

# Our Need for Christ<sup>1</sup>

*In a time of tribulation and a world of war and distress, man seeks his redeemer and longs for deliverance from his troubled life. Fr Matta speaks here about an important issue in our life, he experienced it deeply. Enjoy! NB: All quotations are taken from the NKJV, if not otherwise mentioned.*

**D**URING MY EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE, the greatest experience that strongly drew my attention was whenever I felt that I lacked in my relationships with the people, the Church, or the monks, I became distressed and agonized to the extent that my energy, ministry, and influence upon others was consequently weakened. However, the moment I approached the person of my Lord Jesus and felt Him as though He was returning after a long absence of which I was always the cause, my heart would leap with joy, and my mind would regather so that all sense of want falls away from me, allowing Christ to rise over the horizon of my whole life. Then I see Him more than all my needs and feel His fullness overflowing and sweeping my life in the tide of His love that transcends the mind.

In the same manner, I had this sense whenever I was greatly troubled with numerous uproaring thoughts about the ways of God or His dealings with people or His care for the one as for the many. Then my spirit was sorely distressed within me. For I was always eager to see God as supreme at all levels – of mercy or justice and chastening, of tender fatherhood or sovereignty and grace – and thus I remained torn asunder with conflicting feelings that gave me no rest nor peace. But once I felt Him approaching me, my soul calms down immediately, all my questions and worries vanish from me, and Christ appears transcending all my intellectual scales concerning mercy or justice and fatherhood or sovereignty.

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<sup>1</sup> A spiritual speech delivered in St Macarius' Church, in his Monastery in *Scetis* on March 3, 1975. Revised translation in 2022.

At such moments, Christ reveals to me the mystery of His will.

Through these two experiences, I have been assured that Christ, whom we lack, is the sole need of our life. The more distant we are from Him, the greater our reliance on so many things of this world, and the more our worrying develops regarding particulars or generals in our life. Why is it that the person of Christ appears in this way as though He is the fullness of everything?

There is one answer that suffices many questions.

We must realize that humanity comprises within itself two contradictory worlds: the physical and the spiritual. The sum of these two together is one of the most astonishing traits in human nature, but it had an exorbitant price. All the ideals that come from this realm of the spirit that permeates into the human being are matched by a material reality decaying in human life, which may reach low and ignoble examples.

A man may kill his brother for a morsel of bread or sell his heavenly heritage for a meal (cf. Gen 25:29). The history of civilization, philosophy, and science proves that there is no hope of establishing a natural reconciliation in the tension and disruption inherent in our being between the ideals of the spirit and the realities of the flesh—whether through the interference of wisdom, the refinement of skills or the mere following of the commandments of God, or even chastisement. As soon as human instincts rage, one rebels against all spiritual values, and a temporary spiritual blindness overpowers and drives them to commit the grossest transgressions, even against themselves.

Here Christ appears in His full humanity and full divinity as the greatest miracle that has ever happened, reconciling both human realities—apparent in their instincts and passions, in their dealings with others, time, their own needs, infirmities, and failures—with spiritual ideals, or instead with God Himself. The reconciliation is complete, perpetual, and eternal, and is profoundly rooted in the depth of oneself, for all that belongs to Christ has come to belong to us.

In this case, Christ has become at once humanity's miracle and God's miracle. Our miracle because we have reached the depth of God's nature, and God's miracle because He has penetrated the depths of our nature. In order to enter the light of this miracle, we must realize that this reconciliation does not rest on a theory, however elaborate, nor on the mere fulfillment of commandments. The

reconciliation fulfilled by Christ is a personal reconciliation achieved in Christ Himself, not through our power but through His power, and the result surpasses the human mind. It suffices to realize that the moment reconciliation was fulfilled through the Incarnation and Crucifixion of Christ, it comprised all humanity in the person of Jesus, Who represents it before God the Father.

Man is reconciled to himself, for God was reconciled in the body of our humanity that belongs to Christ, which He took from us. Hence, we say confidently and succinctly that we are reconciled with God in Christ. This highly personal reconciliation is a unique mediation undertaken by this sole Mediator, Christ, between God and humanity, giving rise to a new force that penetrated not only the earth but also heaven.

The lesser and feeble image of our Christianity is our vain attempt to apply the commandments of Christ to our daily problems without Christ Himself. The sturdy and more excellent image are obtained when “the person of Christ” enters our life. Then all our problems fall at once, and we rise to the level of Christ’s commandments without the least of personal mastery.

Attempting to accomplish Christ’s commandments without Him, which is impossible, leads the Christians to experience bitterness since, on their own accord, they are incapable of fulfilling the commandments of God that they love. Christ laid down the commandment so that we may prove by it His presence. “Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Cor 13:5).

Hence the Lord says: “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me” (John 14:21). In this sense, the one who loves Me is the one who can follow my commandments. In other words, first comes the person of Christ, and secondly, follows all that is Christ’s.

Christians are always required to declare their faith before Christians and non-Christians alike. This persistent demand puts us in perpetual tension, for we are bound to rise to the level of the Truth that they may see and reveal It, and to the level of faith that they may act following the Truth before they declare It, or else they would disgrace themselves and Christ alike.

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