

## Joyful Rescue

By Marco Casanova, Asst. Director of DSM/LW

Jesus, through His Church, rescues the joy of my salvation.

The mission of Jesus, at its very core, is to offer Himself as our saving remedy. He's what "salvation" is all about. Jesus Himself descends to the root of our existence, and heals us.

I needed salvation.

I didn't choose to have same-sex attraction. I didn't want it. There have been seasons of self-hatred because of it. If it were up to me, I'd choose a different story. Yet it's precisely there that I needed Jesus, there that I met Him, and there that I continue to meet Him.

Same-sex attraction engendered a deep, ruminating sadness in me. It tried to determine my destiny, but I wanted more. Trusting Jesus, I called on Him.

I planted the Cross in the ground of my same-sex attraction. Instead of a deepening chasm of sadness, it became the base of His Cross. The Cross took root. I needed Jesus to be enthroned there. I needed Him to remain there. I desired Him to dwell there.

That was just the beginning for me. It's essential: finding a place in my subjective, broken experience for the Cross. If I hadn't identified that space, I wouldn't need a Savior. Jesus is no hobby. I need Him.

After fixing the Cross in the place I abhorred most, the Savior sought to rescue a deeper joy. He wanted to rain on my parade of "worldly sorrow", crucifying it.

"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death" (2 Cor 7:10).

Catholic thinkers through the ages have developed a theology of human behavior called "moral theology." Josef Pieper, an expert on the great, is a gift in this area. Pieper writes about "acedia," a vice against hope. Synonymous with sloth, acedia is "worldly sorrow." When I initially thought of sloth, I listed many ways to combat my millennial laziness. Pieper and Aquinas take it to another level.

Aquinas says that acedia is a sin against "sabbath rest." To kill this vice against hope is not about doing, but about being. "Genuine rest and leisure are possible only under the precondition that man accepts his own true meaning" (Pieper). If humanity has no peace with who he is created to be, he is unable to rest. Or, maybe he'd rather stay in his unrest? Boom. Worldly sorrow tries

again to determine his destiny.

Pieper goes on to say that acedia, in its final form, is a hatred of the divine good. It has “a monstrous result that, upon reflection, man expressly wishes that God had not ennobled him but had ‘left him in peace.’”

God created me, a man, for purposes above and beyond my low-ceiling expectations. What does worldly sorrow sound like? “Lord, I’d rather stay in my porn addiction. Leave me alone.” “Lord, I’d rather live a life of unfettered homosexual pleasure. Leave me be.” “Lord, I didn’t ask for this, and I could care less about your ‘plans and purposes’ for my life. I give up.”

This worldly sadness is subtle but grows in strength. It hates the light.

Why, in this ruminating state, was I so sad, asking God to leave me alone? I lacked hope in the God who raises the dead. I lacked hope that God created me for joy, not sadness. Why couldn’t I be reconciled to the good of my body? Why couldn’t God create a way for me to be known in my deepest wound? Why couldn’t God fulfill my desire for a bride and family?

The Cross is a doorway, leading me to the Church. As I placed that Cross in the ground I most hated, Jesus opened me to His friends. The Cross was no “joy-killer.” It was an invitation to a feast. This feast gives me hope.

Coaxed by the saints and Church teaching, I discovered the good of my body. Her Sacraments allow me to access Jesus’ forgiving, Sacred Heart. Her saints remind me that resistance to worldly sorrow is the path to victory. I am not alone; He gives me friends with whom to feast. And I seek a particular woman with whom to create family. Jesus, lead on!

Jesus, through the Church, rescues my joy. Over and over. Worldly sorrow still knows my name, but I choose to resist. God made me for so much more; therefore, I place my hope in Him.