockets of water became fewer. But the few that remained caught the Light with a brilliance that made me gasp. My heart leapt at the sight for it captured in full the truth of my Thai family--the Light shines in the darkness and overcomes that darkness (JN 1: 5) through a repentant people. I want to be among them. Sue's band of prophetic healing saints helps me to repent. Again.

'And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all humanity together shall see it.' (IS 40: 5)