

Don't Drink the Poison

By **Monsignor Chiodo, Des Moines**

There are so many messages buzzing around us --- some good and some bad. From the cradle, our ears have picked up messages --- some positive and some negative. Some of the more negative and destructive messages we have unfortunately taken to heart. Here are some of the more poisonous ones: "You're worthless. You're helpless. You're clueless. You're heartless. You're spineless. You're witless. You're a loser."

And like a mental tape player some of those messages keep repeating themselves over and over again. But today, brothers and sisters, the Lord wants us to listen to a different message, a message summarized in the words that came from a cloud which overshadowed Jesus. It is the voice of God the Father: "This is my beloved." It refers to us too. Yes, we are God's beloved. Do you believe it?

Someone recently emphasized the importance of acting according to who you are. If we have taken to heart messages that depict us as hopeless, mindless, miserable creatures we'll act that way --- to our own destruction. Many of those poor souls who end up in serious trouble, those who are addicted to drugs or alcohol, those who live for the day and forget about the responsibility of tomorrow, those who believe the world revolves around their wants and needs, have fallen into Satan's trap. They have drunk the poison, and they are destroying themselves, and most of the time they try to take others with them. "You are my beloved." Let the words strike a chord in your heart.

No one is hopeless, helpless, clueless or mindless. No one need believe they are heartless or spineless. No one need accept the indictment that he is a loser. Why? Because as Saint Paul puts it today: "If God is for us, who can be against us? "Is it possible that he who did not spare his own son but handed him over for the sake of us all will not grant us all things

besides? You are God's beloved and no matter how dark things seem to be, his light will overcome the darkness. Hear the message, not just with your ears but with your heart and take it with you, you are God's beloved. So many of us choose to ignore the word of life and accept the word of death.

A room was filled with applicants for a single job as a telegraph operator. The voices of the applicants competed with a flow of dots and dashes from the telegraph key. Most were too busy talking to hear the message of the telegraph as it put out its message. Suddenly the door opened and a new applicant entered. He listened for a minute, walked over to a door marked "private" and knocked. A man opened it and said to the other applicants: "You may go. We're hiring this man." When the others demanded an explanation, the man at the door said, "Listen!" The clicks of the key kept repeating the message: "If you hear this, knock at the door marked 'private,' the job is yours."

The Lord is constantly speaking to me. Am I listening? Most of the time we pay attention to the wrong messages and we let the wrong messages sap our spiritual strength.

A man stopped to watch a little league baseball game. He asked one of the youngsters what the score was. "We're behind 18 to nothing," was the answer. "Well," said the man, "I must say you don't look discouraged." "Discouraged," the boy said, puzzled, "why should we be discouraged? We haven't come to bat yet." That's the kind of confidence the Lord wants to instill in us today. The confidence that comes from God tells us to take one day as it is to struggle to overcome the negative messages which play their poisonous message in our ears to overcome the message of God.

I recall Martin Luther King, Junior, and how he so often stood before thousands of citizens, who felt down-trodden and hopeless, people who had been fed the poison of a message which claimed they were inferior and unworthy. He instilled a different message in them, and so they often would sing: "We shall overcome. We shall overcome. We shall

overcome someday. Because deep in my heart. I do believe that we shall overcome today.”

All you who have drunk the poison of hopelessness and helplessness, who have taken to heart a message that leads to doom and self-destruction, look at the cross and listen to another message coming from the heart of the Savior. Take a different message home: “You are my beloved. Believe it. Let no power in Hell or on earth make you believe otherwise. You are God’s beloved. And you shall overcome...someday.”