



BISHOP'S MONTHLY REFLECTION

September 2023

“For our struggle is not with flesh and blood,
but with the principalities, with the powers,
with the world rulers of this present darkness,
with the evil spirits in the heavens.” Ephesians 6:12

UNBOUND: A Practical Guide to Deliverance

There is a great need in our day and age to address the dark spiritual forces afflicting the minds and hearts of people. It was Pope St. John Paul II who challenged the bishops throughout the world to establish, within each of their dioceses, an outreach ministry to help the faithful who are spiritually afflicted by the influence of evil. The Pope stressed the importance that each diocesan bishop appoint an exorcist for his diocese.

We are to be reminded: doors opened to dark influences and sin, have the capability to bind us. Choices made in life that are contrary to God's ways, contrary to loving Him above all things, contrary to embracing His Commandments and contrary to loving our neighbor as ourselves - all of this - separates us from God's divine life - his sanctifying grace. But when we freely choose God, and respond to His grace and mercy, the door is opened to us to experience reconciliation, spiritual healing and freedom from the sins that hold us *bound*. It is only by way of the victory of the *death and resurrection* of Jesus - the Paschal Mystery – that a person can be healed and freed from slavery to sin.

Those seeking deliverance from the debilitating effects of sin, should be relieved to know that there is a ministry to assist them who are held *bound* and struggling with reoccurring sin. This outreach ministry is known as:

Unbound Ministry. It utilizes the integration of *Five Keys* into one's spiritual life. The following keys: *Repentance and faith*

Forgiveness

Renouncing the work of your enemies

Standing in the authority you have in Christ

Receiving God's blessing of your identity and destiny -

have the potential to help one to experience conversion and the Father's mercy of deliverance - freedom from the bondage of sin – abundant life!

As the letter of Colossians reminds us:

“He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness,
and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. “

Neil Lozano, the author of *Unbound*, states: “I have not written this book to prove the existence of the devil. I focus on deliverance from evil spirits in the context of the normal Christian life. Many people have gone to counseling, confess their sins, pursued a God-centered life and done all they know to be free from spiritual bondage in specific areas of their lives. No matter what they do, they find no relief. Many faithful, committed believers, have lived with hidden sin, compulsion and fear, due to the deception that surrounds the work of evil spirits. It may never have occurred to them that they might need deliverance from evil spirits. It is unfortunate

that many people in the Church have never heard a clear warning about the dangers of the demonic. Uninformed, they dabble in things they shouldn't. "

Neal clarifies that: "Deliverance in its brightest sense is a word of salvation. It is the power of God destroying the works of the devil in our lives, so we may receive the inheritance we have in Christ: the kingdom of God. Deliverance from evil spirits removes the obstacles so we may receive, in Christ, the Father's blessing." Neal states that the primary point of this ministry is to speak to: "the hearts of those who seek deeper conversion to our Lord Jesus. Jesus is our liberator. He is the truth, and He has told us that the truth sets us free."

As we find ourselves in the month of September, we are reminded that this month is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. As Mother of the Church, she is concerned for our wellbeing, especially, our spiritual well-being. Her maternal concern is for us to avoid sin and to seek a life-giving relationship with her Son, Jesus. It is a comfort to know that Our Lady is always present to those whom she affectionately refers to as: "poor sinners." Because sin separates us from God's love, this saddens and afflicts her Immaculate Heart. Our Lady longs for our salvation. Seeing how her children choose poorly, in regard to avoiding sin, this pierces her Immaculate Heart like *swords*; a common image used in depicting Mary as Our Lady of Sorrows.

The *good news* is that grace and mercy abound! All that is needed is our willingness to respond and permit God to break the bondage that sin creates in our lives and to confess and be reconciled to Him, the Church and ourselves!

As we acknowledge our brothers and sisters who are presently suffering from spiritual affliction, I want to stress the importance of our diocesan Ministry of Deliverance, and thank those involved and committed to it! I, especially, encourage the clergy, and invite the laity, to acquire a copy of Neal Lozano's book: Unbound. As individuals become familiar with this specialized ministry, it will help them to experience the true *freedom* that only Jesus can give us!

Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Monsignor J. Cotta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. To the left of the signature is a small, stylized cross symbol.

Obispo Cotta