"Awaken your power, Lord, and come!"

Good afternoon to you and to each of my esteemed listeners! Welcome to EWTN's Open Line Tuesday edition! I'm Barbara McGuigan, exceedingly joyful to be with you today, just three days after Christmas! My prayer is that your "holy-day" was filled with a peace and certainty that will carry you through the coming year! Are you ready for a New Year? I sure am. No matter what trials or painful circumstances our Great God permits us to pass through, He, in His Divine Wisdom, has a plan to work in and through them. We will emerge victorious! The Baby Who Is God has come! We now have a fightin' chance!

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Our email address is always Openline@ewtn.com.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I have much to discuss with you, but I would be remiss to neglect today's feast, the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the child martyrs of Bethlehem. Our Gospel today, St. Matthew 2:13-18, proclaims:

> When the Magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and His Mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, Out of Egypt I called my son.
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> When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more.

Brothers and sisters, can you picture such a massacre, with the heart-piercing cries of mothers watching their baby boys being slain before their eyes? Fr. Peter John Cameron in today's *Magnificat* prayer book explains:

> It is impossible for Herod's henchmen to recognize with absolute certainty, among all the babies of Bethlehem and its vicinity, just which infant boy is Jesus Christ. Thus, seething with diabolical fury, Herod orders the massacre of all who resemble Jesus in gender and approximate age. This barbaric case of "mistaken identity" becomes the source of incomparable exaltation for the Holy Innocents. For there is no greater glory than for a person to be mistaken for Christ Himself. Perhaps the Lord had this in mind later in life when he declares that only those who change and become like little children can enter the Kingdom of God. In our

> childlikeness, we are most like Jesus Christ. The blood of the Son Jesus that cleanses us from all sin begins to reach us and transform us today in a powerful way through the blood of the martyred Holy Innocents.

Have things changed all that much in the 21st century? Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI very pointedly and brilliantly quoted in his Christmas Greeting to the Curia,

> "Excita, Domine, potentiam tuam, et veni." (Awaken your power, Lord, and come.) These were the same liturgical words in the season of Advent that he noted were "probably formulated as the Roman Empire was in decline. The disintegration of the key principles of law and of the fundamental moral attitudes underpinning them burst open the dams which until that time had protected peaceful coexistence among peoples. The sun was setting over an entire world. Frequent natural disasters further increased this sense of insecurity. There was no power in sight that could put a stop to this decline. All the more insistent, then, was the invocation of the power of God: the plea that he might come and protect his people from all these threats."

How can we deny the Holy Fathers following words?

> "Today too, we have many reasons to associate ourselves with this Advent prayer of the Church. For all its new hopes and possibilities, our world is at the same time troubled by the sense that moral consensus is collapsing, consensus without which juridical and political structures cannot function. Consequently, the forces mobilized for the defense of such structures seem doomed to failure."

Reading this passage, brothers and sisters, reminded me of Hilary White's December 14 article on LifeSiteNews.com, called "Nice Evil." We are steeped in Nice Evil, are we not? Hilary listed the following litany of evils:

> The idea that it must be legal for children to be killed before birth at their mothers' convenience. That elderly people owe it to society to commit suicide. That a man may contract a marriage-like legal arrangement with another man. That marriages can be contracted and tossed aside at a whim. That children can, and should be manufactured to the specifications of paying customers, like a luxury car. That the populous and fecund peoples of the world are a menace solely on the basis of their fertility. That human beings when they are very small, may be used as experimental test subjects.

Brothers and sisters, only a fool would think of these things as acceptable, as profitable, as beneficial to mankind... as "nice." But it goes deeper than this. It speaks volumes about certain philosophies that can be mindlessly adopted, even unconsciously, by those who embrace these "nice evils." Hilary White goes on to talk about a horrifying thought that one day struck her:

> "Under an old, Christian-based legal definition, insanity is understood to be the incapacity of a person to tell the difference between good and evil, right and

> wrong. If we propose that most people in the modern western world, people raised under the new, post-Christian, post-absolutist philosophical dispensation, truly do *not* know that abortion is wrong – that it is a monstrous evil to kill an innocent human being – nearly everyone around us is, in some sense, murderously insane.

Brothers and sisters, Hilary White then wrote that she doesn't "actually believe that (completely)." But she went on to write,

> …but it is at least true that moral relativism – the idea that morality can be a flexible thing subject to individual circumstances and personal preference – has become the guiding principle, or perhaps anti-principle, for most people in our culture. But is this idea, moral relativism, simply another word for the evil that men choose? The evil they refuse to give up in the face of "old fashioned" moral absolutism? Does this make the common man a "moral monster"?

Hilary White continues:

> The 20th century political philosopher Hannah Arendt coined the term "banality of evil" when she observed the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. Eichmann was the very epitome of modern, banal, "nice" evil – an unthinking bureaucrat who, even to the end, could not seem to grasp the enormity of the evil in which he had taken part as a cog in the machine, a mere functionary.
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> Observers of the Nuremberg trials often commented that many of Eichmann's fellow Nazis were to all outward appearances perfectly ordinary, bland, modern, well-educated, even cultured men: bureaucrats whose mass murders were committed from a distance with the stroke of a pen, and with the most prosaic and dispassionate of justifications...
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> That man, those men, clearly ought to have known, and their facades of civilization are not enough to cover their shame. It is not enough… to like Beethoven and Bach, to read Schiller and enjoy sports and be attentive husbands and fathers. We must know the difference between good and evil, or we are lost, we become those men, those civilized monsters.

Brothers and sisters, to all the modern day Herods who, not unlike that paranoid king, and with the stroke of a pen or scalpel, turn their backs on tiny, unborn infants, let's you and I proclaim that today is the Feast of the Holy Innocents and in our prayers we invoke their intercession to save abortion-targeted preborn babies and to end abortion and restore respect and legal protection for all preborn babies.

I will close this monologue with the brilliance of Francois Mauriac, who is acknowledged as one of the greatest Roman Catholic writers of the 20th century, as he writes of "The Mystery of the Holy Innocents":

> We cannot hold this (Christ) Child responsible for the incomprehensible creation which he came to save but which, since hell-fire will continue throughout eternity, He did not save completely. Though Infinite, he has been swallowed up in a finite that is pock-marked with crimes. He establishes his claim in this world with two crossed pieces of wood; yet in the name of that cross, millions of martyrs and executioners have been raised up, people have been burned at the stake, crusades and wars have been unleashed, and human beings have been dominated by inhuman laws. The gentle Child shivers with cold on the edge of a criminal world while angels promise peace to men of good will – a peace that can be discovered only after a full measure of suffering; but in the shadows of his birthplace Herod's soldiers sharpen their knives for a slaughter of innocents that will apparently never end.
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> This is the Christian paradox: these are the parts of an undecipherable mystery to which the Child has the secret word. When he became a man, he did not tell us what that word is; still, we know that it exists. Christ implied as much when his disciples murmured: "But will no one be saved?" And He answered: "Man can do nothing; but all things are possible to God." This last secret word will not be given to us until our malice can no longer use it as an excuse for satisfaction of our vices. Until the end of time the little child will keep the secret, which man would use only to glut himself. A nature or a definition of God does not exist; but there is a Love Which Knows Itself and which is reflected in creatures mysteriously wounded from their birth.

My brothers and sisters, we "creatures mysteriously wounded from birth" by original sin know, as Mauriac did, too, that the "Love Which Knows Itself" is the Incarnate Baby Jesus Who Is God!

"Excita, Domine, potentiam tuam, et veni." Awaken your power, Lord, and come. To those words our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI added these:

> We set out from this plea for the presence of God's power in our time and from the experience of his apparent absence. If we keep our eyes open as we look back over the year that is coming to an end, we can see clearly that God's power and goodness are also present today in many different ways. So we all have reason to thank him...

I look forward to your comments and questions. What are you most thankful for this Christmas in the midst of trial and hardship? Here are the numbers to call: 1-800-585-9396 and 1-205-271-2985.

Closing: Many thanks for your insightful calls and excellent emails. Thanks, also, to my brilliant EWTN Radio producers, Tom Graye, Elena Rodriguez and Mike Romano.

Let us close the show today with a small part of Fr. Peter John Cameron's "Prayer before a Manger Scene":

Lord Jesus, as I kneel before your manger in adoration, let my first Christmas word be: thank you. Thank you, Gift of the Father, for coming to save me from my sins.

You come as a baby, because babies are irresistible and adorable. You come as a baby because you want our first impression of God incarnate to be that of one who does not judge. How I long to be united with you in every way. May I never be attracted to the allurements and charms of the world. May I love you always, at every moment, with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. May the tenderness, the dependency and the mercy that you reveal in your infancy become the hallmarks of my life.

Oh divine Fruit of Mary's womb, may I love you in union with the holy Mother of God. May my life be filled with the obedience of St. Joseph and the missionary fervor of the shepherds so that the witness of my life may shine like the star that leads the Magi to your manger. I ask all this with great confidence in your holy name. Amen.

Until next week on Open Line, Blessed be our Newborn King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and may He mightily bless you! Bye for now!