

## CONSEQUENCES

*Happy the man who stands firm when trials come. He has proved himself, and will win the prize of life, the crown that the Lord promised to those who love him. (The letter of St. James 1; 12.)*

In his letter, St. James warns us against blaming God for all the things that go wrong. When bad things happen, often we ask why is God doing this. When disasters occur, we ask why has God let this happen. Perhaps, the question should be, what have we done to cause this or what have we not done to prevent it happening. I read an article the other day that claimed the terrible recent fires in Australia were not just due to global warming but that British colonisation was partly to blame. It seems that the indigenous people of that country had, for centuries, practised a method of management, "cultural burning", which involved small controlled fires of vegetation which ended, so the study claims, when the British came in 1788. I only mention this as an example to illustrate that whatever we do or say, however great or small, has a consequence.

We must never act without thought, we must never speak without thinking about what we are saying. St. James advises us to ask God first. If we do what is right, we please God. If we know what is the right thing to do and fail or refuse to do it, we are committing sin. Everything we say and do and everything we choose not to do effects our lives and possibly the lives of others. Fr. Francis, in one of his homilies, advised us to guard our thoughts for our thoughts become our words and our words become our actions.

Soon after I started writing this reflection, the news of the Russian invasion of Ukraine was confirmed. This event will surely have, dreadful consequences, not only for Ukraine but throughout the whole world. Since then, we have been haunted with images of terrible cruelty, merciless and indiscriminate bombing of civilians, children's nurseries and hospitals.

I do not believe that the Russian people want war nor do they hate us. They want only what we have, freedom! Freedom to say and do what we think is right; freedom to choose our leaders and dismiss them when they fail us; Freedom to worship the God we believe in and trust. We in the West have all this but have become complacent and taken it for granted. We have removed God from much of our lives. We forget that with freedom comes responsibility. The responsibility to make sure that what we say and do does not harm others but rather helps those who share our lives. When God made man, He gave him freewill. The freedom to love him or reject him. That is the basic human right of every human being. This war is not God's will it is the result of one man's evil lust for power and the greed of those who supported and encouraged him.

If only nations could learn to share one language, the language of love. It is an easy language to learn. There are no words to remember. It comes straight from the heart. If we truly have love in our hearts, we will always say a kind word and do the right thing. It is never too late to turn again to God. Let us turn to him and pray, not with words but with humble and contrite hearts.

*So, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another and this will cure you; the heartfelt prayer of a good man works very powerfully. (The letter of St. James 5:16)*