

04aa10-Letter-to-Sardis

by "Sister Anne" | Jun 1, 2017 | 04aa Mary Unveils the Apocalypse | 0 comments



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Good evening everyone!

Greetings to our audio and YouTube listeners!

Tonight, we continue to work our way through the first column of sevens, the letters to the angels of the seven Churches. Once again, I'll just propose that these seven Churches represent seven regions within the universal Church. After we've examined the data we've acquired for all of the Churches we can go back to consider if the evidence I've presented has been sufficient to prove the hypothesis. This evening's fifth Church will be easy. We've proposed four Churches so far:

- 1) **Ephesus as the Church of leadership**, especially the papal curia and cardinals
- 2) **Smyrna as the Church of the poor**, especially Africa and South America
- 3) **Pergamum as the Church dominated by Communism**, especially Russia and China.
- 4) **Thyatira as a Church where eastern religions** prevail, namely India and southeast Asia

The sixth and seventh Churches we haven't yet looked at:

- 6) **Philadelphia** will represent the marginalized, **holy ones** from all the regions, the 144,000
- 7) **Laodicea** will be shown as the **Church of tepidity**, namely Europe

Tonight, we're going to look in detail at the fifth letter to the angel-bishops of Sardis

- 5) **Sardis, the Church of the wealthy**, that is, North America, particularly United States and Canada

And to the angel of the Church of Sardis write: Thus says He who has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. I know your works: you have the name of being alive, but you are dead. Be watchful and strengthen what still abides, yet is about to die; for I have not found your works complete before my God. Remember therefore what you have received and heard, and keep it and repent. If, therefore, you do not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know at what hour I will come upon you. However, you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that conquers shall be clad thus in white garments: and I will not efface his name from the Book of Life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his holy angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches

Rev 3:1-6 [Westminster version]

And to the angel of the Church of Sardis, write!

Sardis was one of the great cities of primitive history. In Greek lore it was simply the greatest of all the cities. At the beginning of records, it stands forth prominently as the capital of a powerful empire. It was a virtually impregnable fortress, a plateau 1,500 feet above the plain. Even today it offers only one approach. All other sides are smooth, rock walls, nearly perpendicular, a quarter mile high, absolutely unscalable in ancient times. Artificial fortification wasn't even necessary. The only approach was by a long and steep winding road, which could be defended with perfect ease.

Why would we compare this lofty city to the United States and Canada? The first point is that they have a geographical situation that gives them a military advantage. It's difficult to wage a war on a country which you have to cross an ocean or the north pole to get to. North America isn't easy to invade and that gives our nations leisure: leisure to engage in trade, leisure to engage in education, leisure to indulge in all sorts of pass-times, innocent and not so innocent.

Sardis was celebrated among the Greeks precisely because it took advantage of its security to develop an extremely lucrative commercial industry. The region of Phrygia raised thousands of sheep. Sardis bought the wool and dyed it in a variety of colors. A Roman philosopher-historian said that Sardis was given the credit for inventing the art of dyeing wool. True or not, they certainly perfected the trade, and then they produced rich carpets. Remember these seven Churches are located on the peninsula of modern Turkey. Turkish carpets have been famous for centuries. The art probably began right here in Sardis, several centuries before the time of Christ. You may recall the name of King Cyrus of Persia. The Persians conquered the Babylonian empire after the Jews had been exiled there for seventy years. Cyrus thought it wasn't good idea to have a lot of foreigners nearby as they could start an uprising. Moreover, it would be profitable if the foreigners would return to their own deserted countries and farm it and send him tax revenue, so he made some lucrative offers to any Jews who would voluntarily return to their destroyed cities. When the King of Persia passed from his apartments to the gate where he mounted his horse, the long hall was laid with carpets from Sardis. No foot but that of the king was allowed to tread on these. They were so soft and thick that his bed was covered with these carpets in lieu of a mattress.

Sardis didn't stop at dying the wool and weaving beautiful carpets. They marketed their wares which reached the halls of kings. Inventions, textiles, exports. Does that sound like the United States? At least it did until recent decades, that is before we sold our inventions and moved our factories to foreign countries. I won't speak much of Canada in this conference. I presume that their history of European immigrants and entrepreneurs is fairly similar to the way the United States developed, but I don't pretend to be very knowledgeable of their long history of English and French politics which gives Canadians their unique experience of independence in the New World.

We also have something akin to the American gold rush which sent thousands of families to the rivers of California to pan for gold. For a long time, historians thought the tales of the gold of King Croesus (KREE-sus) who reigned in the sixth century B.C. was mostly legend. The king's wealth, it was said, came from the sands of the River Pactolus in which King Midas washed his hands to rid himself of the 'Midas Touch' (which turned everything he laid hands on into gold) and in so doing, the hands of Midas made the sands of the river rich with gold. But in 1968 archaeologists and excavators found nearly 300 crucibles that had been used for the refining of gold.

Croesus was king of Lydia, the region of the Turkish peninsula which included the seven cities. King Croesus ruled from the high plateau of the city of Sardis. Either during the reign of King Croesus or shortly before, the people of Sardis were cited as the first to mint coins of gold and silver in Asia Minor, they especially produced a pale-yellow alloy of gold and silver. King Croesus funded construction of the great Temple of Artemis-Diana at Ephesus, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Croesus is not a legendary figure: his signature is at the base of one of the columns of the Temple of Artemis (now on display at the British Museum). In the sixth century B.C., the Spartans purchased this gold alloy to gild the face of their statue of Apollo. So, from Sardis came the old expression "as rich as Croesus." Sometimes we in the United States don't realize how legendary our wealth is to the rest of the world. Since America is so large, we usually vacation within our own country. With a continent 3000 miles wide, we aren't motivated to cross an ocean and learn another language when there is so much to see and do in our own backyard. I've gained a foreigner's perspective from a few random remarks that I'll share as a personal testimony.

I hope you've read *With God in Russia* the memoir of Father Walter Cizek, the American Jesuit priest who did secret missionary work in the Communist Soviet Union of the 1940s and 1950s. Father Cizek is moving forward in the cause of beatification. You may remember the scene in one of the prisons when Father Cizek expressed surprise that they had to clean with brooms instead of vacuum cleaners. The prisoners wanted to know all about this invention. Father Cizek said they used to beg to be told about life in America. So many things we take for granted were unimaginable to them. Another time I recall a Carmelite priest who gave us nuns a retreat. He was born in Egypt and raised in Lebanon. He started to use the expression "You don't have to go to America for such and such" when he interrupted himself. "Oh, I'm in America so I don't know what to place beyond it. In commercials our people say that they have fantastic products which you can get without having to travel to America." And then the rather sad testimony of a friend whose daughter was an airline stewardess. With her frequent flyer points she was able to send her retired parents on vacation in many countries. This woman said to me, "No matter where we go, the difference between their standard of living and the American standard of living, is so dramatic, that it's like every child in the United States had won a lottery at birth."

So, it is with Sardis. They were at the head of the world in wealth and military strength. The coins in Sardis were inscribed with the proud title, "Sardis First Metropolis of Asia, of Lydia, and of Hellenism." But was it all innocent commerce? No! They were also involved in the slave market! Christians of the United States certainly have a shameful past in the slave trade of the 1800s, but how does that compare today with so many abuses of human life? The USA is number one in paying low wages to men, women and children to assemble our products in foreign countries so that they can be retailed at a fat profit. It's not just the government's fault of our country or that country. It's the fault of every businessman and of the stores, and of the shoppers. We all share something of responsibility for this. But what about the sale of aborted body parts?

Besides using body parts of aborted babies for medical research and cosmetics, we are eating the babies in the form of flavor additives. Kraft, Pepsi and Nestle and Cadbury candies introduced a new wave of products using aborted baby body parts provided by Semonyx and StemExpress. StemExpress describes itself as "a multi-million-dollar company that supplies human blood, tissue products, primary cells and other clinical specimens to biomedical researchers." It also boasts of offering "the largest variety of raw material in the industry, as well as fresh, fixed and cryopreserved human primary cells." StemExpress provides easy-to-use online shopping carts with user-friendly dropdown boxes that allow the customer to purchase products like a "fetal liver" of their choice for as low \$610. Various medicines are based on fetal tissue, and many Christians refuse vaccines because it is well known they are based on "human lives." Later in the Apocalypse at the fall of Babylon we'll hear:

The merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo any more, cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human lives

Rev 18:11-13

The sins of Sardis are great in the eyes of Jesus.

Thus, says He who has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. I know your works: you have the name of being alive, but you are dead.

The Book of Revelation already told us the meaning of the seven stars.

The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches and the seven lampstands are the seven Churches

Rev 1:20

And we saw earlier how the Blessed Mother said that the angels of the Churches are the bishops. In 1921 Father Sylvester Berry of Columbus, Ohio published a commentary on the Book of Revelation. Here is what he said about the stars.

He who has the seven stars is Christ who exercises a special care for the ministers of his Church. He is now manifesting this solicitude for the Bishop of Sardis. Christ, the searcher of hearts and reins, knows the true state of this bishop's soul. He appears to be a faithful servant of God and a true shepherd of souls, but in reality, he is spiritually dead. These words imply a state of moral sin and a sad neglect of pastoral duty. Through the ministry of Saint John the Apostle, Christ now exhorts the Bishop of Sardis to arouse himself to a realization of his sad plight. He must do penance for the past and stir up his zeal to save the few members of his flock who remain faithful.

The pastor of souls is responsible to God for their salvation. He must teach and guide them by word and example, "for the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts" [Mal 2:7]. He is like a watchman set upon a watch-tower; "if he sees the sword coming, and sound not the trumpet and the people look not to themselves, and the sword comes, and cuts off a soul from among them; he indeed is taken away in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at the hand of the watchman" [Isa 33:6]

These words of the prophet are also a warning that no one can make an unworthy pastor an excuse for his sins. . . . Even when the watchman does not give warning, the soul perishes and is taken away for his own

iniquity. And the pastor who is negligent in the care of his people is exposed to the danger of being snatched away by sudden death without the grace of the Sacraments.

The Apocalypse of Saint John by Father. E. Sylvester Berry (1921)

Jesus holds all the stars/bishops/Churches in his hand and addresses the angel of Sardis. This suggests that Sardis exerts a great deal of influence in the Church. This is very true of the United States. Small countries often don't have a single cardinal, often because they are young and not very organized as a Church. The USA has 18 Cardinals, and 448 active and retired Catholic bishops in the United States. China and India might be comparable in size demographically, but the USA and Canada are heavily Catholic. Not only do the prelates of the USA outnumber almost all other nations, the USA is wealthy and the Catholics are generous, so the Vatican is largely funded by the United States Catholics. It's not an exaggeration to say that the Church in North America must set a standard for the world. The analogy between the letters to the Church of Ephesus (representing the Vatican) and that of Sardis is close. Some commentators even insist that the two have to be studied together. Both began enthusiastically and cooled down. The sender of both letters stands forth as the center, the pivot and the director of the Universal Church, and in particular of the entire group of the Asian Churches. To the Ephesian Church "these things saith He who holds the seven stars in his right hand, he that walks between the seven golden lamps." To the Church of Sardis, the letter proceeds from him "that has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." Jesus is a stern Lord who addresses his bishops.

I know your works: you have the name of being alive, but you are dead . . . I have not found your works complete before my God. Remember therefore what you have received and heard, and keep it and repent.

Rev 3:1-3

It's nothing less than shocking than to say that this wealthy, generous, busy, influential Church is dead. Who can even count the organized works of charity in the Catholic Church of the United States? And the Churches are full compared to Europe. Jesus will compare Europe to the lukewarm Laodicea. But He is calling the USA and Canada dead! Dead in sin! Saint Paul once said of certain widows:

She who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives

1Tm 5:6

The father of the prodigal son said:

My son was dead, and is alive again.

Lk 15:24

To be dead in sin, is to talk about mortal sin.

If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin [literally, unto death], he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal

1Jn 5:16-17

Mortal sin isn't healed by a few prayers. It requires deep repentance, deep conversion.

With the whole tradition of the Church we call mortal sin the act by which man freely and consciously rejects God, his law, the covenant of love that God offers, preferring to turn in on himself or to some created and finite reality, something contrary to the divine will (*conversio A.D. creaturam*) [. . .]. Man perceives that this disobedience to God destroys the bond that unites him with his life-principle: it is a mortal sin, that is, an act which gravely offends God and ends in turning against man himself with a dark and powerful force of destruction"

The Lord is talking to the angels, the bishops of the Churches, and holding them responsible first and foremost for congregations who are alive, breathing, but dead in sin. How many Catholics in the congregation are on contraceptives? These women and their husbands are killing children in the womb at an alarming rate. They can conceive monthly, even twins and triplets, but these tiny babes can't implant in the womb because of the pill. Murder, murder, murder! Are priests allowed to preach this sin from the pulpit and warn their sheep of the wolf? No, it won't fill the collection plate. Many bishops in this country make it clear that pastors need to avoid difficult topics that would make Churchgoers uncomfortable.

And how many couples appear for marriage class and are already living in mortal sin? But the pastors make no difficulties about it? Catholics aren't even embarrassed anymore if nobody wants to bother with the formality of a wedding.

And how many Catholics advise their unwed pregnant daughters to get an abortion? Statistics say that just as many Catholics get abortions as anyone else. And how many Catholic hospitals and clinics prescribe "morning after pills" under the table, but keeping it off the official books?

And how many bishops fail in their prophetic duty to call out sinful government policies because they want free handouts from the government? These are not small, compromising sins. These are mortal sins! Jesus was never impressed by the Pharisees who attended all the liturgies, observed all the fasts, gave generous alms:

I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

and:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of greed and uncleanness. . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you are like to whitened sepulchers, which outwardly appear to men beautiful but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness. So, you also outwardly indeed appear to men righteous: but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity

Mt 5:20; Mt 23:15-28

Be watchful and strengthen what still abides, yet is about to die!

Fortunately, there is hope! The Sacrament of Penance can forgive mortal sin and raise a dead soul to life. We spoke earlier of the sin of blasphemy perpetrated by the two beasts of land and sea. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a lost cause, because that person has a dead conscience. He doesn't believe in sin. He has no motive to seek forgiveness. The Church of Sardis may have blasphemers in its sheepfold and among its pastors, but Jesus is not accusing the Catholics of Sardis as being that perverted. These Catholics have faith but their faculties are impaired. Sin darkens the mind. It's very dangerous to remain in sin. A person in mortal sin is no longer in a state of sanctifying grace. He or she doesn't have the light and strength to climb out of the pit of sin in which they are living.

This is why Mary has been appearing all over the earth begging good Catholics to offer prayers, penance, personal sacrifices on behalf of sinners. This is why she appeared at Fatima and showed little children a vision of hell. This is why those little children gave up their songs and games and spent the rest of their lives inventing penances to prevent more souls from falling into hell. When is the last time you heard a sermon on Fatima? It's an approved apparition. Priests can preach it from the pulpit. But it's not a popular topic. Let's keep this dead Church comfortable. Let's not wake the dead. Let's not even strengthen the good Catholics in the pews who are about to die from sheer contagion in this culture of death, of sheer self-centeredness. Jesus is not happy with this Church or its bishops. We hear a lot about fake news today, but Jesus is calling out fake Churches.

If, therefore, you do not watch, I will come as a thief,

As we said, Sardis was built on a 1,500-foot-high plateau with smooth, rock walls, nearly perpendicular. The Greeks had a proverb: "To capture the citadel of Sardis is impossible." But the city of Sardis was lazy and not watchful. A soldier of the king of Sardis dropped his helmet, and very stupidly, he descended the secret backstairs route to fetch his hat. Enemies were watching and thus learned the secret route. While the troops snoozed away, in 546 B.C. King Cyrus of Persia and his troops captured this wealthy "impregnable" city and King Croesus was ignominiously defeated. Sardis was

never again the capital of an independent state. Her glory had largely departed. Did Sardis learn the lesson? No! Two centuries later, King Antiochus the Great also scaled the steep, unguarded walls. Part of his success was that the rock walls were decaying in places and the people of Sardis had not invested their money in repairing the wall.

But why does Jesus compare Himself to a thief? A thief is a sinner. He is breaking the seventh commandment. Theft can easily be a mortal sin. What is Jesus wanting to steal? Our wealth! Why? To detach us from our toys and make us repent of our addictions and our selfishness! To make us do penance for our sins by poverty. Mary warned the United States of our impending state of poverty, of despoilment by Jesus the thief, when Father Stephen Gobbi visited Pennsylvania in 1990:

MMP #437–The Hour of the Great Trial

Malvern (Pennsylvania, U.S.A.), November 15, 1990

Spiritual Exercises in the Form of a Cenacle with 3 Bishops and 250 Priests of the MMP from United States and Canada

437a-Beloved sons, today I want to tell you of the joy and the comfort that my Immaculate Heart feels in seeing you gathered together in such great numbers in these, your spiritual exercises, which you are carrying out in the form of a continuous cenacle. You have come from almost all the states of this country of yours, from Canada and from other countries of Latin America.

437b-You are gathered in prayer, offered together with me, by the recitation of the entire Rosary, by your listening to my word, by a solemn holy hour of Eucharistic adoration, and by the concelebration of holy Mass, always presided over by a bishop, during which you renew your act of consecration to my Immaculate Heart.

437c-You have also wished to make more intense your act of love and reparation to Jesus present in the Most Holy Eucharist, by your nocturnal adoration, so pleasing to me and blessed by me, because it has given great comfort and joy to the Eucharistic and priestly Heart of Jesus.

437d-And now, I announce to you that the hour of the great trial is on the point of arriving.

437e-The great trial has arrived for your country. How many times, as a concerned and sorrowing Mother, have I endeavored to urge my children to follow the path of conversion and of return to the Lord.

437f-I have not been listened to. You have continued to walk along the way of rejection of God, and of his law of love. Sins of impurity have become ever more widespread, and immorality has spread like a sea which has submerged all things. Homosexuality, a sin of impurity which is against nature, has been justified; recourse to the means of preventing life have become commonplace, while abortions–these killings of innocent children, that cry for vengeance before the face of God–have spread and are performed in every part of your homeland.

437g-The moment of divine justice and of great mercy has now arrived. You will know the hour of weakness and of poverty; the hour of suffering and defeat; the purifying hour of the great chastisement.

437h-The great trial has arrived for your Church. Those errors which have brought people to the loss of the true Faith have continued to spread. Many pastors have been neither attentive nor vigilant, and have allowed many rapacious wolves, clothed as lambs, to insinuate themselves into the flock in order to bring disorder and destruction.

437i-How great is your responsibility, O pastors of the holy Church of God! You continue along the path of division from the Pope and of the rejection of his Magisterium; indeed, in a hidden way, there is in preparation a true schism which could soon become open and proclaimed.

437j-And then, there will remain only a small faithful remnant, over which I will keep watch in the garden of my Immaculate Heart.

437k-The great trial has arrived for all humanity. The chastisement, predicted by me at Fatima and contained in that part of the Secret which has not yet been revealed, is about to take place. The great moment of needed justice and of mercy has come upon the world.

437l-For this reason I have wanted you here. You must be the apostles of these last times. Go out everywhere and proclaim with strength and courage the Gospel of Jesus. Walk along the path of contempt for the world and for yourselves. Illuminate the earth in these times of great darkness. Cause the rays of the light of your faith, of your holiness and of your love to come down upon the world.

437m-You have been chosen to combat courageously against the power of him who places himself in opposition to Christ, in order to obtain, in the end, my greatest victory.

437n-Leave this cenacle in confidence; leave in joy and in great hope. I am with you. I am manifesting myself by means of you. I will work prodigies in you, so that all will be able to see my light and feel my maternal presence.

437o-Together with your dear ones, together with the souls which are entrusted to you, I bless you all in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

To the Priests, Our Lady's Beloved Sons

Here in the United States Mary speaks of the scourge of a coming schism, between a corrupt majority and a faithful remnant. Likewise, Jesus talks about "a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments." In the next few weeks I hope to give a conference on Mary's approved apparitions at Akita, Japan. Mary spoke to Sister Agnes of a coming schism where cardinals will oppose cardinals and bishops will oppose bishops. All the messages were in Sister's native tongue of Japanese except one word. Mary had used the English word, not the Japanese word, for cardinals. How many English-speaking nations have multiple cardinals? These are hints from heaven that the Church in the United States is in grave danger of schism if the bishops fail to repent and united together in leading this nation to conversion.

And this topic brings us to Jesus appearing to Sardis, not only holding seven stars, but as

He who has the seven spirits of God

Rev 3:1

The seven spirits refer to the seven charisms. A charism is a special gift of the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church. Jesus appears to Sardis as a living lampstand. He is the light of the world and He calls us to light up the household of the Church, not hiding our light under a bushel basket

Mt 5:15

Consecrated religious by vocation have a prophetic duty to bear witness to the light. After a major synod in which bishops gathered to reflect on the value of religious life, Pope Saint John Paul produced a magnificent encyclical.

Those who are called to the consecrated life have a special experience of the light. . . . [they are] a kind of sign and prophetic statement for the community of the brethren and for the world.

Encyclical: Vita Consecrata #15

The seven-branched lampstand in the tabernacle was made of one piece but each lamp was turned at its particular angle to throw light forward [cf. Ex 25]. The seven major rules are flames from the Holy Spirit which must be kept burning. Among the thousands of congregations, almost all of them are ultimately inspired by one of these seven rules:

1) Saint Elijah (through the Carmelites and Patriarch **Saint Albert** of Jerusalem)

2) Saint Basil

3) Saint Augustine

4) Saint Benedict

5) Saint Francis

6) Saint Ignatius

7) Blessed Virgin Mary (dictated to Melanie at LaSalette)

These Rules have a similar structure and even engage in similar ministries, but whether the religious are teaching or in hospitals or in foreign missions, they exude the special grace, or emphasis, or spiritual flavor as it were, of their ultimate founder. All these lights are needed on the candlestick of the Church. They each throw light on some different aspect of God to give the spiritual life fullness and balance. Religious are often inspired by the writings of saints who followed other Rules. There is no competition between religious orders to outshine each other. Representatives of all seven Rules are needed in every diocese or that diocese will be deprived of certain spiritual nutrients.

It's the Holy Spirit who calls to religious life, just as he calls to marriage. After one has discerned a vocation to marriage, one has to pray and discern to discover the spouse God wants for us. Likewise, after discerning a vocation to consecrated life, it's another matchmaking step in the romance to discover the rule and congregation where God wants that person to spend his or her life.

But Jesus is saying that Sardis is a dead Church. He has seven spirits in his hand and seven stars, but are these spirits breathing or gasping? Are these stars shining or is their light dim? The number of consecrated religious in the United States is very high, even though you hardly ever see them because they don't wear a habit: 21,698 male religious, and 71,250 female religious.

Just because they are mostly invisible nowadays doesn't mean they don't have a massive impact on how schools, hospitals, adoption agencies, food programs and a thousand other ministries are being run in this country. Are they doing a good job? Is Jesus happy? Well, first of all, why don't the bishops enforce canon law and make the religious in their diocese wear a habit? Not just any habit. Members of a congregation are supposed to match in their attire and insignia because it's the vocation of a religious to give a witness, not to hide under a bushel. People who want to work in secret usually aren't doing good things.

For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Jn 3:20

Mary warned of schism, of bishops opposing bishops, but the religious women in the United States have been living in schism for several decades. They've basically divided into two camps and most laypeople aren't even aware of the fact.

80% of consecrated women belong to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious

These religious have been under investigation by the Vatican because of their departure from the magisterium on many issues such as radical feminism, contraception, lesbianism, abortion, etc. These women are highly educated and articulate. They easily persuade young women that this is authentic religious life in the 21st century. These communities do not give glory to God. They do not lead to holiness. They are dead in the eyes of the Lord.

Note: Many sisters who are in LCWR-related orders do not appreciate being associated with the organization and were quite hopeful for reform when the Vatican began the investigation. These pockets of fidelity in certain congregations may represent an eventual "rescue" and return to the charism of their founders, but there are few heroes who bravely wear the habit and observe their constitutions

cf <https://www.lcwr.org/>

20% of consecrated women belong to the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious

Very faithful to the Church and magisterium.

These women wear their distinctive habit, live in community, give authentic public witness.

Note: Authentic communities of cloistered nuns do not belong to this group because they will not leave the enclosure to send superiors out to these meetings.

I wish more bishops would be aware of their responsibilities because they can do a lot to stop religious by not allowing them to minister in the confines of their diocesan territories. That's what the crook of the miter means. But in reality, many bishops smile approvingly on these religious and together they are moving the Church forward according to their own agenda, and the laity are bankrolling it unawares. I'll provide some links in the YouTube description box if you want to do some research. Think twice before you give to certain charities run by religious. Ask which group the congregation belongs to LCWR or CMSWR.

cf <https://cmswr.org/>

The letter to Sardis is full of images: lamps and watchmen and thieves. But the Book of Revelation is one book so we should examine another verse that mentions thieves.

Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!

Rev 16:15

Years ago, in reading my favorite rabbinical commentary on Temple liturgies in the time of Jesus, Alfred Edersheim wrote:

Quite lately, they who have dug under the ruins of the Temple have discovered one of those tablets in the Court of the Temple which warned Gentiles, on pain of death, not to advance farther into the sanctuary. The tablet answers exactly to the description of Josephus, and its inscription is almost literally as he gives it. This tablet seems like a witness suddenly appearing, after eighteen centuries, to bear testimony to the narrative of Josephus as that of a contemporary writer. . . . Perhaps one of the most striking instances of this kind is afforded [in Scripture] by the words 'Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments.' They literally describe, as we learn from the Rabbis, the punishment awarded to the Temple-guards if found asleep at their posts; and the Rabbinical account of it is curiously confirmed by the somewhat naive confession of one of their number, that on a certain occasion his own maternal uncle had actually undergone the punishment of having his clothes set on fire by the captain of the Temple as he went his rounds at night

"The Temple: Its Ministry and Services" by Alfred Edersheim (1874) Ch. 7: At Night in the Temple

Jesus is like a night-stalking Temple lampstand, checking on the watchmen. The lampstand is lighted up and He merely has to bend forward to set a sleeping shepherd on fire. But this is not a natural fire. To be in mortal sin is to flirt with hell fire.

Alfred Edersheim explained that the Roman guards divided the night into four three-hour shifts, which made it easier for the soldiers to stay alert. Their second watch began at midnight, the third watch began at three am. But the Temple guards served one long day shift or one long night shift. If they fell asleep, they'd naturally be deepest in slumber in the second and third watch. In the parable of the ten bridesmaids Jesus says the bridegroom came at midnight [Mt 25:6]. This parable of the bridegroom is grouped with the Lord's warning that this time will be like the days of Noah:

For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of man.

Mt 24:38-39

Thieves do their thieving at nighttime. The Church of Sardis is in deep darkness, serious confusion.

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into.

Lk 12:37-39

But will there be temporal fire for the Church of Sardis besides eternal fire. Last week I gave a conference on Mary's apparition in the United States at Green Bay, Wisconsin. She had a stern warning for the people who were not properly catechizing their children in the Faith. All the energy was devoted to material prosperity while spiritual things were being neglected. She warned of punishments if parents failed to repent. Within a dozen years, the great Peshtigo fire, the worst recorded forest fire in North America devoured 2000 square miles (1.5 million acres) of timberland in Northeastern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. Witnesses described it as "a wall of flame, a mile high, five miles wide, traveling 90 to 100 miles an hour, hotter than a crematorium, turning sand into glass." It destroyed millions of dollars worth of property October 8, 1871, and in those days a dollar could buy a lot.

But at Akita in 1973 Mary warned of fire falling from heaven in punishment for sin. Would this be natural fire from weapons made by men? Or something supernatural? What comes to mind is the vision experienced by George Washington at Valley Forge in 1877. He was at his lowest point in the struggle for American independence. A mysterious woman appeared and foretold the greatness of the nation, but also that it would undergo three serious trials. After the vision of the War of 1812 which was a critical threat to the new colonies, then the dreadful Civil War, the vision continued:

And again I heard the mysterious voice saying, 'Son of the Republic, look and learn.' At this the dark, shadowy angel placed a trumpet to his mouth, and blew three distinct blasts; and taking water from the ocean, he sprinkled it upon Europe, Asia and Africa. Then my eyes beheld a fearful scene: from each of these countries arose thick, black clouds that were soon joined into one. Throughout this mass there gleamed a dark red light by which I saw hordes of armed men, who, moving with the cloud, marched by land and sailed by sea to America. Our country was enveloped in this volume of cloud, and I saw these vast armies devastate the whole country and burn the villages, towns and cities that I beheld springing up. As my ears listened to the thundering of the cannon, clashing of swords, and the shouts and cries of millions in mortal combat, I heard again the mysterious voice saying, 'Son of the Republic, look and learn.'

When the voice had ceased, the dark shadowy angel placed his trumpet once more to his mouth, and blew a long and fearful blast. Instantly a light as of a thousand suns shone down from above me, and pierced and broke into fragments the dark cloud which enveloped America. At the same moment the angel upon whose head still shone the word Union, and who bore our national flag in one hand, and a sword in the other, descended from the heavens attended by legions of white spirits. These immediately joined the inhabitants of America, who I perceived were well-nigh overcome, but who immediately taking courage again, closed up their broken ranks and renewed the battle. Again, amid the fearful noise of the conflict, I heard the mysterious voice saying, "Son of the Republic, look and learn." As the voice ceased, the shadowy angel for the last time dipped water from the ocean and sprinkled it upon America. Instantly the dark cloud rolled back, together with the armies it had brought, leaving the inhabitants of the land victorious!

Then once more I beheld the villages, towns and cities springing up where I had seen them before, while the bright angel, planting the azure standard he had brought in the midst of them, cried with a loud voice: 'While the stars remain, and the heavens send down dew upon the earth, so long shall the Union last' And taking from his brow the crown on which blazoned the word 'Union,' he placed it upon the Standard while the people, kneeling down, said, 'Amen.'

The scene instantly began to fade and dissolve, and I at last saw nothing but the rising, curling vapor I at first beheld. This also disappearing, I found myself once more gazing upon the mysterious visitor, who, in the same voice I had heard before, said, "Son of the Republic, what you have seen is thus interpreted: Three great perils will come upon the Republic. The most fearful is the third, but in this greatest conflict the

whole world united shall not prevail against her. Let every child of the Republic learn to live for his God, his land and the Union.” With these words the vision vanished, and I started from my seat and felt that I had seen a vision wherein had been shown to me the birth, progress, and destiny of the United States.

George Washington’s Vision and Prophecy for the United States of America, John L. Grady, MD. (1970s) [out of print] <https://medjugorje.com/product/american-history-you-never-learned/>

The United States has a proud history of a melting pot where all persons aspiring to lofty ideals can find refuge. We have spoken of the Book of Revelation as the Great Day of the Great Feast of Tabernacles. The prophet Zechariah said that on that Great Day every house would be like the House of God and even the cooking pots would be holy:

And on that day, there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “Holy to Yahweh.” And the pots in the house of Yahweh shall be as the bowls before the altar; and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to Yahweh of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the flesh of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a merchant in the house of Yahweh of hosts on that day

Zech 14:20-21

According to Temple rules, earthen vessels that have been defiled have to be broken, destroyed. But there is hope for metal pots. Fire or hard scrubbing purges consecrated vessels. The prophet Ezekiel compared Jerusalem to a metal pot which had to be purged by fire.

Son of man . . . utter an allegory to this rebellious house and say to them, thus says the Lord Yahweh . . . Woe to the city of bloodshed, to the pot now encrusted, whose deposit will not go away! . . . For the blood she shed is in her midst . . . I will pile the wood high . . . heap on the wood and kindle the fire . . . then let the empty pot sit on the coals till it becomes hot and its copper glows so its impurities may be melted and its deposit burned away . . . Your impurity is lewdness. . . I tried to cleanse you but you would not be cleansed from your impurity, you will not be clean again until my wrath against you has subsided. I Yahweh have spoken. The time has come for me to act. I will not hold back; I will not have pity, nor will I relent. You will be judged according to your conduct and your actions, thus says the Lord Yahweh!

Ezk 24:3-14

However, you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments . . .

Father Berry says that “a few names” was a customary phrase meaning a few people. The people are the named ones. God knows them by name. This calls to mind the parable of the rich man dressed in purple and eating sumptuously and the poor man. In the parable we never hear the name of the rich man [Luke 16]. He probably had buildings and streets and a business that made his name a household word. But the poor man’s name is Lazarus because his name is known by God. This is a not so subtle message to the Church of Sardis. In the United States we spend millions of dollars on trying to make our name important whether it’s through commercials, billboards, or business cards, we are very eager to make sure the world knows our name. But the rich man burning in hell was a man whose name was unknown to God.

Who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that conquers shall be clad thus in white garments . . .

The word white is repeated but the meaning is not redundant. In the first case white is juxtaposed with defiled garments, so white carries the connotation of purity. The word for defile in Greek is very strong, not a mere splash or smear of something that can easily be washed out, but a stain that basically dyes the garment. The Hebrew word for defiled garments is an uncleanness that keeps one from participating in Temple worship, particularly fleshly “pollution” like human excrement or menstrual blood [cf Zec 3:3; Ezk 4:12; Isa 63:60]. However, no stain, or even moral sin is beyond the power of grace. Isaiah encouraged sinners:

Thus says Yahweh, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.”

Isa 1:18

The color white among the ancient nations was associated with innocence and purity. On this account it was appropriate for those who were engaged in the worship of the gods, because purity was prescribed as a condition of engaging in divine service. All Roman citizens wore the pure white toga on holidays and at religious ceremonies, whether or not they wore it on ordinary days; in fact, the great majority of them did not ordinarily wear that heavy and cumbersome garment; and hence the city on festivals and holidays is called “*candida urbs*” the city in white. In the Hebrew Temple liturgy, the priests wore richly colored robes of violet and scarlet, but all priests wore a white tunic. And at some point, the early Christians began the custom of wearing a white garment for the octave of their baptism to celebrate their cleansing from all stain of sin.

Walking in white would have brought to everyone’s mind the ceremonial march in Rome called the “triumph.” The Triumph was in origin a religious ceremony. The victorious general who celebrated it played for the moment the part of the Roman god Jupiter; he wore the god’s dress and insignia until he reached the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Mount. The soldiers wore their full-dress military attire with all their decorations. The citizens wore white togas as a sign of joy. The conquered foes were stripped of their honors, and paraded in the Triumph as a show. A dirty and dark-colored toga was a sign of sorrow and of guilt. Hence it was worn by mourners and by persons accused of crimes. And in this march trumpets were frequently blown, so all these civil and religious concepts intermingle to give the Book of the Apocalypse a universal sense of messages not just for the seven Churches but for the whole earth.

You may have noticed that we didn’t mention the local god or goddess of Sardis. There are coins and ruins which point to the Sardian goddess Cybele but this was a trading city, very cosmopolitan. It seems that diverse religions were welcome. There were many Jews. Devotion to Cybele wasn’t very important. Little information about this deity has survived. It wasn’t like the city of Ephesus where everyone had to venerate Diana. So this is one more similarity to connect Sardis with North America where citizens have a right to freedom of worship.

And I will not efface his name from the Book of Life,

The “Book of Life” would have been understood as the official list of the citizens of the heavenly city. All Greek and Roman cities kept a list of citizens, according to their class or tribe or township, in which new citizens were entered and from which degraded citizens were expunged. And Psalm 87 says that Yahweh registers the citizens of Zion as they arrive from far-off lands.

But in the Old Testament, there are also references to books of events, that happened in the life of each king [e.g., 2Chr 20:34] This second kind of book appears in Revelation 20:12.

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also, another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done.

Rev 20:12

And I will not efface his name from the Book of Life . . . and I will confess his name

I will not efface and I will confess are a play on words in the Greek

and I will not efface (*exaleipho*) his name from the Book of Life, and I will confess (*exomologeō*) his name

Rev 3:5

exaleipho: efface, blot out, wipe away

exomologeō: praise, thank, confess

At that time Jesus rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise (*exomologeō*) You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

Lk 10:21

This was on the occasion that Jesus also alludes to a book in heaven:

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.” And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. “Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

and:

And I will confess his name . . . before my Father and before his holy angels.

Lk 10:17-20; Rev 3:5

Only the Church of Sardis is rewarded with this reference to the holy angels. Once again, the importance and the responsibility of America is singled out because in an approved revelation of Mary as Our Lady of America, Sr. Mildred saw two angels who were given as special protectors because of the role of the Americas, and their names are remarkably similar to Sardis. I hope to give a conference on this series of apparitions soon. I'll just give here, a brief extract of Sister's notes:

I am the Angel Sultra, sent by the Almighty whose faithful servant I am, to help the people of God in their hour of need. I have been appointed guardian, protector and defender of the United States of America whose people honor and love the Immaculate Virgin, the Queen of Angels and have dedicated their land to her. . . . Follow me, people of God, brothers and sisters, as our Queen paves the way and the peace of the Lord will reign once more upon the earth.

I am the Archangel Sardus, Protector, Guardian and Defender of America whose soil is saturated with martyrs' blood and honors so highly the Queen of Heaven and her holy Spouse [Joseph] who work only to further the Kingdom of Jesus. . . . Listen to the words and warnings of the Queen of Heaven and you will experience my protection and I will fight in your defense that with the people of all Nations you can at last come to the peace of the Kingdom which is within you.

I was informed that these two mighty Spirits would fight together side by side aided by an army of their companion Spirits.

Diary of Sister Mildred (August 22, 1981)

Here we have two angels for the Church of Sardis, and the very word Sardis is a plural noun because the city outgrew its high plateau and spilled over into the plain a quarter mile below. It was no small trek to travel from part of the city to another, hence it seemed like two cities. And notice that the United States and Canada are also two cities.

As for the meaning of the original singular noun, lexicons suggest the gem sardonyx, a type of reddish-brown quartz. But the Webster dictionary tells us that a sardonic comment is a Greek expression when someone laughs with skepticism or derision. Woe to North Americans who laugh sarcastically at warnings from heaven that call for repentance.

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches [Rev 3:1-6].

Sources:

The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia and their Place in the Plan of the Apocalypse by W. M. Ramsay (1904)

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The Apocalypse of Saint John, by Father E. Sylvester Berry (1921)

The Apocalypse of Saint John, by James J. L. Ratton (1915)

and various internet sites and random sources