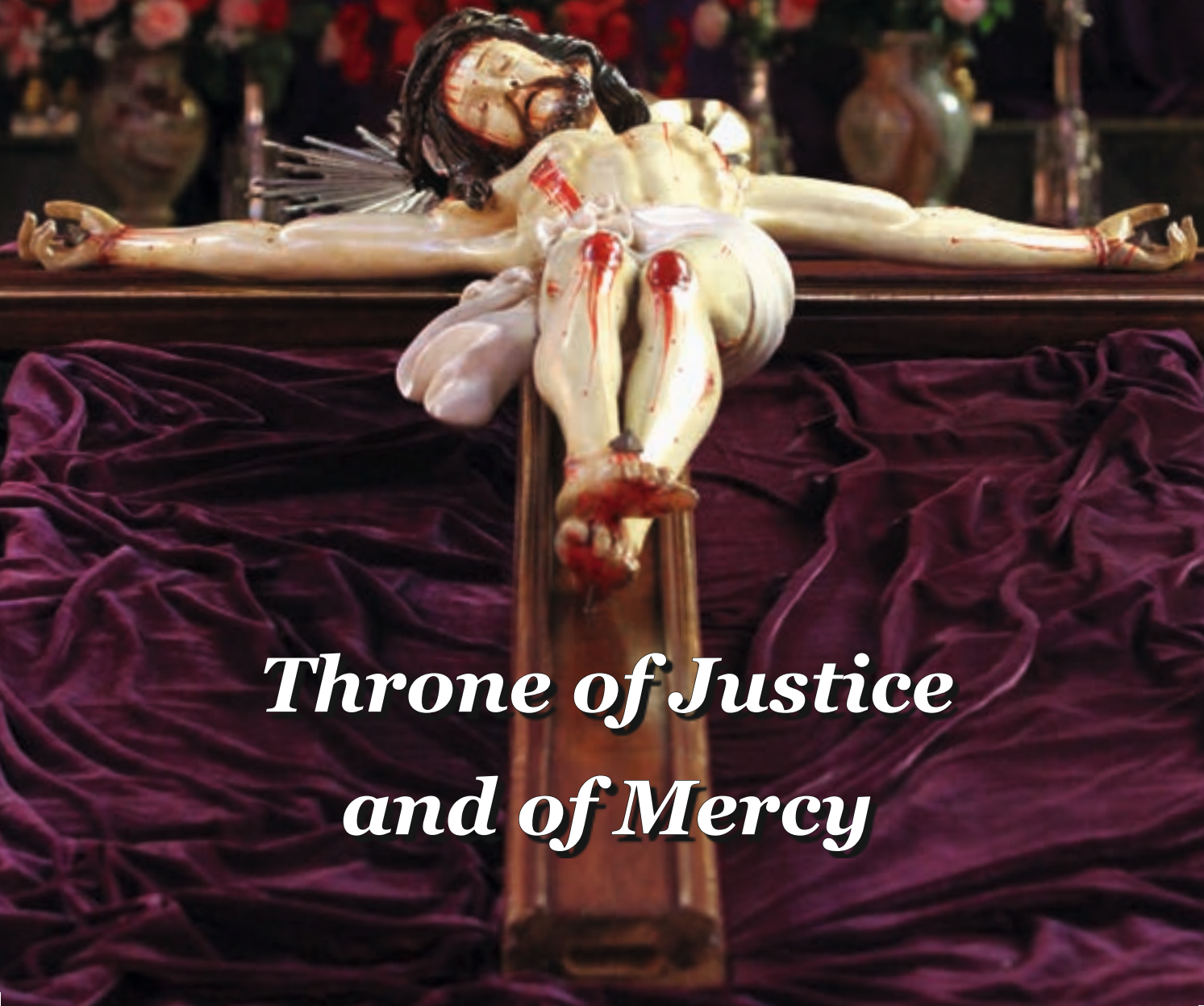




# HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Vol. 13, No. 138  
April 2019



*Throne of Justice  
and of Mercy*





Dona Lucilia Corrêa de Oliveira, photographed by Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, a few days before her death

João Scognamiglio Clá Dias

## ***Was Dona Lucilia a Saint?***

**I**n her magnificent letters, Dona Lucilia frequently expresses such sublime spiritual truths that the reader experiences sentiments similar to those produced by the inimitable epistolary writings of St. Teresa of Avila.

For this very reason, I dare to frame in concrete terms a question that naturally and clearly comes to mind with the reading of this marvelous *Life of Dona Lucilia* [written by Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias].

Was Dona Lucilia a true saint, in the full sense of the word? Or, to put it differently, did her Christian virtues reach the heroic degree indispensably required for a person to be recognized by the Church with beatification

and canonization? In view of the rigorously historical data that this biography offers us in such abundance, I dare to answer, without the least hesitation, with a resounding yes.

The final word belongs to the Holy, Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the infallible mistress of the truth. But to us falls the sweet duty and the sacred right to humbly beseech Divine Providence to heed our heartfelt petition, for the glory of God and the greater good of souls.

Fr. Antonio Royo Marín, OP



# HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Vol. 13, No. 138, April 2019

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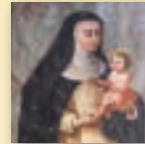
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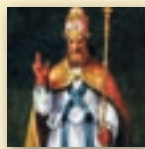
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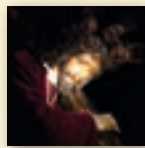
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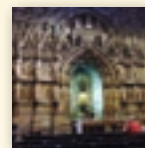
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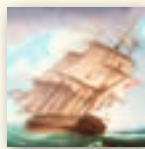
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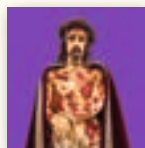
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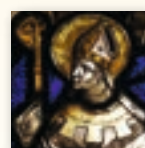
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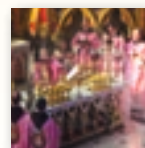
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# OUR READERS WRITE

## **BRINGS THE BEAUTY OF THE HOLY GOSPEL TO LIFE**

I wish to greet and thank Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias for all the works of evangelization done by the members of the Heralds of the Gospel through the chapels, the books and especially through *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine, which brings the beauty of the Holy Gospel to life. It is presented and discussed in a didactic, dynamic and accessible manner, increasing our religious knowledge and the desire for holiness which will make us similar to Christ and His Church.

May God and Our Lady continue to bless and lead each one of the members of the Heralds in the evangelization and sanctification of souls.

*Catiany Barbosa  
São Paulo – Brazil*

## **SHOWING THE TRUTHS OF THE FAITH THAT THE WORLD NEEDS**

I am very happy when the monthly magazine arrives, because it is such a pleasure to read. It has captivating teachings that I have never found in any other magazine. I find witnesses of the Gospel and lives of the Saints that I had never heard of before. Please continue to send me the magazine; I always look forward to receiving it, for I know I will discover something new. I ask God and His Mother to continue to illuminate your minds, to show the truths of the Faith that the world needs so much.

*Nazarina de Jesus Pacheco  
São Miguel Island – Azores, Portugal*

## **ARTICLES FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF COMMUNITIES**

*Heralds of the Gospel* magazine has been very important to my family. Whenever we are involved in evangelization, we use its articles to provide formation in our communities.

What stands out is the combative, joyful and concrete approach given to all of the material. Something that especially caught my attention was a reflection of Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias in which he highlights the episode of Our Lord Jesus Christ convoking the Apostles to pray in the Garden and He finds them sleeping, while the wicked plot to arrest Jesus... And worse: Judas was awake, with that terrible goal of betraying the Master!

*Carlos Leonardo Lopes  
Miracema – Brazil*

## **JOY IN SEEING THE GROWTH OF THE HERALDS**

Many thanks for the beautiful *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine, which is always filled with beautiful teachings.

What joy to see how the work is growing – so many children of the Blessed Virgin Mary! I cannot repay you for all that this means to me, seeing all these young people who will later become priests and religious, sons and daughters of Mary, ready to save souls. This is also the intention I pray for in my Rosaries.

I wish you much success and reiterate the immense joy the magazine gives me. May God bless you always.

*Herminia García  
Osorno – Chile*

## **A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH**

Receiving *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine is always a source of joy, for it is a beautiful magazine, both for its layout and its content. Each article is a clear demonstration of faith, which touches me deeply and compels me to reflect on the things that happen with me and around me.

I know, admire and respect the work that you have been doing for so long. A former student of mine belonged to your youth group, and I noticed the diligence and devotion he put into everything he did. That was when I decided I had to get to know more about you. I offer my profound gratitude for your kindness. Your letters always have the best of messages. Thank you so much.

*Alisva Rodríguez  
Guayaquil – Ecuador*

## **EFFICACIOUS INSTRUMENT FOR GROWTH IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE**

*Heralds of the Gospel* magazine is a veritable treasure for every Catholic, especially at the present time, in which the mass media seems to have almost completely forgotten God and the Church.

It is a joy to read the stories of the Saints, their miracles, the wonders of Christian Civilization and especially the very insightful Gospel commentaries, which help us to reflect on our attitudes and the commitments we should make, if we are truly seeking sanctity. It reminds us of the joy of being Catholic, without forgetting that this life is always accompanied by the cross.

In short, it is an efficacious instrument for growth in the spiritual life.

*Shary Picón  
Lima – Peru*



## THE BEST GATE IS ALWAYS THE NARROWEST

Today's world is increasingly hostile to suffering, understanding it less and less. We flee it whenever possible, and when it does burst into our lives, it is often considered an injustice. We forget that life on this earth – called a “valley of tears” by St. Bernard – is filled with struggles and, although it does bring joys, it also entails many afflictions.

Undeniably, the life of the wicked is always easier and more agreeable. Believing that they will not have to respond to a Judge on the fulfilment of the Moral Law, they indulge freely in the pleasures that this world offers, which are rarely legitimate, and often perverse and criminal.

Notwithstanding, the godless do not know peace; they live in a constant and feverish search for new and more intense pleasures. They are agitated, worried that they may lose what they have gained, and wary of the deceit and betrayal that make up their environment. In some obscure corner of their guilty consciences, they are haunted by chimeras of the law, the police and prison.

The righteous, in turn, live in the same world, under the same difficult conditions and the same law. In addition to shouldering the portion of suffering that is everyone's lot and the privations and restrictions that their uprightness imposes on them, they are often persecuted, opposed and misunderstood by the ungodly, even within their own family.

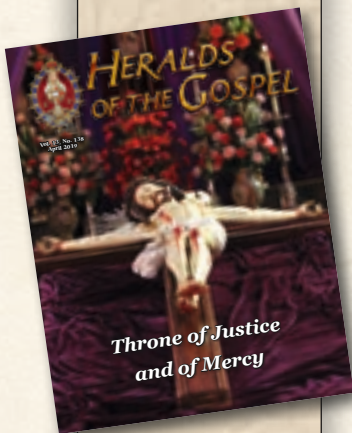
They may occasionally receive some modest reward for the good they do, but this is not the rule. However, they live in peace, because they have a clear conscience, and in the twilight of this life, they calmly surrender their soul. After all, the prospect of God's judgement is not a terrifying one for them.

In the end, both the just and the unjust, the holy and the impious, will die... Young and old, poor and rich, weak and powerful – we will all find ourselves on the other side. Our life is an enigma that is only resolved after death; the great difference will be the destination that is reached.

Jesus purchased our salvation at a high price, and we will benefit from it as long as we follow His example. However, having been redeemed by our Saviour, we no longer belong to ourselves, but to Him. Since there has been a Redemption, we will be judged in light of it.

The Cross is the throne from which Christ reigns over the world, and from which He will judge humanity when He returns. From there, He contemplates the conversion of the Good Thief and observes the impenitence of the bad.

Thus, in the presence of the Crucified One, only two paths lay open, and we will be placed either on the right or the left; there is no third position between justice and mercy, despite the rationalizations touted by widespread relativism. Mercy for those who accept the ways of God or, having abandoned them, return; and Justice to those who reject them. This is why Jesus taught that the gate of Heaven is narrow... ✧



*Adoration of the Holy Cross in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (São Paulo)*

Photo: Thiago Tamura Nogueira





# *The Wondrous Power of the Cross*

During the Passion, the Lord carried the wood of the Cross, which became for Him a sceptre of power. With invincible steadfastness, He displayed upon His shoulders, for all the people to adore, the standard of salvation.

**H**aving discoursed in our last sermon on the events which preceded the Lord's arrest, it now remains, with the help of divine grace, to discuss, as we promised, the details of the Passion itself.

## *The sons of darkness assail the true Light*

The Lord had made it clear by the words of His sacred prayer (cf. Jn 17) that both the human and divine natures were most truly and fully present in Him. From one proceeded the reluctance to suffer, from the other the determination to suffer.

However, having banished the fears stemming from weakness and confirming the greatness of His strength, He returned to the resolution of the eternal designs, and in the condition of a sinless Slave, He resisted the fury of the devil who attacked Him by the hands of the Jews. In this way, the cause of all would be undertaken by the sole One who shared the nature of all, without sin.

The sons of darkness, therefore, assailed the true Light. And though

they used torches and lanterns, they could not escape the night of their infidelity, because they did not recognize the Author of the light. They arrest Him, who puts up no resistance; they lead Him away, and He is willing to be led. If He had willed to resist, their wicked hands could have done Him no harm, yet thereby the world's Redemption would have been delayed. Without suffering, He who came to die for all men's salvation would have saved none.

Allowing the people's fury, incited by the priests, to afflict Him as much as it dared do, He is brought to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, and then sent back to Caiaphas, by order of Annas. After the calumnious accusations made against Him and the false testimony of bribed witnesses, a delegation of the high priests brings Him to the tribunal of Pilate. [...]

## *The Lord was handed over to the wrath of His enemies*

Bowing to the madness of the implacable mob, Pilate allowed Jesus to be tormented with outrageous barbarities and unspeakable insults.



St. Leo the Great, by Bernardino Campi / Reproduction

He then presented Him to the crowd scourged, crowned with thorns, and clothed in a robe of derision.

Pilate doubtless thought to appease His enemies, so that when they had satisfied their envious hatred, they might cease to further persecute the One Whom they beheld already so abused. However, their wrath was only further kindled, and they cried out for the liberation of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus. "His blood be on us and on our children" (Mt 27:25), the crowd roared in unison. Thus, those wicked people obtained, to their own condemnation, that which they persistently demanded. [...]

And so the Lord was handed over to the wrath of His enemies and they, in order to mock His royal dignity, obliged Him to carry the Cross. Thus was fulfilled what Isaiah had foretold: "For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulders" (Is 9:6).

Therefore, the Lord carried the wood of the Cross, which became for Him a sceptre of power. For the



wicked, this was an object of derision, but to the eyes of the faithful a great mystery was set forth, for the most glorious vanquisher of the devil and the omnipotent destroyer of the opposing powers, resplendent with beauty, bore the trophy of His triumph.

With invincible steadfastness, He displayed upon His shoulders, for all the people to adore, the standard of salvation. By His example, He strengthened all His followers, as if saying to them: “He who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me” (Mt 10:38). [..]

***Fount of all blessings and source of all graces***

O wondrous power of the Cross! O ineffable glory of the Passion! In it is contained the Lord’s tribunal, the world’s judgment, and the power of the Crucified.

For Thou didst draw all things unto Thyself, Lord, and when Thou didst stretch out Thy arms during an entire day to an unbelieving people that rebelled against Thee (cf. Is 65:2; Rom 10:21), the entire world was touched by the divine light to proclaim Thy majesty.

Thou didst draw all things unto Thyself, Lord, when all the elements combined to pronounce judgment in execration of the crime committed against Thee: the heavenly lights were darkened, and the day turned into night, and the earth was shaken by extraordinary tremors, and all creation repudiated those wicked men.

Thou didst draw all things unto Thyself, Lord, for when the veil of the Temple was rent, the Holy of Holies separated itself from those unworthy high priests, so that the image give way to the Truth; the prophecy to manifestation, and the Law, to the Gospel.

Thou didst draw all things unto Thyself, Lord, so that what before was done in the one Temple of Ju-

dea, under dark symbols, was now to be celebrated in all the nations of the world, by means of a perfect and manifest sacrament.

In fact, there is now a more illustrious rank of Levites; there are elders of greater dignity and a more sacred anointing of priests, because Thy Cross is the fount of all blessings and the source of all graces. Through it the faithful receive strength for weakness, glory for shame, and life for death.

Now the variety of carnal sacrifices has ceased, and the one offering of Thy Body and Blood makes all the other victims unnecessary, for Thou art the true “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29).

*Let that come to pass of which the Apostle spoke: “Those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised”*

Thus, in Thee is accomplished all mysteries, for just as there is but one sacrifice, all the peoples form but one kingdom.

***“Those who live might live no longer for themselves”***

Therefore, let us confess that which the blessed teacher of the nations, the Apostle Paul, confessed with a glorious voice: “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim 1:15).

Thus, God’s mercy towards us is all the more wonderful since Christ

died not for the righteous nor for the holy, but for the unrighteous and wicked. And though the divine nature could not receive the sting of death, He was born as one of us so that He might assume that which He would offer for us. For long ago He threatened our death with the power of His death, saying by the lips of Hosea: “O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy destruction” (13:14 Vulgate).


For by dying He subjected Himself to the laws of hell, but by rising again, He abolished them. He destroyed the perpetuity of death, making it temporal instead of eternal. “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22).

And so, dearly-beloved, let that come to pass of which the Apostle Paul spoke: “Those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor 5:15). Now, as the old things have passed away and all things have become new, let none remain in his old carnal life, but let us all be renewed by daily progress and growth in piety. For however much a man be justified, yet so long as he remains in this life, he can always be more perfect. And he that is not advancing is regressing, and he that is gaining nothing is losing something.

Thus, let us take care to march in step with faith, by works of mercy, in the love of righteousness, so that by celebrating spiritually the day of our Redemption, “not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8), we may deserve to be partakers of Christ’s Resurrection, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen. ✧

*St. Leo the Great. Excerpts from Sermon LIX, on the Passion of the Lord: PL 54, 337-342*





Our Lord of Pity  
Church of St. Roch,  
Seville (Spain)

❧ PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,  
ACCORDING TO JOHN ❧

<sup>1</sup> Jesus went out with His disciples across the Kidron valley to where there was a garden, into which He and His disciples entered. <sup>2</sup> Judas His betrayer also knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with His disciples. <sup>3</sup> So Judas got a band of soldiers and guards from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and went there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. <sup>4</sup> Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to

Him, went out and said to them, “Whom are you looking for?” <sup>5</sup> They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazorean.” He said to them, “I am.” Judas His betrayer was also with them. <sup>6</sup> When He said to them, “I am,” they turned away and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup> So He again asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” They said, “Jesus the Nazorean.” <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, “I told you that I am. So if you are looking for Me, let

# “What Profit Is There in My Blood?”

On the day that the Holy Church reflects on the perfect sacrificial holocaust offered by the Divine Redeemer to the Father, we are invited to meditate on how our sins weigh in Jesus’ sufferings.



**Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP**

## **I – “BEHOLD THE MAN!”**

Holy Church establishes the ceremony of Good Friday – the very heart of our devotion and religiosity – with extraordinary care and sensitivity. In her divine wisdom, perfection, and impeccable spirit, she chooses the Gospel of the Passion according to St. John to illuminate and strengthen faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the true Son of God. The text is so clear and eloquent that on its own it nourishes our meditation without extensive explanation. Moreover, given the length of the passage, it would be impossible to comment on it verse by verse. For this reason, we will limit ourselves to highlighting some passages that will help our spiritual progress and increase our understanding the grandeur of the Passion, a central event in the history of humanity.

### *Adam in his splendour*

“Behold the Man!” (Jn 19:5), Pilate announced as he brought Jesus out of the praetorium after the scourging. Our Lord was cov-

ered with blood from head to foot, crowned with thorns, with a reed of derision between His bound hands, in complete and entire humility, for He is Humility. The King of the universe, the God-Man, was presented to the people as “the Man,” in the most degrading conditions possible. It is a poignant, but also richly symbolic scene.

Let us call to mind Adam, created by God as the perfect model of the human race. Every supernatural, preternatural, and natural privilege was granted to him in abundance, in proportions difficult for us to imagine. He was a magnificent man, admirable for having been moulded directly by the divine hands. Upon creating him, God could well have exclaimed in satisfaction: “Behold the man!” The very Angels, contemplating Adam in Paradise, were enchanted to see the beauty that God had conferred on him, adorning him with gifts and qualities, and giving him a high degree of participation in the divine nature. He lacked only one thing: for that grace to blossom into glory. From this life, he

*Adam was a magnificent man, moulded directly by the divine hands*



these men go.”<sup>9</sup> This was to fulfill what He had said, “I have not lost any of those You gave Me.”

<sup>10</sup> Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave’s name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup> Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave Me?”

<sup>12</sup> So the band of soldiers, the tribune, and the Jewish guards seized Jesus, bound Him, <sup>13</sup> and brought Him to Annas first. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. <sup>14</sup> It was Caiaphas who had counseled the Jews that it was better that one man should die rather than the people.

<sup>15</sup> Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Now the other disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered the courtyard of the high priest with Jesus. <sup>16</sup> But Peter stood at the gate outside. So the other disciple, the acquaintance of the high priest, went out and spoke to the gatekeeper and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup> Then the maid who was the gatekeeper said to Peter, “You are not one of this Man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” <sup>18</sup> Now the slaves and the guards were standing around a charcoal fire that they had made, because it was cold, and they were warming themselves. Peter was also standing there keeping warm.

<sup>19</sup> The high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and about His doctrine. <sup>20</sup> Jesus answered him, “I have spoken publicly to the world. I have always taught in a synagogue or in the Temple area where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing. <sup>21</sup> Why ask Me? Ask those who heard Me what I said to them. They know what I said.” <sup>22</sup> When He had said this, one of the Temple guards standing there struck Jesus and said, “Is this the way you answer the high priest?” <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike Me?”

<sup>24</sup> Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

<sup>25</sup> Now Simon Peter was standing there keeping warm. And they said to him, “You are not one of His disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” <sup>26</sup> One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said, “Didn’t I see you in the garden with Him?” <sup>27</sup> Again Peter denied it. And immediately the cock crowed.

<sup>28</sup> Then they brought Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was morning. And they themselves did not enter the praetorium, in order not to be defiled so they could eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup> So Pilate came out to them and said, “What charge do you bring against this Man?” <sup>30</sup> They answered and said to him, “If He were not a criminal, we would not have handed Him over to you.” <sup>31</sup> At this, Pilate came out to them and said, “Take Him yourselves and judge Him according to your law.” The Jews answered him, “We do not have the right to execute anyone,” <sup>32</sup> in order that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled that He said indicating the kind of death He would die.

<sup>33</sup> So Pilate went back into the praetorium and summoned Jesus and said to Him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, “Do you say this on your own, or have others told you about Me?” <sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have You done?”

<sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, “My Kingdom does not belong to this world. If My Kingdom did belong to this world, My attendants would be fighting to keep Me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, My Kingdom is not here.” <sup>37</sup> So Pilate said to Him, “Then you are a King?” Jesus answered, “You say I am a King. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice.” <sup>38</sup> Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?”

would pass into eternity without death, transforming faith into vision, hope into reality, and charity would be forever consummate.

### *The devil's derision when he deformed man*

But Satan managed to make a horror of this perfection of a man, by sin. Then, looking up at God, we can picture him scoffing and saying in reference to Adam: behold the man! Adam and Eve had become so repugnant that God expelled them from Paradise and placed Cherubim at the gate to block their entrance, because they were unworthy to live there (cf. Gn 3:23-24). Thus began the history of an unfaithful humanity, disobedient to God's commands.

### *The pure and innocent victim redeemed our sins*

On the opposite extreme – and what an opposite, and what an extreme! –, in this scene of the *Ecce Homo*, we find the true firstborn of humanity, the New Adam, incomparably more perfect than the first. His Soul, hypostatically united to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, never ceased for even a moment to be in possession of the beatific vision. So, there could exist no soul superior to His; it was holy, and never separated from the divinity. God acted like it, while it acted like God Himself. Nor could there exist a more brilliant intelligence. His supreme will adhered to everything that the understanding and the beatific vision showed Him. His most pure sensibility was of an extraordinary delicacy. Any praise would be insufficient for Him, since He was the most magnificent Man on the face of the earth.

The Father resolved to place this Man in the state of humiliation in which we see Him now, completely disfigured, “spurned and avoided by people, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity” (Is 53:3), as Isaiah describes Him in the first reading. Later, He lost so much blood along the *Via Sacra* that it was necessary for someone to help Him carry the Cross to Calvary. And when He was nailed to it, His bones could be counted (cf. Ps 22:18). In this way, Our Lord Jesus Christ Jesus is presented as the pure and innocent victim to expiate for the deformation that sin had produced in man.

His Passion gives us an idea of the gravity of sin, which cost the Man *par excellence* – mod-



Timothy Ring

“Ecce Homo” - Scala Santa, Rome

*Our Lord Jesus Christ is presented as the pure and innocent victim to expiate for the deformation that sin had produced in man*

el for the entire order of creation – such atrocious immolation: “if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Lk 23:31). If this is God's justice wreaked upon the Innocent One, Who took the weight of our crimes upon His shoulders, what will happen if we follow the path of enmity with God?

### *Justice and mercy embrace in the work of Redemption*

When the wicked angels sinned in Heaven, revolting against God—“*Non serviam!*” (Jr 2:20)—, there was an immediate and fulminating reaction from St. Michael. Without the least vacillation, he raised himself up with all the heavenly hosts, crying out, “*Quis ut Deus!*” in reparation for this great offence and casting the devils into hell. God applied His justice with full rigour. “Now war arose in Heaven, Michael and his Angels fighting against the drag-



When he had said this, he again went out to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.<sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at Passover. Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"<sup>40</sup> They cried out again, "Not this one but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

<sup>19:1</sup> Then Pilate took Jesus and had Him scourged.<sup>2</sup> And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns, and placed it on His head, and clothed Him in a purple cloak,<sup>3</sup> and they came up to Him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him repeatedly.<sup>4</sup> Once more Pilate went out and said to them, "Look, I am bringing Him out to you, so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him."<sup>5</sup> So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he said to them, "Behold the Man!"<sup>6</sup> When the chief priests and the guards saw Him they cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him. I find no guilt in Him."<sup>7</sup> The Jews answered, "We have a law, and according to that law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."<sup>8</sup> Now when Pilate heard this statement, he became even more afraid,<sup>9</sup> and went back into the praetorium and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" Jesus did not answer him.<sup>10</sup> So Pilate said to Him, "Do You not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release You, and I have power to crucify You?"<sup>11</sup> Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over Me if it had not been given to you from above. For this reason the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin."<sup>12</sup> Consequently, Pilate tried to release Him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release Him, you are not a friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."<sup>13</sup> When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and seated Him on the judge's bench in the place called Stone Pavement, in Hebrew, Gabbatha.<sup>14</sup> It was preparation day for Passover, and it was about noon. And he said to the Jews,

"Behold, your King!"<sup>15</sup> They cried out, "Take Him away! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."<sup>16</sup> Then he handed Him over to them to be crucified.

<sup>17</sup> So they took Jesus, and, carrying the Cross Himself, He went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha.<sup>18</sup> There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.<sup>19</sup> Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the Cross. It read, "Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews."<sup>20</sup> Now many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.<sup>21</sup> So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that He said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'"<sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

<sup>23</sup> When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier. They also took His tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down.<sup>24</sup> So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be," in order that the passage of Scripture might be fulfilled that says: "They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots."

<sup>25</sup> This is what the soldiers did. Standing by the Cross of Jesus were His Mother and His Mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.<sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw His Mother and the disciple there whom He loved He said to His Mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"<sup>27</sup> Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your Mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.<sup>28</sup> After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst."<sup>29</sup> There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop

on [...]. And the great dragon was thrown down [...], and his angels were thrown down with him” (Rv 12:7, 9). Similarly, when Adam and Eve sinned, tremendous wrath fell upon them and, as a result, they were consigned to this valley of tears. It is frightful to fall under the domain of God’s justice!

At the same time, we must not forget that justice and mercy embrace and kiss on the altar upon which the Divine Victim is offered. In this way, the Cross is not only a throne of justice, but also of mercy and goodness. Because of sin, God could well have deprived us forever of participation in His nature, as He did with the rebellious angels. Nevertheless, He turned the situation around by sending His own Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Who, in the words of St. Ephrem, “broke and blunted the sword of Paradise.”<sup>1</sup> Filled with compassion, He took on a mortal Body with martyrdom in mind, so as to make reparation for the sins of man and open to him the gates of Heaven, making Himself into the victim of divine justice. Only a God is capable of this! No creature would have the strength to go to such an extreme. Thus, divine life was brought within our reach, and today, we, the baptized, who live in God’s grace, have in our souls the seed of the beatific vision as we prepare ourselves for eternal happiness.

## II – THE DEFEAT OF THE POWER OF DARKNESS

The Gospels make it clear that in the Passion everything happened in accordance with the will of God the Father and with the full consent of Our Lord Jesus Christ. By virtue of His divine knowledge, His beatific knowledge and His infused knowledge, He knew what awaited Him in a perfect and detailed manner. He, all-powerful, commanded the winds, the seas, and the storms; He had power over ailments, multiplying the loaves and fishes; He walked upon the water, and resurrected the dead... Nevertheless, He accepted everything with the resignation of a lamb, without uttering a complaint.

### *Grand manifestation of Jesus’ power*

When they sought Him in the Garden of Olives, He responded: “I am” (Jn 18:5). The soldiers drew back and fell to the ground. What

did this mean? The Lord wished to prove, even to His enemies, that He was giving Himself up of His own accord. He had already sweat blood (cf. Lk 22:44) and prostrated Himself on the ground, greatly distressed and troubled (cf. Mk 14:33); He had already prayed to the Father beseeching: “Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done” (Lk 22:42); and had already shown His weakness to the alarmed Apostles. However, in declaring “I am,” the Divine Master wanted to make it clear that, if He wished, He could discontinue the Passion with that act, making the soldiers, together with Pilate, Herod and the Sanhedrin, return to nothingness. To further accentuate this note of omnipotence, He even said to St. Peter: “Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once send Me more than twelve legions of Angels?” (Mt 26:53). Thus, the Passion

*God could well have deprived us forever of participation in His nature, nevertheless, He turned the situation around*



Sergio Hollmann

Adam and Eve are expelled from Paradise (detail from the Annunciation), by Fra Angelico, Prado Museum, Madrid



and put it up to His mouth. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus had taken the wine, He said, "It is finished." And bowing His head, He handed over the spirit.

<sup>31</sup> Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for the Sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and that they be taken down. <sup>32</sup> So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. <sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs, <sup>34</sup> but one soldier thrust his lance into His side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

<sup>35</sup> An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may come to believe. <sup>36</sup> For this happened so that the Scripture passage might

be fulfilled: "Not a bone of it will be broken." <sup>37</sup> And again another passage says: "They will look upon him whom they have pierced."

<sup>38</sup> After this, Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the Body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So he came and took His Body. <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus, the one who had at first come to Him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. <sup>40</sup> They took the Body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom.

<sup>41</sup> Now in the place where He had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. <sup>42</sup> So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was close by (Jn 18:1–19:42).

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Jesus before Caiaphas, from the studio of Martin Schongauer  
Unterlinden Museum, Colmar (France)

began with a majestic manifestation of Jesus Christ's divinity.

### *In the presence of Annas*

Arrested, He is brutally led to Annas to be interrogated. On this occasion, He testifies: "I have spoken publicly to the world. I have always taught in a synagogue or in the Temple area where all Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. They know what I said" (Jn 18:20-21). In response, He received a blow... They knew His doctrine very well, for they had followed Him every step along the way, with more attention and interest than anyone.

Regarding this, St. Augustine comments: "The very things which they had heard without understanding, were such as could not with justice or truth be turned into a criminal charge against Him: and as often as they tried by their questions to find something whereof to accuse Him, He gave them such replies as utterly thwarted all their plots, and left no ground for the calumnies they devised."<sup>22</sup>

### *Immeasurable dynamism of evil*

As the scenes of the Passion unfold and the humiliations and offences against Our Lord multiply, we are gripped with deep indignation.

In the Gospel of St. John, we glimpse a reality that prompts us to ask if it had not been his intention to demonstrate the great dynamism of evil. Indeed, evil would have succeeded in triumphing over the Church, had it not been for the promise of the Divine Master: "the powers of death will not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). Without the grace of God and His direct intervention, no one would have the strength to resist the devil's fury, for, as St. Peter Chrysologus says, his insatiable cruelty "is not satisfied that men become corrupt, but turns them into promoters of vice and teachers of delinquency."<sup>23</sup> There was the Author of grace, the Saviour, God Incarnate! What evil did against Him is incalculable. Faced with this reality, one can understand the reaction of Clovis,

King of the Franks, who, upon hearing the narration of the Passion from St. Remigius exclaimed in outrage: "Ah, if only I had been there with my Franks!"<sup>24</sup> But Clovis, without the help of grace, would also have been shouting: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" For man, after original sin, is capable of all crimes, even the greatest of crimes – the deicide. Nevertheless, Our Lord Jesus Christ, with His death on the Cross, defeated the power of darkness and destroyed its vigour and capacity of diffusion.

### **III – HAVE WE PLAYED A PART IN JESUS' SUFFERINGS?**

We, too, perhaps without realizing it, contribute to this grave injustice each time we sin. How important it is for us to remember this when the devil tempts us, or our inclinations entice us to evil! In effect, we strike Jesus just as His cruel executioners did. Sin is, to a certain extent, a participation in the deicide. If all men, from Adam and Eve until the last, had persevered, and one of us were the sole perpetrator of a single fault, that one would be responsible for these torments, for Jesus would have taken on flesh and suffered all of this, even if only for that one.

*As the scenes  
of the Passion  
unfold and the  
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indignation*



### *Model of chastity, poverty, and obedience*

Let us examine some episodes of His terrible Passion. What did they do to Him? They tore off His clothes. As Our Lord Jesus Christ is the archetype for all humanity, His sense of modesty is the most excellent possible. What must He have felt interiorly as He underwent this horrendous experience? He permitted this humiliation to make reparation for the sins of sensuality. How many aberrations of ostentation in clothing and excesses in fashion, due to vanity! What loss of moral sense and modesty as a result! And us, how do we control our sensuality? Do we make an effort to avoid near occasions of sin?

Deprived of His garments, He, the King of the universe, was left with nothing in His possession. They left Him only a contemptuous symbol of His royalty – the crown of thorns. And how attached are we to earthly goods?

In the Passion, the Saviour also wanted to be a model of obedience for us. Despite the violence committed against Him, He submitted to everything showing not the least inconformity or resistance, in expiation for our disobedience to the Law of God and legitimately constituted authorities.

The psalmist's phrase, "*Quæ utilitas in sanguine meo?* – What profit is there in My blood?" (Ps 29:10) can be applied to Our Lord. This question resounds not only in the Passion, but today: what profit is there in Our Lord Jesus Christ's Blood for us, in the twenty-first century? What profit does this Blood have for me? This most precious Blood poured out, until the last drop, for me!

### *Pilate, typical example of lukewarmness*

We are shocked with Pilate's response to hearing the following affirmation from Jesus' lips: "My Kingdom does not belong to this world. [...] For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice" (Jn 18:36-37). This governor – a weak, mediocre, vulgar and worldly man, an opportunist – rejected, at that moment, an invitation to belong to this other Kingdom... "What is truth?" (Jn 18:38), he asked, and then walked away. It is likely that, in the depth of his soul, he felt the desire to clearly know the truth, but he perceived that Our Lord's answer would oblige him to be completely honest

and to forsake the sophisms which he had concocted to cover his guilt with a variety of spurious veils. Pilate knew that he could not condemn Our Lord and he looked for a way out, to be at peace with his conscience.

### *Justifying evil leads us to the worst sins*

Pilate is the perfect image of those who concoct increasingly obscure excuses to quiet their conscience, until they lower themselves to the point of committing sin. Since man is intrinsically logical and never practices evil for evil's sake, he always seeks an explanation to justify his crime. How often do we sin, certain that this was not the right path to have taken! How many consciences have become deformed, after the manner of Pilate's, for not wanting to accept the truth as it is!

Further on, his conscience troubled him when he heard that Our Lord had called Himself the Son of God, so Pilate asked Him: "Where are You from?" (Jn 19:9). But Jesus did not answer him, for when consciences become lax, the Lord no longer speaks to them. Only in the end does He offer one last chance, reminding him: "You would have no power over Me if it had not been given you from above. For this reason the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin" (Jn 19:11). And St. John adds: "Consequently, Pilate tried to release Him" (Jn 19:12). However... a conscience without integrity is dragged along by depraved public opinion, by bad companions, by the devil, until it veers off course and falls into the abyss. This is what happened to Pilate in his tepidity: he washed his hands and ended up condemning Jesus, but without wanting to take responsibility for His death. "I am innocent of this righteous man's blood; see to it yourselves" (Mt 27:24). This incoherent attitude will be recalled in the Creed until the end of time: "He suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Incoherent to the extreme. The courage that he lacked to confront the Sanhedrin and to save Our Lord's life, which was in his hands – despite being warned by his wife (cf. Mt 27:19), by the voice of grace and by Jesus' very presence – he regained when the Jews protested the inscription fastened to the Cross: "*Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews*" (Jn 19:19). In this trifling and secondary matter he shows rock-solid firmness and imposes his authority. And us? Are we

*Pilate is the perfect image of those who concoct increasingly obscure excuses to quiet their conscience*



Leandro Souza

Good Friday ceremony, presided by Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias  
Our Lady of the Rosary Basilica, Caieiras (SP), 14/4/2014

*May I  
dedicate  
myself  
entirely to  
embracing a  
life of virtue,  
of purity,  
humility and  
obedience –  
in a word,  
of holiness!*

demanding about trivial things and negligent when it comes to grave and important issues?

***An appropriate day for a good examination of conscience***

We could go over each of the episodes in this sublime narration of the Passion and draw more conclusions from them for an examination of conscience... in an endless article. Instead, let us make use of what has been covered until this point to ardently ask the grace of making reparation for all of this through good works and, above all, through a horror of sin. Isn't it time, recalling Our Lord's Passion and Death, to make a serious resolution to amend our lives, to cut with our whims and errors and transform

our lives into an act of atonement for everything that Jesus suffered? Let us have such true repentance for our faults, and such a supernatural spirit, that we ask for holiness with a sincere heart – a holiness which is not so much the result of personal effort, but rather the grace of God. We should implore it insistently, for the Saviour has already won it for us on this day, from the height of Calvary. "By the tree of the Cross, you were given back much greater goods than those you lamented having lost by the tree of Paradise."<sup>5</sup>

May I dedicate myself entirely to embracing a life of virtue, of purity, humility and obedience – in a word, of holiness in order keep the Mother of Jesus company at the foot of the Cross. ✧

<sup>1</sup> ST. EPHREM OF NISIBIS. Himnos sobre el Paraiso, 2, 1, apud ODEN, Thomas C.; LOUTH, Andrew; CONTI, Marco. *La Biblia comentada por los Padres de la Iglesia, vol. I: Génesis 1-11*. Madrid:

Ciudad Nueva, 2001, p.163.  
<sup>2</sup> ST. AUGUSTINE. In Ioannis Evangelium, tract. CXIII, n.3. In: *Obras, vol. XIV*. (Ed.3). Madrid: BAC, 2009, p.845.

<sup>3</sup> ST. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS. Sermo II (De duobus filiis prodigo et frugi, II), n.5. In: *Homilias Escogidas*. Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 1998, p.50.  
<sup>4</sup> FRÉDÉGAIRE, III, 21, apud KURTH, Go-

defroid. *Clovis*. Paris: Jules Taillandier, 1978, p.297.  
<sup>5</sup> ST. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS. Sermo LX (De Symbolum Apostolorum, V), n.8. In: *Homilias Escogidas*, op. cit., p.186.



# *The Soft Twilight of a Long and Beautiful Life*

Dona Lucilia cast a glance filled with sweetness, serenity and kindness over her long past. She had lived, suffered, and struggled with all of life's adversities, without holding grudges, and without bitterness. Her death marked the end and the summit of a peaceful and unwavering ascension.

**Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP**

**P**rovidence reserved the harshest trial of Dona Lucilia's existence for the final months of her life. Old age had perfected her charity, and the resignation of her soul had reached a sublime apogee. She was only five months away from her particular judgment.

At this juncture, Dona Lucilia had a clear notion, owing to her sharp maternal intuition, that something very grave was happening to the "very beloved son of her heart," although family members and friends sought to hide from her the diabetic crisis that befell him towards the end of 1967.

Obligated to spend a long period convalescing within the confines of his apartment, Dr. Plinio soon began to receive an influx of visits from disciples and friends. The physical blow that Dr. Plinio suffered, then, resulted in Dona Lucilia becoming better known and – why not say it – admired.

*Gentle manners, filled with kindness*

Anyone who had the pleasure of visiting that apartment and spending

time in the company of Dona Lucilia during the final months of her earthly existence was in a good position to evaluate the high degree of consideration, gentleness and esteem inherent to her noble manners, even in their simplest expressions. Endowed with a respectful and affectionate character, she was a master in the difficult art of treating others with affable dignity, in a way which always made them feel at home.

Because of her supernatural sense of compassion, it caused her acute suffering to see someone – even a stranger – saddened or slighted. The skill with which she immediately sought to apply the balm of the right word, the fitting expression, a good counsel in a difficult situation, solace in sorrow, and alms for those in need, was admirable.

Dona Lucilia's own happiness depended on that of her neighbour... Her soul was moved by the desire to make each person happy, which explains her deep regret when she could not do so. It was the affection of a totally and essentially Catholic heart. Her soul's joy consisted in lov-

ing others for the love of God, and being loved by them. However, when her goodwill was not reciprocated, she never succumbed to sentiments of bitterness, for she did not pursue personal benefit or advantage in these relationships.

*Seen through the "brise-bise" fingering her rosary*

Dona Lucilia's age never caused her to leave off her habit of praying the Rosary every afternoon. She carried out this important activity seated in her wheelchair, in the dining room, as she contemplated the tree-tops of Buenos Aires Square and enjoyed the sun's last rays which penetrated through the window. Those were wonderful sunsets, rarely seen in the greyish megalopolis of São Paulo today. Those evenings harmonized admirably with Dona Lucilia's thoroughly Brazilian soul.

To those fortunate enough to observe her through the folds of the *brise-bise* on the door of the adjoining room,<sup>1</sup> she was a true monument! It was impossible to separate the nobility from the religiosity of this lady



David Ayusso / João Scognamiglio Clá Dias / Personal archive

At left, Dona Lucilia Corrêa de Oliveira in the 1960s; and at right, the Author at the same time; in the background, sunset on the Serra da Cantareira (São Paulo)

of ninety-one years. To speak of her virtues is to speak of nobility, and vice versa. In fact, there was something more than nobility in Dona Lucilia; she was blessed with an august soul.

She assumed such an upright and composed posture and prayed with such piety and devotion that the sight was stirring.

***In the throes of ill-health, manners imbued with kindness***

As far as her strength permitted, Dona Lucilia carried out the social duties of a housewife to perfection. We have already observed this in a special way, as she prayed her evening prayers.

Upon noting the presence of a friend of Dr. Plinio in the apartment, she took an interest in learning from her maid who was waiting for her son.

— Mirene! Who is there? — she would ask, already entirely disposed to receive the unexpected visitor.

Regarding this exceptional way of being, a certain youth recounted a beautiful episode that serves as proof of this eminent *Paulista* lady's elevated virtue:

*“I remember leaving that conversation so delighted that it seemed that I had been in the company of an Angel more than a human being”*

“Dona Lucilia bid me enter the dining room, as soon as she finished her pious recitation of the Rosary, and, after having given me the customary explanations of the reason for Dr. Plinio’s delay in receiving me, she had me sit down to afternoon tea in her company.”

Almost three hours of conversation passed by as if they were a few minutes. Three decades later, this young man still remembered with emotion the utter gentleness and the enveloping affection of Dona Lucilia towards him on that occasion.

He related:

“She endeavoured to entertain me the entire time, discussing the topics most agreeable to me, within an atmosphere of serenity and benevolence. I remember leaving that conversation so delighted that it seemed that I had been in the company of an Angel more than a human being. She communicated such an impression of well-being, that I even imagined Dona Lucilia to be a lady who had never suffered the least discomfort in her life, for at no moment did she show even the slightest degree of malaise or fatigue, disposed as she was to do good for my soul, as far as the limits of time would allow.”

He then continued his narration, describing Dona Lucilia’s facial expressions, her small and elegant gestures, her voice, her gaze and her hands.

On that same day, after this conversation, Dr. Plinio called him into his office to arrange a telephone call with Dona Lucilia’s doctor. It was 9:30 p.m. on a Saturday.

The youth was astonished to overhear Dr. Plinio telling the doctor that Dona Lucilia had spent the whole



day feeling very indisposed, and was in such discomfort that she certainly would not be able to sleep. After describing all of her symptoms to the physician in detail, Dr. Plinio asked his assistant to take down the name of the injection prescribed. Since the young man had some knowledge of this particular medication, he realized what Dona Lucilia's real physical state was – she who had so cheerfully entertained him at such length. He recalls: “Kindness was second nature in Dona Lucilia. This episode made it clearer to me that she had spent her life doing good to others – ‘*pertransiit benefaciendo*’ (Acts 10:38).”

Seeing that there was no one else to buy the injection, this same young man volunteered to run the errand. Then, owing to the absence of the medical assistant on duty, he himself was invited by Dr. Plinio to administer it to Dona Lucilia, since he was qualified for this. It would be the occasion of another episode which would mark the life of this happy youth. When he was led into Dona Lucilia's room, he was filled with admiration and emotion to see her lying on her bed with such dignity. He narrates:

“Dona Lucilia, I am here to apply an injection prescribed by your doctor,” I said when I greeted her.

“Dona Lucilia's instinctive concern for others was extraordinary, even if she was feeling unwell, as on that occasion. In addition to the transient symptoms she was experiencing, she was just a few months away from her death; nevertheless, her attention was focused on her neighbour.

“In that atmosphere of composure and respectability, under the soft light of a small lamp, her first reaction was to look at me attentively and say:

“To think that it is on a Saturday night that I am putting you to all this trouble! I beg your pardon for disrupting your plans.”

“Without showing the slightest displeasure during the injection, which

caused some discomfort, Dona Lucilia said right afterwards:

“I really regret having put you to all this trouble.”

“Not at all, Dona Lucilia. It is rather I who am sorry that you had to undergo this injection.”

“But I thank you very much,” concluded Dona Lucilia, in her manner of unsurpassable sweetness.”

This episode once more brings back the remembrance of her limpid gaze, and her smile...

### *The last day of her life, spent in calmness and tranquillity*

Despite her advanced age, her features and her expression seemed to suggest that she might live for a long time yet, especially since longevity was a family trait. No one imagined that, within a short time, she would depart from this world for eternity.

Approximately one month before her death, she experienced a sudden deterioration of health. Her final days had arrived. Dr. Plinio recalls:

“I remember that on April 20<sup>th</sup>, the eve of Mama's death, I saw that her heart was much worse, and I literally spent the entire day in her bedroom. Whenever I had to step out, I returned promptly. She was so oppressed by shortness of breath that she could not speak, and she felt the agony, the angst which a lack of air naturally causes. But she remained calm, tranquil, and serene.”

### *Entreaties of an anguished son*

Dr. Plinio continues:

“Not long before, I had asked Our Lady to show me the maternal kindness of having Mama's death occur at a moment that would be the least painful for her and for me. This seemed to me a reasonable request and one that would be well received by Our Lady.

“I asked myself what the most favourable conditions would be for

this. Evidently, my desire was that her death would be tranquil, serene, with that grandeur which, in the midst of so much kindness, she had never lost for a single moment; and with proof that her death was united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and to the Holy Catholic Church.

“I also asked that I not be surprised during the night with the news of her death, but that it come during the day, in this way avoiding the terrible shock of being awoken in the middle of the night with someone telling me:

“Dona Lucilia is dying...”

“That would be horrible. I wanted to be spared that.

“I expressed yet another desire to Our Lady: if Mama were to expire in the morning, I would hope it to be at an hour after which I had read the newspaper, because after her death I would not have strength for that, and I could miss a piece of news that was important for the Catholic Cause.

“It was exactly in this manner that everything unfolded. Just as I finished reading the paper, the nurse came into my room and said to me:

“Dona Lucilia is dying, you must come quickly.”

“Point by point, everything that I had asked for came about, except one detail: I would have liked to have witnessed the final moments of her life. But Our Lady was kind even in that, sparing me something which would have been extremely painful for me. From Mama, Providence asked one last trial: the absence of her son in that supreme moment of her life.”

### *Sustained by confidence in God up until the very last moment*

Dr. Plinio concludes:

“She conserved, in that extreme of weakness, the surety of an ordered spirit and intelligence, and a good conscience. She walked through the

shadows of death with all serenity...

“Up until her final moments, she was sustained by confidence, which gave her the certainty of attaining that towards which her entire life seemed to be aimed: that people open up to her and let themselves be fully enveloped by her kindness.

“A part of this light was unveiled to Mama near the end, when she became acquainted with the many youths who would go to my apartment, partly to visit me, but even more to see and talk with her, especially certain ones who had more contact with her. It was also during this time – more than throughout her whole past – that she spread that Christian sweetness and goodness of which her heart was overflowing. This was the apex.

“During those days, I had a vague notion that she spoke with the people who waited to see me. I could not have imagined, however, that the understanding between them had been so deep. I would see her enter the office or my bedroom, with a vibrant and joyful look, and I asked myself: ‘But, why?’ Only after she died, speaking with one or another, I discovered that they had talked with her, asked her questions, taken her photograph...

“And so I thanked Our Lady, because her final days were filled with marks of kindness, the starting point of a relationship that would continue, later on, at her tomb...”

### *Glory, light and joy*

Most certainly, on that 21<sup>st</sup> of April of 1968 – the soft twilight of a long and beautiful life – Dona Lucilia cast a glance filled with sweet-



Dona Lucilia Corrêa de Oliveira photographed by Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, a few days before her death

*She made a large Sign of the Cross, and with utter peace of soul and trust in Divine mercy, fell asleep in the Lord...*

ness, serenity, kindness, a sense of observation, and a touch of sadness over her long past.

She had confronted everything. She had lived, suffered, and struggled with all of life's adversities, without holding grudges, without bitter-

ness or recrimination, but also without yielding or giving in. It was the end and the summit of a peaceful and unwavering ascension.

Those who saw her on her deathbed had the impression – to the degree befitting the housewife that she was – that the light of heavenly glory was already somehow illuminating her features, so affable, so amiable and so peaceful up until the very end.

It was the peacefulness of one who felt protected by Divine Providence, and who knew that the only thing wanting was to render her soul to God, next to whom would be reserved a three-fold happiness: glory, light and joy.

Thus, on the morning of April 21<sup>st</sup>, with her eyes wide open, fully conscious of the solemn moment that was approaching, she raised herself slightly, made a large Sign of the Cross, and with

utter peace of soul and trust in Divine mercy, fell asleep in the Lord...

“*Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur* – Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord” (Rv 14:13). ✧

*Taken, with small adaptations, from “Dona Lucilia”. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, p.617-654*

<sup>1</sup> During Dr. Plinio's convalescence, after his severe diabetic crisis in 1967, the Author of these lines took on the role of assistant in his apartment, so as to help him with any problems that might arise. As a result, he had the opportunity to get to know Dona Lucilia more intimately, as well as her routine.





Ship in a storm, by Thomas Buttersworth

## ***The Virtue of Faith: the Foundation of Great Works***

Whoever is united to God by faith participates in some way in the divine power and becomes, in a certain sense, as powerful as God Himself.



**Sr. Daniela Maria Moreira, EP**

**O**ur life on this earth of exile could well be compared to a ship traversing the vast sea. During fair weather, it glides across the calm waters. However, at other times a strong wind begins to blow, the waves are stirred up and the sky darkens. Suddenly, a storm is unleashed against the fragile vessel.

The time of trial, hardship and tragedy has arrived.

But navigating turbulent waters does not signify a tragedy for those who have faith. The practice of this theological virtue leads us to consider obstacles that arise during our pilgrimage through this valley of tears as the pledge of the eternal reward, and not as a reason for sadness.

But what exactly is the virtue of faith?

### ***What is the virtue of faith?***

In the Sacrament of Baptism, the virtues and gifts are instilled in our souls, together with sanctifying grace, which makes us true children of God. The virtues and gifts actuate our supernatural organism, giv-

ing us the capacity to do good and avoid evil in way that is meritorious in God's sight.

The stable disposition to act well is called virtue. It consists in the constant repetition of the acts that lead us to live uprightly, contrary to vice, which is the habit of the evil.

When acquired through the exercise and perfecting of the human gifts, developed by force of will and acting over a specific aptitude, the virtues are called natural; but when God Himself instills them in our souls, they are then qualified as supernatural, for they have Him as their source and reference point.

Among the infused virtues there are those called theological – faith, hope and charity –, which, as their name indicates, lead us to knowledge and love of God. Essentially supernatural, in addition to being divine gifts, their acts are directed toward the Creator. They are the interior compass of man, giving him the capacity for supernatural activities which attain their plenitude in Heaven, and they develop by being exercised daily, with the assistance of grace.

St. Thomas Aquinas affirms that faith is the first among the virtues since by means of it we understand our final end, the Creator. In fact, “natural knowledge cannot reach God as the object of heavenly bliss, which is the aspect under which hope and charity tend towards Him.”<sup>21</sup>

Faith also constitutes the gate by which the other virtues enter and it is by faith that one believes in that which grace demonstrates, albeit obscurely. It enables man to give his resolute assent to Revelation. It is like a spiritual auditory faculty, which enables us to hear the harmonies of the Kingdom of Heaven and, in a way, the voice of God, even before we are admitted into



Our Lord calms the sea  
Church of St. Peter,  
Bordeaux (France)

*The miracles  
worked by  
Our Lord Jesus  
Christ during  
His earthly life  
were conditioned  
on those who  
benefitted  
from them*

the beatific vision. It confers a supernatural perspective to human existence.

### *Faith makes us participants in divine omnipotence*

The miracles worked by Our Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly life were conditioned on those benefitting from them being able to contemplate them from this supernatural perspective. Thus, the Divine Master said to the blind man of Jericho: “Your faith has made you well” (Lk 18:42).

By contrast, He admonishes the Apostles for their naturalistic outlook on life and events, imbued with merely human criteria, and exhorts them: “For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you” (Mt 17:20).

Commenting on this passage of the Gospel, Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP, affirms: “Faith is, in fact, capable of moving mountains, for it is driven by the power of God, and when someone unites himself to the divine force, with the vigour of this vital virtue they become as strong as God Himself.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, faith makes us participants in divine omnipotence.

### *Extraordinary antidote for temptations*

Furthermore, this virtue guides the intellect to the truth and, united to charity, disposes the will to a good end, as the Angelic Doctor teaches: “Faith has a relation to some good in so far as it directs the intellect to the true. Furthermore, it has a relation to the good considered as the object of the will, inasmuch as it is formed by charity.”<sup>23</sup>

In this way, faith is an extraordinary antidote for temptations that come from the devil, the world and



the flesh. When the devil tempts us to not fulfil the Commandments, by faith we believe that there is a Lord and Legislator, whom we should obey. When the world seduces us with illegitimate prosperity or frightens us by adversity, we believe that God rewards the sufferings of the good and punishes the wicked. If the flesh goads us with transitory delights, we believe that this life is fleeting and, if we are faithful, we will enjoy eternal happiness.

Trials, sufferings and contradictions are indispensable for the sanctification of man, for they reinvigorate faith and produce a work of perfection. Everything that happens to us is permitted by Providence so as “to define in us the culminating moment in which either God or the devil triumphs on the inner battlefield of our soul.”<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, we must ask the Father to make us “*fortes in fide*” (1 Pt 5:9), for this virtue instils courage and fills the spirit with enthusiasm. It “is the balm for all sorrows, it is courage and joy in the sufferings of this great wasteland of our earthly exile, until the day of our eternal happiness in heavenly glory dawns.”<sup>25</sup>

### ***Believing during aridity***

By growing in the virtue of faith, we attain an unshakeable confidence. Abandonment in God’s hands and resignation to His will are the most eloquent testimonies to the presence of this virtue.

However, this does not mean that those who practise faith will not undergo periods of aridity, in which they will be assaulted by affliction, uncertainty and doubt. As the Apostle states, in this life “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7).

Even the holiest souls have experienced these trials, and perhaps the most paradigmatic example has been that of the great St. Joan of Arc. At a certain point, she



St. Paul the Apostle  
St. Patrick’s Basilica,  
Montreal

*“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval”*

felt abandoned by the supernatural lights that had accompanied her, but just before her death on the pyre, in the throes of the tragedy of her unjust condemnation and tormented by doubt, she cried out from within the flames: “The voices did not lie!”<sup>26</sup>

She left us a supreme message: at the moment of apparent abandonment by God, in the depths of the soul, one must have the faith that the voices of grace never lie! “We can never doubt faith. We must be more certain, therefore, in believing the truths of faith than those things which can be seen, because God’s knowledge is infallible, but the visible sense of man can err.”<sup>27</sup>

### ***Foundation of great works***

Faith and charity are inseparable virtues. Whoever believes in God knows that he is loved, sustained and accompanied by His infinite love. Faith also offers a target for our hope.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval. By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear” (Heb 11:1-3), St. Paul writes to his compatriots, after having received sublime revelations from the Redeemer.

Combining the three theological virtues, which, as we have seen, set us in a divine perspective, man becomes capable of great works, as the same St. Paul teaches a little further on, recalling the great figures of the Old Testament: “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speak-

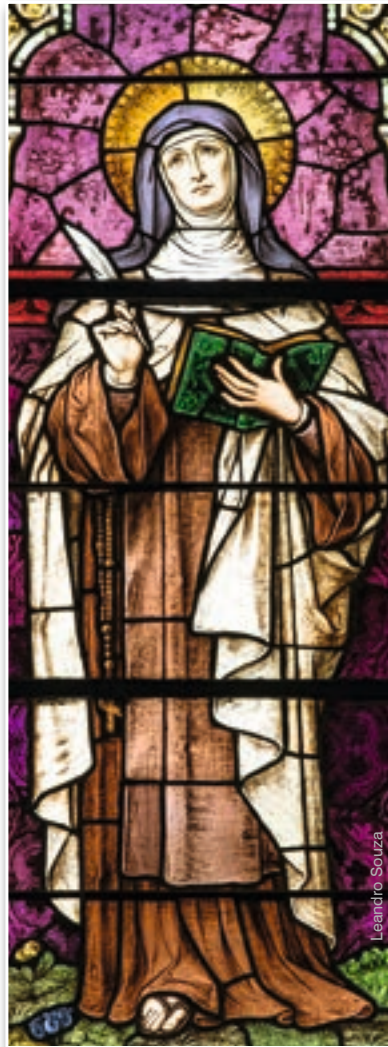
ing. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God” (Heb 11:4-5).

And he continues: “And without faith it is impossible to please Him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith” (Heb 11:6-7).

His epistle being addressed to the Hebrews, St. Paul reflects very specifically on the patriarch of the Chosen People: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of Heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore” (Heb 11:8-12).

### *Souls filled with faith*

In the New Testament, there is no shortage of examples of the practice of this admirable virtue. From the foundation of the Church, God has always appointed elite souls, filled with faith, to mark history with their works.



St. Teresa of Avila  
Church of Our Lady of Glory,  
Juiz de Fora (Brazil)

*From the foundation  
of the Church,  
God has always  
appointed elite souls,  
filled with faith,  
to mark history  
with their works*

One such soul was St. Teresa of Avila, a great and admirable woman who shone in the firmament of the Church in the sixteenth century. Having reformed Carmel, she made of each of the convents she founded a bulwark of faith, inhabited by hearts inflamed with charity.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Company of Jesus, also built his work on a robust faith, logically rooted in the purest doctrine. This allowed him to reinvigorate fervor in the bosom of the Church, at a time marked by Protestantism and Renaissance frivolity.

We could mention innumerable other souls who gave us their noble testimonies faith, but this would go beyond the capacity of this article. Let us preserve these names filled with glory and take a valuable lesson from their examples: those who wish to do great works must begin by fortifying their faith.

In this fleeting life, in which works are nothing more than a ladder to eternity, those who believe and act based on faith mark history, and those who act devoid of faith disappear in the mist of time. ✧

<sup>1</sup> ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.4, a.7.

<sup>2</sup> CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. How Should We Face Disillusionment? In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2012, v.VI, p.395.

<sup>3</sup> ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., a.5, ad 1.

<sup>4</sup> CLÁ DIAS, op. cit., p.400.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, *ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> BOURRE, Jean-Paul. *Guerrier du rêve*. Paris: Belles Lettres, 2003, p.240.

<sup>7</sup> ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Exposição sobre o Credo*. Introdução. 5.ed. São Paulo: Loyola, 2002, p.21.



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# Sublime Lesson of Resignation to Suffering

The unspeakable sorrows of Jesus in His Passion teach us to carry our own cross. They invite us to see suffering as a necessary means to reach Heaven and the most sublime way to glorify God.



Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

**I**t is a long-standing tradition among us to say a few words on the passage of the Gospel referring to the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, during these days of Holy Week. And, since today is Holy Thursday, it seems appropriate to read and comment on some passages from the concordance of the Holy Gospels composed by Archbishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva,<sup>1</sup> as a preparation for the great commemoration that will be held tomorrow: the Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross and the Redemption of humanity.

Let us begin the reading at the moment in which the Last Supper has ended and Our Lord and the Apostles set out for the Garden of Olives.

### *The perspective of tragic events*

Archbishop Duarte writes: “After these words, having recited the hymn of thanksgiving, Jesus left with His disciples and crossed over the Kidron valley. Going to the Mount of Olives, as was customary,

they came to a place called Gethsemane, where there was a garden which He entered with His disciples.

“Having arrived there, Jesus said to them: ‘Sit here, while I go yonder and pray. Pray also that you may not enter into temptation.’”

We see a clear distinction here between the feast of the institution of the Eucharist, the first Mass, and the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Last Supper has a festive character, over which are projected the shadows and sadness of the tragic events that will follow. With the conclusion of the thanksgiving, the feast has ended, and so He begins to confront the sorrow, the tragedy, the great struggle. His life had already been marked by battles, but at this moment they reach their peak, their apogee.

To get a real sense of the events that the Gospel narrates in such simple language, we must imagine the state of soul of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the dispositions of His Sacred Heart during these episodes.

### *Shadows that deepen and lights that begin to shine*

There were two reasons why the Last Supper was sad for Him: firstly, because the Redeemer saw the Passion that would soon begin, for He obviously had knowledge of everything.

But also due to the pitiful situation of the Apostles. The narration of the Last Supper contains clear indications of their shortcomings and mediocrity. What must have wounded the Sacred Heart of Jesus, piercing it more deeply than the lance of Longinus, was the infidelity of the Apostles, and the fruitlessness of the work that Our Lord had initiated with them.

The Redeemer, showing them an unprecedented manifestation of His love by instituting the Holy Eucharist and offering Himself to them in communion, sees those souls receive this incomparable gift with coldness: St. Peter, is grandiloquent; Judas, is in the despicable state that does not deserve men-

tion; and the other Apostles are preparing to flee.

There is the touchingly beautiful episode of St. John the Evangelist, the beloved disciple, who rests his head upon Jesus' breast and asks Him the identity of the traitor; Our Lord tells him who it was. Yet this disciple "whom Jesus loved," would flee with the others.

And so the shadows deepen at the very moment that the splendours of the Mass begin to shine. And Our Lord Jesus Christ, who had knowledge of all times and of everything that would take place, delighted in the idea of the glory that the Holy Eucharist and the Mass would give to the Eternal Father, with the adoration He would receive from the Saints and the souls of the elect, until the end of the world.

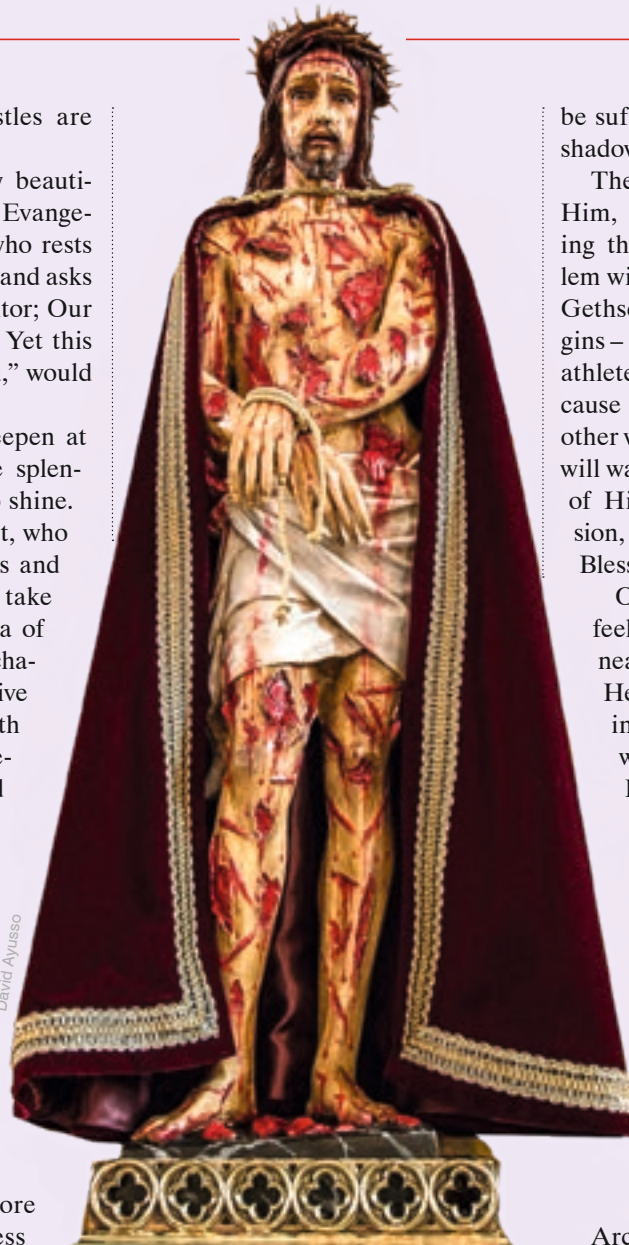
### *A battle waged in solitude*

All these sentiments penetrated His Heart, and constituted a sort of twilight of sadness mixed with joy. At a certain moment, the light withdraws and Our Lord begins to enter more deeply into the darkness of His suffering and death. Each step is more tragic than the last.

He walks, but He walks resolutely, without a moment of respite or relief – save when He receives the Angel who consoled Him, and when He sees Our Lady and is comforted by her presence along the *Via Sacra* – reaching the point of His exclaiming from the height of Calvary, at the apex of the suffering: "My God, my God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?" (Mt 27:46).

And until the *consummatum est*, that is, until saying "all that was to

David Ayusso



Our Lord Jesus Christ Scourged  
Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary,  
Caieiras (São Paulo)

*The Last Supper has a festive character, over which are projected the shadows and sadness of the tragic events that will follow*

be suffered has been suffered," the shadows only thickened for Him.

Therefore, we can imagine Him, sad after the Supper, walking through the streets of Jerusalem with the Apostles on the way to Gethsemane, where His agony begins – in Greek, agony means battle; athletes were called agonists, because they fought in the arena –, in other words, the great battle that He will wage alone. And solitude is one of His tragedies during the Passion, until the moment in which the Blessed Virgin Mary appears.

Our Lord withdraws, for He feels that no one is worthy to be near Him at this moment, and He says to the somnolent and indifferent Apostles: "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray. Pray also that you may not enter into temptation."

When He draws away, instead of an Apostle asking Him: "Lord, why are You isolating Yourself?" or "Lord, can I not help You?" they begin to vacillate, and Jesus starts to experience the tragedy in His soul.

### *Oppressed by mortal sadness*

Archbishop Duarte continues: "And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, He began to be greatly distressed and troubled, and was beset by sadness and dejection. He said to them: 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with Me.'"

Our Lord chose to keep these Apostles with Him, while He left the others behind, and in this greater intimacy He explained to them: "My soul is sorrowful, even to death." And then He asked them: "Watch", in other words, "Stay awake with Me. I want to have the consolation



of your presence and your compassion, while I am undergoing this tremendous suffering.”

And the concordance adds: “And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.”

Let us think of the Holy Shroud of Turin: that gaze, that majesty of Our Lord. What would it mean to someone however small his soul, to see that countenance upon which was summarized all the glory of the universe, that gaze which synthesized in an unimaginable and superlative degree all the holiness possible in every soul of every age, the intelligence, power, goodness, in short, every quality; to contemplate that face, the most perfect mirror of God that had ever been created!

We can imagine Our Lord – a tall man –, with a white tunic, on what perhaps was a moonlit night, with the shadows of the trees causing a play between darkness and light. How poignant it would have been to see this majestic man all alone...

Suddenly, a great white figure that bows and falls with his face to the ground! Then, prostrate, the King of all glory prays, oppressed by a sadness that inundated Him until to His death.

*“Not My will,  
but Thine be done”*

And He said in His prayer, which the Apostles heard, so that afterwards they could recount it and leave these memorable words registered for all eternity: “Father, if

*Jesus offers  
Himself  
in communion,  
and sees this  
incomparable gift  
being received  
with coldness*

Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done.”

It is perhaps the sweetest and, at the same time, most powerful prayer that has ever been formulated on earth.

The sweetest because, seeing that the Eternal Father willed torment and martyrdom for Him, and was going to take Him as a victim, Jesus presents Himself filled with love and calls Him “My Father,” the most tender words that one person can address to another.

“My Father,” He says, as one who groans! He knows He will suffer that torment, necessary according to the designs of God, for His glory. And Jesus, in His most holy humility, as though abandoned, separated from His divinity, remains in that darkness. His human nature entreats: “If it be possible to avoid this torment, take it away.” Just as one who says: “The weight of the suffering is so great that I am compelled to ask Thee: for the sake of mercy, is there not some way to remove it?”



The Last Supper, by Fra Angelico – San Marco Museum, Florence (Italy)

Gustavo Krahl

However, Our Lord immediately adds: “If it is not possible, then do Thy will and not mine.” Thus, we see strength in addition to tenderness: “If it is not possible, then although I cannot endure it, and I do not have the means, I will begin; because nothing exists that I am not ready to undertake to fulfil Thy will. I am the strong man par excellence, crushed, broken and annihilated. Nevertheless, I am ready to fight until the end. Send Me Thy strength, and I shall do Thy will.”

It is, then, a complete submission, a total obedience, a loving act without the slightest revolt or the sensation that God will not be merciful with Him; He sees mercy even at the moment in which mercy would seem impossible.

There is a mystery here. Could not God the Father have accepted a drop of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s Blood, and thus redeemed humanity?

Truly, one drop of the Blood of Christ has infinite value. And theologians say that even the Blood He shed in the circumcision would have not only been sufficient, but superabundant, to redeem humanity. However, there was a plan of God, mysterious to us, by which those innumerable torments were necessary.

The colloquy of the Man-God with the Eternal Father, at once so tragic and so intimate, reveals to us something of the relationship between them. One sees that, for some reason, the Father and He Himself, as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, did not wish to



Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives -  
Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,  
New Orleans

*“Crushed, broken and annihilated, I am, nevertheless, ready to fight until the end; send Me Thy strength, and I shall do Thy will”*

make this possible. Thus, we are given to glimpse a little of this relationship, and this little is of extraordinary sublimity.

***Every man must carry his cross***

Jesus desired that humanity see all of His sufferings, so that each one of us would have the courage to bear our own suffering. If the God-Man had come to earth and suffered only a little, shedding one droplet of blood, we would have been redeemed. But the lesson of resignation to suffering, of the acceptance of suffering as the apex of existence, would have been missing. Suffering cannot be considered a disaster, a burden, something incomprehensible that should not happen. On the contrary, it is the necessary path for man to arrive where he ought to arrive, the road that leads him to his ultimate destiny.

Each one of us was born to carry a cross, to undergo a Garden of Olives, to drink a chalice and to have our moments of agony, in which we say to God Our Lord: “My Father, if it be possible, take this chalice from

me, but may Thy will be done, and not mine.”

We would not understand that man was born to give glory to God, above all by suffering – this core idea, fundamental in the formation of the true Catholic – if it had not been shown to us in the most sublime and compelling example, which is Our Lord Jesus Christ dying on the Cross.

We see here a contrast with the modern spirit, according to which man’s end on earth is to achieve success, health, amass wealth, enjoy life and when there is no longer any way out, to die at an old age. And, throughout life, to ensure the greatest possible degree of security, so that one is spared not just suffering,





*Each one of us  
was born to carry  
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to drink a chalice  
and to have our  
moments of agony*

Religious in the Via Sacra  
Museum of Religious Art,  
Puebla (Mexico)

but even the fear of suffering. This outlook is essentially pagan. To evaluate life like this is to evaluate it as a pagan does. Catholic formation prepares people for suffering, for it is founded on Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose life was centred on this supreme hour of sorrow.

***How should  
we look upon the  
sufferings of our life?***

This leads us to ask how we should consider the sufferings in our life, the greatest of which is, undoubtedly, our own sanctification. A serious process of sanctification always brings suffering, and much suffering. And if someone were to tell me that he does not suffer, I would be immediately inclined to ask: “Then you do not sanctify yourself?” For there is no sanctification that is not accompanied by suffering.

With our sanctification in mind, we should ask questions such as the following:

Do we combat the impulses within us, stemming from both original sin and our evil actions? What do we do, not only to repress these evil

impulses, but to practise the virtues opposed to them?

Do we accept our limitations with regard to intelligence, or in the physical or social sphere, such as a lack of status, wealth or charm? There are awkward people, with whom others avoid socializing; at most they receive a cursory greeting. There are also those who are very witty, and are popular for the diversion they provide, and who try to draw us into their buffoonery. How do we accept the need to resist this solicitation?

***Only those who  
carry their cross are  
truly serious***

In all of this, each person has a cross. And Our Lord Jesus Christ shows us the essential role of suffering. One of the reasons for which it was not possible for the Eternal Father to heed Jesus’ prayer was so that men would have this example.

When Napoleon’s star was still on the rise, before he had become emperor, a flatterer said to him: “General Bonaparte, why do you not proclaim yourself a god?”

When the ancient Roman heroes and those of Antiquity in general had reached the apex of their triumphs and their vainglory, they would be divinized. He looked directly at the man who had said this and gave this crushing reply: “After Jesus Christ, there is only way for someone to be taken seriously as a god: to climb to the height of Calvary and be crucified. I am not prepared to do this.”

The example of Our Lord Jesus Christ made such a deep impact that another candidate for divinity has never been taken seriously, because only the cross is serious, and only the men who want to carry it are truly serious. Therefore, we should love our cross and meditate on the aforementioned points. ✧

*Taken, with small adaptations,  
from “Dr. Plinio” magazine.  
São Paulo. Year XIII. N.145  
(April, 2010); p.14-19*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. LEOPOLDO E SILVA, Duarte. *Concordância dos Santos Evangelhos*. 3.ed. São Paulo: Ave-Maria, 1940, p.365-368.

# “Love One Another in Truth...”

In their letters and preaching, the Apostles never neglected to combat the false doctrines that circulated among the early Christians, for there can be no genuine love of God and neighbour outside of the truth.



Fr. Francisco de Araújo, EP

“**T**he Apostle of Love” is one of several titles given to St. John the Evangelist, and it is enough to read his writings to understand why.

In the first of his letters we find the famous affirmation that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8) and, if we carefully peruse the fourth Gospel, we will note how deeply it is imbued with the inexpressible affection of a God who became Man to save us.

## *We love because God first loved us*

Differently from the synoptic Gospels, which narrate what took place during the Last Supper in a more succinct fashion, St. John dedicates five chapters to this fundamental episode in Christ’s life. As his Gospel is focused on the theological and spiritual aspects of the Redemption, it transcribes the final words of Jesus to His disciples, among which the famous new commandment is especially highlighted.

“Love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (Jn 13:34), He exhorts



Detail of stained-glass window of the Last Supper - Cathedral Basilica of Hamilton (Canada)

*“In this is love,  
not that  
we loved  
God but that  
He loved us  
and sent His Son”*

them, shortly after Judas had left the Cenacle. And further on the Divine Master adds: “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12).

The relationship between the divine love that comes down to us and the love we should bear our neighbour is clearly laid out by the Evangelist in his first epistle. In it, he affirms: “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 Jn 4:7-10).

In view of this, St. John proclaims: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 Jn 4:11). We, men, love “because He first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19).

And he continues, urging: “If any one says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has



seen, cannot love God Whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God should love his brother also" (1 Jn 4:20-21).

***"He who commits sin is of the devil"***

The Virgin Apostle certainly practised the commandment of charity toward God and neighbour to perfection.

With almost maternal affection, he addresses his disciples in this same letter, seeking to turn them away from the greatest of evils, sin: "My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin" (1 Jn 2:1); "Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 Jn 2:15).

However, this deep affection does not prevent him from issuing them a stern warning: "He who commits sin is of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8). He goes on to add: "By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother" (1 Jn 3:10). And a little further, he insists: "If any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 Jn 3:17).

***"God is light and in Him is no darkness"***

Another characteristic emanates from the writings of John: the need to proclaim the truth in face of the heresies that began to arise in the nascent Church; principally Gnosticism.

"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5). Thus, in his epistles, the Evangelist is concerned with placing emphasis on an essential aspect of genuine love: it must be grounded in the truth. He opens his second letter with the following words: "To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us for ever" (2 Jn 1-2).

*With almost maternal affection, St. John addresses his disciples, seeking to turn them away from sin*

The same idea is repeated at the beginning of the third letter: "The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth" (3 Jn 1). And a little further on he adds: "No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth" (3 Jn 4).

Now, in what exactly does this truth consist?

In the observance of the Commandments, as the Divine Master teaches in John's Gospel: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (Jn 14:15); "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me" (Jn 14:21).

And in case any doubt remains, St. John explains: "He who says 'I know Him' but disobeys His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in Him: he who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked" (1 Jn 2:4-6).

***"Test the spirits to see whether they are of God"***

Nevertheless, not all those who claim to be followers of Christ seek to walk in the truth, as He walked. Some, claiming to be sheep of the same flock, dare to surreptitiously or openly contest the doctrine taught by the Divine Master. The



Scenes from the life of St. John by Pedro Sierra; at left, St. John resuscitating Estacteus and at right, preaching on the eve of his death - Church of St. Lawrence, San Lorenzo de Morunys (Spain)

Photos: Francisco Lecaros

Beloved Disciple did not hesitate to call them antichrists.

In his first epistle, he denounced them: “So now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us” (1 Jn 2:18-19). And he continues: “I write this to you about those who would deceive you” (1 Jn 2:26).

Subsequently, he warns: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already” (1 Jn 4:1-3).

He repeats the same caution in the second letter: “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward” (2 Jn 7-8).

### ***We should avoid those who foment division***

To avoid this, the Apostle of Love recommends taking a radical stance which, at first sight, may appear to contravene the law of charity he espouses: “He who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; for he who greets him shares his wicked work” (2 Jn 9-11).

As a good minister of God, St. John preached not only by word, but above all by personal exam-



The soul of St. John rising to Heaven, by Pedro Sierra - Church of St. Lawrence, San Lorenzo de Morunys (Spain)

*“Beloved, test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world”*

ple. In this regard, his disciple St. Polycarp recounts an eloquent episode. One day, St. John entered the public baths of Ephesus to bathe, but rushed out again almost immediately, fearing that the edifice would collapse, having caught sight of Cerinthus inside, a gnostic endowed with great speculative ability, which he used to spread false doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

The Apostle par excellence is no less categorical in this regard. In a letter addressed to his disciple Titus, he orders: “As for a man who is fac-

tious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him” (Tit 3:10). And in another letter he forewarns the Galatians: “But even if we, or an Angel from Heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8-9).

### ***To fight error is an act of love of God***

At the early dawning of the Holy Church, the gates of hell raised up two intransigent enemies against her – persecution and heresy. Now, though the first filled Heaven with martyrs and sowed Christians throughout the immense territory of the Roman Empire, who can count the number of souls the latter has cast into hell?

In the fulfilment of their sacred ministry, the Apostles, personally formed by the Divine Master, did not neglect to combat the false doctrines that spread among the early Christians. Proof of this can be found in the letters of St. John, as well as those of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Jude and St. James. All of them provide magnificent examples of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, allied with confronting error.

There can be no genuine love removed from the Light that shines in the darkness, nor love of neighbour separated from Him who took on flesh, suffered and died for us. ✧

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON. *Contra as heresias*. L.III, c.3, n.4.



# Abbess, Mystic and Wonderworker



Francisco Lecaros



Sr. Lucilia Bassi, EP

Called from her early childhood to a profound union with her Divine Spouse, she was rewarded with abundant mystical graces and with the gift of working miracles. Even the infernal spirits were obliged to obey her.

**I**n paging through the biographies of the Saints, we are amazed at the different ways in which the Holy Spirit acts to bring souls to a complete and definitive union with God. While some, like St. Paul, are shaken by a resounding fall and called to a radical conversion only after reaching maturity, others have their innocence preserved and reach perfection in charity from a tender age.

Yet regardless of the way travelled and even of age, all, without exception, at a certain moment were faithful to the voice of grace that clamoured within them, like that of Jesus saying to the Apostles: “Follow Me” (Mt 9:9; Jn 1:43).

In the life of Agnes of Montepulciano, God’s call was not long in being heard. At the time of her birth, several candles in the place were miraculously lit with divine flames. They announced the great mission of that girl who, by her virtues, would enlighten souls, thereby heeding the appeal of the Divine Master:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven” (Mt 5:16).

### *Vocation tested from childhood*

By four years of age, Agnes had learned to pray the Our Father and Hail Mary, often preferring to forsake children’s games to speak with God in a more secluded corner of the yard. Attracted by a voice that whispered in the depth of her heart, before she had even reached the age of ten she felt a desire to embrace religious life.

However, struggles and trials began at an early age. When she expressed to her parents her good desires, they tried every means to dissuade her.

It happened that one day, while passing by a hill close to the walls of Montepulciano, Agnes was violently attacked by a band of devils who, assuming the form of crows and cawing fiercely, attacked her head with their beaks and claws. There was

a house of perdition in the vicinity that would later be destroyed and replaced by a house of Christ's spouses founded by the Saint, and the infernal spirits seemed to foresee the detriment this would cause them.

The unusual episode deeply worried her parents. The girl then categorically presented to them God's plans in her regard, telling them that similar things would follow if they continued to oppose the fulfillment of her vocation. Fearful, they had no other option than to heed the heavenly designs: they entrusted their daughter to religious life, allowing her to enter the monastery of the "Sisters of the Sack."<sup>1</sup> They had earned this appellation because, out of humility, they used a scapular made of rough cloth.

### ***Fervent prayer and observance of the rule***

The young religious was always joyful and tireless in the fulfillment of the rule. She fasted, prayed and did penance, being an angelic example to her sisters in the community, who were in awe of such a lofty degree of fervour and virtue. Her seriousness and continual progress toward perfection caused astonishment even among those most outstanding in obedience.

On one occasion, the bishop visited them and, enchanted with Agnes, gave this advice to the religious: "Mothers, take care in instructing this child, for her name will be as glorious for her homeland, as the Saint of the same name is for Rome."<sup>2</sup>

Having been rewarded with innumerable mystical graces, her prayer life was lived in a continual ecstasy. Frequently during her spiritual collo-

quies, she entered into prolonged levitations. In the places where she prayed, roses and lilies habitually sprang up, exuding a pleasing and exceptional perfume. Assumed by such supernatural phenomena, she was not able to hide from her sisters the flames of love of God that blazed in her heart.

Upon entering the chapel, the religious often found her immersed in ecstasy, with her mantle covered with a shower of manna-like white grains. And on the day in which she professed her vows and received the veil, in Proceno, the chapel was filled with the same Heaven-sent manna, which fell in the form of little cross-

es, as to symbolize the acceptance by the Crucified of the self-oblation made by His loving spouse.

### ***Holding the Child Jesus in her arms***

On another occasion, while she prayed in the monastery chapel, the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, carrying the Child Jesus. It was the feast of the Assumption, and the Queen of Angels placed her Son in Agnes' arms, allowing her to hold Him for a few moments.

Filled with joy and deeply touched, Agnes implored the Divine Infant to remain at her side or to take her with Him. Nevertheless, the time had not yet come for this desire to be realized, and soon Our Lady took Him back into her arms...

Perceiving that the Divine Infant was about to leave, Agnes adroitly removed the little cross that He wore around His neck, and said to Him: "Since you are departing, at least leave me a memento of this day!"<sup>3</sup>

Our Lady smiled at this pious theft and disappeared, leaving the Saint prostrate on the ground, tightly clutching the little cross in her hand.

### ***Young superior of the monastery of Proceno***

At fourteen years of age, St. Agnes left her first convent for a new foundation, in the city of Proceno, where she immediately became known for her virtue, winning the admiration and confidence of all. Many of the people, delighted with her, desired that she be appointed prioress of the monastery despite her young age, and they arranged the necessary dispensations. Thus, even before she had turned fifteen, the young religious received the



**On the day that she pronounced her vows the chapel become filled with manna sent from Heaven**

Consecration of St. Agnes of Montepulciano, Colonial Museum, Bogotá (Colombia); on previous page, St. Agnes with the Child Jesus in her arms - Church of St. Dominic, Elvas (Portugal)

Reproduction



office of governing the other sisters.

Considering herself unworthy of the post she had received, Agnes redoubled her prayers and sacrifices: she only ate bread and water, the cold ground was her bed, and a stone her pillow.

Persevering in prayer, she obtained everything she asked of God. On one occasion, wishing to have a relic from the holy sites where Jesus had lived and shed His most precious Blood, a strong wind filled her hands with dust; an Angel had come to bring her clumps of earth that had been soaked by the Blood of Jesus. And if this were not enough, shortly thereafter the Angel gave her a piece of the clay basin in which the Blessed Virgin had bathed the Child Jesus in His infancy.

A devotee of the Eucharist, she felt constantly drawn to Jesus in the Host, never losing a minute that she might be able spend before the tabernacle. And, very often, when there was no opportunity to receive Communion from the hands of a priest, the Angels themselves were her ministers.

### ***Power to expel demons***

However, more than for her own spiritual profit, her ardent prayers benefitted those around her.

There was a possessed man in a neighbouring city of Proceno, whose behaviour was alarming. As no priest in the region could provide a solution, the desperate relatives of the poor man, desiring his cure, decided to turn to the holy abbess, whose miracles were known throughout the region.

Realizing that it would impossible to bring the victim to her, they asked Agnes to come with them to



**When she could not receive Communion from the hands of a priest, the Angels themselves were her ministers**

An Angel bringing Communion to St. Agnes of Montepulciano - Colonial Museum, Bogotá (Colombia)

the unfortunate man's dwelling. As soon as the servant of Christ entered the city, the proud and crazed demon, who moments previously had seemed oblivious to anything that was said to him, began to roll the body of the possessed man violently from side to side.

When the holy religious set foot on the threshold of the house, she heard the cowardly and despondent whimpering of the devil: "I am not able to stand, because the virgin Agnes has entered!"<sup>74</sup> Then the afflicted man was liberated from the spirit that had tormented him for so long.

A contemplative soul, with a solid interior life, St. Agnes progressed daily in spiritual perfection, without letting herself be consumed by

earthly concerns. Neither the lack of money, nor the absence of bread was an obstacle for the intrepid abbess. In face of any material problem, she addressed her supplications to God, and was efficaciously attended. Frequently, the bread multiplied so as to feed the religious of her monastery. And when there was no more wine in the house of one of the families she visited, she transformed water into wine, like Jesus at the wedding feast of Cana.

### ***On the hilltop of Montepulciano***

After a vision which made it clear that God willed that a new house be founded on the hill of Montepulciano, where she had been attacked by crows, Agnes departed with some religious to erect a monastery there under the rule of St. Dominic.

When the necessary donations were obtained, she purchased the entire hilltop, on which was built a church dedicated to Our Lady in addition to the convent.

A zealous abbess, with her admonitions and example she strove to encourage her subalterns to give themselves ever more radically to Christ, while also continuing to work miracles to assist them.

On one occasion, a young religious of this house lost her sight and so that she would not have to leave the monastery to be treated, the Saint restored her sight, saying: "What Jesus and I want is that from now on you do not weep with these eyes over temporal works or misfortunes, but only for love of God, abandoning all earthly attachment, and keeping your heart free to love the Divine Spouse."<sup>75</sup>

One Sunday she was in prayer when an Angel gave her a chalice, with the following words: “Drink, spouse of Christ, this chalice which Our Lord also drank for you.”<sup>6</sup> After this apparition, the holy abbess fell gravely ill. He who long ago called her to a life of battles, asking her at the age of nine to persevere in her good resolutions despite the opposition of her parents, now invited her to accompany Him to the height of Calvary, uniting herself to Him through the acceptance of new sufferings.

At the request of her religious sisters, Agnes went to visit the thermal springs of Chianciano, with the aim of recuperating her health. When she placed her feet in the waters to bathe, the place was filled with the mysterious and previously seen manna that fell from Heaven. A new spring also emerged there, which, through the merits of the Saint, was the source of cures for many sick people.

During her trips to these baths, she worked many miracles, including the resurrection of a boy who had drowned, simply by making the sign of the Cross over the body. After so many cures and prodigies realized there by the intercession of the virtuous religious, the site came to be called St. Agnes’ Spring.

### *Prodigies even after death*

Returning to the monastery, her sufferings were redoubled and, on April 20, 1317, St. Agnes finished her journey in this life and departed for eternity. Even before the news of her death had spread, at daybreak, a lady struck with a grave malady in her arm approached the gates of the monastery, asking to see the dead abbess. She told the sisters that she

had had a vision during the night in which the Saint, filled with light and surrounded by Angels, told her that if she touched her body she would be cured. That inert corpse, marked by heroic sanctity, continued to assist souls, and obtained the cure of the afflicted woman.

Similar episodes ensued for several days after her death. Her body began to exude a celestial odour that spread throughout the monastery, as well as a most sweet-smelling balsam that issued from her in abundance.

St. Catherine of Siena nurtured an intense devotion to St. Agnes, for the Lord revealed to her that in Heaven they would be great companions. In one of her visits to Mon-

tepulciano, as she inclined to venerate the mortal remains of the Saint, a foot miraculously began to move, rising up to meet the lips which reverently kissed them.

And the venerable religious remained like this, with one of her feet slightly suspended in the air, as a remembrance of the amazing event. To this day, with her body partially incorrupt, she can be venerated in the shrine of Montepulciano, in Italy, with one foot slightly elevated. There, St. Agnes has aided innumerable souls with prodigious cures, both physical and spiritual, making her worthy to be acclaimed as the intercessor of those in need and terror of infernal spirits. ✧



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**St. Catherine of Siena was deeply devoted to St. Agnes, for the Lord revealed to her that in Heaven they would be close companions**

St. Catherine of Siena kissing the feet of St. Agnes  
Colonial Museum, Bogotá (Colombia)

<sup>1</sup> BLESSED RAYMOND OF CAPUA. *The Life of Saint Agnes of Montepulciano*. Summit (NJ): Dominican Nuns of Summit, 2012, p.10.

<sup>2</sup> ÁLVAREZ, OP, Paulino. *Santos de la Orden de Predicadores*. 2.ed. Vergara: El Santísimo Rosario, 1920, v.I, p.398.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, p.399.

<sup>4</sup> BLESSED RAYMOND OF CAPUA, op. cit., p.36.

<sup>5</sup> ÁLVAREZ, op. cit., p.403.

<sup>6</sup> BLESSED RAYMOND OF CAPUA, op. cit., p.67.



# The Value of Intention

The merit of an action does not lie in its difficulty or in the suffering it entails, but rather in the intention with which it is done. The simplest and most commonplace acts take on great value when done for the love of God.



Sr. Isabel de Sousa, EP

**“W**hen will I understand that virtue is not in eating onions, but in eating onions for love of God?”<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly, such a reflection sounds strange to our ears. For how can someone attain sanctity by eating onions or perhaps by peeling turnips? However, this thought was jotted down by a young religious who is venerated as a Saint by the Church. His name is Brother Rafael Arnáiz Barón.

With this phrase, he teaches us that the merit of an act is, above all, in the intention with which it is done.

## **Holiness is not in external acts**

“Intention can radically modify the nature of an act,”<sup>2</sup> Catholic doctrine teaches us. Therefore, following on the heels of his first affirmation, the Trappist Saint adds: “Sanctity is not in external acts, but in the internal intention of any act.”<sup>3</sup>

Acts considered neutral and trivial to human eyes are clothed with immense importance if aimed at the glory of Almighty God. According-

ly, St. Rafael affirms: “Great things are not necessary to be great Saints, it is sufficient to make small things great. [...] God can make me a Saint as much by peeling potatoes as by governing an empire.”<sup>4</sup>

At times we believe that the merit of an action is directly propor-

tional to the difficulty involved in carrying it out or the size of the sacrifice that it demands of us, but those who think so are mistaken. Suffering, in itself, is not the measure of sanctity.

A person can suffer from a serious and painful cancer, being obliged to remain in hospital for days or months, abandoned by those who are



**“God can make me a Saint as much by peeling potatoes as by governing an empire”**

Exterior of the Abbey of San Isidro de Dueñas, in Palencia (Spain), which houses the tomb of St. Rafael Arnáiz (detail)

dearest to them; but if they do not endure these torments for love of God, they will be of no value to him. Worse yet, if he revolts because of such a situation, these sufferings may even become the occasion of his condemnation.

**God accepts our weaknesses as if they were virtues**

Therefore, the supernatural value of our actions depends on the intention with which they are done.

The Creator penetrates the interior of each soul and nothing can escape Him, for “man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Sm 16:7). And He rejoices when He sees one of His creatures taking advantage of the little annoyances of life to attain eternal happiness by means of them.

“God is happy with any offering, as long as it is made wholeheartedly.”<sup>5</sup> He is pleased to accept even nothingness. Thus, St. Rafael declares: “I offered the Lord my absolute poverty, my empty soul. I endeavoured to sing to Him the hymn of one who can only offer miseries. But it does not matter, for miseries and weaknesses offered to Jesus, by a heart truly filled with love, are accepted by Him as if they were virtues.”<sup>6</sup>

How many opportunities we have at our disposal to conquer Heaven!

**Very little is asked of us to attain Heaven**

One day St. Rafael was working in the kitchen when a light sudden-



**“Great things are not necessary to be great Saints”**

St. Rafael Arnáiz, wearing the Trappist habit

ly pierced his soul, compelling him to exclaim: “What am I doing, Holy Virgin? Peeling turnips! Why, why do I peel turnips? And his heart, leaping in his breast, spontaneously answered him: I peel turnips for the love of Christ!”<sup>7</sup>

Then great peace settled in the depth of his soul, accompanied by the following reflection: “The thought that in the world one can make of the least of life’s actions acts of love of God; that the opening or shutting of an eye for His name

may lead us to attain Heaven; that peeling turnips for true love of God may give as much glory to Him and as many merits to us as the conquest of the Indies; [...] is something that fills my soul with joy!”<sup>8</sup>

And he concluded: “Actually, very little is asked of us to win Heaven,”<sup>9</sup> for, as St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus affirms, God “looks more at the intention than the value of the action.”<sup>10</sup>

**Small acts accompanied by great intentions**

Few are those who have the mission of conquering empires for the Reign of God, rare are the vocations destined to guide nations or peoples. But let us not think that because we are not called to such things we are prevented from reaching a high place in Heaven, very close to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“We are nothing and worth nothing; with the same ease with which we sink into temptation, we soar with consolation upon feeling the lightest touch of divine love,”<sup>11</sup> St. Rafael notes.

Let us offer to Our Lord, through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, all our acts, even the smallest, accompanied by excellent and great intentions! They will be similar to the widow’s mite mentioned in Sacred Scripture (cf. Mk 12:41-44). Having cast only two small coins into the Temple coffers, she earned the praise of God Himself and being received into Paradise. She gave everything she had, out of love! ✧

<sup>1</sup> ST. RAFAEL ARNÁIZ BARÓN. Escritos, n.1170. In: *Obras Completas*. 6.ed. Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2011, p.954.

<sup>2</sup> BOULENGER, A. *Doutrina católica. Manual de instrução religiosa. Moral*. Rio de Ja-

neiro: Francisco Alves, 1980, t.II, p.16.

<sup>3</sup> ST. RAFAEL ARNÁIZ BARÓN, op. cit., p.954.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, n.790, p.712.

<sup>5</sup> ST. RAFAEL ARNÁIZ BARÓN. Escritos por temas.

2.ed. Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2000, p.553.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> ST. RAFAEL ARNÁIZ BARÓN, Escritos, op. cit., n.787, p.710.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, p.710-711.

<sup>9</sup> Idem, n.789, p.711.

<sup>10</sup> ST. THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS AND THE HOLY FACE. *História de uma alma*. 27.ed. São Paulo: Paulus, 2010, p.268.

<sup>11</sup> ST. RAFAEL ARNÁIZ BARÓN, Escritos, op. cit., n.788, p.711.





Photos: Plinio Savio

**Italy** – From March 7 to 19, the Heralds carried out a Marian Mission in the Parish of Our Lady of Sorrows, in Rosarno. One of the Masses was celebrated by the Diocesan bishop, Most Rev. Francesco Milito. The parish priest also conferred three new Shrines of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (right).



Photos: Gustavo Kralj

**Canada** – Faithful to long-standing tradition, the Heralds of the Gospel were responsible for the crowning of the Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the recitation of the Holy Rosary at the opening of the Lift Jesus Higher Rally, an important annual event organized by the Archdiocese of Toronto.



Photos: Eric Salas

**Spain** – After several weeks of preparation, a group of thirty persons made their consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the parish church of Our Lady of the Star, in Chucena. The ceremony took place on February 11, during a Eucharist presided over by the pastor, Fr. Justino Espuela Muñoz.



## Maputo: Activities in a Spirit of Ecclesial Communion



Photos: Urbano Ngoca

Always in a spirit of communion with the local church, the Heralds of the Gospel of Mozambique have carried out countless pastoral activities. During Christmas, they visited orphanages with the Child Jesus and the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (photo 1), and participated in the reception for the new Auxiliary Bishop, the Most Rev. António-Juliasso Sandramo, at the Episcopal Palace (photo 2). They also had the honour of receiving a visit at their house from Most Rev. Francisco Chi-

moio, OFM Cap., Metropolitan Archbishop of Maputo. Following the national custom, several offerings were presented to him during the Mass (photo 3), and, after blessing those present (photo 4), he offered a talk in the chapel for cooperators and friends (photo 5). On Ash Wednesday, the chapel of the Heralds' house was filled with faithful from the region (photo 7). On the first Sunday of Lent, many people gathered to participate in the Holy Mass in the community of St. Anthony Muchisso (photo 6).





Photos: Stephen Namí

## ***Bishop Colombo Dedicates New Altar***

**O**n Sunday, February 10, the Most Rev. Sérgio Aparecido Colombo, Diocesan Bishop of Bragança Paulista, presided over the ceremony of dedication of the altar at the Oratory of Our Lady of Lourdes, belonging to Our Lady

of Graces Parish. The liturgical rite which, is rich in significance and beauty, was carried out with all solemnity, aided by two Herald deacons. There was also an outdoor procession around the Oratory, in honour of the Patroness.



Photos: Eduardo Pásseiro

**Recife** – A concert-lecture heightened awareness among the students of Vinícius de Moraes College, located in Jaboatão dos Guararapes, on the importance of values such as respect, discipline and happiness. The event was part of the Future and Life Project, carried out by the Heralds to promote culture among young people.



## **American diocese will administer Confirmation and First Communion at age eight**

Another American Diocese will now administer the Sacrament of Confirmation together with First Communion. Most Rev. James Sean Wall, Diocesan Bishop of Gallup, released a pastoral letter on February 11 in which he prescribes the simultaneous reception of these Sacraments for students in the third grade of elementary school, at eight years of age.

In the letter, Bishop Wall gives some brief doctrinal and historical background on the subject and affirms: "Receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation long after the reception of Holy Communion tends to weaken the understanding of the bond and relationship that the Sacraments of Initiation have with one another. Since the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation lead the faithful to the culmination of their initiation into the Christian Life in Holy Communion, the practice of postponing the reception of Confirmation until the teenage years has not always been beneficial."

The new norm will be implemented gradually over the next three years, a period in which the age for Confirmation will be progressively lowered and catechetical programs will be modified as needed.

In 1995, Saginaw, in Michigan State, became the first American diocese to restore the joint administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Communion. Since

then, more than a dozen ecclesiastical circumscriptions in the United States and Canada have followed the same criterion.

## **First priest ordained from the Asmat tribe**

On February 2, Fr. Moses Amiset was ordained; he is the first member of the Asmat tribe, in the Indonesian province of Papua, to become a priest. The ceremony, presided over by the Diocesan Bishop, Most Rev. Aloysius Murwito, OFM, was held in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Agats.

The city of Agats is in one of the poorest and most difficult to access regions of the archipelago. There being no seminary in the diocese, Fr. Amiset completed his studies in philosophy and theology in Jayapura, on the other side of the island.



## **Heroic virtue of Cardinal Mindszenty recognized**

On February 13, the approval of the decree recognizing the heroic practice of the Christian virtues by the Servant of God Cardinal József Mindszenty, Archbishop of Esztergom and Primate of Hungary, was announced. He will now receive the title of Venerable.

On the same day, Cardinal Péter Erdő, the current Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest and Primate of Hungary, presided over a thanksgiving ceremony in the Basilica of St. Stephen in the Round on the Celian Hill, in Rome, the church of which Cardinal Mindszenty was titular.

For having vehemently opposed the arbitrary measures of the communist regime in Hungary, Venerable József Mindszenty was arrested in 1948 and condemned to life imprisonment the following year. Liberated during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, he took refuge in the American Embassy in Budapest, where he remained secluded for fifteen years. He died in exile in Vienna, on May 6, 1975.

## **Process of canonization for Fr. Augustus Tolton opened**

On February 5, a theological commission composed of nine members unanimously voted in favour of the declaration of the heroic virtues of Fr. Augustus Tolton, an African-American priest who died in the odour of sanctity in 1897. The way has now been opened for him to receive the title of Venerable, and the canonical process will pass to the phase of beatification.

Fr. Tolton was born into slavery in 1854. Having attained his liberty, he soon expressed the desire to be a priest. However, several American seminaries refused to accept him. He ended up completing his studies in Rome, where he was ordained in 1886, at thirty-one years of age. He became the first black priest from the United States and, now, he will also be the first to be involved in a process of canonization.

He carried out his ministry in Illinois, in the cities of Quincy and especially Chicago, being assisted in his pastoral work by St. Catherine Drexel, becoming her confessor.

## **Mexican youth pilgrimage to Christ the King monument**

Between twenty-seven and thirty thousand Mexicans participated in the 36<sup>th</sup> Youth March to the Cerro del Cubilete, on February 23, reaffirming their Catholic faith and devotion to Christ the King. The walk, which



attracts young people from across the country, customarily takes place on the last Saturday of January, but this year it was held later to accommodate World Youth Day.

The event began at dawn on the John Paul II esplanade, located at the foot of the hill on the top of which is erected the famous shrine dedicated to Christ the King. At 6:30 a.m. there was Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and then the young people began the long ascent by foot over a route of twelve kilometres. The pilgrimage closed with a Mass celebrated by the Archbishop of León, Most Rev. Alfonso Cortés Contreras.

### *Spanish Shrine Commemorates Centenary of the Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

As part of the commemorations for the centenary of the consecration of Spain to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, made by King Alfonso XIII on

May 30, 1919, the Shrine of Cerro de Los Ángeles will welcome an exhibit of historical images of this invocation; outstanding among which is that from the retable of the Church of St. Francis in Palencia, expressly given by the diocese for this event.

Sculpted in 1747 by Pedro de Bahamonde, it depicts Our Lord with His arms open, showing the wounds to which the name of the exhibit alludes: “His wounds healed us.” This is the first image of this invocation carved in the Kingdom of Castile, becoming a model for many others.

More information on the exhibit, as well as on the symposiums and other events organized for the occasion of the centenary, can be found at [corazondecristo.org](http://corazondecristo.org).

### *Rosary for Men makes annual pilgrimage to Aparecida*

More than seventy-eight thousand people participated in the 11th Na-

tional Pilgrimage of the Rosary for Men to the Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida, held on Saturday, February 16. About fifty thousand faithful were expected, but the number of participants far surpassed expectations.

The programme began on the previous day, with an evening Mass followed by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and a procession to Itaguaçu Port – the site where the miraculous statue was found –, traveling along the Rosary Path. At night, there was a prayer vigil in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and, the next day, a solemn Mass in the Benedict XVI Tribune and the recitation of the Holy Rosary in the Basilica, among other activities.

The Rosary for Men regularly gathers groups of men in parishes to pray the Rosary. A million and a half members of the faithful participate in this initiative throughout Brazil.

## **Archdiocese of Belém celebrates Tricentenary**

To commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of its founding, the Brazilian Archdiocese of Belém de Pará began a jubilee year on February 22, Feast of the Chair of Peter, with a Mass celebrated in Mangueirinho stadium. Convoys from ninety-one parishes of the Archdiocese gathered to attend the Eucharist celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio to Brazil, Archbishop Giovanni d’Aniello, and concelebrated by the Bishops of Pará, Amapá and Maranhão, as well as many clergy.

All the celebrations for the liturgical year in the Archdiocese revolve around this important date. The creation of new parishes in mission areas and the ordination of new priests are also planned.



Archdiocese of Belém

The Catholic Church arrived at the city of Belém four hundred and three years ago, with the first Jesuit missionaries sent to the Amazon River basin. In that same year, a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Grace was erected in the Fort of Presépio, and later transferred to the site where the Cathedral is located today. On March 4, 1719, with the Bull *Copiosus in misericordia*, Pope Clement XI created the Diocese of Santa Maria de Belém and of Grão Pará, the fifth oldest in Brazil, which was elevated to the condition of Archdiocese by St. Pius X.

# Doctoral Thesis Confirms Authenticity of Holy Grail of Valencia

In a doctoral thesis in Art History, presented on February 27 at the University of Valencia, researcher Ana Mafé García affirms that the chalice kept in the Cathedral of that Spanish city is, with 99.9 per cent probability, the one used by Our Lord Jesus Christ during the Last Supper.

The results of the research reveal that the structure of the chalice, which had been dated to the first century before Christ, and its volumetric measurements adhere to Hebrew standards. Furthermore, analysis of the material from which it is made indicates it is carnelian, a stone representative of the tribe of Judah, to which Our Lord belonged. To these

facts the historian adds many more, including a new interpretation of the Kufic calligraphy inscribed on the base, which the researcher claims alludes to the name of Jesus.

Applying a mathematical rule of probability to the results of the study, Mafé reached the conclusion that the chalice of Valencia fulfils 99.9 per cent of the requisites necessary to be considered the authentic Holy Grail. Using the same method on the so-called Chalice of Doña Urraca, kept in the Basilica of St. Isidore, in León, and which is also alleged as the chalice of the Last Supper, the percentage obtained was only 33.

Lúcio César Alves Rodrigues



At left, the chapel of the Holy Chalice in the Cathedral of Valencia (Spain); centre, researcher Ana Mafé, author of the doctoral thesis; at right, the Holy Chalice

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# Whose Grandeur was Greater?

While they awaited a buyer, three sumptuous pieces of fabric dreamed of their future glory. Meanwhile, the linen cloth reflected: “Could God be pleased to see them filled with vanity and pride?”



Flávia Frez Corrêa

**A**round the year of Our Lord 33, there lived a woman named Sarah, renowned for her special skill: she

crafted textiles of every kind, from simple veils to rich brocades embellished with golden and silver threads and precious stones.

Her work was famous throughout all the villages of Judea, and people eagerly flocked to the market near the Temple of Jerusalem where she displayed her goods. But despite the high demand for her products, the artisan never had a large supply to offer, since each piece required painstaking labour and she did not want them to lose their due value.

That week she had only four fabrics to display: the first was of a green turquoise hue, with a golden border. The second was a rare gold silk, adored with purple; the third was a red taffeta of a delicate texture; the last was a noble yet inconspicuous piece of white linen.

Before sunrise, the vendors had set up their booths, in anticipation

of early buyers. As the textiles waited, they began to talk among themselves:

— Oh, turquoise! Look at my magnificent purple accents! I deserve to belong to the nobility! The Queen of Sheba herself would be delighted with me! – said the gold fabric.

— And did you not notice my brilliant sheen and my lively colour? I would be fit to adorn not just a queen, but even the Temple itself! – exclaimed the red.

— My friends, your worth is great, but you pale in comparison with my unique colour and my beautiful golden border. Wait and see which of us is destined to stand out the most – added the turquoise piece, smug in its finery.

Off to the side, the pure white cloth quietly reflected: “Indeed they really are beautiful! However, could God be pleased to see them in this state, filled with vanity and pride?”

The clients started to arrive. The gold fabric soon caught the eye of a servant of the Roman governor:

— Greetings Sarah! My master, the governor, has heard of your talent, and was so impressed that he wants to give one of your pieces to Caesar. May I take this one?



Illustrations: Elizabeth Bonynn

**The customer handed over the hefty price that Sarah requested for the red fabric; however, it went away disappointed...**



— Why of course! Naturally there is a price to pay...

Off went the gold piece, proudly thinking of the admiration that it would certainly receive from the emperor.

Another buyer appeared at Sarah's booth:

— I have saved hard to have enough to buy one of these rare textiles, in order to embellish my home. This red piece really takes my fancy!

The customer handed over the hefty price that the merchant requested and took the item. That piece of fabric went away disappointed. Its destiny was not so grandiose after all...

Soon afterwards, a haughty woman approached. Her attire suggested considerable wealth:

— Sarah, I am searching for some cloth to decorate my palace. I want a striking piece... Oh! I just love that green turquoise! May I take it?

— Yes, if you pay me double, since several people are bidding for it.

The purchase was made. Off went the turquoise, dreaming of the attention it would attract in the palace, and the praise that it would receive from visitors.

No passers-by showed any interest in the linen. Sarah decided to take it off the stand in order to embroider it and display it the next time. She dismissed the rest of the clientele.

While some turned away disappointed and others mumbled their annoyance, Ruth, an old friend of the artisan, arrived at the stand urgently requesting a piece of cloth. The seamstress offered her regrets:

— My friend, unfortunately I have nothing of great value. Everything is sold out.

— Oh, Sarah, I would be satisfied with anything at all! I want to give a gift to a lady whom I met during the preaching of the Master who has enchanted everyone around Jerusa-

lem with His words.

— Is that so? Could He be related to Simeon the prophet? Anyhow, I have only one piece left. It is plain white, but very fine linen. I do not think it is what you are looking for, but you may have it free of charge if you wish.

Ruth eagerly took the piece and went her way. The white fabric thought to itself: "God has heard my prayers; at least I will be of use to someone. However, will my future owner stow me away in a chest and forget about me? May God's will be done. If only I could see that extraordinary Man preach..."

The next day, a Friday, Ruth set out early to visit her friend:

— Veronica, I want to give you this piece of cloth as a sign of our friendship. It is one of the pieces made by the famous craftswoman Sarah.

— O Ruth, I thank you from my heart. What a fine piece of linen. I would like to invite you in for a little visit, but just now I was on my way out in the hope of finding the Master, for I heard that He is close by. Do you wish to join me?

With hasty steps, the pair departed. In her excitement, Ruth failed to notice that Veronica's expression was a little tense due to a feeling of foreboding that weighed on her heart. As they walked along, they soon heard a cry:

— Crucify Him! Crucify Him!

A tumultuous throng was leaving the city. Alarmed, they both ran to see who was being treated so bru-



**When she saw Him all wounded and bloody, Veronica's heart burned with the desire to comfort Him**

tishly. It was He whom Veronica had seen preaching and doing good to others; It was Jesus, Son of Mary.

When she saw Him all wounded and bloody, crowned with thorns, and carrying a heavy Cross, Veronica's heart burned with the desire to comfort Him in some way. Without thinking twice, she ran to Him and delicately wiped His Holy Face with the cloth that she had just received. The grateful gaze of the Saviour rested on her, and in those fleeting moments, she understood Him better than she ever had in all of His sermons.

As the Divine Master slowly withdrew and continued along His sorrowful way, she noticed with great surprise that His face was imprinted on the linen! And what joy the humble cloth felt now! What were all of the riches and the honours of the world compared with having the Sacred Face of Jesus imprinted on oneself?

As its pure white fibres caressed that disfigured face, the linen cloth was transformed into a most valuable relic, a perfect image of God Himself. It then understood that there is no greater glory on this earth than that of being associated with the sufferings of the Redeemer. ✧



# THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY

**1. St. Gilbert, Bishop** (†c. 1245). He erected Dornoch Cathedral in Scotland, founded several hospices and governed the Diocese of Caithness for twenty years.

**2. St. Francis of Paola, hermit** (†1507 Plessis-les-Tours - France).

**St. Dominic Tuoc**, priest and martyr (†1839). Dominican priest martyred during the religious persecution in Vietnam.

**3. St. Richard of Chichester, bishop** (†1253). Exiled by King Henry III and later restored to his See; he generously assisted the poor.

**4. St. Isidore of Seville, bishop and Doctor of the Church** (†636 Seville - Spain).

**St. Benedict Massarari**, religious (†1589). Member of the Order of Friars Minor, he carried out the duties of cook, superior and master of novices in Palermo. He is also known as St. Benedict the Moor, or the Black.

**5. St. Vincent Ferrer, priest** (†1419 Vannes - France).

**St. Irene**, virgin and martyr (†304). Born in Thessalonica, she converted to Christianity, together with her sisters Agape and Chionia. She was burned alive during the Diocletian persecution.

**6. Blessed Michael Rua, priest** (†1910). Disciple and successor of St. John Bosco, he was an excellent propagator of the Salesian Congregation.

## 7. 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent.

**St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle**, priest (†1719 Rouen - France).



**Blessed Mariana de Jesus Navarro**  
Church of Our Lady of Mercy,  
Palma de Maiorca (Spain)

**St. Hermann Joseph**, priest (†1241/1252). Religious from the Premonstratensian monastery of Steinfeld, Germany; he stood out for his love of the Blessed Virgin Mary and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

**8. St. Dionysius of Corinth, bishop** (†180). Gifted with extraordinary knowledge of the Word of God, he instructed the faithful of his Diocese of Corinth by preaching, and instructed bishops of other cities and provinces through letters.

**9. Blessed Marguerite Rutan**, virgin and martyr (†1794). A Daughter of Charity, guillotined during the French Revolution.

**10. St. Michael de Sanctis**, priest (†1625). Spanish priest of the Trinitarian Order, he was favoured with frequent ecstasies and visions.

**11. St. Stanislaus of Krakow**, bishop and martyr (†1079 Krakow - Poland).

**Blessed Symforian Ducki**, religious and martyr (†1942). Franciscan Capuchin martyred in Auschwitz concentration camp, Poland.

**12. St. Joseph Moscati**, layman (†1927). Respected doctor, he gratuitously rendered his services to the poor. He died at age 47 in Naples, Italy.

**13. St. Martin I, Pope and martyr** (†656 Chersonesus - Ukraine).

**St. Hermenegild**, martyr (†586). Son of the Visigoth king Leovigild; he was killed by order of his father in Tarragona, Spain, for refusing to receive Communion from an Arian bishop.

## 14. Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.

**St. Lambert of Lyon**, bishop (†688). Monk of Fontenelle Abbey, of which he became the superior after the death of St. Wandrille. He was later elected Bishop of Lyon.

**15. St. Ortarius**, abbot (†sixth century). He lived a life of austerity and prayer in the Landelles Monastery, France, where he cared for the sick and poor.

**16. St. Turibius**, bishop (†fifth century). He was born in Turin, Italy, and became Bishop of Astorga, Spain. He vigorously fought Priscillianism, which had made great headway in this country.

**17. Blessed Mariana de Jesus Navarro de Guevara**, virgin (†1624). Born in Madrid; she



felt called to religious life very early, but was forestalled by her parents. She eventually entered the Mercedarian Order.

**18. Holy Thursday.** Institution of the Holy Eucharist.

**Blessed Savina Petrilli**, virgin (†1923). Founded the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena, in Siena, Italy.

**19. Good Friday.**

**St. Martha**, virgin and martyr (†341). She suffered martyrdom in Persia during the persecutions of King Shapur II.

**20. Holy Saturday.**

**Blesseds Richard Sergeant and William Thomson**, priests and martyrs (†1584). Ordained priests in France, they returned to England to carry out their ministry. For this reason, they were hanged at the gallows at Tyburn.

**21. Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord.**

**St. Anselm**, bishop and Doctor of the Church (†1109 Canterbury – United Kingdom).

**Blessed Bartholomew Cervere**, priest and martyr (†1466). Dominican religious assassinated by Waldensian heretics while travelling to Cervere, Italy.

**22. St. Agapitus I**, Pope (†536). He worked to ensure that the Bishop of Rome would be freely chosen by the clergy of the city. He died in Constantinople, where he had gone to meet with the Emperor Justinian.

**23. St. Adalbert of Prague**, bishop and martyr (†997 Tenkitten - Russia).



**St. Lambert of Lyon**  
Museum of Cluny, Paris

Sergio Holmann

**St. George**, martyr (†fourth century Palestine).

**Blessed Helen Valentini**, widow (†1458). After the death of her husband she became an Augustinian tertiary, dedicating herself to prayer, reading of the Gospel and works of mercy.

**24. St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen**, priest and martyr (†1622 Seewis - Switzerland).

**St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier**, virgin (†1868). To mercifully welcome repentant public sinners, called “Magdalenes”, she founded the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Angers, France.

**25. St. Mark**, Evangelist.

**St. Erminus**, abbot and bishop (†737). He succeeded St. Ursmar in the governance of Lobbes Abbey in Belgium. He led an profound life of prayer

and received the spirit of prophecy.

**26. Our Lady of Good Counsel.**

**St. Rafael Arnáiz Barón**, religious (†1938). Trappist religious, diagnosed with a serious illness while in the novitiate; he accepted his poor health with patient resignation.

**27. Blessed Nicholas Roland**, priest (†1678). Founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Child Jesus in Rheims, France. For some years he was spiritual director of a youthful Jean-Baptiste de la Salle.

**28. 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter. Divine Mercy Sunday.**

**St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort**, priest (†1716 Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre - France).

**St. Peter Chanel**, priest and martyr (†1841 Futuna - Oceania).

**St. Gianna Beretta Molla**, mother of a family (†1962). A pediatrician, she chose to die rather than have an abortion, thereby saving the life of her fourth child.

**29. St. Catherine of Siena**, virgin and Doctor of the Church (†1380 Rome).

**St. Achard**, bishop (†1172). Superior of the famous Abbey of Saint-Victor in Paris, he was elected Bishop of Avranches. He wrote several spiritual treatises.

**30. St. Pius V**, Pope (†1572 Rome).

**St. Pomponius**, bishop (†sixth century). He fought against the Arian heresy in the Diocese of Naples, and built a church in this city dedicated to the Name of Mary, Mother of God.



# The Holy Joy of the Children of God

When we meet with suffering, we should never give in to discouragement. Let us keep in mind the rose-coloured variety of the *Quaresmeira*, and face suffering with the joy that leads to Heaven.



Sr. Juliana Galletti, EP

**A**mong the various symbols of supernatural realities with which God has endowed Brazilian nature, one is particularly expressive. It is the Purple Glory tree, whose Portuguese name is *Quaresmeira*, which means Lenten tree. Its flowers come into their fullest bloom just before Holy Week.

It is easy to see the Creator's hand in these beautiful trees. They remind the faithful that Lent has arrived, a time of contrition and conversion liturgically characterized by the use of the colour purple. However, the attentive observer will notice among these trees decked with violet or deep lilac-hued flowers, a less common variety adorned with rose-coloured flowers.

God does nothing by chance. If the striking purple blossoms are a summons to the penitential attitude that should mark the days leading up to the Easter Triduum, what is the symbolism of these rosy flowers?

In the middle of the Lenten Season, there is a day reserved for celebrating joy: *Lætare* Sunday. On this

day, rose-coloured vestments replace the purple ones, the music is more festive and flowers once again adorn the presbytery. There is a break in penance, in order to soften the sadness for our sins with the perspective of the Resurrection.

On this fourth Sunday of Lent, Holy Church teaches us that suffering and repentance ought to always be mingled with joy, for in the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ we have the certainty of pardon. Furthermore, the presence of the rose hue alongside the purple reminds us that happiness in this life is inseparable from the cross. To attain eternal joy, we must face tribulations, setbacks and sufferings. There is no greater sign of God's love for us than the trials He sends to purify and sanctify us.

"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him" (Rom 8:28). Accordingly, when suffering knocks at our door, a sentiment of joy should blossom in our heart, so well symbolized by the rose-coloured trees that grow sporadically among the penitential purple variety.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, most perfect of mere creatures, conceived without sin and endowed with every gift and virtue, suffered so immensely in this life that She is called Co-redemptrix. She is the sublime example of how God crowns His especially beloved with suffering!

This truth clashes with worldly maxims that equate happiness to a state of complete material satisfaction, exempt from any form of suffering. On the contrary, the only happiness possible for man on this earth is found along the path blazed by Our Lord Jesus Christ with His Cross, and it implies the fulfilment of duty and the acceptance of adversities, embracing them with enthusiasm, in the knowledge that they lead us to Heaven.

When suffering comes our way, we should not imagine that God has abandoned us, nor should we lose heart. Let us keep in mind the image of the rose-coloured *Quaresmeira* growing amid the purple ones, and face suffering with joy. In this way, we will be preparing our souls for the joys of eternity. ✧





Stephen Nami



Mauroguanandi (CC BY-SA 3.0)



Mauroguanandi (CC BY-SA 3.0)



João Paulo Rodrigues

Photo 1: Eucharist presided by Msgr. João in Our Lady of the Rosary Basilica, Caieiras (São Paulo);  
photos 2 and 3: Rose-coloured Quaresmeiras, of the Kathleen variety - CERET Park, São Paulo;  
photo 4: Quaresmeiras on the grounds of Tabor House - Caieiras (SP)





## ***Mysterious Grandeur, Enveloping Goodness***

**W**hen the Cyrenian took the Cross, a mute dialogue was established between him and the God-Man, who seemed to say to him: “My son, it is for you that I suffer. You see me at the height of abandonment and of disgrace, having reached the utter limit of human contempt. But look

at Me: a mysterious grandeur, an enigmatic and enveloping goodness touches your soul, as a good doctor does in pouring ointment on a wound. Do you not see a new horizon opening for you?”

Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira