

HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

An International

Pontifical Right

Vol. 11, No. 112
February 2017

*The Presentation
in the Temple*



My Mother of Lourdes, Remember Me

When I pray before thy image, when, in thought I am transported to thy shrine, my Mother, sweet Virgin of Lourdes, remember me.

Thou, who dost never abandon one who invokes thee, comforter of the afflicted, special protectress of those who suffer, my Mother, sweet Virgin of Lourdes, remember me.

Inexhaustible fount of goodness, when in my thirst I fly to thee to find God, my Mother, sweet Virgin of Lourdes, remember me.

Here, I stand, to intercede for the Church and for my country, for sinners for all my loved

ones, my Mother, sweet Virgin of Lourdes, remember me.

Here, I stand, to tell thee of my pains, to confide to thee my woes, and those of all who suffer. I come to thee to pray for my relatives and friends who have already gone to meet God. My Mother, sweet Virgin of Lourdes, remember me.

At the hour of my death, at the moment when I shall depart for the Father's House, thou, who art my hope, my Mother, sweet Virgin of Lourdes, remember me. Mother Immaculate, may I one day be with thee in Heaven, to praise and bless the Lord for all eternity. My Mother, sweet Virgin of Lourdes, remember me.



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CONTENTS

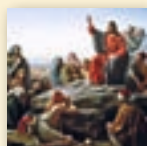
Our Readers Write 4

Between Heaven and Earth (Editorial) 5



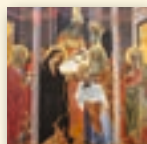
*The Voice of the Popes –
The Priesthood
and Pride of Mind*

6



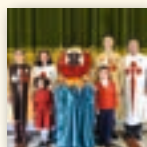
*Gospel Commentary – The
Sublime Moral Beauty of
the New Law*

8



*Feast of the Presentation
of the Lord – The Art of
Praying Well*

16



A Difficult Mission...

20



*Two Spiritual Diaries,
Two Types of
Martyrdom*

22



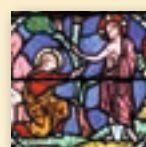
Heralds Worldwide

26



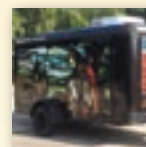
*St. Joan of Valois –
Royalty Embracing
Suffering*

32



"God Loved Us First"

36



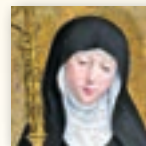
*Church and World
Events*

40



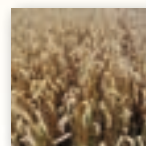
*Story for Children...
Relief for a Troubled
Conscience*

46



*The Saints of
Each Day*

48



*The Most
Excellent Food*

50



OUR READERS WRITE

"ONCE, IN THE AMAZON RAINFOREST"

As a monthly subscriber and reader of *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine, I am always impressed with the consistent excellence of its articles. Allow me to congratulate the entire team for the article of Br. Marcos Paulo Algauer, EP, in the November edition, under the title: *Once, in the Amazon Rainforest....* Very beautiful and touching, truly a *Story for Children... or for Adults Full of Faith*.

Jorge César Nunes
Niterói — Brazil

PRECIOUS SOURCE OF INFORMATION AND FORMATION

Evangelization is so urgent in these days of confusion and aberration! I read the magazines with great pleasure, and, at the risk of stating the obvious, I must say that they are of first-rate quality in their content and their overall layout, including the photography.

In fact, I read it by parts, depending on the topic. I would like to say that I read it from start to finish, but that's not true... Nevertheless, for me it is a precious source of information and formation. I have been carefully collecting them since I first signed up.

May the Father in Heaven, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Paraclete Spirit bless your project and each one of you.

Sandro Pesántez
Cuenca — Ecuador

TIMELINESS OF THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH'S MAGISTERIUM

I was very touched by December's article *The Family, a "Domestic Church"*. It helps us to reflect on the importance of the family in the formation of children, following

the example of the Holy Family. I thought that the difference between the material home and the spiritual home was beautiful.

I have noticed that the magazine gives new life to the teachings of the infallible Magisterium of the Church, publishing not only documents from the Popes of our times, but also from those of previous centuries, showing the perennial importance of the Church's teaching, as well as its timeliness. Congratulations!

Evandro Antony Velloso
Belo Horizonte — Brazil

ISSUES ARRIVING LATE... BUT THEY ARRIVE!

First off I thank almighty God and Our Lady, under the invocation of Fatima, for having me become acquainted with the charism of the *Heralds of the Gospel*, their great love for Jesus in the Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin, and the Pope. I am enchanted with the meditations by Msgr. João and the stories for children in the magazine. Unfortunately, in Honduras the issues arrive late... but they arrive!

Bessy Lucía Márquez
Signatepeque — Honduras

ARTICLES THAT BRING US WISDOM

I like all the articles of the magazine, for they bring us a lot of wisdom. The first one I read, and which I greatly enjoy, is *Story for Children... or for Adults Full of Faith?* But I also like *Church and World Events* and *Did You Know...*

Joana Maria Titonelli
Areal — Brazil

INSPIRATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Regarding *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine, I notice the presence of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I ask her to continue to be present, to inspire

each of the editors and, above all, to intercede for our sanctification and salvation.

Antônio Figueiredo
Salvador — Brazil

MUCH TO BE LEARNED FROM THE MAGAZINE

My congratulations on the magazine! I am always so pleased to receive it, for there is so much to be learned from it. All the sections are interesting and the moments I spend reading them are good ones.

Asunción García
Ávila — Spain

A GRAND CATECHESIS

For me, the magazine is splendid, especially the *Gospel Commentary* by Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP. It is a grand catechesis!

Delfina da Costa
São Paulo — Brazil

READERS' SUGGESTIONS

I would like to make a suggestion: it would be nice if you could include a prayer on the back cover or the inside pages of the magazine, illustrated with an image of the Saint to whom the prayer is dedicated. A different prayer for each issue.

Dario Gutiérrez
Bogotá — Colombia

I receive your magazine monthly, with its many topics and interesting stories. The photos are magnificent. But now I wish to make a suggestion: would it be possible to add some prayers to these beautiful stories, for our daily life? That would be excellent!

Helena Gonçalves
Lisbon — Portugal

Editor's Note: We highly appreciate this suggestion from our readers, and are considering a way to implement it.

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

When Jesus decided to choose a few from among His disciples to appoint them as Apostles, He did not go down into a valley or enter a forest, but “went up on the mountain” (Mk 3:13) with them. In the same way, to deliver that quintessential teaching, the Sermon of the Beatitudes, we are surprised that He does not choose a synagogue, a public square or even a field close to the city... Contravening every notion of convenience or proximity to the public, the Master does not go after the people, but draws them after Himself to the mountaintop (cf. Mt 5:1). In the multiplication of the loaves, Christ performed the miracle only for those who had followed Him to the heights (cf. Jn 6:3-14), and not for those who remained immersed in the conveniences of the cities.

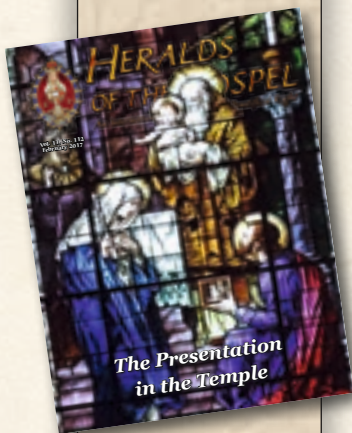
Various conversations in which Jesus formed His disciples also unfolded in the solitude of the peaks, as for example, when He spoke to them about His second coming, “with much power and majesty” (Mt 24:30). When He wanted to pray alone, He almost always chose the top of some mountain. To conclude, the main episodes of the Redeemer’s life, such as the Transfiguration, the agony in the Garden and the Crucifixion, took place on elevated geographical points; and it was on a mountain that the Apostles met Jesus again after the Resurrection (cf. Mt 28:16-17).

Historical facts such as these, especially when in connection with the God-Man, cannot be by chance. In fact, high altitudes offer incomparable beauty and wonder, but, above all, they are cloaked in profound symbolism. “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him” (Ps 103:11). This phrase provides yet another example of how nature is made of images that aid in building our relationship with God and with supernatural realities.

The mountain represents what is loftiest in this world, making it a privileged place for man to place himself, so to speak, on the tips of his toes, in order to enter into contact with God. The fact that the Temple – and Jerusalem itself, which was an image of the Church and of Heaven – was built on a mountain illustrates this idea.

Now, if geographic elevation can be so meaningful, what to say of someone who spiritually ascends to the heights of his own calling, like an alpinist of himself, and, with the help of grace, overcomes the abysses of his defects and arrives at an exceptional degree of sanctity? Such men are more angelic than human, and they accomplish in themselves a union between Heaven and earth, in a truly priestly function, whether sacramental or not. It is they who determine the course of history, for they embody supreme ideals, and from Heaven on high God comes down to visit them, and to establish in them His abode (cf. Jn 14:23).

When, in this way, these apex-men bring Heaven to earth, the Kingdom of God will be among us, and the request made for two thousand years in the Our Father will have been heeded: “Thy Kingdom come.” ✧



*Presentation
of Jesus in
the Temple - Gesù
Church, Miami
(United States)*

Photo: Angelis David Ferreira



The Priesthood and Pride of Mind

The priesthood that Jesus Christ instituted for the salvation of souls is by no means a human profession or office which anyone desiring it for any reason can say he has a right to receive.



Reproduction

St. Pius X
Photographed by Cossio & C.

Our soul is fearful of the strict rendering that We shall one day be called upon to make to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Pastors, concerning the flock He entrusted to Our care. We pass each day with great solicitude in preserving as much as possible the faithful from the dangerous evils that afflict society at the present time.

Therefore, We consider addressed to Us the words of the Prophet: "Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet" (Is 58:1). Accordingly, sometimes by speech and sometimes by letter We constantly warn, beseech, and censure, arousing, above all, the zeal of Our Brethren in the Episcopate so that each one of them will exercise the most solicitous vigilance in that portion of the flock over which the Holy Spirit has placed him.

Corruption of manners and open contempt for authority

The cause which now moves Us to raise Our voice is of very serious importance. It demands all the attention of your mind and all the energy of your pastoral office to counteract

the disorder which has already produced the most destructive effects. If this disorder is not radically removed with a firm hand, even more fatal consequences will be felt in the coming years.

In fact, Venerable Brethren, We have letters, full of sadness and tears, from several of you, in which you deplore the spirit of insubordination and independence displayed here and there among the clergy.

Most assuredly, a poisonous atmosphere corrupts men's minds to a great extent today, and the deadly effects are those which the Apostolic Saint Jude formerly described: "These men also defile the flesh, disregard authority, deride majesty" (Jude 1:8). That is to say, over and above the most degrading corruption of manners there is also an open contempt for authority and for those who exercise it. What overwhelms Us with grief, however, is the fact that this spirit should creep into the sanctuary even in the least degree, infecting those to whom the words of Ecclesiasticus should most fittingly be applied: "Their generation, obedience and love" (3:1).

This unfortunate spirit is doing damage especially among young priests, spreading among them new and reprehensible theories concerning the very nature of obedience. In order to recruit new members for this growing troop of rebels, what is even more serious is the fact that such maxims are being more or less secretly propagated among youths preparing for the priesthood within the enclosure of the seminaries.

The priesthood is by no means a human office

We therefore consider it Our duty, Venerable Brethren, to appeal to your conscience to see that you do not spare any effort and with a firm hand and constant resolve you do not hesitate to destroy this evil seed which carries with it such destructive consequences. Never forget that the Holy Spirit has placed you to rule. Remember Saint Paul's command to Titus: "Rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise thee" (Ti 2:15). Be firm in demanding that obedience from your priests and clerics which is a matter of absolute obligation for all the faithful, and constitutes the most

important part of the sacred duty of priests.

Take the proper means necessary for the diminution of these quarrelsome souls. Bear well in mind, Venerable Brethren, the Apostle's warning to Timothy: "Do not lay hands hastily upon anyone" (1 Tm 5:22). In fact, haste in admitting men to Sacred Orders naturally opens the way to a multiplication of people in the sanctuary who do not increase joy. [...] The priesthood that Jesus Christ instituted for the salvation of souls is by no means a human profession or office which anyone desiring it for any reason can say he has a right to receive.

Therefore, let the Bishops call young men to sacred orders, not according to the desires or pretexts of the aspirants, but, as the Council of Trent prescribes, according to the needs of the dioceses. In this task they can select only those who are really suitable and dismiss those who have inclinations contrary to the priestly vocation. The most dangerous of these inclinations are a disregard for discipline and that pride of mind which fosters it.

Your priests will be as you have trained them

In order that young men who display qualities suitable for the sacred ministry may not be lacking, Venerable Brethren, We wish to insist most earnestly on what We have already frequently pointed out. That is to say, you have a very serious obligation before God of guarding and fostering most solicitously the proper conduct of the seminaries. Your priests will be as you have trained them. [...]

Let the seminaries be jealously guarded in order that a proper atmosphere will be maintained. Let them always be destined exclusively for preparing youths, not for civil careers, but for the noble vocation of being ministers of Christ.

Let philosophy, theology, and the related sciences, especially Sacred Scripture, be studied along the lines of pontifical directives: according to the teaching of Saint Thomas which Our venerable Predecessor so often recommended, and We Ourselves recommended in the Apostolic Letter of January 23, 1904.

Therefore, let the Bishops exercise the most prudent vigilance towards the professors' teachings. Let them recall those who run after certain dangerous novelties to their sense of duty. If they do not profit from these warnings, let them be removed – cost what it may – from their teaching position. [...]

Let discipline continue to be fostered with renewed vigor and vigilance. Finally, in every seminary there must be a spiritual director. He is to be a man of extraordinary prudence and experienced in the ways of Christian perfection. With untiring zeal he must train the young men in solid piety, the primary foundation of the spiritual life.

Venerable Brethren, if these rules are conscientiously and religiously followed they will be your sure guarantee of seeing a clergy growing up around you which will be your joy and your crown.

Let worldly arguments be banished from the holy place

If these instructions are not observed, the problem of insubordination and independence which We now lament will be even more aggravated by some of the younger clergy and cause even more harm. This is especially so since those who are subject to this reprobate spirit are not lacking, and, abusing the sacred office of preaching, they are its outspoken promoters and apostles, to the detriment and scandal of the faithful. [...]

No one can have the faculty of preaching "unless he first be approved of in life, knowledge and

morals." (Council of Trent. Sess. V, c.2, *De Reform*). Priests of other dioceses should not be allowed to preach unless they have testimonial letters from their own Bishop. Let the subject of their sermons be that which the Divine Savior indicated when He said: "Preach the Gospel" (Mk 16:15) ... "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Mt 28:20). Or, according to the Council of Trent, "announcing to them the vices they should avoid and the virtues they should follow in order to escape eternal punishment and attain heavenly glory" (Sess. V, c.2, *De Reform*).

Therefore, let those arguments better suited to journalistic campaigns and lecture halls be completely banished from the holy place. Let moral preaching be preferred to sermons which are, to say the least, fruitless. Let the preacher speak "not in the persuasive words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor 2:4). The principal source, therefore, from which preaching will derive its strength will be the Sacred Scriptures, understood not according to the private judgement of minds very frequently blinded by passions, but according to the traditions of the Church and the interpretations of the holy Fathers and Councils.

According to these rules, Venerable Brethren, you should judge those to whom you will entrust the ministry of the divine word. Whenever you find any of them departing from these rules, being more concerned with their own interests than those of Jesus Christ and more anxious for worldly applause than the welfare of souls, warn and correct them. If that proves insufficient, be firm in removing them from an office for which they have proven themselves unworthy. ✧

*St. Pius X. Excerpts
from the Encyclical Letter
Pieni l'animo, 28/7/1906:
ASS 39 (1906), 321-329*



The Sermon on the Mount, by Carl Heinrich Bloch - Frederiksborg Palace (Denmark)

✠ GOSPEL ✠

Jesus said to His disciples: ³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. ³⁹ But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one as well. ⁴⁰ If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand over your cloak as well. ⁴¹ Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go for two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow. ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbour and

hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for He makes His sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? ⁴⁸ So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:38-48).

The Sublime Moral Beauty of the New Law

To the moral precepts of the Old Law, Our Lord will add demands that are much more profound, elevated, and radical.



Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

I – THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The Sermon on the Mount takes up three entire chapters in St. Matthew's Gospel, from the fifth to the seventh, and the Holy Church so highly values this preaching of the Divine Master, that it dedicates six consecutive Sundays to it in the present Liturgical Cycle, enabling us to contemplate it more deeply and with greater spiritual profit. Accordingly, on previous Sundays, we admired the beauty of the eight Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:1-11), we received the invitation to be salt and light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-14), and we considered Jesus' words on the entire fulfilment that He came to give to the Law of Moses (cf. Mt 5:17). Next Sunday we will see the impossibility of simultaneously serving both God and riches (cf. Mt 6:24) and, finally, on the Ninth Sunday, Our Lord will warn us as to the danger of building a house upon sand (cf. Mt 7:24-27).

However, this Gospel of the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time contains the pith of the entire Sermon on the Mount, and reveals the sure way

for attaining holiness. What does it mean to be a saint? It means reaching the daring goal set by the Divine Master: "Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

II – THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

In Terrestrial Paradise, Adam and Eve possessed sanctifying grace, the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which they intrinsically and formally participated in the divine life. They further benefitted from a perfect internal balance devoid of disordered appetites, for, in virtue of the preternatural gift of integrity, their inferior powers were subject to reason, and their reason to God. Upon sinning, they – and with them all of humanity – lost this blessed state of original justice.

As an outcome, man was faced with a terrible internal battle provoked by the inclination to evil. And one of the signs of this disorder is exaggerated self-love, with the resulting desire for vengeance and retaliation for any offence,

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vengeance*

In meting out punishment that was equivalent to the crime, the talion law served to mitigate the excessive revenge so common in that era

as an old German saying illustrates: *Schadenfreude ist die beste Freude* – The joy in another's misfortune is the best of joys.

As we will see in this Gospel, Our Lord completely modified this cruel and egoistic system of human relationships.

Personal vengeance is banished from Christianity

Jesus said to His disciples: ³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. ³⁹ But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one as well.”

We have previously had the opportunity to outline how the talion law prevailed in Antiquity. We find it in the Code of Hammurabi – written around 1750 BC, in Babylon – having even been incorporated into Roman Law. It is worth recalling that the term *talion* comes from the Latin *talis*, meaning like or equal. In other words, retaliation should be proportional to the offence. From a certain perspective, the establishment of such norms is understandable, since those were crude people accustomed to the use of force, among whom it was not easy to make law and justice prevail. In reality, the law of retaliation, in meting out a punishment that was equivalent to the crime committed, served to mitigate the excessive revenge so common in that era.

Mosaic Law also employed it, as we read in the Book of Exodus: “then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (21:23-25). Although this law was initially enforced by legitimate authority alone, later, with the decadence of customs, the parties involved began to take justice into their own hands, according to their own criteria,

and carry out atrocious reprisals against their adversaries. It is therefore to caution His disciples against sentiments of rancour that Our Lord affirms: “When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one as well.”

These words give rise to a question: how should this precept be understood, since He Himself acted differently when struck by a soldier in the house of Annas? Instead of offering His other cheek, He replied: “If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike Me?” (Jn 18:23).

The Redeemer came to implant a new mentality. He wants egoism to be eliminated from within us, so that we do not react out of self-love when someone unjustly offends or strikes us, but that we first consider the outrage perpetrated against God by the violation of His Commandments.

From this perspective, offering the other cheek would imply inducing the aggressor to commit yet another sin, instead of leading him to repentance. In questioning His tormenter, Our Lord was actually seeking to benefit that poor soul, giving him the opportunity to amend his error. While the unhappy wretch likely did not realize that he was

striking God Himself, his reprehensible brutality was nonetheless a serious sin against goodness and justice. With His serene reply, Our Lord attempted to put the aggressor's conscience in order.

Detachment from material goods

⁴⁰ “If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand over your cloak as well.”

At that time it was normal to own several tunics, but only one or two cloaks. The latter was considered necessary, the essential item of clothing, and more valuable than the tunic. Indeed, we see St. Paul making a point of asking Timothy, in one of his epistles, to bring



The Code of Hammurabi, Louvre Museum, Paris

him the cloak that he had left “with Carpus at Troas” (2 Tm 4:13). According to Jewish Law, anyone who took a neighbour’s cloak as collateral on a loan could not keep it overnight, but was obliged to return it before sunset (cf. Ex 22:26), for it would be sorely missed by the owner. Thus, in saying to hand over “your cloak as well” to those who want to take your tunic, Our Lord counsels total detachment from earthly goods, so that our souls may be free from all lust for possessions.



Our Lord before Pilate - Basilica of St. Praxedes, Rome

Fighting egoism

⁴¹ “Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go for two miles.”

At times, Roman soldiers or other government officials required the aid of individuals to serve them as guides or to perform some other task, as occurred with Simon of Cyrene, “who was coming in from the country, and [they] laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus” (Lk 23:26). Naturally, in face of such an eventuality, many protested and even refused to heed the request. To teach us the importance of charity, Our Lord says: “go for two miles.” In other words, to the degree possible, gladly do even more than what is asked.

The importance of generosity

⁴² “Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.”

In the Old Testament we find several commendations of those who lend: “I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging bread. He is ever giving liberally and lending, and his children become a blessing” (Ps 37:25-26); “It is well with the man who deals generously and lends” (Ps 112:5). In reminding His

listeners of this truth, Jesus shows that He truly did not come to abolish the Law and the prophets, but to fulfil them (cf. Mt 5:17).

How should this verse be interpreted? Must we always yield and hand over everything that is asked of us? If this principle were transformed into law, innumerable abuses would soon lead society into chaos. This could not be Our Lord’s intent. He wants us to forget ourselves, to be concerned with the wants of those around us, and to be free of self-interest and pragmatism. In contrast, the egoist – the one who is closed in on self – never takes the initiative to help the needy; if someone beseeches a favour of him, he immediately looks for a way out.

The precept of universal love

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.”

When put to the test, the Divine Redeemer asked the lawyer what was written in the Law (cf. Lk 10:25-26), and the latter immediately answered correctly, citing the Books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Dt 6:5) and “your neighbour as yourself” (Lv 19:18).

How should this verse be interpreted? Must we always yield and hand over everything that is asked of us?

*Our Lord
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tions of the
Law of Moses
to lend new
fullness to the
Command-
ments*

Francisco Lecaros



Our Lord disputing with the Pharisees - Library of the Monastery of Yuso, San Millán de la Cogolla (Spain)

The Jews were fully aware of the precept of universal love, yet they considered only their compatriots as “neighbours,” while the Gentiles and the pagans were seen as enemies, deserving of contempt and hatred.

As the true Legislator, Our Lord Jesus Christ will rectify the false interpretations of the Law of Moses, which altered and impoverished it, to lend new fullness to the Commandments and old teachings. As we have already had occasion to comment,¹ in confronting the expression “You have heard...” with the affirmation “But I say to you...,” from the subsequent verse, He shows the emptiness of the Pharisees’ morality of appearance, in contrast with the Gospel. Speaking in the first person, He truly “taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Mt 7:29).

⁴⁴ “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”

According to the New Law, the disciples of the One Who is “gentle and lowly in heart” (Mt 11:29) should love those who displease, persecute and calumniate them no less than those who esteem, praise and bless them. If we wish to be sons of God, we need to be completely free of rancour toward enemies, and we must pray for them. God’s glory demands

that we seek to do everything possible for the conversion of all, imitating the sublime example of Jesus from the height of the Cross. What was His first word, spoken with regard to those who crucified Him? “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34).

Of course, one should not stand by and permit the Church’s adversaries to act freely against her, estab-

lishing iniquity on earth. If it is an obligation to love one’s enemies, it is also necessary to hate sin! Therefore, it is appropriate to request divine intervention to put an end to evil, and to use all means—in accordance with God’s Law and man’s—so that it will not prevail in the world.

God’s infinite munificence

⁴⁵ “...that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for He makes His sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.”

Thus, just as your Father who is in Heaven “causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust,” He also showers His graces over all, wretches and malefactors included. God created Angels and men that they might partake in His absolute happiness. So great is His love for us and His desire to save us that He sent His Only-begotten and eternal Son to take on flesh and endure the torments of the Passion to redeem humanity and open the gates of Heaven.

As this is the Father’s will, we should ardently labour, not only for the salvation of all those struggling in this valley of tears, but even to hasten the liberation of the suffering souls in Purgatory with our prayers and sacrifices.

Love is the distinctive sign of Christians

⁴⁶ “For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same?”
⁴⁷ And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?”

To comprehend the indignation of the Pharisees in being compared with pagans and tax collectors, whom they held in such contempt, it is enough to recall the prayer of one of them in the Temple: “God, I thank Thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector” (Lk 18:11).

The unsurpassable didactics of the Divine Teacher leads us to easily understand, through these two comparisons, that there is nothing extraordinary in loving friends and benefactors. Merit lies in desiring the good of even those who attack, rob or offend us.

St. Augustine explains: “Therefore, love alone marks the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil. They all sign themselves with the sign of the Cross of Christ; they all respond, Amen; they all sing Alleluia; they are all baptized, they all come to church, they all build the walls of churches: there is no discerning the children of God from the children of the devil, except by charity. [...] Have what you will; if this alone you have not, it profits you nothing.”²

Accordingly, when we notice that someone harbours antipathy for us, we should think: “I will pray for this person, that Our Lady obtain for him the grace of eternal salvation. To all appearances, he is my enemy; in reality, he does my soul enormous good, for he helps me to perceive that, in fact, because of my defects, I should look upon and treat myself as he looks upon and treats me. This helps me know myself better.”

The heroism of forgiveness

Jesus beckons us to follow Him along the path of heroic charity, of patience and of entire and prompt forgiveness. For this reason, we must not hold resentment against anyone; we should forget any personal offence *a priori*. We Christians need to be veritable oceans of forgiveness, as the

Apostle teaches: “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph 4:31-32).

This interior disposition which makes relations among Christians so pleasant was noted by the pagans at the beginnings of the Church: “See, they say, how they love one another... how they are ready even to die for one another.”³ Now, after two thousand years of Christianity, we might well expect the Lord’s teachings to have imbued institutions, customs and human relationships, to the point where today’s society were more deeply marked by charity and affection than that of long ago, like wine whose taste becomes richer with the passing of time.

The most daring goal in history

⁴⁸ “So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

With unassailable clarity, Jesus lays out our life’s goal and purpose: to imitate the heaven-

We should ardently labour to hasten the liberation of the suffering souls in Purgatory with our prayers and sacrifices



Mary praying for the souls in Purgatory
Church of St. Cyr, Sargé-sur-Braye, France

G.Freihalter (CC 3.0 by-sa)



*But how
can we be
perfect as God
is perfect?
Did Our
Lord counsel
something
that cannot
be fulfilled?*

ly Father, absolute model of holiness, adapting our mentality, inclinations, and desires to Him. But how can we be perfect as God is perfect? By what means can we reach this supreme perfection, impossible for our weak nature? Did Our Lord counsel something that cannot be fulfilled? Or was it a didactical exaggeration? He could have said: “Be perfect as Moses was perfect, as Abraham, as Isaac, as Jacob”... Why did He establish such a lofty model? It so happens that the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, the uncreated Word, equal to the Father, assumed our nature, and, being man, as the Archetype of humanity, reproduced in Himself the perfection of the Father, urging us to do the same.

Sanctifying grace – a participation in the divine life – is instilled at Baptism, accompanied

with the virtues and gifts, enabling us to accomplish in a divine manner that which, by human effort, is utterly unattainable. Therefore, we should not be satisfied with just keeping the Commandments. We should go beyond this, desiring to become like Our Lord, seeking to be perfect like Him, to heed the sublime invitation made in the Sermon on the Mount. This is the meaning behind the short prayer we find in the Litany of the Sacred Heart: “Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make our hearts like unto Thine.”²⁴

III – CALLED TO TRUE HEROISM

Our supernatural life is subject to growth, to the measure that we pray, apply ourselves to the practice of virtue, avoid occasions of sin, and receive the Sacraments. More than in times past, we are beset by dangers that threaten our perseverance. To resist these wiles of the devil, the world, and the flesh, it is vital to foster a growing desire to attain the heroism of perfection.

There is a place reserved for us in Heaven, and we can occupy it with more or less brilliance, depending on the fidelity with which we seek to be “perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.” The famous maxim of Paul Claudel, “youth was not made for pleasure, but for heroism,”²⁵ is actually incomplete, for heroism with regard to virtue is not only an obligation for youth, but for everyone, without exception.

Edifying examples

These dispositions abound in the lives of the Saints. On one occasion, St. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, met up with

Reproduction



St. Francis de Sales - Copy of a portrait made in 1618



Christ with the Twelve Apostles, by Taddeo di Bartolo - Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

a nobleman who poured out a torrent of insults against him, to which he did not reply, maintaining an affable and serene silence. After the visitor left, a priest who witnessed the scene asked St. Francis why he had not forcefully reprimanded the insolent man. "Dear Father"—the saint replied —"I have made a pact with my tongue, by which it will remain silent while my heart is unsettled and will never reply to any word that might provoke me to anger."⁶ It being a personal insult, he stifled self-love and kept calm. Days later, touched by the charity of the Bishop, the offender tearfully apologized.⁷ What an example for us!

Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, incidentally a great admirer of St. Francis de Sales, gave like example. The author of this article shared his company for almost forty years. He permanently maintained the spirit of the Gospel, even when those closest to him caused him suffering. Because of his limited mobility due to injuries sustained in a car accident, he required assistance for some acts of daily life. With utter detachment, he left the choice of what he would wear to others.

At times, an inappropriate choice was made, and he was given a light suit on a cold day or a winter suit on a particularly warm day; he accepted these annoyances without complaint.

Not infrequently, when someone asked to meet with him, he would enquire as to where the person wished to be received, leaving the choice of locale to him. On one occasion, Dr. Plinio received some visitors from abroad at his home at six o'clock in the evening; they were so entertained and caught up in the conversation with their host that at eleven o'clock they still had not left. At no moment did Dr. Plinio allude to the hour, for, if the Catholic cause was not being jeopardized, he did everything to meekly and discreetly accommodate others and comply with their wishes.

As we admire these examples, we should bear in mind that the true heroism of virtue is inseparable from a full surrender into God's hands, with the awareness that any good act comes from grace, and not from human nature. We are also called to follow this path: to be perfect as the heavenly Father desires. And His aid will never fail us! ✧

*More than
in times
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dangers that
threaten our
perseverance*

¹ Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. Is the True Fulfillment of the Law in Doing What the Pharisees Say? In: *Heralds of the Gospel*. Nobleton, ON. No.40 (Feb., 2011); p.10-17; Gospel Commentary for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A, in volume II of the collection *New Insights on the Gospels*.

² ST. AUGUSTINE. In Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos, tract. V, n.8. In: *Obras*, vol. XVIII. Madrid: BAC, 1959, p.269.

³ TERTULLIAN. *Apologeticum*, XXXIX: ML 1, 471.

⁴ CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM. *Compendium Eucharisticum*. Città del Vaticano: LEV, 2009, p.411.

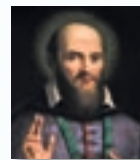
⁵ CLAUDEL, Paul; RIVIÈRE, Jacques. *Correspondance: 1907-1914*. Paris: Plon, Nourrit et C^{ie}, 1926, p.23.

⁶ HAMON, André-Jean-Marie. *Vie de Saint François de Sales, Evêque et prince de Genève*, vol. II. Paris: Jacques Lecoivre et C^{ie}, 1858, p.161.

⁷ Cf. Idem, p.295-296.

The Art of Praying Well

An excellent means of praying well, following the example of St. Simeon, is to take Our Lord in our arms; that is, to have Him in the depths of our heart.



St. Francis de Sales

Let us now see how we can find in today's Gospel an excellent way of saying our prayers well. Some people are greatly mistaken, imagining that many methods are necessary to pray well. We see them become distressed for this reason, laboriously striving for some particular art which they feel is necessary to attain this objective. As a result, they constantly scrutinize their prayers to determine whether or not they are said correctly. Some even believe that they must be careful not to move, so that the Spirit does not leave them, as if God were so delicate as to concern Himself with the methods and capacities of those who pray.

I am not affirming that there are no time-honoured rules and methods for praying well. But we should not bind ourselves so strictly to them, or become so attached to them as to hinge all our confidence upon them. This would be to suppose that we may give these considerations more importance than our own affections, and expect satisfactory results.

The example of Simeon

On the contrary, we must understand that only one thing is necessary to pray well: to hold Our Lord in our arms, like St. Simeon; that is, in the affections of our heart. In this way, we will always pray well, regardless of how we go about it. Without this condition, our prayer can never be accepted by God.

*We beseech the
Angels and the Saints
to unite their prayers
to ours, to make a holy
medley, so that in this
sacred blending, ours
will be better received
by the Eternal Father*

"No one comes to the Father, but by Me" (Jn 14:6), Our Lord said. Prayer, according to the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, is an "uprising of the mind to God."¹ We could never do this on our own; but when we have Our Lord in our arms, everything becomes easy.

And to prove this, I ask you, dear faithful, to consider this holy man, Simeon, and see how well he prayed, having Jesus in his arms: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Lk 2:29-30). Let Thy servant go in peace, he says, for he has seen his salvation and His Lord.

Indispensable mediation of Jesus Christ

Evidently, it would be an extreme abuse to wish to exclude Our Lord Jesus Christ from our prayer and think it could be well done without His assistance, for it is undeniable that we can only be pleasing to the Eternal Father when He sees us



*Oh, how happy we
would be to go to the
Temple, prepared to
receive this grace
of receiving from
Our Lady, or from
her beloved spouse,
St. Joseph, our
Divine Saviour!*

Presentation of Jesus in the Temple
Capitoline Museums, Rome

through His Son, our Saviour. And not only men, but also the Angels, for the fact is that Christ, while not their Redeemer, is their Saviour. The Angels were justified and confirmed in grace by Him, because Christ merited this for them, as we read in Revelation (cf. Rv 12).

When we look through red or violet-coloured glass, everything we see seems to take on that hue. In the same way, the Eternal Father, beholding us through the beauty and goodness of His Sacrosanct Son, will find us beautiful and good in accordance with what He hopes of us. Without this artifice, we would appear before Him with our own ugliness and deformity.

Prayer, as the Fathers of the Church state, is none other than the raising up of our minds to God. And although in elevating ourselves to God we encounter Angels and Saints on our way, we do not lift our hearts to them so as to remain in them, nor do we have them as the object of our prayers, as the heretics perfidiously

claim. We only beseech them to unite their prayers to ours, to make a holy medley, so that in this sacred blending, ours will be better received by the Eternal Father, to whom they will always be pleasing if we have with us His beloved little Benjamin, as did the sons of Jacob when they went to meet their brother Joseph, in Egypt (cf. Gn 42–43). This is because if we do not take Him with us, we will bear the penalty with which Joseph threatened his brothers: they would no longer see his face, nor receive anything from him if they did not bring him their youngest brother.

Conditions to receive the Child Jesus

Now, our little brother is this Divine Infant that Our Lady carries to the Temple today, presenting Him herself, or through St. Joseph, to the good and aged Simeon.

However, it is more likely to have been St. Joseph and not Our Lady, for two reasons: the first is that it was the role of the men to offer their

sons, as their obligation was greater than the mothers'. The second is that, until they were purified, women did not dare approach the altar where the offerings were made. Whichever of the two it was, it does not matter, we need only know that St. Simeon took this blessed newborn in his arms, from the hands of Our Lady or St. Joseph.

Oh, how happy we would be to go to the Temple, prepared to receive this grace of receiving from Our Lady, or from her beloved spouse, St. Joseph, our Divine Saviour! For, holding Him in our arms, there would be nothing else wanting to us, and we could well sing the sacred canticle: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word." Let Thy servant go now in peace, O my God, for my soul is fully satisfied, possessing all that is most desirable in Heaven and on earth.

Let us briefly consider the necessary conditions for obtaining this grace of receiving and carrying Our Lord in our arms, as did St. Sim-

eon and Anna, the good widow who had the happiness of being in the Temple at the moment in which the Child was presented there.

First condition:
taking Our Lord in our arms

In the first place, our attention is drawn to the Evangelist's observation that St. Simeon was "righteous and devout" (Lk 2:25a). In many places of Sacred Scripture, the word devout denotes respect toward God and things pertaining to His service; thus, we gather that this good elder was filled with the fear of God and of reverence for sacred things. But St. Luke further comments that he sought the consolation, that is to say, the Redemption of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him: "*expectans consolationem Israel, et Spiritus Sanctus erat in eo*" (Lk 2:25b).

All of this indicates to us four essential conditions for praying well. The first, we have already said, is to take Our Lord in our arms, in our affections, as did the good St. Simeon, especially because this is the essence of true prayer.

Second condition: to adapt our will to God's

As to the second condition, the Evangelist says that the holy old man was righteous, in other words, he had perfectly adapted his will to that of God, living according to His holy Law. We, too, will certainly never be able to undertake holy prayer well if we do not unite and adapt our will to God's. And often this is what is lacking.

For example, you sometimes see a person who is about to pray. Ask him why he does so. He will respond that it is to ask God for consolations, and to beseech Him deliverance from the many distractions that continuously disturb him during prayer. What, then; do you not want to adapt your will to God's? In-

deed, entering into prayer, you must be resigned to suffer the annoyance of distraction, the aridity and tedium that may come to you, remaining just as content as if you had experienced much consolation and serenity. For one thing is certain: your prayer will be no less pleasing to God, or less fruitful for you, for having been accomplished with greater difficulty, as long as you adapt your will to that of the Divine Majesty.

We must accustom ourselves to seeking our perfection with tranquillity of heart, following the ordinary ways, doing everything we can to acquire the virtue

By this means, you will always pray and do everything else with profit for yourself and in a way pleasing to the eyes of God, which is what we should desire.

Third condition: to live in the expectation of perfection

The third condition is that, like the good St. Simeon, we ought to expect the Redemption of Israel; that is, we must live in expectation of our own perfection. Oh, how happy are those who, living in this hope, never tire of waiting!

This is what I say to many who, desiring to attain perfection through the acquisition of virtues, want to have them all at once, as if perfection were just the desire. Oh, what a great advantage it would undoubtedly be if

we could be humble as soon as we so desired, and if we could clothe ourselves effortlessly in virtues, just as easily as putting on a garment!

We must accustom ourselves to seeking our perfection with tranquillity of heart, following the ordinary ways, doing everything we can to acquire the virtues, and to be faithful in practising them, each according to his own vocation. Then, as for reaching the desired goal sooner or later, remain in expectation, in the hands of Divine Providence, who will be sure to console us in His own time, just as He did St. Simeon. And even if we should wait until the hour of our death, we must conform ourselves.

Thus, let us be content in doing what is within our means, and we will obtain perfection, always sooner than we desire, as long as we have it when it pleases God to give it to us.

Fourth condition: reverence and fear of God

The fourth condition is to be God-fearing like St. Simeon; that is, full of reverence before God at the time of prayer. Ah, dear souls, what respect ought we to have toward the Divine Majesty, in whose presence even the Angels, who are so pure, tremble?

However, I would say that we cannot have in our prayers such a sentiment of His presence as to provoke an utter humiliation of all the powers of our soul, or such a sensible reverence that our soul feels diminished and abased before God, in the knowledge of His infinite grandeur and our extreme littleness and unworthiness.

Oh, surely, such a sentiment is not necessary in order to have fear of God! It is sufficient to have this reverence in the will and the superior part of our soul. How edifying it is to see the veneration with

which St. Simeon held Our Lord in his arms, for he knew the sovereign dignity of the One he carried!

The Holy Spirit does not dwell in a deceitful and foolish heart

Furthermore, I repeat that the Holy Spirit was upon St. Simeon and made His dwelling place in him: “*et Spiritus Sanctus erat in eo.*” Thus, he deserved to see Our Lord and carry Him in his arms.

In the same way, we must make room for the Holy Spirit in us, if we want Our Lady or St. Joseph to give us the Divine Saviour of our souls, to hold in our arms – Him from whom proceeds and in whom consists all our happiness. It is, after all, only by His mediation and favour that we will have access to His heavenly Father. But what must we do to make room for the Holy Spirit?

I will pour out my Spirit on every living being, says God to the prophet Joel: “*effundam Spiritum meum super omnem carnem*” (Jl 2:28). The Holy Spirit has filled the whole earth, says the wise man, in the first chapter of the Book of Wisdom: “*Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum*” (1:7). Nevertheless, in the same place it is said that He does not dwell in a deceitful and foolish heart: “*Spiritus enim Sanctus disciplinae effugiet fictum*” (1:5).

Here is an important fact! The Holy Spirit has not the least reserve in making His dwelling place in us; as long as He does not find in our hearts insincerity, deceit, and hypocrisy. These defects impede the Divine Consoler from residing in



Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, by Bartolo di Fredi
Louvre Museum, Paris

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to see the veneration
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Simeon held Our
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for he knew the
sovereign dignity of
the One he carried!*

our souls and showering us with His graces and heavenly blessings. We need to be simple, without pretence or deceit, if we want Him to come to us, and Our Lord after Him. For the Holy Spirit wishes to be the precursor of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. As the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him as God, from all eternity, it seems He desires to make retribution with the inversion: Our Lord proceeding

from the Holy Spirit, as Man.

Eternal reward: to be carried in the arms of the Lord

What more can we say, if not that, by having the Holy Spirit within us during this fleeting and mortal life, having great respect and reverence before the Divine Majesty, awaiting with submission for the coming of our perfection, and adapting our wills as closely as possible to God's, we will most assuredly have the happiness of carrying Our Lord in our arms, just as the

good St. Simeon. And by means of this grace, we will be able to pray very well.

Notwithstanding, as a prior condition we must faithfully imitate Our Lord and Our Lady in the practice of a perfect obedience, founded in a profound, true and sincere humility, as we have said.

After this, we will have only to sing with St. Simeon: “*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine.*” Now Lord, let Thy servant go in peace to the joy of eternal life, in which Thy goodness will carry us eternally in Thy arms, in exchange for having carried Thee in ours during the course of this mortal life. So be it. ✧

*Excerpts from the Sermon
for the day of the Purification
of Our Lady. In: “Œuvres”. Paris:
Société Générale de Librairie
Catholique, 1881, t.VI, p.17-26*

¹ ST. JOHN DAMASCENE. *De fide orthodoxa*. L.III, c.24.

A Difficult Mission...

Educating children demands teaching them, with kindness and gentleness, to practise the virtue of fortitude. Without it, they will be unable to face life's countless difficulties.



Fr. Fernando Gioia, EP

When the liturgical calendar includes St. Paul's exhortation to children in his Letter to the Ephesians – "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (6:1) –, a peculiar stir often arises among the families present in the congregation: fathers and mothers discreetly nudge a son or daughter, eyes wander about with feigned nonchalance, and whispered exchanges even ripple through the naves of the church. From the presbytery, the celebrant priest has a privileged view of the scene.

But St. Paul continues with an exhortation to parents, saying: "do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (6:4). The roles are now inverted...

These reactions are natural, for the Apostle's words point out a very delicate and real problem: the difficult mission of educating children and the respectful attitude that children should have toward their parents. The latter are called to obey; the former, to correct without provoking anger.

How is such a balance achieved? It is a complex task in our present chaotic days, beset with so much libertinism.¹

Harmony between affection and firmness

Many holy educators give us important guidelines that help us to proceed with wisdom in circumstances that demand much care. St. John Bosco, for example, highlights that without affection there is no trust, and education without trust is impossible. Thus, strive to win over children's hearts, and from there make inroads to the soul,² using a method of education which could well be summed up with this phrase: "make yourself loved, so as to better make God loved."³

St. Marcellin Champagnat, founder of the Marist Brothers, affirms the need to admonish with simplicity and discipline without terrorizing, so as to form children's wills gradually. They should be formed in obedience, never ordering what is not just and reasonable, forbidding many things at once, or demanding what is too difficult to accomplish. However, once an order has been given, it must be fulfilled.⁴

It becomes clear that, for these reasons: there is no institution better suited to the human and religious formation of children than their own family. The dedication and affection of parents sweetens discipline and education; the love,

trust and admiration of the children opens them to being taught with seriousness.

False concept of freedom

Many environments in which we are immersed seem to be ruled by the motto: everything should be permitted. It cries out everywhere demanding a "liberty" very different from that taught by the Church, which seeks moral good and instructs us to follow the dictates of reason, enlightened and supported by faith.

Now, giving free reign to the senses, to the imagination and to the will, doing only that which is appealing at the moment, is equivalent to incapacitating the self-control every man should possess as part of his free will. Such an attitude depersonalizes man more than any exterior tyranny.⁵

Although it may resound harshly in our ears, it can be affirmed that the word *no* is essential in the formation of boys and girls. This is the reality.

"Decalogue for bad education"

The director of one of the schools of the Heralds of the Gospel sent me something unusual: a *Decalogue for Bad Education*, circulated some time

ago by the Catholic magazine *Magnificat*, of Braga, Portugal. They, in turn, published it citing the source as the Seattle Police Department in the United States, which, alarmed by the level of delinquency and behaviour problems in youth, drew up the following ironic list:

1) Starting in early childhood, give your child everything he wants. That way, he will grow up believing that the world owes him a living.

2) If he picks up foul language, laugh. This will make him think it's funny.

3) Never give him any spiritual instruction. Let him decide for himself when he is older.

4) Never tell him that what he did was wrong. This may give the child a guilt complex, so that if he is later punished for stealing a car, he will think that society is persecuting him.

5) Pick up everything after him. This will lead him to believe that others are there to serve him.

6) Let him read and see anything he wants. Be sure to disinfect the dishes he uses with detergent, but let his mind feast on garbage.

7) Parents, always quarrel in the presence of your children, so that they become used to it and will not be shocked if the family later breaks up.

8) Give a child all the spending money he wants; never let him realize that one must work to earn money.

9) Satisfy his every whim for food, drink, entertainment, and comfort, in or-

der to protect him from feelings of frustration.

10) Take his side in any disagreement with others, since teachers, neighbours, police officers and other authorities do not understand the poor child.

This intriguing Decalogue ends by saying: When your child gets into real trouble, excuse yourself by declaring that you tried everything but nothing worked.

The Christian home: cradle of true education

The principles that guide Catholic formation are the opposite. They recognize that a child tends to do what he hears and sees, and his first actions will be in imitation of the example given by his parents. When a child does not receive adequate parental attention, he clearly perceives this and senses that he is missing something...



Some are called to obey and the others to correct without provoking anger. How is such a balance achieved?

A Companion family photographed during a graduation ceremony of The Heralds' Academy, 17/12/2016

Although the State also has its role in the education of children, it cannot substitute the family, who are entrusted, by nature, with this sacred mission. The often irreparable harm caused when the family does not fulfil it is what we see all around us today.

Every unruly child can be corrected, just as every good child is at risk of being lost. When this happens, it is not the boys and girls themselves who are to blame, since they are often the victims of their own vulnerability, but rather a lack of zeal in their parents or the use of inadequate methods, "fashionable" parenting styles based on so-called modern pedagogical or psychological systems, as the above *Decalogue* cautions.

Let us reaffirm the principle that the goal of the family is the procreation and education of children. May our homes not be places that are Christian in appearance, while children are raised in a way that could be called pagan. Children must be taught, with kindness and gentleness, when they are still young, that life is hard, and that they must love fortitude as a Christina virtue, and confront difficult things.

We must not neglect to speak of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and His teachings; of Mary Most Holy, as our Mother, advocate and protector; of the Holy Church as master of the truth, leading us to Heaven, for the Church is the educator par excellence. ✧

¹ Cf. ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Redemptor hominis*, n.21.

² Cf. AUFRAY, SDB, A. *Método de la educación mor-*

al de la juventud. Barcelona: Surgitel, 2004, p.59-60.

³ Idem, p.60.

⁴ Cf. FURET, Jean-Baptiste. *Vida de São Marcel-*

ino José Bento Champagnat. São Paulo: Loyola, 1999, p.498-500.

⁵ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*.

II-II, q.104, a.1, ad 1; RODRÍGUEZ Y RODRÍGUEZ, OP, Victorino. *Temas-clave de humanismo cristiano*. Madrid: Speiro, 1984, p.266.

Two Spiritual Diaries, Two Types of Martyrdom

Separated by a distance of 18 centuries, two spiritual diaries narrate two different ways of reaching the same objective: holiness.



Dcn. Thiago de Oliveira, EP

After the death of Alexander the Great, in 323 BC, the vast empire he conquered was eventually split into four parts. The eastern regions went to the dominion of Seleucus Nicator, one of his most distinguished generals. Taking Babylon as a base, he swiftly built up the Seleucid Empire, encompassing a large area from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus River. Antioch became its capital. Around the year 300 BC.

Almost two and a half centuries later, in 64 BC, when the Romans conquered the Middle East, Antioch became the capital of the Roman province of Syria and the third most important city of the empire, only behind Rome and Alexandria.

In the time of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the city had close to 500 thousand inhabitants, including Syrians, Arameans, Jews and Greeks. The immense wall that surrounded it was protected by 300 towers. Powerful and beautiful, Antioch could take pride in being the main city of the region.

A child embraced by Jesus

The region of Palestine also comprises part of the territories that the Romans had added to their empire. Among the cities they conquered around the Sea of Galilee was Capernaum: a simple fishing village with houses built of large black stones. Our Lord did much of His work there.

On one occasion, returning from the Mount of the Transfiguration, Jesus came to the city with His Apostles and, knowing that they had argued among themselves as to who was the greatest, He asked them: "What were you discussing on the way?" (Mk 9:33). The best they could do was keep silent, for they were ashamed of themselves and their thoughts which had been so unfocussed on God, who was standing before them.

With adorable grandeur, Our Lord sat down and, calling the Twelve, He taught them: "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mk 9:35). And

to add life to this teaching, transmitted on so many other occasions, the Divine Master put a child in the midst of the Apostles, embraced him and said: "Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me" (Mk 9:37).

This simple episode, which took place in a rustic fishing city, became the immortal example of humility and the paradigm for this virtue. And according to a beautiful tradition, the child who had the great privilege of being embraced by the Saviour became one of the greatest Saints of the apostolic era: Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch.

Innocence persecuted by villainy

This child, especially esteemed by Our Lord, became a follower of St. John the Apostle, the Beloved Disciple, and the second or third Bishop of Antioch, the city in which the followers of Christ were "for the first time called Christians" (Acts 11:26).



“Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me”

Jesus blessing the children - Stained glass from the Church of Mondorf-les-Bains (Luxembourg)

It was also in Antioch that St. Paul and St. Barnabas attained great success evangelizing pagans. And the first evangelizing missions would depart from this capital.

This was the site designated by Providence where St. Ignatius established a long and admirable government over the flock of the Church and exercised it until the Emperor Trajan, in the East, ordered ten soldiers to summon the venerable Bishop to Rome to the Flavian Amphitheatre, the famous Coliseum, to be martyred.

That innocent child, model of humility for the Apostles, would eventually be barbarously persecuted for being good, for being an authentic Catholic, for being a Saint! Innocence persecuted by villainy; gratuitous hatred of evil against the good.

Spiritual diary of a journey

In a time before the advent of rapid transportation, we can imagine the anguish of a person unjustly arrested, who trudges death's

road, heading toward an inevitably tragic end. Having access to a diary outlining the thoughts of such a person, especially if we knew he was a saint, would mean obtaining a true spiritual treatise.

This was the valuable legacy that St. Ignatius left us, for, in these very circumstances, he used the stops along the way to write letters to the various churches to whom he wished to counsel or address an exhortation.

Of the seven letters he wrote, and which are still extant, we are particularly interested in the one addressed to the Romans. Since the capital of the empire would be the place of his death, the holy Bishop dealt especially with the subject of martyrdom in this missive. It is the only one of his letters that is dated, written on August 24, probably in the year 107 AD, during a stop-over of the soldiers in the port city of Smyrna.

Using metaphorical language, St. Ignatius reveals how his voyage was progressing: “From Syria even unto

Rome I fight with beasts, both by land and sea, both by night and day, being bound to ten leopards, I mean a band of soldiers, who, when goodness is shown to them, show themselves all the worse.”¹

“Allow me to become food for the wild beasts”

Shackled for love of Our Lord, the Saint affirms that the main reason for his writing to the Romans is to dissuade them from intervening in his judgement in an attempt to liberate him from the torments. This was precisely what he did not want: “I write to the churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly die for God, unless you hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me.”²

How can a person fearlessly face death? St. Ignatius was fully aware of the torments he might have to undergo, but nothing distressed him as much as feeling far from his Divine Master: “Do not hinder me from living, do not wish to keep me in a

state of death; and while I desire to belong to God, do not give me over to the world.”³

Indeed, his wish was heeded. In being devoured by the ferocious beasts, as he himself prophesied, his innocent soul once again encountered Him who had embraced him as a small child: “Allow me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ.”⁴

The futile hatred of the Roman emperor is buried in history; the love of the venerable Bishop of Antioch, however, lives eternally with the Saviour. The grandeur of the Church of Christ overcame the powers of the time, showing who has true control over events: “Christianity, in being hated by the world, shows that it is not a work of persuasion, but of grandeur.”⁵ It is a grandeur that begins in the spirit of people like St. Ignatius and eventually influences and transforms all of society.

Another type of martyrdom

But not everyone has this same calibre of soul. Undoubtedly, very few have conserved their innocence as he did. At times we may lack courage – not to suffer martyrdom, but rather to overcome a sin or vice. This, paradoxically, sets in motion a veritable interior martyrdom, in which the beast that tears us apart lives inside us and is much fiercer than those of the Coliseum.

In the ancient Roman amphitheatres, those brave Catholics received the grace of martyrdom, standing firm for a few minutes while they were devoured by ravenous animals, and then their eyes opened to the eternal reality. With spiritual mar-

tyrdom, the victory always seems distant. The more one fights against the interior beast, the more invincible it seems.

How, then, can we attain holiness? The question becomes thorny if we consider that the person seeking holiness is one who has lost his innocence. He does not begin at the same starting point as St. Ignatius, but from a lower step, which makes the battle even more arduous.

Inner drama written on a wall of Rome

During the journey of a French journalist to Rome, in the mid-19th century, an unexpected find turned out to be a revelation about this type of spiritual martyrdom. The journalist, the famous Louis Veillot, was walking through a deserted quarter of the Eternal City, when, on the outside wall of a church, he spied some well-defined characters etched with a charcoal pencil. It was the diary – faded by time – of the drama of a penitent soul.

It began like this: “September 14. I have health problems because of my own fault, caused by agitation

and disobedience. At this moment, 11 o'clock in the morning, I decided, with the help of God and Mary Most Holy, to no longer torment myself and to recover true peace. St. Joseph, pray for me.”⁶

The anonymous hand of this pained soul had admitted an inability to dominate the interior beast. However, this person had taken the firm resolution to improve, with the help of God and Our Lady. He also invoked the venerable figure of the Patriarch of the Church, St. Joseph. If he took care of the Child Jesus, would he not also care for the members of the Mystical Body of His Divine Son?

What did this unknown martyr wish to say by agitation and disobedience? We do not know precisely, but this is not of great importance. For each us, the interior beast has a different name – pride, lust, avarice, envy, etc. – and, with God's help, we must overcome it.

Failure and perseverance in resolutions

However, it often happens that just when the victory over the beast



Gustavo Kraij

The hatred of the Roman emperor is buried in history; the love of the Bishop of Antioch lives eternally with the Saviour

The martyrdom of St. Ignatius of Antioch - Basilica of St. Clement, Rome

seems at hand, we feel, deep down, that which St. Paul himself describes to the Romans of his time: “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do” (Rom 7:19).

How often we make good resolutions and then, after a while, we notice that little or nothing of these resolutions have been fulfilled. With this, our spiritual drama intensifies; we must redouble our efforts to persevere in virtue, even at the cost of the “blood of our soul.”

The internal battle is admirably well described in the confession of this poor soul, who over the course of months, during the street’s deserted hours, left a register on that stone wall: October 14. Until now I have not managed to fulfil what I wrote on September 14; but now I have decided to do my utmost. November 15. I renew what I promised, so as to put it into practice. November 23. I have failed, but I have made the wholehearted resolution to do it. Today, December 28. I decided to be good. Today, December 31. I want to always obey, to please Mary Most Holy until death.”⁷

Who can fail to glimpse through these lines an intrepid spirit, even more so, in a sense, than that of a martyr? Incapable of obtaining victory alone, he turns and insistently implores Our Lady to triumph for him and in him! If the dilacerations of the body of the martyrs freed their souls to fly to God, in this instance, one must become emptied of self, placing oneself entirely in



Livia Natsue Salvador Uchida

**“I want to always obey, to please
Mary Most Holy until death”**

Our Lady of Good Success
Mount Carmel House, Caieiras (SP)

the immaculate hands of the Queen of Heaven.

Mary obtains for us the crown of victory

This was the foreseeable outcome of the story: whoever confides thus in Providence, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, will certainly attain the victory desired.

The diary of our spiritual martyr continues: “January 28. By the love of Mary Most Holy there is no more agitation. And today, February 1, I renewed my resolution. March 12. The agitation is over. March 29. It no longer torments me and truly, I sin no more.”⁸

With the characteristic artistic flair of the Italian people, this vic-

torious martyr expressed his contentment by drawing, on each of the last two inscriptions of his diary, two palms forming a crown. The crown of victory!

Reading the confessions of this trial-torn soul deeply touched Veuillot. To him they bore the fragrance of the inscriptions of the catacombs, where the first martyrs of Christ are buried.

The path to reach Heaven

In the same Rome where the innocent St. Ignatius of Antioch came out victorious by surrendering himself to the teeth of the beasts, we see, nearly 18 centuries later, a penitent soul triumph by freeing himself from the claws of the devil with Our Lady’s help.

The similarity between the two scenarios invites us to reflect on the immortality of the Holy Church. Centuries can pass, the devil can attack the Mystical Bride of Our Lord Jesus Christ, but the Blessed Virgin and the Patriarch of the Church never cease to help souls who sincerely wish to sanctify themselves.

Whether through innocence or penitence, there is only one way to reach Heaven: by conquering our “interior beast”, in the implacable battle to attain holiness. In this fight there is no place for hollow exterior postures; one must burn with charity and the desire to be reunited with God in eternity. Here, the counsel of St. Ignatius to the Romans fits well: “Do not speak of Jesus Christ, and yet set your desires on the world.”⁹ ✠

¹ ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH. Carta aos Romanos [Letter to the Romans], 5, 1. In: PADRES APOSTÓLICOS. 4.ed. São Paulo: Paulus, 2008, p.105.

² Idem, 4, 1.

³ Idem, 6, 2, p.106.

⁴ Idem, 4, 1, p.105.

⁵ Idem, 3, 3, p.104.

⁶ VEUILLLOT, Louis. *Le parfum de Rome*. L.IX, c.40. 5.ed. Paris: Victor Palmé, 1865, v.II, p.166.

⁷ Idem, p.166-167.

⁸ Idem, p.167.

⁹ ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, op. cit., 7, 1, p.106.



Catechetical Nativity Scene – During Advent and Christmas, the Heralds of the Gospel House in Madrid received visits from many schools (above, left) to view the catechetical Nativity Scene presentation with sound, light and movement (right). While they awaited their turn, groups of children were entertained with musical presentations (centre) and puppet shows.



Consecrations – With increasing frequency, entire families are making their consecration to the Blessed Virgin as a form of venerating the Mediatrix of All Graces and imploring her protection. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, there was a solemn consecration to Our Lady by various groups prepared for the occasion by the Heralds of the Gospel, in the house of the institution in Camarenilla, Toledo (photos 1 and 2). Consecration ceremonies were also held in Valencia, on December 18 (photo 3), and in the Heralds' house in Madrid (photo 4).

n Evangelizing Activities



Photos: Eric Salas



Freddy Enrique Guírrrez



Eric Salas



Freddy Enrique Guírrrez

Christmas concerts – On December 23, the Heralds provided a concert of Christmas carols in the historic Parish of San Ginés, in Madrid. The church filled with faithful to hear the music (photos 1 and 2). Christmas concerts were also held in Santa Maria Soledad Torres Acosta Parish in Las Tablos, Madrid (photo 3), in Assumption Parish of Camarenilla, Toledo (photo 4), and the Chapel of Infant Jesus Hospital of Madrid, specializing in pediatrics.



Photos: Eric Salas

A Day with Mary – On November 26, “A Day with Mary” was held in Chucena, in the province of Huelva. After the talks, the Pilgrim Statue was taken in procession through the city streets (right). The day ended with a solemn Eucharistic Celebration in Our Lady of the Star Parish.

HERALDS IN BRAZIL

Leandro Souza



Matheus Rambo

Campo Grande – On Saturday, December 16, a blessed Christmas concert was held in the house of the institution, with the participation of close to 700 people. The musical ensemble was made up of members of the Heralds of the Gospel, youth undergoing formation and Companions.

Douglas Villas Boas



Douglas Villas Boas



Felipe Sette

Cuiabá – Metropolitan Archbishop Milton Antônio dos Santos, SDB, visited the house of the institution during the last week of November to bless the Nativity Scene (left) and to celebrate Holy Mass (centre). In November, the Heralds also participated in the Third Sacred Music Cantorum Week, sponsored by the Archdiocese (right).

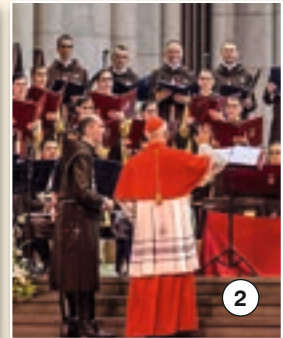
Gabriel Sotti



Caio Pereira

Maringá – On November 27, twenty-one youths in formation from the Heralds of the Gospel made their solemn consecration to Our Lady (left). On December 4, an additional 83 faithful consecrated themselves to the Blessed Virgin according to the method of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort (right).

Christmas concert in the Cathedral of São Paulo



Photos: Stephen Nami

The International Orchestra of the Heralds of the Gospel performed the traditional Christmas Concert in the São Paulo Metropolitan Cathedral (photo 1) before Midnight Mass celebrated by Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer, who offered words of gratitude to the orchestra and greeted the conductor, Fr. Pedro Morazzani Arráiz, EP (photo 2). At the end of the Midnight Mass, the rector of the Cathedral, Fr. Luiz Eduardo Pinheiro Baronto (beside the Cardinal in photo 3), thanked the

Heralds for their “effective collaboration” in the Cathedral’s pastoral activities. After mentioning the First Saturday ceremonies, he highlighted the presence of priests from the institution who hear confessions at the Cathedral twice a week and conveyed his greetings and gratitude to the founder, Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias. Finally, the Cardinal enthroned the figure of the Child Jesus in the Cathedral Nativity Scene, set up by Herald artists, as in previous years (photo 4). ✧



Photos: Roberto Cochowski

Nova Friburgo – On Christmas Day, Holy Mass was celebrated for the first time in the Chapel of Our Lady of Fatima, still under construction. It is part of the future house of the Heralds in this city. Companions, youth in formation and their families participated in the Celebration, presided over by Fr. Lourenço Isidoro Ferronato, EP.



Photos: Plinio Bosco

Canada – A group of 12 people made their consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary in a ceremony at the Parish of St. Mary Immaculate in Richmond Hill, ON, on December 8, 2016. At the request of pastor, Fr. Pawel Zborowski, the Heralds were present with the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.



Photos: Janet de Cabrera

China – On December 28, Companions from Peru visiting continental China brought the first Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the Cathedral of Fuchou, in the capital of the Province of Fujian. The Shrine will circulate among families in the region and was entrusted to Coordinator, Mrs. Maria Tang, by Fr. Joseph Lin.



Photos: Jesse Arce-Jacome

Colombia – During the month of November, Heralds carried out Marian Missions in several parishes of Bucaramanga, the capital of the Department of Santander (left). On November 19 they held "A Day with Mary" in the city, led by Fr. Juan Francisco Ovalle Pinzón, EP (right).



Photos: Urbano Ngoca

Mozambique – At the request of the Nunciature, the Heralds performed a Christmas concert on November 18, in St. Anthony of Polana Church in Maputo. In attendance were the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, as well as Cardinal Júlio Duarte Langa, the President of the Republic, Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, and other dignitaries.



Photos: Sebastián Cadavid

El Salvador – On December 12, after an enriching formation course, 148 people consecrated themselves to Our Lady in El Salvador, according to the method of St. Louis Grignion de Montfort (photos 1 and 2). On December 12, the Heralds gave a Christmas concert to a large audience in the main square of Apopa, a city on the outskirts of the El Salvadorian capital (photos 3 and 4).



ST. JOAN OF VALOIS

Royalty Embracing Suffering

Her noble blood was the cause of sufferings by which God wished to make her a prayerful soul, a pleasing victim and an example of unpretentiousness in the ambitious political scenario of fifteenth-century France.



Sr. Carmela Werner, EP

In our days, marked with the sign of secularism, there is an effort to stamp out all suffering from life as if it were something noxious that separates us from the path of happiness. However, despite the fact that scientific breakthroughs have made it possible to control most pain, it is undeniable that physical and moral suffering is part of the human condition.

Given man's natural inclination to egoism, he easily forgets his Creator in moments of well-being and success. Accordingly, adversity is a powerful aid for purifying the soul from attachment to creatures, obliging us to consider the limitations of fleeting goods and to turn to the sole Good, to God, on whom we may set all our hope. Those who face suffering with these dispositions acquire

a respectable quality, becoming worthy of admiration.

Such is the dominant trait of St. Joan of Valois: her life evokes the heroism of one who shouldered a series of weighty crosses. Providence led this woman to the heights of sanctity by steep paths; pondering them may help us to accept our own setbacks with resignation, and to better understand the inestimable value of suffering in this valley of tears, the way chosen by Our Lord Jesus Christ to work the Redemption.

Dramatic birth in a royal setting

We often associate royal dynasties to the concepts of prestige, power, and beauty. But it seems that God willed the high birth of this child so that her noble blood would be the cause of her torments and,

thus, of her transformation into a prayerful soul, a pleasing victim, and an example of unpretentiousness, flowering amid the ambitious political scenario of fifteenth-century France.

St. Joan of Valois, the second daughter of King Louis XI and Charlotte of Savoy, was born on April 23, 1464. Her father, an irascible and dominating man, longed impatiently for an heir who would assure the continuity of his lineage on the throne and, in anticipation, celebrated the arrival of a prince.

The monarch was incensed to hear that the queen had given birth to a girl, and blamed the infant for the supposed misfortune. Louis XI harboured an ungrounded antipathy toward the child; he refused to spend time with or pay any attention to his newborn daughter.

Paternal aversion soon reached a peak when the physical disabilities of the princess became apparent. Her face and her overall physical constitution showed early signs of deformities which would become more pronounced as she neared adulthood; she would be hunch-backed and lame, with severely stunted growth.

Paroxysm of paternal contempt

The unloved child grew up in an environment marked by the king's contempt; but the queen felt compassion for her daughter and instilled her with her own religious fervour, teaching her to turn to God as a good Father who loves each of His children infinitely.

From a young age, Joan displayed a meekness that was unexplainable in human terms; she uttered no complaint due to her limitations or to the thinly disguised aversion of almost everyone who knew her. Motivated by complete submission to God's will, she accepted her situation and sought solace in the supernatural. She often requested her maids of honour to take her to a church so that she could give herself over to silent prayer.

Her devotedness was a further irritant to Louis XI, who considered her presence in the castle a nuisance. Fearing that the deficiencies of the princess would tarnish the splendour of royal house, he resolved to send her far away, separating her from the queen, whom she would never see again. To this end, he chose a distant fief entrusted to a noble and childless couple, the Barons of Linières.

Joan of Valois, yet a child at the time, left

her family to embark on an uncertain future alone. The trials that awaited her would be no less painful than those of the first years of her life.

A promise of Our Lady

The Linières received the little princess in their domains, in the historical region of Berry, with a Christian attitude. Despite the familial and material abandonment to which Joan had been subjected, she eagerly applied herself to embroidery, playing the lute and performing manual tasks suited to a girl of her age. However, with her contemplative leaning, she dedicated most of her time to pious practices.

She fostered deep devotion to Our Lady, whom she loved as her tender Mother. One day, imploring the assistance she did not expect from any human power, she made a devout request: "O my Mother, teach me thyself what I should do to please thee!"¹ To which the Blessed Virgin replied: "My daughter, dry your tears, for one day you will flee from this world whose dangers you fear, and you will start an Order of holy religious dedicated to singing

the praises of God, faithful in following my footsteps."²

When would this foundation occur? The Queen of Heaven did not reveal this, demanding yet another proof of confidence from Joan. Being so young, all she could do was pray and wait for a sign before daring to take any initiative.

Submission and heroic obedience

Paradoxically, with the passing of time, Louis XI decided to bolster his plans by using his daughter's hand to best advantage. He shamelessly arranged a marriage favourable to the interests of the crown, leaving the Saint in a state of bewilderment.

He wanted her far from the court and she only wished to live for God. Nevertheless, with the aim of consolidating his authority in an unstable political scenario, and to reduce the risk of future rivalry with the Duke of Orleans, the king decreed the nuptials between his nephew Louis and his daughter Joan, eliminating a main adversary to the throne in a single stroke.

The wedding was held on September 8, 1476, when Joan was only 12 years old and the Duke of Orleans, 14. This episode was yet another example of the abnegated spirit of the princess in abiding by her father's decisions, especially in face of the icy indifference of her husband, who did not so much as cast a glance at her during the ceremony.

Louis of Orleans, a young man of noteworthy natural gifts, lived a life of luxury



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Louis of Orleans avoided his sickly spouse from the outset, and publicly manifested antipathy toward her

St. Joan of Valois - Church of Sauzé-Vaussais (France); Luis XII, by Jean Perréal - Hampton Court (England); on previous page, St. Joan of Valois, Church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, Paris

in his castle, avoiding his sickly spouse from the outset, and publicly manifesting his antipathy. His behaviour toward her would always be one of open indifference, stooping at times to hostility, even at future crossroads when she would save his life.

Nevertheless, the rejection of Louis of Orleans in some way served Joan's desires. Upon receiving the news of the marriage, she had knelt before a crucifix and implored the Lord not to disregard her intention to be completely consecrated to Him.

Healing balm: the arrival of St. Francis of Paola

Not all of the decisions taken throughout the reign of Louis XI were as unpropitious as the marriage of his daughter. One noteworthy good action in this monarch's life was a decision he made shortly before his death. Having come down with the serious illness that would take his life in 1483, he resolved to bring a man of high virtue to his court in the hope

of obtaining a miraculous cure from Heaven.

His choice fell on an Italian wonderworker named Francis of Paola, whose fame for sanctity had crossed the Alps and reached France. This outstanding apostle of charity received a papal order to attend the sick man, and he duly arrived, enlightened by inspirations from the Holy Spirit to do much good in French lands.

He patiently helped the king in his illness, but informed him that it was God's will that the desired miracle not occur, for his time had come to depart from this world. The Saint prepared the sovereign to meet death with resignation, and remained in the country for several decades, during which he would guide the princess at decisive times in her spiritual life and the foundation of the Order foretold by Our Lady.

Repaying evil with good

Joan's father died when she was 19, and after this the cross of her

unwanted marriage began to weigh more heavily upon her, with episodes permitted by God to increase the merits of her crown of heavenly glory.

Just as Louis XI had desired, a son born after Joan succeeded him to the throne, with the name of Charles VIII. The suspicions of the young king with regard to his brother-in-law were not unfounded, for Louis of Orleans soon took up arms in an attempt to usurp the crown. His revolt against the State, known as the Mad War of 1485-1488, was put down in time and harshly repressed by the king. The Duke was sent to prison and condemned to death.

St. Joan of Valois perceived the ambition of those involved in this political and familial clash. Despite awareness of her husband's guilt, she insistently solicited her brother for his liberation. Having spent three years in a dungeon, Louis of Orleans once again saw the light of day thanks to the patient intercession of his wife, yet he showed no gratitude to his benefactress. Indeed, he had refused to see or speak with her whenever she had visited him in prison.

Joan repaid her husband's ill-treatment with sweetness, but his attitude only worsened when he became king after the death of Charles VIII, who left no heirs. One of the first measures of the newly crowned Louis XII was to finalize the marriage annulment process he had previously begun in secret, alleging to the Holy Father that he had been forced by his father-in-law to contract the marriage under pain of death.

With the paperwork phase and declaration under oath carried out, the annulment was granted by Alexander VI, signifying a final public humiliation for the Saint, who thanked the king with a prayer: "Blessed be the Lord who permitted



After patiently helping the king to meet death with resignation, St. Francis of Paola remained in the country for several decades

Louis XI kneeling before St. Francis of Paola, by Nicolau Gosse - Anne-de-Beaujeu Museum, Moulins (France)

this separation to help me serve Him better than I have until now.”³ Impressed this time by her proven virtue, Louis XII made the sole gesture of deference toward Joan in his entire life, granting her in usufruct the duchy of Berry, which she governed prudently until her death.

Before leaving to take up residence in Bourges, its capital, Joan bid the king farewell in touching terms: “I express to you my gratitude as one would to a liberator, for you have freed me from the harsh slavery of the world. Forgive me for the errors I may have committed against you. I wish to expiate for them by consecrating my life to prayer for you and for France.”⁴

Founding the Annonciades and edifying death

Now she was finally free from earthly fetters to fulfil the designs revealed by Our Lady when she was a girl. In a numerous exchange of letters, St. Francis of Paola confirmed the divine origin of the inspiration dating back to her tender youth, giving his approval for her to undertake the foundation.

The Saint, who, through all of her trials had kept her mind and heart fixed in filial contemplation on the privileges of Our Lady, gathered from among the maidens of Bourges a group desiring to imitate the Blessed Virgin in all her virtues, but especially her faith, charity, prudence, humility, poverty, obedience, piety, patience and devotion. Recognized in 1501 by the Holy See, the contemplative Order of the Annonciades, in honour of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was founded.

Gathered around their noble superior, the first communities grew in number and holiness, until the new institute was solidly formed and



Throughout all of her trials, Saint Joan kept her mind and heart turned toward Our Lady

St. Joan of Valois depicted by Jean Perréal at the beginning of the sixteenth century

established. At first Joan of Valois was divided between the administration of the duchy and the care of the religious, but gradually she kept more and more to the cloister, where she found true happiness.

In January of 1505, her deformed body, wracked by penances, showed signs of heart failure; the condition worsened, signalling her approaching death. On February 4 she serenely expired, surrounded by spiritual daughters and accompanied by a miraculous light which shone around her bed for an hour and a half after she had breathed her last.

In the palace of Louis XII, another light descended from the firmament marking the precise hour of the departure of the expiatory victim. She was now in God's presence to pray for the king and for France. The monarch, moved and impressed by this divine sign, repented of his abusive treatment of her and ordered

that his former spouse be rendered royal funeral services.

Leaving posterity a lesson of royalty embracing suffering, the life of St. Joan of Valois could be summed up in these sublime words of St. Augustine: “Although the good and the wicked suffer alike, we must not suppose that there is no difference between them, because there is no difference in what they both suffer. For even in the likeness of the sufferings, there remains an unlikeness in the sufferers; and though exposed to the same anguish, virtue and vice are not the same thing. For as the same fire causes gold to glow brightly, and chaff to smoke; and under the same flail the straw is beaten small, while the grain is cleansed; and as the lees are not mixed with the oil, though squeezed out of the vat by the same pressure, so the same violence of affliction proves, purges, and clarifies the good, but damns, ruins, and exterminates the wicked. And thus it is that, in the same affliction, the wicked detest God and blaspheme, while the good pray and praise. What matters then is not what ills are suffered, but what kind of person suffers them. For, stirred by the same movement, mud exhales a horrible stench, and ointment emits a fragrant odour.”⁵ ✦

¹ GUÉRIN, Paul. Sainte Jeanne de Valois. In: *Les petits bollandistes. Vies des Saints*. 7.ed. Paris: Bloud et Barral, 1876, t.II, p.263.

² Idem, ibidem.

³ Idem, p.264.

⁴ Idem, ibidem.

⁵ ST. AUGUSTINE. De civitate Dei. L.I, c.8, n.2. In: *Obras*. Madrid: BAC, 1958, v.XVI-XVII, p.75-76.



"Noli me tangere" - Cathedral of St. Julien, Le Mans (France)

Francisco Lecaros

“God Loved Us First”

The human heart was made to love. But, what is true love? Knowing this is fundamental, especially at a time when love seems to have lost its true meaning.



Sr. Rita Defanti, EP

It is dawn. No one dares to leave home, for the streets of Jerusalem still seem to echo with the pounding of hammer upon nails, the shouting of insults and the clamour of the mob at the crucifixion of the Nazarene. But a few women overcome their dread and, together, set out toward the sep-

ulchre... To the sepulchre? Yes, to the place where their Lord has been lain.

Madness! They will certainly be arrested! Nothing stops them... Moved by love, they brave all eventualities. Among them, Mary Magdalene stands out. She loved the Lord so much that she became a “model of love. Hers is a vigilant and

thoughtful love, which spares nothing and faces anything; a love that incites concern for what happens to the Beloved. It is a love devoid of human respect – while the Apostles hide, she spares no effort or sacrifice. She is even ready to roll away the stone of the sepulchre with her own hands, to argue with the guards, to implore

them and to create a disturbance, if necessary.”¹ Finally, hers is a love that “makes her intrepid: neither the silence of the night, nor the solitude of the site, nor the dwelling-place of the dead, nor the apparition of spirits terrify her; she is only fearful at not finding the Body of her Master to pay Him her last respects.”²

How important love is, for, in fact, the human heart was made to love! But love must be well directed, like that of the Holy Women of the Gospel. As the famous saying goes: “tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are.” It could be paraphrased like this: tell me who you love and I will tell you who you are...

It is important, then, to know what love truly is, especially in this egoistic age, in which this word seems to have lost its true meaning and to have become distanced from its purpose, frequently being interpreted as nothing more than romanticism or fleeting sentimentalism, always marked with selfishness.

A movement of the free will

So what is love, then?

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches³ that man possesses both rational and appetitive faculties. The rational or intellectual appetite following upon apprehension made by a free judgement is called will. The human will tends to the good that it desires as its proper object. Thus, he defines love as “the first act of the will and appetite; for which reason all the other appetite movements presuppose love, as their root and origin. For nobody desires anything nor rejoices in anything, except as a good that is loved.”⁴

Love is therefore active; it is an act of the human will. And an upright will produces a good love; a degenerate will, an evil love. Consequently, it follows that when one loves honestly, one may do as one pleases – “*dilige*,

et quod vis fac”⁵ –, for it is by love that the will must be ordained.

St. Augustine is categorical in affirming that to love is so inherent to the human being that one who does not love is dead. However, he warns: “Love, but ponder what you love.”⁶ He further explains that when a person’s love revolves around God, such a love is called charity; “the love of the world and the love of this age are called concupiscence.”⁷

“Tertium non datur”

The implacable law of logic understood in the famous Latin aphorism “*tertium non datur*” can be applied to love. In other words, there is no third position; one cannot love in a contradictory manner.

From this standpoint, the pithy Augustinian proposition is better understood: “two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.”⁸ Therefore, love is true when

it is founded on God and must be directed and ordained to God. And it is only in relation to God that one must love men and the things created by God.

On this subject, Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias comments: “there are two loves: one is true love, which is love of God. The other is egoistic, romantic, sentimental love; it is the love of self-interest.”⁹ The first brings satisfaction, joy and peace. The other leads to anguish, frustration and tears. There is no intermediate love.

To where should our heart tend?

We know that all things are drawn by the law of gravity to occupy their place, which gives each thing its corresponding weight. The word gravity derives from the Latin *gravitas*, formed from the adjective *gravis*, meaning weighty. Our heart, as a representative of the human spirit, also has its weight. It is once again St. Augustine whose reasoning uses this principle as a starting point.



St. Thomas Aquinas –
“All the appetite movements
presuppose love, as their
root and origin. For nobody
desires anything except as a
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St. Augustine – “Two cities
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loves: the earthly by love of
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God; the heavenly by love of
God, even to contempt of self.”

He says that the weight of each body not only holds it in place, but also gives each thing its place. For example, when lit, fire ascends, while a stone, when thrown from a height, falls. And the soul? How can it have weight, if it is spiritual? He resolves the question by affirming that it also has a weight that moves and impels it: “*Pondus meum, amor meus* – My weight is my love; by it am I borne wherever I am borne.”¹⁰ Love moves us. The words of the Divine Saviour can be taken in this same vein: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt 6:21).

St. Francis de Sales¹¹ explains that our inner actions of love can be classified as spiritual, rational and sensual. Nevertheless, in scattering its strength over all three operations, it becomes more extensive and less intensive. In other words, if love is divided among diverse types of loving operations, it becomes less vigorous and perfect than if its action were concentrated in one direction.

As a symbol of love, he uses the image of fire and asks: is it not true that, when forced out of a single muzzle of a cannon, the flame has much greater impulse than if it had two or three openings? He concludes, “Since, then, love is an act of our will, he that desires to have it, not only noble and generous, but also very vigorous and active, must contain the virtue and force of it within the limits of spiritual operations, for he that would apply it to the operations of the sensible or sensitive part of our soul, would so far weaken the intellectual operations, in which essential love consists.”¹²

Therefore, our heart should lean toward our treasure, which should be our nobler side. Love of the intellect and of the heart, St. Francis de Sales continues, which “should be master over our soul, refuses all sorts of corporal and sensible unions, and is contented with goodwill only.”¹³ And he goes on to say: “by how much more exalted and

spiritual the subject of love is, by so much its actions are more lively, subsistent and permanent: nor is there a easier way to ruin love than to debase it to vile and earthly unions.”¹⁴

“Love with love is paid”

From this perspective, the greatest of all the Commandments is better understood: “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Dt 6:5).

At first glance, this precept may seem to be a demand from the Creator for His creatures love Him. Yet, if we analyse love as an act of the will seeking the good, as we have just done, and observe how in everyday life we feel inclined to esteem those who in some way benefit us, what love we should bear the One who took us from nothing, who gave us life and who maintains our being! Furthermore, He watches over each one; from the tiniest insect to gigantic animals and sea monsters, “not one of them is forgotten before God” (Lk 12:6). God’s care for the animals is but a pale reflection of His loving concern for the creature He designated to be king of the universe, creating him in His “image, after our likeness” (Gn 1:26). “But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not” (Mt 10:30-31), the Divine Master says consolingly.

Beyond a mere demand, the Commandment engraved on the Tables of the Law is a requirement of retribution and restitution. “Love with love is paid,” says the proverb. But how can man respond to such a preferential love?

St. Bernard states that “love is a great reality, and if it returns to its beginnings and goes back to its origin, seeking its source again, it will always draw afresh from it, and thereby flow anew. Love is the only one of the motions of the soul, of its senses and affections, in which the creature can re-



St. Francis de Sales – If love is divided among diverse types of loving operations, it becomes less vigorous and perfect than if its action were concentrated in one direction.



St. Bernard – “Love is the only motion of the soul, of its senses and affections, in which the creature can respond to its Creator, even if not as an equal, and repay His favour in kind.”



We love, because God first loved us; our charity is nothing more than repayment for the countless favours we have received from Him

Detail of the Last Supper, by Ugolino da Siena - Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

spond to its Creator, even if not as an equal, and repay His favour in kind.”¹⁵

The fullness of happiness is found in charity

Indeed, the Almighty chose us, from among infinite creatures which He could have created and did not create, out of love: “For Thou lovest all things that exist, and hast loathing for none of the things which Thou hast made, for Thou wouldst not have made anything if Thou hadst

hated it” (Wis 11:24). God does not love things because they are good; He first instilled the good in them by loving them. Accordingly, from rational creatures – which were apportioned the highest thing that can be possessed, namely, an immortal spirit and the invitation to the beatific vision – God expects to be repaid with love. This is the sole end for which we were created: to love and serve God in this world and then to enjoy His company in eternity.

Only those who have the weight of their heart inclined to higher things are capable of seeing in other human beings this divine reflection, as creatures of God’s hands. This signifies true charity, by which people show goodwill to one another for love of God. And authentic love of neighbour is a testimony that one truly loves God, as the Beloved Disciple affirms, “he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20).

True love, then, can be summed up in the inspired words of Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias: “We love, because He first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). Indeed, our charity is nothing more than repayment for the countless favours we have received from His goodness. As Creator, He gave us being, maintains and will maintain us always; as Redeemer, He saved us, taking on flesh and suffering the torments of the Passion; as Father, He wished to instil in us the divine life, ‘that we should be called children of God’ (1 Jn 3:1). God is our beatitude! He is Goodness par excellence, substantial Goodness, Goodness in essence. Thus, it is in total adhesion to Him, by the practice of this Commandment – and not in earthly and fragmentary delights – that we find the fullness of happiness.”¹⁶ ✧

¹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. The Reward for Those Who Love More. In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, v.VII, p.359.

² DUQUESNE. *L’Évangile médité*. Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 1904, v.IV, p.386.

³ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.26, a.1.

⁴ Idem, I, q.20, a.1.

⁵ ST. AUGUSTINE. In Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos tractatus decem. Tractatus VII, n.8. In: *Obras*. Madrid: BAC, 1959, v.XVIII, p.304.

⁶ ST. AUGUSTINE. Enarratio in Psalmum XXXI. Sermo II, n.5. In: *Obras*. Madrid: BAC, 1964, v.XIX, p.391.

⁷ Idem, ibidem.

⁸ ST. AUGUSTINE. De Civitate Dei. L.XIV, c.28. In: *Obras*. Madrid: BAC, 1958, v.XVI-XVII, p.985.

⁹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Homilia da Sexta-feira antes da Epifania* [Homily for Friday before Epiphany]. Caieiras, Jan. 5, 2006.

¹⁰ ST. AUGUSTINE. Confessionum. L.XIII, c.9, n.10. In: *Obras*. 7.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1979, v.II, p.561.

¹¹ Cf. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES. *Traité de l’amour de Dieu*. L.I, c.10. Paris: Lecoffre; J. Gabalda, 1934, t.I, p.38.

¹² Idem, p.38-39.

¹³ Idem, p.41.

¹⁴ Idem, p.43.

¹⁵ ST. BERNARD. Comentarios sobre el Cantar de los Cantares. Sermón LXXXIII, n.4. In: *Obras Completas*. Barcelona: Rafael Casulleras, 1925, v.III, p.708.

¹⁶ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. The Two Wings of Sanctity. In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2014, v.IV, p.470-471.



CHURCH AND WORLD EVENTS

Beatification of 109 Spanish martyrs

On December 22, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints published the decree of beatification of 109 Spanish martyrs of the Civil War, all of them belonging to the Congregation of the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, popularly known as the Claretians, after their founder, Archbishop St. Anthony Mary Claret.

They were killed out of hatred for the Faith between the years 1936

and 1937. The group is headed by Fr. Mateo Casals, professed priest and superior of the Claretians of Sabadell, together with professed brother, Theophilus Casajús and professed brother of the Claretians of Cervera, Speras Aluja, put to death with 106 companions.



Archdiocese of Asunción distributes food baskets

Through the *Share Christmas with Your Neighbour* campaign, the Archdiocese of Asunción in Paraguay distributed over 40 thousand food baskets to needy families during the Christmas season.

The baskets were delivered by members of the Archdiocesan Social Ministry and the Santa Librada Foundation. Archbishop of Asunción, Most Rev. Edmundo Valenzuela, SDB, reported that “in addition to these 40 thousand baskets, we are in the process of preparing more, so that there will be 80 thousand to deliver to needy families.”

Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns dies

At 95 years of age, 76 of them as a member of the Franciscan Order and 71 as a priest, Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns surrendered his soul to the Lord. He was admitted to Santa Catarina Hospital on November 28 with bronchopneumonia, and died at on December 14 at 11:45 a.m. due to multiple organ failure. Cardinal Arns was Archbishop of São Paulo from 1970 to 1998, and was a cardinal since 1973.

The wake began at 8 p.m. in the Cathedral of São Paulo, with a sol-

Seven Million Mexicans Pilgrimage to Guadalupe

On December 12, an unprecedented multitude gathered on Cerro de Tepeyac, in Mexico, to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the country and of the Americas. Leading up to the date, 7.2 million pilgrims arrived, according to prefecture calculations published in the Mexican daily newspaper *La Jornada* and by the US *Diario las Américas*. Over the subsequent days, people continued arriving from across Mexico and beyond its borders.

This year commemorates the 485th anniversary of the *Brown Virgin*, as the Mexicans affectionately call her. Many of the faithful from different parts of the country flocked to the site on bicycle, in large vehicles, and even on foot, to fulfil promises. The Archbishop Primate of Mexico, Cardinal Norberto Rivera, presided over the solemn Mass for the feast and recited a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, con-



The festivities in honour of Our Lady of Guadalupe concluded with a fireworks display

taining this request: “O Virgin most clement, repeat to your afflicted and threatened children those words filled with kindness and consolation that you spoke to the humble St. Juan Diego: ‘Am I not here, I, who am your Mother? Are you not in my arms? Do you need anything more?’”

The blood of St. Januarius does not Liquefy

St. Januarius, martyr and patron of Naples, is the protagonist of an impressive miracle that has been renewed three times a year for centuries. A relic of his coagulated blood venerated in the Cathedral liquefies on the first Sunday of May, on September 19 – his feast – and on December 16. The first of these dates is related to the relic's transfer to its present place of veneration. On December 16, 1631, St. Januarius prevented the city from being destroyed in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, with the lava stopping at the city gates.

The fact that the miracle did not occur on December 16 has prompted concern in the Italian media, which usually reports the liquefaction. As the ampoule containing the relic was returned to its place, Msgr. Vincenzo De Gregorio, Abbot Prelate of the Royal Chapel of the Treasury of St. Januarius, said: "We are men of faith, and we must keep on praying."

La Stampa newspaper reported that "the absence of the miracle has always been associated with disastrous moments in the city's history." In Septem-



Cardinal Crescêncio Sepe, Archbishop of Naples, shows the reliquary with the liquefied blood, during the miracle that occurred last year

ber of 1939 and 1940, it coincided with the onset of the Second World War and with Italy's entry into the conflict; in September of 1943, Italy was occupied by Nazi troops; in 1973, Naples was ravaged by a cholera epidemic; and in 1980 the devastating Irpinia earthquake occurred.

bern Mass celebrated by the Archbishop, Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer. Subsequently, 23 requiem Masses were celebrated, until 3 p.m. on December 16. Cardinal Scherer commented that Cardinal Arns "gave his life to God, after having generously dedicated it to his brethren in this world," and he added in a press release: "We thank God for his example as a zealous Shepherd of God's people and for his special attention to the little ones, the poor and the suffering."

Cardinal Arns was the fifth of 13 children in a German immigrant family. After graduating in philosophy and theology in Brazil, he studied literature and pedagogy at the Sorbonne, where he also obtained his doctorate. He wrote 57 books. Many personalities attended the funeral rites, which concluded with the entombment of the body in the Cathedral crypt.



Beatification of Mother Mary of St. Peter

After the closing of the Diocesan phase, the Bishop of the French Diocese of Langres, Most Rev. Joseph de Metz-Noblat, officially requested the Holy See to open the canonization process of Mother Mary of St. Peter.

Born on August 15, 1838, in Grancey-le-Château, Adèle Garnier founded the Congregation of the Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of Montmartre, Order of St. Benedict, in 1898, in Paris. Obligated to leave Paris in 1901, the nuns settled in Tyburn, in the heart of London, near the execution site of many martyrs. Favoured

with mystical gifts, Mother Mary of St. Peter died on June 17, 1924, just over a year after the Child Jesus had announced her impending death.

Tiny Irish island has Christmas Mass

The tiny Irish island of Tory has only 150 inhabitants, and the pastor who assisted them, Fr. Kieran Creagh, was transferred in September of last year. But this did not stop the islanders from having a Christmas Mass.

Since the pastor's departure, a priest has had to make it by ferry to the island, 15km from the mainland, so that the Catholics can participate in the Eucharist. However, heeding the requests of the faithful, the Diocese of Raphoe confirmed that a priest would be sent to celebrate Christmas with them. Patsy Dan Rodgers, the leader of the community, expressed his appreciation: "We miss not having a full-time priest over

here and were sad to see Fr. Creagh leave. But we've been lucky enough to have had cover on the island for Sunday Mass ever since, and we're extremely grateful for this, because priests are so scarce these days."

The island is about 4.5km in length and is home to the remnants of a monastery founded in the sixth century by St. Columba. Rodgers affirms that the practice of the Catholic Faith has a fundamental role for the community and that Christmas Mass is extremely important to them.



Church of the Belarusian Rite is consecrated in London

On December 17, Catholics of the Belarusian Greek Catholic Rite

in London attended their first Mass celebrated in a church built specifically to meet their needs: the Church of St. Cyril of Turau and All the Patron Saints of the Belarusian People. This date marked the church's consecration. It was built to minister to the community of the Belarusian Rite living in London since 1947.

The church, also known as the Belarusian Memorial Chapel, is the first of this rite to be built outside of Belarus, and took a year to construct. Its cornerstone was brought from the Church of the Blessed Trinity of Druja.

The ceremony was presided over by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Antonio Mennini, accompanied by Most Rev. John Sherrington, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, and Most Rev. Hlib Lonchyna, Bishop of the Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London.

Following the celebration, Bishop Sherrington commented: "It was a great joy to concelebrate at

the Consecration of the altar and new Belarusian Church. The consecration of the altar, symbol of Christ, included washing, lathering, and pouring of wine and drying before the anointing with Chrism. We remembered the preparation of Christ's body for burial before He rose in glory. This rich Divine Liturgy thanked God for this new Church which gives hope to the Catholics of Belarus."

Italian city hosts large-scale living nativity scene

Until January 7, the Italian city of Matera served as the backdrop for one of the world's largest living nativity scenes, in which over 400 volunteers participated. To take in the whole scene, viewers had to walk almost 3 km through the streets and environs of the city, leaving from the old Church of Santa Maria dell'Idris.

Along the route, classical music and regional hymns added to the atmosphere, as sites such as the

Austria Issues Commemorative "Silent Night" Stamp

To commemorate the bicentennial of *Silent Night*, the Austrian Post Corporate Headquarters issued a commemorative stamp with the caption *Der holde Knabe im lockigen Haar* – The lovely Boy with curly hair. This is a phrase from the famous Christmas carol composed in a parish of Mariapfarr, close to Salzburg, where Fr. Joseph Mohr wrote the lyrics. Subsequently, schoolmaster and musician Franz Xaver Gruber added the melody.

The designers of the stamp, conjecturing that Fr. Mohr's composition may have been inspired by the paintings of the church retable, in Gothic revival style, in which the Child Jesus is depicted with curly golden locks, decided to reproduce it on the commemorative stamp. The stamp also features the adoration of the Magi, with the innocent detail of St. Joseph being humbly "hidden" behind a wall, watching in wonder as the Kings offer their gifts before the Blessed



Virgin with the Child Jesus in her arms.

market of Jerusalem and various others of that time were depicted. The rocky terrain is particularly suited to portraying the landscapes of Galilee in the time of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In previous years, the display has drawn more than 70 thousand visitors.



ncregister.com

Canonization process opened for American slave

On December 18, during a Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, the Archbishop of Denver, Most Rev. Samuel Aquila, officially opened the canonization process of Julia Greeley, a former slave who died on June 7, 1918, and was known in the Archdiocese as the “Apostle of the Sacred Heart” and “Angel of Charity.”

Born between 1833 and 1848, she lost an eye as a child, due to abuse received from her “owner”. She lived in extreme poverty. After her conversion, in 1880, she became known for heroic acts of charity and mercy. So well known that, on the day of her wake, a continuous influx of faithful reverently filed before her mortal remains for five hours. She was a familiar sight pulling a small red wagon through the streets of Denver filled with food and goods bought with the money she earned or begged as alms, to distribute among the poor, including white families.

One of the well-known acts of charity of the Servant of God was the visit she made to all 20 fire stations in the city of Denver – braving some sarcastic reactions of non-Catholics

– to promote the apostolate of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to distribute holy cards, beseeching divine protection upon the fire-fighters’ dangerous work.

Diocese of Lafayette has Travelling Chapel

In January 2016, *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine reported on the method that a priest from the Diocese of Lafayette, USA, came up with to minister to the widest possible number of faithful: converting an ambulance into a mobile confessional.

On December 16, Fr. Michael Champagne presented the results of his initiative: he has heard more than 3,000 Confessions, (over 300 hours worth), after travelling over 6,400 miles throughout the State of Louisiana, in his *Spiritual Care Unit*. Accompanied by a team of volunteers, he has made about 140 stops at hospitals, shopping centres, grocery outlets and so on.

In face of the initiative’s unexpected success, Fr. Champagne added what he calls a church on wheels to the unit. Decorated on the outside with reproductions of beautiful stained-glass windows depicting the Good Shepherd and the parable of the prodigal son, it is used to celebrate Mass in places where there is no place available, such as homes for the aged. It is possible for several wheelchairs to enter the vehicle.

Fr. Champagne stated to a local newspaper: “We have seen literally hundreds return to the Church after 30, 40 and 50 years. Getting on ‘their turf’ makes a tremendous difference in getting people back to practising the sacramental life of the Church.” In fact, one of his closest collaborators had been distanced from the Sacraments for at least 15 years.



Michael Champagne

The travelling confessional and chapel used by Fr. Michael Champagne in his 6,400-mile journey

Church of Curitiba celebrates 125th anniversary

A twofold anniversary was celebrated in neighbourhood of Santa Felicidade, in the Brazilian city

of Curitiba, on December 25: the Nativity of the Lord, and the 125th anniversary of the parish church of St. Joseph.

Built in the place where a small wooden chapel had once stood, the beautiful Romanesque-style parish church was erected by Italian immigrants led by Fr. Pietro Colbacchini. In 1888, he wrote: "The Santa Felicidade colony, composed of 130 families, already has quite a decent wooden church, but now the building of a large and beautiful church has begun." The result was a church measuring 36m by 16m, divided into three naves in the form of a Greek cross.

England needs Catholic schools

Using the opportunity offered by fiscal policy changes which facilitate the opening of private schools in England, on December 13, the Diocese of East Anglia revealed a project to open eight new educational institutions in Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Thetford and Norwich, to meet the growing need for elementary and secondary Catholic schools.

Paul Barber, director of Catholic Education Service, an organization independent of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, explained that there is high demand for Catholic education throughout the country. Helen Bates, assistant director for East Anglia's Schools Commission, says the Diocese is "desperately in need" of these new institutions.



Chinese student forum invokes the protection of Mary Immaculate

According to information published by *Fides* agency, on December 7 and 8 the Ninth Forum on Catholic Studies for young Chinese scholars took place in Beijing. The date was especially chosen to coincide with the feasts of the Immaculate Conception and St. Ambrose.

"We have always chosen the date of 7 and 8 December just to entrust our work and our study to Mary Immaculate," explained Fr. Jianmin Zhao, vicar of the Archdiocese of Beijing and director of the Beijing Institute for the Study of Christian Culture. "We entrust our young scholars to St. Ambrose, invoking the intercession, accompaniment and protection of Mary Immaculate and St. Ambrose for our academic and religious path."

The Forum covers a wide range of themes, including dogmatic and moral theology, anthropology, exegesis of Sacred Scripture, history, sociology and art. Proposals for the evangelization of Chinese society are also presented. Several of the 96 participants of the event, held annually since 2008, came from outside the country.

New Archbishop of Papeete appointed

The Cathedral of Notre Dame in Papeete had two reasons to celebrate at Christmastime. This city on the Island of Tahiti, and the capital of the archipelago of French Poly-



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Chile: Shrine of the Immaculate Receives a Million Devotees

Devotion to the Immaculate Conception is deeply rooted in the Chilean people. The feast is celebrated with pomp in every diocese of the country, but above all at the Chilean Shrine of Lo Vásquez, near Valparaíso, which is especially dedicated to this Marian invocation.

This year, the shrine received almost one million pilgrims on her feast, December 8. The influx of faithful began on December 4, and 54 Masses were celebrated. On December 8, the statue of the Immacu-

late Conception was carried in procession around the Shrine, and priests were available throughout the day to hear Confessions. In the sermon of the outdoor Mass, Most Rev. Gonzalo Duarte García de Cortázar, Bishop of Valparaíso, commented: "We give thanks to the Lord for so many brethren who chose to come, and we give thanks to so many people who served and helped the pilgrims. Jesus tells us: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life'; therefore, the Virgin is Mother of Life and of every life."



Images of the commemoration published on Shrine's website

Photos: www.santuarioiovasquez.cl

nesia in the Pacific Ocean, received a new Archbishop: Most Rev. Jean-Pierre Cottanceau, SS CC, native of Ussel, France.

Erected as an Apostolic Vicariate in May of 1848, Papeete was

raised to the category of Metropolitan See in 1966, with the Diocese of Taiohae as a subsidiary. Its new Archbishop belongs to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, as have all the pre-

vious ones. Since 2015, Archbishop Cottanceau was Papeete's Apostolic Administrator. He carried out part of his pastoral work in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Philippines.

Relief for a Troubled Conscience

Day and night, the problem tugged on Martin's conscience: where was the soul of his little daughter Mariana? If she was not in Heaven, was he to blame?



Marcela Rodrigues

First thing in the morning, as the church bells rang, Josephine stole off to Mass, quite unknown to Martin, her husband, who had no patience for religious practices. She was very worried about her little daughter, Mariana, who was not yet a year old, and who had come down with a mysterious illness that baffled the village doctor. She had left the child with Gretel, the governess, and had gone to pray to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament about the baby's Baptism, for despite the promptings of relatives and neighbours, Martin arrogantly refused to let his daughter receive the Sacrament that would make her a child of God.

Gretel was a woman of faith, and did everything she could to help Josephine in her good efforts, and even offered to bring the child to the parish church while Martin was out working the fields. At first Josephine did not agree to the plan, for, if her husband found out,

he would send Gretel away. But the governess devised a way to bring the baby to the church without her employer knowing, and with Josephine's consent.

Some weeks later, Mariana's health worsened, and, being too frail to fight the infirmity, she soon departed for

eternity. Her mother followed not long afterwards, a victim of the same mysterious illness.

As the years went by, Martin buried himself more and more in material things. His prized possession was the vineyard and winery that he had inherited from his deceased wife's family. He spared no effort to increase production, and success seemed to be his. But one day, one of the workers came to him and said:

"Sir, I've come on behalf of the other workers in your plantation to bring you some bad news. For about a week, a horde of insects has been devouring your vineyard. We've tried everything to exterminate them, but they continue spreading. We don't know what more to do. If things continue like this, the harvest will be lost."

In a fury, Martin sent the man back into the fields, to redouble his efforts and that of the other workers, under threat of dismissal. The worker replied:



Illustrations: Elizabeth Bonyun

Gretel, the governess, was a woman of faith, and did everything she could to help Josephine

“Sir, I’m sorry to say so... but we all feel that this pestilence is a punishment from God, sent for your hardness of heart toward Him! So here’s our proposal: let’s make a promise to the Blessed Virgin, asking her to help us to exterminate the insects. But the condition is this: if she heeds us, you will return to being a practising Catholic. Do you accept?”

Martin dismissed his worker’s words as foolishness, but all the same he decided to comply. That way, all the field hands would willingly set to work in the vineyard, and he could busy himself with looking for a scientific solution to the problem. To his mind, those peasants sought superstitious explanations for problems that they did not understand. But he knew of many agriculture experts in the capital, and he was sure there was no problem they could not resolve.

A few days later, as Martin was about to set out on a visit to one of these specialists, he was surprised to see all of this workers coming to meet him. Jubilantly, they announced that he had to come with them to the church to sing the *Te Deum*. The pestilence had disappeared and the grapes were making a marvellous comeback. Everything indicated that he would need more baskets and more hands to collect the harvest.

To prove to himself that this story was true, the disbelieving vintner ran to his fields. After inspecting row after row of healthy grapes, he fell to his knees in awe. He had never seen the like; what his eyes beheld exceeded the wildest dreams of the most demanding producer.

A few sniffles were heard, then the sound of muffled prayer. Before long Martin was weeping out loud. He begged pardon of the Blessed Virgin for having closed himself to the voice of grace. Then he got up and went to find the parish priest in order to reconcile himself with God.

He made a good Confession, and became a fervent Catholic. But a problem tugged at his conscience day and night. Where was the soul of his little Mariana? He had not allowed her to be baptized. In anguish, he thought: “What if, because of me, she didn’t make it to Heaven?”

Unable to bear the thought, he went to see a Capuchin friar named Fr. Christian who was known for his holiness, and told him the whole story. The good priest suggested that he start praying for his daughter’s soul and promised to do his part, offering many Masses for this intention.

“But Father, how can I pray for someone who passed away five years ago? What can God do, since everything now belongs to the past?” asked Martin.

“My son, for God there is neither past nor future. In eternity, everything is present. Pray for her, because there is still time.”

Satisfied with the priest’s counsel, he returned home. And from then on he bombarded Heaven with insistent prayer. He often went to Mass during the week, and whenever he met a priest or a nun he always asked them to pray for the girl’s soul.

One day, Gretel, the old governess, paid him a visit. Martin was glad to see her again, because she reminded him of Josephine and Mariana. When he told her about his conversion, she joyfully said:



“Father, how can I pray for someone who passed away five years ago?”

“Well, I want you to know that during all these years, I have prayed for you every single day, and now I see that God has heard my prayers.”

The conversation drifted to a variety of subjects, and Martin finally told her of the deep remorse that gripped his heart.

“Put your mind at rest, sir! Mariana is in Heaven enjoying the beatific vision and watching over us! Perhaps it was she who brought about the conversion of her father!”

“How can you be so sure? She wasn’t baptized...”

Gretel then explained that in agreement with Josephine, she had taken the child to the church to receive the Sacrament, shortly before her death. And she added:

“Who knows...maybe this all came about because of your prayers.”

Martin was beside himself with joy! Fr. Christian had been right when he explained to him the retroactive value of prayer. From that day forward, his soul was at peace, and never more did he turn away from God or the Sacraments. ✧

THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY

1. Blessed Louis Variara, priest (†1923). Italian Salesian missionary who died in Cúcuta, Colombia. He cared for lepers and founded the Congregation of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

2. Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.

Blessed Stephen Bellesini, priest (†1840). Ardent devotee of the Mother of Good Counsel of Genazzano, Italy, who, throughout difficult times remained faithful to the Augustinian Order, dedicating himself to the education of children, preaching and pastoral work.

3. St. Blaise, bishop and martyr (†c. 320 Sebaste – present-day Turkey).

St. Ansgar, bishop (†865 Bremen - Germany).

St. Mary of St. Ignatius Thévenet, virgin (†1837). She founded the Congregation of the Religious of Jesus and Mary in Lyon, France.

4. St. John de Britto, priest and martyr (†1693). Portuguese Jesuit sent to the missions in India, where he suffered martyrdom after converting many people to the Catholic Faith.

5. Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Agatha, virgin and martyr (†c. 251 Catania - Italy).

St. Sabas the Younger, monk (†995). With his brother, St. Macarius, he tirelessly spread hermitic life in the regions of Calabria and Lucania, Italy.

6. St. Paul Miki and companions, martyrs (†1597 Nagasaki - Japan).

St. Vedast, bishop (†c. 540). Sent by St. Remigius, Bishop of

Rheims, to Arras, France, he catechized King Clovis, re-established the local church and shepherded it for almost forty years.

7. Blessed Mary of Providence

Smet, virgin (†1871). She made a private vow of chastity and was dedicated to apostolate in parishes in Lille, France. She later founded the Society of the Helpers of the Holy Souls, in Paris.

8. St. Jerome Emiliani, priest (†1537 Somasca - Italy).

St. Josephine Bakhita, virgin (†1947 Schio - Italy).

St. Honoratus, bishop (†c. 570). In the imminence of a Lombard invasion, he endeavoured to save the populace, procuring refuge for them in Genoa.

9. St. Maroun, hermit (†c. 423). He lived as a hermit, consecrated to prayer and rigorous penances, on a hilltop near present-day Aleppo, Syria. A famous monastery was built at his graveside, and later a Christian community bearing his name developed at the site.

10. St. Scholastica, virgin (†c. 547 Monte Cassino - Italy).

St. Austreberta, virgin and abbess (†704). She piously governed the monastery of Pavilly, France, previously founded by Bishop St. Audeno.

11. Our Lady of Lourdes.

St. Soteris, virgin and martyr (†c. 304). Choosing the Faith to nobility of blood and human honour, she refused to obey the order to sacrifice to idols, boldly facing insults, condemnation and death by sword. Her sepulchre can be found in Rome.

12. Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Blessed Humbeline, abbess (†1136). Converted from worldly pleasures by her brother, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, she entered the Abbey of Jully-les-Nonnains, France with the consent of her husband; she later became the prioress.

13. Blessed Jordan of Saxony, priest (†1237). First successor of St. Dominic as head of the Order of Preachers; he was ardent in spreading the order. He died in a shipwreck near Acre, in Palestine.

14. St. Cyril, monk (†869 Rome) and **St. Methodius**, bishop (†885 Velehrad - Czech Republic).

St. John Baptist of the Conception Garcia, priest (†1613). He undertook the renewal of the Trinitarian Order and ardently defended it amid grave difficulties and tribulations. He died in Cordoba, Spain.

15. St. Sigfrid of Växjö, bishop (†c. 1045). Born in England, he undertook a mission to evangelize the north of Europe. He converted many pagans and baptized King Olaf of Sweden.

16. Blessed Nicholas Paglia, priest (†1256). While studying in Bologna, he was drawn by the preaching of St. Dominic and became his most faithful companion. He received the habit of the Order and the ministry of preaching from the Founder.

17. Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order (†1310 Monte Senario, near Florence - Italy).

St. Mesrob, monk (†c. 440). Evangelizer of the Armenians and disciple of St. Nerses, he created an alphabet to teach Sacred



St. Agatha, by Jacopo di Michele - Palazzo Abatellis, Palermo (Italy); St. Scholastica, by the Master of Liesborn - National Gallery, London; St. John de Britto - Jerónimos Monastery, Lisbon; and Blessed Louis Variara

Scripture; he translated the Old and New Testament, and composed hymns and songs in the Armenian language.

18. Blessed George Kaszyra, priest and martyr (†1943). Religious of the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, he was burned in Rosica, Poland, by persecutors of the Faith.

19. Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Quodvultdeus, bishop (†439). Exiled from Carthage with all of his clergy by the Arian King Genseric, he died as a confessor of the Faith in Naples.

20. St. Serapion, martyr (†c. 248). At the time of Emperor Decius, he was dismembered and thrown from the terrace of his own home, in Alexandria, Egypt.

21. St. Peter Damian, bishop and Doctor of the Church (†1072 Faenza - Italy).

St. Robert Southwell, priest and martyr (†1595). Priest of the Company of Jesus, who for many years exercised his ministry in London and surrounding areas. He was cruelly tortured, imprisoned and finally executed at Tyburn, London, by order of Queen Elizabeth I.

22. Feast of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle.

Blessed James Carvalho, priest and martyr (†1624). Portuguese Jesuit missionary who died in Sendai, Japan, by ice-water torture.

23. St. Polycarp, bishop and martyr (†c. 155 Smyrna – present-day Turkey).

Blessed Nicolas Tabouillot, priest and martyr (†1795). Parish priest of the Diocese of Verdun, imprisoned in a galley in Rochefort during the French Revolution where he became ill and died.

24. St. Ethelbert, king (†616). King of East Anglia; he was the first

Anglo-Saxon king to be converted to the Catholic Faith by St. Augustine of Canterbury.

25. St. Gerland, bishop (†1100). He reorganized the Church in Sicily after obtaining freedom from Saracen dominion.

26. Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Faustinian, bishop (†fourth century). Through his preaching, he strengthened and expanded the persecuted Church in Bologna.

27. St. Besas, martyr (†third century). Soldier denounced to a judge for attempting to prevent a mob from insulting Sts. Julian and Eunos. Remaining firm in the Faith, he was beheaded in Alexandria, Egypt.

28. St. Oswald, bishop (†992). Governed the Church of Worcester and later that of York, instituting the Rule of St. Benedict in several monasteries.



The Most Excellent Food

In contemplating magnificent wheat fields, who could imagine that Our Lord would use these small grains to work the most fascinating miracle in history?



Bruna Corrêa

When Isaac blesses Jacob as the son of the promise, he asks God to give him “plenty of grain and wine” (Gn 27:28). David exalts Divine Providence saying: “the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy” (Ps 65:13). And, in the Gospel, Our Lord compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a field sown with the good seed of wheat, whose fruits are the sons of the Kingdom (cf. Mt 13:24-38).

From time immemorial, beautiful, golden wheat fields have symbolized abundance, fruit of the blessing of the Almighty. For this cereal grain, when ground, mixed with water and baked, becomes bread, the staple food. It has the honour of being mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer, symbolizing the sustenance that man receives from the generous divine hands: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Mt 6:11).

Now, much more than being a simple and wholesome food for the body, bread symbolizes the spiritual goods with which God Incarnate nourishes our soul, for it was under

the appearance of bread that He chose to remain with us “always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20).

In contemplating magnificent wheat fields, who could imagine that Our Lord would use such a small grain to work the most fascinating miracle in history? Undoubtedly, in creating wheat, God had in mind the institution of the Holy Eucharist, in which Christ gives Himself to men as food. He is the living bread that nourishes our spirit, gives us courage to confront the great battles of this earthly life, and only through Him do we obtain the strength to be true heroes of the Faith.

What an unimaginable gift designed by the Redeemer! What angelic or human intelligence could conceive such a lofty strategy to remain with those for whom He lovingly shed all of His Blood? This proof of God’s love, “to the point of giving Himself to us as our food is beyond all imagination.”¹

And under the simple form of bread! He could have chosen some other element of nature, since all are


submissive to Him: a diamond, gold, fine delicacies, exquisite flowers... No! The King of kings wished to use the most common of daily foods. What a great lesson of humility and unpretentiousness!

Therefore, let us approach the Sacred Table, our hearts filled with devotion, uniting ourselves to her who was a living tabernacle when she carried in her virginal womb the same Jesus present in the Sacred Species. May she transform our hearts, enkindling in them flames of adoration coming from her Immaculate Heart, and make us ardent lovers of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the divine aliment and the pledge of eternal life: “This is the Bread which came down from Heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this Bread will live for ever” (Jn 6:58). ✧

¹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. A Gift Beyond Compare... In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, v.I, p.437.



Mass presided by Monsignor João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP,
in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras, (SP) 13/12/2015



Our Lady of Light
Museum of Religious Art,
Puebla (Mexico)

*Take away the sun, and what will remain
in the world other than darkness? Take
Mary from the Church, and what will there
be other than obscurity?*

St. Bernard of Clairvaux