"There is evil we need to be saved from."

A good day to you and to each of my esteemed listeners. Welcome to EWTN's Open Line Tuesday edition. Barbara McGuigan here, alive and grateful to be with you as we count down the days until Christmas!

It's no secret that we live in an age where many people seem to think they don't need God, much less a savior. It's really not complicated; when a person loses the sense of sin, he loses the need for a savior. He has no need of liberation. Brothers and sisters in the Church Militant, our work is cut out for us! Put on the full armor of God. God's airwaves are open. Here are the numbers to call...

In North America call: 1-800-585-9396

Outside North America call: 1-205-271-2985

Our email address is always: Openline@ewtn.com

On the 4th Sunday of Advent, just two days ago, Fr. Joseph McHugh, now in hospital needing your prayers, began his sermon by saying:

> **Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. . . . She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.**
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> **We believe that Jesus came as Savior. There is, therefore, an evil in the world from which we cannot save ourselves; that we need to be rescued from. The chasm between Faith and unbelief is here: the unbeliever does not believe in salvation from above; to him, and the millions like him, all that is necessary to make the world just and orderly and humane (he would tell you) is to appeal to man's compassion or his sense of justice and peace and, yes, of course love. And the only way to that is to propose new laws and enforce them – by terror, if need be. And along with that, build walls to keep the inhabitants from dropping everything they have, to run away from the man-made hell they have built for them. Men look for salvation even when they deny – especially then. The difference lies in what salvation is to consist of, where it will come from and how it will be obtained.**
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> **The existence of an evil as a malignant reality within human hearts and minds is becoming more clear now. Utopia is beginning to fade. In the opening lines of his book, *Mephistopheles*, Professor Jeffrey Russell writes,**
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> > **The Devil is the best-known symbol of radical evil. The existence of radical evil is clear to anyone not blinded by current relativism. On the individual level radical evil expresses itself in actions of**

unfathomable cruelty. The closest we get to the reality of evil is our own direct experience of evil in ourselves and in others. Perhaps only sociopaths lack this direct intuition.

On November 14, 1984, UPI reported:

Cynthia Palmer, 29, and her live-in boyfriend, John Lane,36, pleaded innocent to burning to death Mrs. Palmer's 4-year-old daughter in an oven. The two, who told neighbors shortly before their arrest that they were 'cooking Lucifer', were arraigned Tuesday in Androscoggin County [Maine] superior court. They were arrested Oct. 27 at their Auburn tenement apartment. Angela Palmer was found stuffed in the electric oven. The door was jammed shut with a chair.

The Lord, apparently, has His own way of driving us back to words and phrases that otherwise we recoil from, not least the phrase, Jesus, our Savior. There is evil we need to be saved from. If your hands are slashed by a blade, you would turn for salvation to a doctor. If your car will not move, you call for Joe, the service station man to come and save you. If you need money you will go to the bank and tell your story to the Credit Manager and hope for salvation from him. Our concept of salvation turns on the evil that is uppermost in our minds, because it undermines or destroys what we hold to be our supreme good.

If man were only a highly developed animal, if he had no destiny beyond space and time, if his greatest good is to belong to the State, if all ideals and morals and norms are decided by what is necessary for this Total Order, then, in that context, the struggle against what prevents such an earthly kingdom being built would be Man's only concern. If, however, this planet is only the place we pass through, if our destiny lies beyond all that temporal order can provide, if society is the only setting within which we prepare ourselves to live in the heavenly realm, if right and wrong have no necessary reference to what we feel or think or say, since as the Lord told the young man good comes from God and not man, then 'liberation' has a totally different dimension. This is what is at stake... ultimately: What is Man's true good?

The theme of liberation is glorious. Jesus came to break the hold of evil on us and He leads us to true freedom from all that drags us into the pride and lust and envy and greed, from sin, in short. Do not think of sin as 'the breaking of a law' but as a Force that dominates us from within, and exercises a gravitational pull on all who come within its field. It was this that Jesus came on earth to destroy. He is the Divine Liberator and every other 'liberation' must be measured by what He came on earth to do.

The angel told Joseph,

> **She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.**

Our Lord came to liberate us from the evil that draws and compels us to say to God, "I will not serve!"

Jesus brings a Power into the world that will touch us in the deepest way, transform us within, and free us from the thrust and compulsion we are under to be unjust, to be selfish, to be cruel, to lust for power, to seek pleasure and satisfaction in all that we do, even when it injures our neighbor. We cannot free ourselves from the grip of evil by ourselves. We need 'Someone' to come and enter into us and transform us from within… We need a cleansing and a purifying Force from heaven that no one in the world can give, that only God can provide. This is what Jesus Christ our Lord came to do. He gives us Himself.

> **I am the true vine and my Father is the vine grower. He prunes away every barren branch, but the faithful ones he trims clean to increase their yield. You are clean already, thanks to the word I have spoken to you. Live on in me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me. Gospel of John 15: 1-4**

All through the Letters that were sent to the first Christians this same emphasis on salvation as a Force is heard. Paul told Titus:

> **The grace of God has appeared, offering salvation to all men. It trains us to . . . live . . . justly and devoutly in this age as we await our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of the great God and of our Savior Christ Jesus. It was he who sacrificed himself for us, to redeem us . . . to cleanse for himself a people of his own, eager to do what is right. These are the things you are to say. Titus2:11-14**

The Philippians heard that same primary emphasis:

> **I wish to know Christ and the power flowing from his resurrection; likewise to know how to share in his sufferings by being formed into the pattern of his death. Thus do I hope to arrive at resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3: 7-11**

Grace is the Power that enables me to think good thoughts and do good deeds. I cannot even begin to think what is necessary to lead me to God without grace, not even think, mark well.

Without the grace of God I am caught in what Sacred Scripture tersely calls 'slavery'. Our Lord told His listeners:

> **Everyone who lives in sin is the slave of sin. . . . If the son frees you, you will be really free. John 8: 33**

The new Christians had been pagans and they knew by experience the futility and despair that filled their hearts. Paul told them:

> **. . . the spirit of God dwells in you . . . if by the spirit you put to death the evil deeds of the body you will live...**

This is the cry that resounds all through the New Testament: the Holy Spirit has come to renew the face of the earth, and by His indwelling as our Guest and Friend, we can expect to be transformed, healed and made new.

> **The spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. But if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God, heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so as to be glorified with him. Romans 8: 16-17**

If the unbeliever asks,

What precisely are you looking forward to in Advent?

We can only reply:

A Man has appeared on our planet who was at the same time God. He came with power to break the demonic hold that impels us to do what is evil and base, even when we long to be humane and loving and just and kind. This Man is Jesus Christ our Lord. We revere Him as God-in-human flesh. The Power that He sends into the world and offers to all who are willing to receive it is called grace. It is more than a Power, as we ordinarily understand that word; grace is another name for the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus came in the flesh through Mary two thousand years ago, but in a profound way. He is forever coming to every man. He may be turned away now as He was then. He will come again in glory when space and time will end. All who died in grace and love will live with Him forever. The grace we have now is the beginning, the seed of the glory we look forward to in the world to come.

Salvation is the word to keep in mind if you wish to understand the world today. It is this one word that divides the world and sets men into two camps: for God or against Him.

My brothers and sisters, "Come, let us adore Him."

Closing: Christmas love and thanksgiving to all of you! It is a Christmas Gift to have you in my life! Know that all of us at EWTN will keep you in mind, heart and prayer as we kneel at the tiny feet of our Newborn King!

Many thanks to my excellent producers of Open Line: Tom Graye, Elena Rodriguez and Mike Romano. Couldn't do it without you!

Paul Claudel, a poet, playwright, diplomat and member of the French Academy who died in 1955, is quoted in our December *Magnificat* prayer book, as if Jesus were speaking these words:

> **The fulfillment has begun; the earth is pondering the signs; and from all directions the enlisted nations are on their way to Bethlehem. But today is the day I have promised Myself to celebrate all alone. Now nothing can prevent Me from being God! There is no longer any way to contain this Heart that longs to give itself, this mind that longs to open and reveal itself utterly to those it loves, even to that mystic and unfathomable degree where Someone vows to himself that he is a hidden God.**
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> **Look where he comes - even as he came on that great day of grace and glory when there rose on a light-drenched land a Sun that marveled at itself! The time has come; I feel them trembling within me, and soon I will no longer be able to contain them, those legions of saints unborn, that long roll call of names almost ready to be released, all those silent nations whom I already hear saying Ave Maria.**

Until next week on Open Line, Blessed be our Newborn King, and may He delight you with the Gift of Himself! Have a very Merry Christmas!