

Clare Boothe Luce was the first American woman appointed to a major ambassador posting abroad.

She was an incredibly flexible writer ... composing everything from drama and screenplays to fiction, journalism, and even war reporting. She was known as a charismatic and forceful public speaker.

Clare was born in 1903, in New York City. Her parents never married, and they eventually separated. Sadly, she recalled her childhood as “unusually unhappy and bitter.”

She became a Catholic in 1946 following the tragic death of her only daughter two years prior. Archbishop Fulton Sheen gave her instructions, and guided her into the Catholic Faith.

Her politics became increasingly conservative as time went on; and she campaigned for every Republican presidential candidate from Wendell Wilke to Ronald Reagan.

She served in the United States House of Representatives from 1943-1947; was ambassador to Italy from 1953-1958; and she was ambassador to Brazil for 4 days in 1959. She was a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board from 1973-1977; was the first woman to receive the Sylvanus Thayer Award from West Point; and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1983.

She died in 1987 of cancer in Washington, D.C.

In today's Gospel, Our Lord speaks on having come to bring about division. And we are reminded in the Letter to the Hebrews that we “*have not yet resisted [sin] to the point of shedding [our own] blood.*”

And while all of this may sound quite nasty and perhaps even gruesome ... while it is most certainly *not* politically correct ... at least in polite society ... to speak of division - that's today's Gospel message.

Yet there is something to be gained by realizing that our relationship to God in Jesus Christ ... brought about by our own Baptism ... recognizing that this grace divides us from sin ... and as such separates us from the world ... and it's burdens ... inasmuch as it unites us to Christ.

Clare Boothe Luce relates a spiritual experience from her teenage years where first she first felt “*a sensation of utter aloneness*” ... which was followed by a feeling that “*Something [greater] Was [with her.]*”

She goes on to say that her “whole soul was cleft clean by it, as a silk veil slit by a shining sword.” She felt, as it were, a division ... a separation.

She goes on, next, to say that “*joy abounded in all of [her]. Or rather, [she] abounded in joy ... adrift in this immense joy, as a speck of dust ... in a great golden shaft of sunlight.*”

This is the division Our Lord is speaking of ... a division which separates us from “*every burden and sin that clings to us*”.

The Letter to the Hebrews goes on to speak of Christ’s cross - or as He calls it in the Gospel today, “*[the] baptism with which I must be baptized*” ... all of which he endured “*[f]or the sake of the joy that lay before Him.*”

Baptism brings us into relationship with the Most Holy Trinity ... a divine relationship ... a joy beyond our understanding and comprehension ... which bestows on us the Supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. Baptism, is a free gift, which brings us into communion with the Saints ... who are the “*great ... cloud of witnesses*” that surround us.

In writing about the Saints, Clare Boothe Luce says: “*the saints give little thought to changing the world around them. They are too busy changing the world within them. They are not out to reform Caesar, but to conform themselves to Christ.*”

Yet while the division Christ brings - the separation from sin and suffering - that we experience in the Sacraments ... we are reminded by St. Paul elsewhere in Scripture that “*God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, ... and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*”

As we continue with this liturgy, and the Baptism of Jaxson Cooper Lee ... let us pray that he may know Christ ... both in separation from the “*burden[s] and sin*” and in experiencing the “*joy that lay[s] before [him]*” in his new life as a Christian ... in which he will be entrusted with “*the message of reconciliation*” ... namely the message of the Gospel.

We will shortly join together as one body ... the Body of Christ ... and with one voice ... we will renounce sin and profess our common Faith.

May we not only be reminded of our own Baptism ... but also experience in a new and powerful way ... the graces of Baptism ... the joys that lay before us ... in our lives and in our hearts.

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As we continue with this liturgy, may we ... through Word and Sacrament come to better know Christ ... both in our separation from the “*burden[s] and sin*” ... and by experiencing the “*joy that lay before [us]*” in our a Christian life ... in which we are entrusted with “*the message of reconciliation*” ... that is, the message of the Gospel.

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