



Vol. 14, No. 147
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HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

*“You have found favour
with God”*

Admirable Catholic Sense

If there was ever an intellectual without the slightest blemish of heresy, it was St. Thomas Aquinas. His Catholic sense was prodigious: on the one hand, in nothing did he clash with the truths defined by the Church of his time; on the other, he resolved countless questions upon which she had not yet spoken.

A characteristic and constant note of the Angelic Doctor's life was total submission to Church Doctrine. If the Church were to define any truth contrary to what he had advocated, he would immediately become the humblest, most loving and fervent champion of the thought he had contested, and the staunchest adversary of the error he had taught. He thus entirely fulfilled the three degrees of Catholic sense.

Some members of the faithful submit to what the Church establishes, at great cost and painfully, where they think differently from her. Others do not hesitate to accept what the Church teaches, but, when faced with any problem, they find it difficult to discern the correct solution for themselves.



St. Thomas Aquinas - Church of St. Dominic, Cuenca (Ecuador); in background, the interior of Sainte-Chapelle, Paris

The highest degree of Catholic sense consists in accepting all that the Church teaches promptly and with loving ease, and in being so imbued with her spirit that one thinks like her, even though at the moment her pronouncement on a given question is unknown. Finally, it is the ability to analyse matters not yet defined by the Church in such a way that, when she does define them, one is ready to adapt one's opinion immediately. But this will seldom be necessary, because those who proceed in this way can usually foresee the thinking of the Church.

Let us admire and endeavour to imitate St. Thomas on this point, and pray earnestly to God, through the great Doctor's intercession, for the virtue of Catholic sense.

Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira



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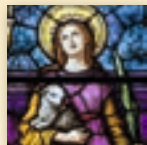
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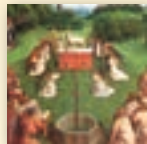
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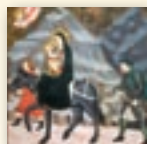
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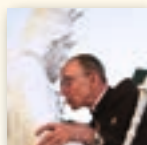
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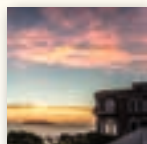
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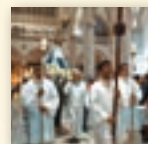
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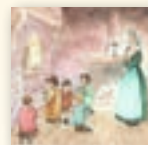
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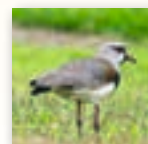
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OUR READERS WRITE

THE RADIANT FACE OF ONE WHO OPTS FOR GOD

Only a week after turning eighteen years of age, the eldest of my four children surprised me with a very courageous and extraordinary decision, although I had already “feared” it: “Dad, I am not going to study at college any longer; I am going to enter the seminary in Brazil.”

The young man’s decision to undertake this new life was a very difficult one. I, mentally detached, tried to listen and understand, because inside I still saw him as a child, playing with his planes or investigating the world of ants.

In fact, he now begins a new adventure, for which he departs without any possessions, like St. Francis. He gave away everything: his clothes, his cell phone, his birthday gifts received the week before... What powerful force inclined him to do this?

The same question could be asked of Br. Rafael Arnáiz who, at twenty-two years of age, left his family and his career for a cloister, for a wake-up call at two o’clock in the morning to sing their prayer in the Trappist monastery; or of Padre Pio who, at sixteen, entered the monastery of Benevento.

We can imagine what their answer would be, but it is not an easy step to take, for either us or for these young men. However, once it has been taken, it is enough to see his radiant face and the happiness he expresses day after day. He does not hide his excitement about his new “engagement”, his path, his way of happiness.

Perhaps this journey had its beginning on the day of his First Com-

munion, when he told us: “When I grow up I want to be a priest.” Or when, at the age of eleven, he “celebrated” his “first Mass” in an improvised chapel in the back yard.

Perhaps what impelled him was his first casual meeting with the Heralds when he returned from school one day. As friends of his grandfather, these Heralds naturally were apostolic with the lad when he, after overcoming his boyish timidity, finally summoned the courage to greet them.

The career towards the priesthood certainly accelerated when, some time later, another Herald persevered in convincing him to attend his first vacation course....

The clock is now reset: he begins a new career in which, no matter what happens, he will always be victorious!

*Santiago de Oñate
Franciscan tertiary and
father of a family
Madrid — Spain*

REFLECTIONS ON CHASTITY AND PURITY OF THE EYES

I often receive *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine, which I read with great care, for it contains a complete catechesis.

The article of Fr. Carlos Javier Werner, in the May 2019 issue, really grabbed my attention. In it he speaks of modesty and helps us to reflect on chastity and purity of the eyes.

In a time in which grotesque and vulgar images of little or no modesty are viewed with such “naturalness”, it is very difficult for a person to maintain chastity of sight.

As Fr. Carlos counsels, only with custody of the eyes can we keep peace in our hearts. Above all, we should have recourse to the help of

Our Lady, with this beautiful invocation, for example: “Give me thine eyes, O Mother, to know how to look; if I look with thine eyes, I will never sin.”

Many thanks for this great work of evangelization!

*Maydee González Bolaños
San Jose — Costa Rica*

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY WILL OPEN THE WAY

When we entered the Heralds, we were immediately touched by a grace, inviting us to change our lives once and for all. We no longer participated in social networks, and *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine kept us informed about what was truly necessary for our life.

We are immensely grateful to our founders, and to all those involved in this unique ideal, for saying “yes” to this call of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Courage and confidence! This work is Mary’s and She will open the way, often carrying us in her arms, if need be.

*Lidiane Perea Perucci
São Carlos — Brazil*

MORE ELEVATED AND CAPTIVATING CONTENT WITH EACH EDITION

The magazine is phenomenal! The content is more elevated and captivating with each edition. When I pick up the magazine, what really catches my attention is the front and back covers. *The Story for Children... or for Adults Full of Faith?* in each issue is also delightful. And I really enjoy the narration of the lives of the Saints, whose example does so much good to our souls.

*Celso Mistrello
Joinville — Brazil*

SUPREME OBJECT OF DIVINE DELIGHT

The Scriptures, always so succinct, contain wonders that are only revealed with time and the gradual working of grace in souls. In the Gospel of the Annunciation, for example, we find the Angel St. Gabriel alleviating Our Lady's concern with the words: "You have found favour with God" (Lk 1:30). Now, what does this expression mean?

To find favour with God is, first of all, to be the object of the Most High's delight. But, since everything is present to Him, we must conclude from the Angel's words that She has been so from all eternity: the Blessed Virgin was, in fact, included in the plan of the Incarnation.

What place did She have in this project? That of being Mother, of being the one chosen to bring God into the world. It was through Mary that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). In this way, She resembled the priesthood of the New Law which, by the words of the Consecration, brings to the altar the One who, by her "*fiat*", Our Lady conceived in her virginal womb. Another analogy is found in the fact that the priest is constituted "to act on behalf of men in relation to God" (Heb 5:1), because the Blessed Virgin, in her role as Mother, obtains for us everything that She asks of Jesus.

The special predilection of which She has been the object since the plan of creation was drawn up has thereby introduced Our Lady into the very Heart of God, whence She maternally governs all human happenings. Through her mercy, She is also the perfect manifestation of divine goodness, the maximum expression of His Heart for us. From this ineffable divine treasure, She has the power to grant us all that we ask of Her, so often without our deserving it.

In these various respects, among so many others, Our Lady is not only Mother and Daughter of the Church, but also her most perfect image (cf. *Lumen gentium*, n. 63). Does the Church teach? Mary also, by her example and by exercising her maternal protection over all mankind. Does the Church govern? Mary does also, in her own way, exerting her influence on souls and directing them to God and to Heaven. Does the Church sanctify? So does Mary, by heeding the petitions made to Her and granting, as Mother of Divine Grace, the divine benefits of which her children have such pressing need.

Therefore, the Mystical Body of Christ, as the "universal sacrament of salvation" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 48), finds a perfect reflection in Mary: if the Church is the Bride of Christ, She is Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

To benefit from the supreme protection of the Blessed Virgin, it is sufficient for us to accept the bond of love that She longs to establish with all hearts. We were created by God for Heaven, and it is through Mary that we will be saved, as St. Louis Grignion de Montfort teaches.

This is the only solution to the crisis in the world: just as John the Baptist was sent to point out the Lamb of God (cf. Jn 1:29), will there not be souls on earth called to make ready "a people prepared" (Lk 1:17) for the reign of Mary? ✦



*Our Lady Seat of
Wisdom - Bela
Vista House,
Mairiporã (SP)*

Photo: Timothy Ring



St. Agnes and the Kingdom of Heaven

In the Holy Church, a well-formed preacher is one who knows to speak about both the sweetness of the Kingdom of Heaven and the fear of punishment. Let us listen to the message of the Kingdom, so as to love it, and heed the teachings on eternal torment, so as to fear it.

In the Gospel proclaimed today (Mt 13:44-52), dearly beloved brethren, the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to earthly realities so that the soul may ascend from what it knows to what it does not know. Thus, through examples of visible things, it will find itself transported to the invisible and, as it were enkindled by contact with them, so that the love it feels for what it knows will also lead it to love that which it does not know.

“Love is strong as death”

The Kingdom of Heaven is compared here in the first place to a treasure hidden in a field: “which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Mt 13:44). [...]

The treasure is Heaven, to which we aspire; the field in which it was hidden is our persistent efforts to conquer it. To sell everything to acquire this field is to renounce carnal pleasures and to trample on all earthly desires, maintaining a celestial conduct, so as not to find pleasant anything that flatters the flesh and not to fear anything that destroys the life of the body.

The Kingdom of Heaven is also likened to a merchant in search

of precious pearls. When he finds one of great value, he also sells everything so that he can buy it. For whoever knows most perfectly the sweetness of heavenly life, willingly abandons all the things he loved on earth.

Compared to eternal bliss, everything seems worthless to him: he leaves what he has and distributes what he had accumulated. His soul is inflamed by the desire for heavenly things; of earthly things, nothing pleases him any longer. The beauty of that which enchanted him in this world now seems unsightly to him, for only the splendour of the precious pearl sparkles in his spirit. It is from this longing that Solomon rightly states: “Love is strong as death” (Sg 8: 6).

God asks that we master the desires of the flesh

In fact, just as death destroys the body, love for eternal life extinguishes the passion for corporeal things; whoever is wholly absorbed in it becomes indifferent to earthly desires.

St. Agnes, whose feast we celebrate today, could not have died corporeally for God without having previously died spiritually to earthly desires. Raised to the heights of virtue, her soul despised the tor-

ments and trampled underfoot the rewards.

She was led before kings and governors surrounded by soldiers, but she remained firm, showing herself to be more resilient than the executioners, and superior even to those who judged her. And we, adults full of weakness, who see young girls walking towards the Kingdom of Heaven by means of the sword, what shall we say, in the face of such examples, we who allow ourselves to be seized by anger, puffed up with pride, troubled by ambition, and overwhelmed by lust?

If we have not been called to conquer the Kingdom of Heaven by struggles and persecution, let us at least feel ashamed that we do not want to follow God in peacetime. Nowadays, God does not say to us, “Die for Me”; but only “Let the forbidden desires die in you.” If we cannot master the desires of the flesh in times of peace, how can we sacrifice that same flesh to the Lord in times of war?

The good and bad are together in this life

The Kingdom of Heaven is also like a net which, cast into the sea, catches fish of every kind. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore, where they

separate the good ones into baskets and toss the bad away. [...]

In this life we are all gathered together in the mesh of the Faith, like a group of unsorted fish. However, the nature of what has been caught in the net will be revealed on the shore, that is, by the Holy Church. Unlike fish, which cannot change after being caught, we were caught while bad, but in this net we become good. Let us reflect upon this, therefore, while we are yet in this net, so that we may avoid being rejected upon reaching land.

Consider how much you enjoy today's solemnity, so that if any of you were forbidden to participate in it, you would be very saddened. Thus, how will it be on that day for those who, in the sight of the Judge, will be dragged away, separated from the company of the elect and plunged into darkness, tortured by eternal fire?

To briefly explain this comparison, the Lord adds: "So it will be at the close of the age. The Angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Mt 13:49-50). These, dear brethren, are words that need to be feared more than explained. The torments of sinners are clearly stated so that no one will use ignorance as a pretext, as if the subject had been explained in a vague manner. [...]

Love the Kingdom, fear the chastisement

The Lord ended His discourse precisely where it began. He had at first asserted that the Kingdom was like a hidden treasure and a precious pearl; He then described the penalties of hell concerning the torments suffered by the damned. He added, in closing, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for



St. Agnes - Stained glass, Cathedral of St. Anthony, Juiz de Fora (Brazil)

*She was led before
kings and governors
surrounded by soldiers,
but she remained
firm, more resilient
than the executioners,
and superior even to
those who judged her*

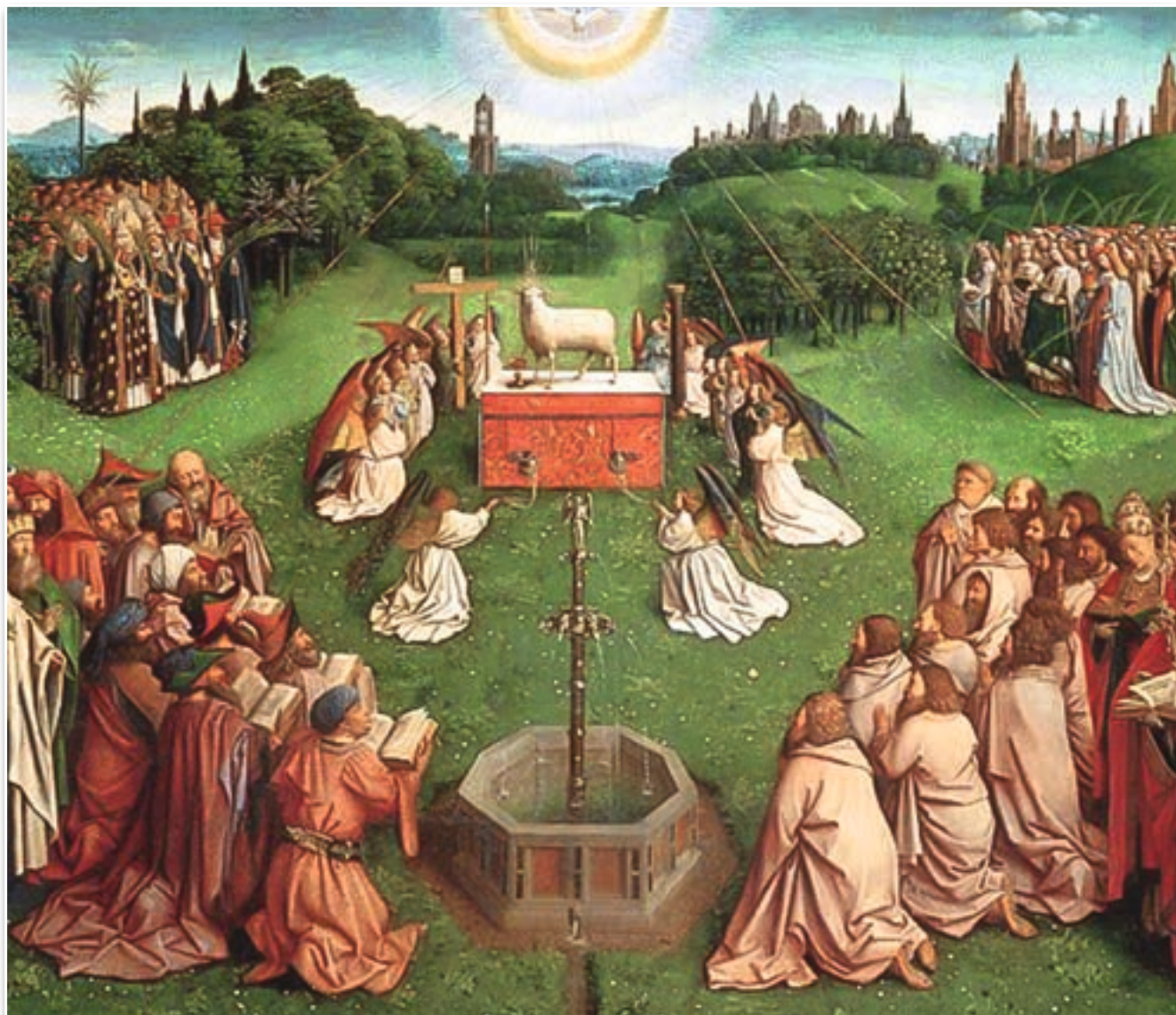
the Kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Mt 13:52).

It is as if He had clearly stated: "In the Holy Church, the well-formed preacher is one who can express new things, telling of the sweetness of the heavenly dwelling place, and at the same time reveal old things, speaking about the fear of punishment, so that at least the torments frighten those not attracted by rewards." Let us listen to what we are told about Heaven so as to love it; let us listen to what we are taught about the punishment to fear it, so that if love is not enough to draw a torpid soul, excessively attached to the earth, into the Kingdom, at least by fear it will be led there.

This is how the Lord speaks of gehenna: "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." There, eternal mourning will follow the present delights. Therefore, dear brothers, if you fear to weep then, flee now from vain joy. For it is indeed impossible to rejoice today with the world and to reign with the Lord on that day. Restrain, therefore, the waves of fleeting happiness, fully dominate the pleasures of the flesh.

May the thought of eternal fire turn bitter all that pleases you in this world. By the austere rule of life which befits maturity, suppress the puerile amusements to which you give yourselves, so that, fleeing from transitory things, you may more easily reach eternal joy, with the help of Our Lord Jesus Christ. ✧

Excerpts from: ST. GREGORY
THE GREAT.
*Homilies on the
Gospels*. Homily XI,
pronounced in the Basilica
of St. Agnes on her feast day:
PL 76, 1114-1118



Adoration of the Mystical Lamb, by Jan van Eyck - St. Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent (Belgium)

GOSPEL

²⁹ John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

³⁰ He is the One of whom I said, 'A Man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because He existed before me.' ³¹ I did not

know Him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that He might be made known to Israel." ³² John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from Heaven and remain upon Him.

³³ I did not know Him, but the

One who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whom-ever you see the Spirit come down and remain, He is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ Now I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God" (Jn 1:29-34).

We Were Pardoned in the Blood of the Lamb!

Who does not fear the supreme trial, so terrible that it made Christ Himself tremble? Nevertheless, knowing that God became Man and gave Himself up to die for me fills me with hope in His mercy and pardon.



Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

I – FROM THE CURSE OF SIN TO THE BEST OF SITUATIONS

Our first parents enjoyed extraordinary happiness in Paradise. Besides living in friendship with God, they were impervious to pain and physical discomfort. They dominated all material creation, including the animals, and by the gift of integrity, they were free from all inner turmoil. Their passions were entirely guided by reason, never straying from the course indicated by faith. Gifted with infused knowledge, Adam must have also abounded in counsels and wise observations.

But when he and the woman disobeyed the Creator, a fundamental disorder was established in their nature, by which the laws of the flesh came into conflict with those of the spirit. A veritable tempest of afflictions and enticements to evil arose in their souls, and they became unable, by their own strength, to consistently practise the Commandments. This is the worst misfortune resulting from original sin, far

more terrible than any anguish, trial, sickness, or even death: to live in the darkness of sin, having lost the clear understanding of all things and inerrancy in judgement.

Mankind spent millennia in this cursed state, for which there was no remedy. Countless falls of Adam's descendants are narrated by Scripture: the disasters preceding the Flood, the follies that culminated in the construction of the Tower of Babel, and the repeated infidelities of the chosen people to God's covenant with Israel.

However, from this lamentable state we were led to the best of situations, thanks to the word of a Virgin. With her mystical and prophetic gifts, Mary idealized in her Wise Heart how the promised Saviour would be and was filled with a great love for Him. She wished to serve Him as a slave of His Mother, and She ardently prayed for His coming. Upon receiving the visit of the Angel to announce the designs of Providence for Her in the plan of the Incarnation, Our Lady re-

*With her
mystical and
prophetic
gifts, Mary
idealized in
her Wise
Heart how
the promised
Saviour
would be*

*The Gospel
of St. John
stands out
from the
Synoptic
Gospels for
its admirable
wealth of
thought*

plied: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). And with this "*fiat!*" everything was resolved! In her most pure womb the Eternal Word became Man so that we would become children of God.

This is the marvel that the Gospel for the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time invites us to contemplate, presenting Jesus as He who takes away the sin of the world.

II – A PROCLAMATION THAT WILL RESOUND FOR ALL ETERNITY

The Gospel of St. John stands out from the Synoptic Gospels for its admirable wealth of thought. This can be attribut-

ed, among other factors, to the fact that it was written primarily to refute the doctrinal deviations rampant among the early Christians, especially those of a Gnostic nature. A fight against an internal enemy is always tougher than any external battle, and many were the combats undertaken by the Apostle against the heretics of his time. It is with good reason that the Beloved Disciple is also called "the Theologian".

Thus, in addition to its magnificent prologue and its unsurpassed Priestly Prayer, the Fourth Gospel also offers us several passages of great the-

ological depth in, such as the one contained in this Sunday's Liturgy.

Silence regarding the Baptism of Christ

Before beginning to analyse this passage, it is worth noting the absence of an allusion in St. John's text to the Baptism of Jesus.

As a former disciple of the Precursor and fostering genuine veneration for him, the Evangelist had sufficient reason to mention an event in which his first teacher – the one who led him to Our Lord – had played such an important role. However, we may suppose that he refrained from relating the fact so as not to foment the tendency among some of the Baptist's followers to overvalue him in relation to Jesus.

They preferred to follow someone who was closer to them, for submitting to a divine Master ultimately demanded a radical change of life. Thus, when Our Lord Jesus Christ presented Himself, they rejected Him, causing such a violent split in that group that, if St. John the Baptist had not been killed, he would have eventually been the object of tremendous betrayals.

John lived solely for the Messiah

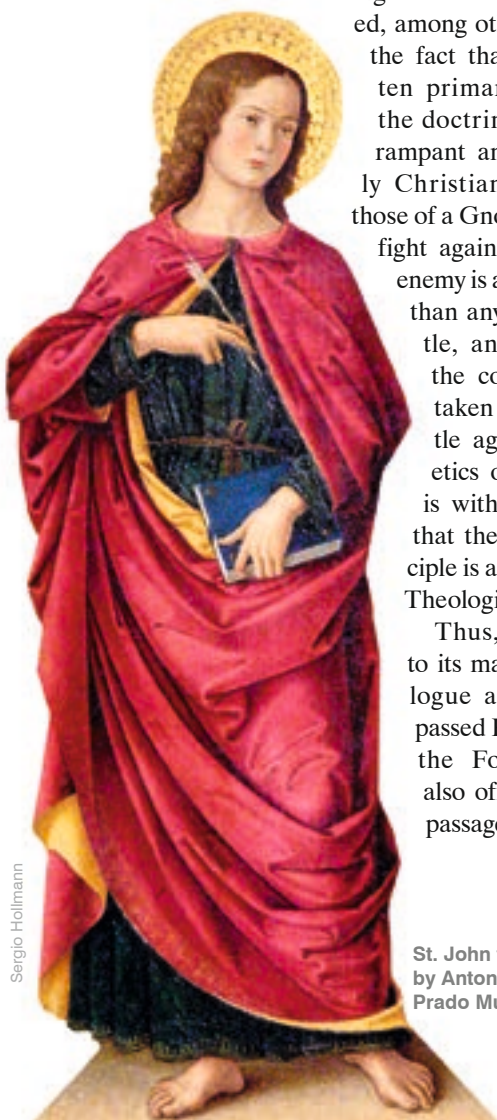
The verses chosen for this Sunday are part of the account of the first days of Our Lord's public life that opens the fourth Gospel.

At the outset we see the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth giving his testimony of Jesus to the retinue of priests and Levites sent by the Jews from Jerusalem, who subjected him to an interrogation about his identity and mission. At the end of the brief narration, the Beloved Disciple states: "This took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing" (Jn 1:28).

Therefore, the Precursor was to be found by the waters flowing in the southern part of the Jordan, in the same place where he had just recently baptized the Lord. There, too, on the following day, the episode discussed in this Liturgy would take place.

^{29a} John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him...

Where was the Saviour coming from, and where was He going? It is not known. What is certain is that after the Baptism, He had spent forty days in the wilderness, during which He had been tempted by satan. Perhaps He was re-



Sergio Hollmann

St. John the Evangelist,
by Antoniazio Romano
Prado Museum, Madrid

turning from there on this occasion when the Precursor sees Him again.

When someone knows a doctrine profoundly and meets a person who embodies it perfectly, his natural reaction is one of wonder, which translates into an exclamation. St. John the Baptist lived solely for the Messiah, meditating and preaching on Him. Therefore, when he saw Jesus, he could not remain silent: from his lips sprang three precious affirmations, transcribed below.

The Precursor indicates the Lamb of God

^{29b} ...and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

Living in a world that has lost the sense of symbolism and has forgotten how to contemplate the meaning of the wonders formed by God's hands, it is difficult for us to grasp the true meaning of the image St. John the Baptist uses.

St. Paul teaches that in Our Lord Jesus Christ, "all things were created, in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible" (Col 1:16). "He is the image of the invisible God, the First-born of all creation" (Col 1:15). Thus, in creating the lamb, an animal that is always docile and tranquil, that does not utter the least cry when taken to the slaughterhouse, and remains silent even when being put to death, the Father wanted to offer us an image of His Eternal Son, who would take on flesh to save us.

Let us not forget, however, that Jesus will also be called the Lion of Judah. Manifesting the other end of the spectrum of perfection, this noble feline, endowed with an imposing and extraordinary roar, is rightly considered the king of beasts, making it a symbol of Christ's strength and majesty.

It should be noted that the Gospel gives no indication of who were John the Baptist's lis-



St. John the Baptist
Church of Our Lady of Mercy,
Salta (Argentina)

teners at that moment. In reality, these words were not spoken for the sake of onlookers. If the day before he had spoken to the priests and Levites, satisfying the curiosity of the Jews, now he is addressing history. His voice cries out and cannot be silenced, for it resounds throughout the centuries until crossing the threshold of the end of time, and will continue to echo for all eternity.

Authenticity of John the Baptist's words

There are those who question the authenticity of these words of the Precursor, hypothesizing that they

were simply placed in his mouth by the Evangelist, but there are strong arguments that prove otherwise.

First, when St. John wrote his Gospel, many of those who had followed the Baptist and personally known Jesus were still alive. If, by some absurdity, he had included any episode contrary to reality, there would be no shortage of those who would have risen up to oppose him, creating a great upheaval in those early days of the Church.

Moreover, the Precursor is praised by the Divine Master as the greatest of all men (cf. Mt 11:11). Therefore, if the Apostles knew something about the Redeemer, it would not make sense for John the Baptist to be ignorant of it. And if his mission was precisely that of going before the Saviour to prepare the way, how could he be unaware of the principal mysteries concerning His Person?

Symbolism of the paschal lamb

And still regarding this first verse, it should be noted that the lamb was for the Jews a perfect and definitive symbol of the transition from the state of curse to that of blessing, since it was the animal indicated by the Most High to be immolated and served during Passover ceremonies.

If the Apostles knew something about the Redeemer, it would not make sense for John the Baptist to be ignorant of it

*St. John
delighted in
recording
these
statements of
the Baptist,
presenting
them as an
authoritative
document*

The origin of this tradition goes back to the night when the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt and set out for the Promised Land across the Red Sea under the command of Moses. God prescribed for that occasion a supper in which a lamb or a kid “without blemish, a male a year old” (Ex 12:5) was to be served, which had been slaughtered at dusk on that same day. With its blood, they were to anoint the doorposts of their houses so that, at the passage of the Lord – whence comes the word *passover* – those dwelling within them would not be slain, as would befall all the first-born of the Egyptians.

As a sign of gratitude, the commemoration of that day would be celebrated annually with a feast in honour of the Almighty. It was precisely at the time of the Passover celebration that the arrest and Death of Jesus took place.

Witness of Christ's divinity

³⁰ “He is the One of whom I said, ‘A Man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because He existed before me.’”

When the Word became flesh in the virgin womb of Mary, St. Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy with St. John the Baptist, as the Archangel told Our Lady: “this is the sixth month with her who was called barren” (Lk 1:36). The declaration of Christ’s divinity by the son of Zechariah is thus made very clear: the birth of the Precursor preceded that of the Messiah in time, but the latter, being God, had existed from all eternity.

This truth bothered the Gnostics, whom the Evangelist was combating, for it clearly demonstrated that Jesus was not merely a receptacle of divinity, but rather the God-Man: human nature had been hypostatically united with the divine in the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. This is why the Virgin Apostle delighted in recording these statements of the Baptist, presenting them as an authoritative document.

Restitutive soul par excellence

³¹ “I did not know Him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that He might be made known to Israel.”

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As Precursor, it is evident that St. John received extraordinary insights from the Holy Spirit concerning Our Lord. Otherwise, he would not have been sufficiently equipped to proclaim Him. In stating that he “did not know Him,” he thus refers to the period prior to such revelations.

He also makes a point of stressing that his baptism was performed with water, in order to differentiate it from that of Jesus, who will baptize “with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Mt 3:11). In this verse, he sets forth the essence of his mission: to predispose the chosen people for the action of the Redeemer. Being a restitutive soul par excellence, he credits Our Lord with all the success of his apostolate, as he seeks to efface himself more and more, as he will say later: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30).

Commenting on this passage, St. Augustine makes an interesting observation: “John received the ministry of baptism, that by the water of repentance he might prepare the way for the Lord, not being himself the Lord; but where the Lord was known, it was superfluous to prepare for Him the way, for those who knew Him He became Himself the way.”¹

Perfect summation of Trinitarian theology

³² John testified further, saying, “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from Heaven and remain upon Him.”

Only by a revelation could the Precursor have had such a clear notion of the Holy Trinity. In the preceding verses he spoke of the Second Person; now he declares that he has seen the Third, and later he will mention the First.

In a very brief discourse, he makes a perfect theological summation of the essence of the Trinitarian mystery and of the Incarnation, Passion and Death of Jesus; that is, of the principal mysteries of our Faith. What wonders the Holy Spirit must have revealed to St. John the Baptist throughout his life!

It is Christ Himself who baptizes

³³ “I did not know Him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, He is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’”



Baptism of Our Lord,
Church of the Most Blessed Sacrament,
Porto (Portugal)

It is significant that he repeats here that, until the Baptism of Our Lord, he “did not know Him.” How can we understand such a statement if, as St. Matthew recounts, John was reluctant to baptize Jesus when he saw Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me” (Mt 3:14)?

It is again St. Augustine who offers us an explanation of the Precursor’s words: “John learns about Him whom he already knew; but only what he did not yet know. What did he know? That He was the Lord. And what did he not know? That the Lord would never transfer to any man the power to baptize, but that He would only pass on the ministry: the right, to no one; the ministry, yes, both to good and bad.”²

In the priesthood of the New Law, whoever administers a Sacrament does so in the name and with the power of Christ. Thus, the Bishop

“What did he know? That He was the Lord. And what did he not know? That the Lord would never transfer to any man the power to baptize”

*If we were
to gather
together all
of the lambs
created, we
would not
obtain the
forgiveness
of even one
venial sin*

of Hippo stresses: “May the ministers be holy, if they so desire. However, if those who occupy the chair of Moses are not righteous, then it is my Master who gives me assurance, of whom the Spirit testifies: ‘He is the One who will baptize.’”³³

Divine and immaculate victim

³⁴ “Now I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God.”

St. John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Our Lord in the form of a dove, and this served as confirmation of what had been revealed to him.

Begotten by the Father from all eternity and identical to Him, the Word is His only Son by nature. This truth so far transcends human and even angelic intelligence that we will only grasp it in glory by means of the light of God. The faith received in Baptism only helps our intelligence to accept it, but not to understand it.

This Only-begotten Son, seeing the doors of Heaven closed to mankind as a result of sin and, above all, considering the offence against the Father, Himself and the Holy Spirit, resolved to atone for this outrage and thereby to put an end to humanity’s sad plight.



Sacrifice of the Old Testament
Capodimonte Museum, Naples (Italy)

We know from the pages of the Old Testament that one of the ways of making this reparation was by offering an expiatory victim. And this required an outpouring of blood, for such is the symbol of life. Animals were immolated as a sign of praise, thanksgiving or petition, but above all to satisfy the honour of God outraged by some sin.

In one of the culminating moments in Sacred History, for example, Abraham is called by God to offer up his only son, Isaac, as a burnt offering. The promise made by the Lord that the already-aged patriarch would have descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky and as the dust of the earth (cf. Gn 13:16; 15:5) hovered over this child. Nevertheless, Abraham did not waver. Full of faith, he went to the top of a mountain, taking Isaac with him, and at the moment he was about to strike him with the knife, an Angel stopped him. Nearby he found a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, and Abraham took it and presented it as a victim in place of his son (cf. Gn 22:3-13).

However, if we were to gather together all of the lambs created, from the first one formed by the hands of the Divine Artist to those that will serve as food for Elijah at the end of the world, and we were to immolate them in holocaust, we would not obtain the forgiveness of even one venial sin. Indeed, sin, because it is an offence committed against God, is of infinite gravity and can only be expiated by a victim of infinite value.

How, then, can amends be made for the fault of our first parents and for all the others that followed it? Only the Blood of a Lamb that was the Son of God would be able to take away the sin of the world. And this is what happened: the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity took on flesh and offered Himself as an immaculate and perfect Victim for humanity, in an entirely lucid, voluntary and free act. By means of this satisfaction presented to the Father, the gates of Heaven were once again opened for mankind.

III – LET US CONFIDE IN GOD’S PARDON!

The Gospel for the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, so rich in theological reflections regarding the essence of our Faith, opens before us the magnificent pathways of confidence in God’s pardon.



The Divine Child Jesus in St. Joseph's lap, with St. John the Baptist at His feet
Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio (Texas)

When we remember our past faults, or are anxious for our future fidelity, we should remember this proclamation made by St. John: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Then we will be assured of His desire to free us from all our shame.

Jesus offered Himself to be immolated on the Cross, and He shed His Blood to the last drop for each of us individually. If Adam and Eve had been faithful and consequently all mankind had been born in Paradise, but only one person had sinned, Our Lord would have been willing to suffer the Passion in order to deliver that one person from eternal damnation. Therefore, I must confide that if I acknowledge my faults and ask for His forgiveness, He will cleanse me and assist me in all difficulties, especially at the moment of death.

Who does not fear the supreme trial, so terrible that it made Christ Himself tremble? However, knowing that God became Man and was willing to die for me fills me with hope in His pardon. By His infinite merits, I will obtain mercy and be assisted by the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in the final hour.

To keep ourselves in this state of surrender and confidence, let us never forget the greatest proof of God's love for us after the Redemption: He left us the Blessed Virgin Mary, an extraordinary Mother, full of affection and kindness for each one of us and prepared to go to any lengths to help us.

Through her intercession, let us never forget our condition as children of God and temples of the Blessed Trinity. If we do everything from within this perspective, grace will make our souls fertile ground, from which it will cause a new historical era to germinate: the Reign of Mary! ✧

*When we
remember our
past faults,
we should
remember this
proclamation:
"Behold,
the Lamb
of God..."*

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE. In Ioannis Evangelium. Tractatus IV, n.12. In: *Obras Completas*. Madrid: BAC, 1955, v.XIII, p.151.

² Idem, Tractatus V, n.11, p.171; 173.

³ Idem, n.15, p.179.



ST. PAULA

The Masterpiece of the Doctor of Scripture

As a disciple of St. Jerome, she remained faithful to her spiritual father even in face of the persecutions and calumnies raised against him.



Sr. Maria Beatriz Matos, EP

“If all the members of my body were to be converted into tongues, and if each of my limbs were to be gifted with a human voice, I could still do no justice to the virtues of the holy and venerable Paula.”¹ This is how St. Jerome begins one of his letters, introducing the reader, with these brief words, into one of the most beautiful pages of Catholic hagiography.

Who is this Paula, whom St. Jerome felt incapable of praising as much as she deserved?

Illustrious lady of ancient Rome

It is the year 379. During a tranquil autumn sunset, the houses light up gradually and discreetly, and the hustle and bustle typical of a busy city slowly fades, giving way to the silence of the night. We are in Rome, the capital of the world.

The watchful eye of those who walk these well-paved streets is drawn to a brightly lit palace, and the noise emanating from within seems to indicate the presence there of many people. The event is just beginning. Gradually the matrons arrive, clothed with luxurious garments, adorned with valuable jewels

and carried on comfortable litters. The first strains of a song are heard. One more party has commenced in Roman high society.

Still young, one would say that Paula, the matriarch of this home, was the happiest person in the world. The great glories of the Cornelii, Scipios, Aemilii and Gracchi shine in her lineage. She is gifted with brilliant intelligence as well: in addition to Latin, she also speaks Greek perfectly. She married Toxotius, the offspring of the most noble blood of the Julii, which gained world renown when Julius Caesar took power as consul and dictator. Along with their nobility, the couple also possessed an immense fortune.²

A lady of this class was obliged to dress in gold-embroidered silk garments, to wear shoes embellished with diamonds, a jewelled belt, and to adorn herself with earrings and necklaces the cost of which was an inheritance. Paula strictly followed these rules.

Bereft of worldly happiness

The years unfolded in care-free happiness for the couple,

who brought five children into the world: Blesilla, Paulina, Eustochium, Rufina and Toxotius, named in honour of his father. The illustrious lady, however, could not imagine the great storm that awaited her with the death of her husband.

The sudden event darkened her horizon with sadness and left her without a compass for her life. Still a young lady, about thirty-one, her future was uncertain, her family vulnerable, and her social life in turmoil. Crushed with sorrow, she would weep for entire nights, and no one was able to comfort her.

Paula's grief reached such a point that many feared for her life. She claimed to be a Christian, but she could not contemplate this tragedy with the eyes of faith. However, her suffering eventually gave her the opportunity to consider things for the first time in the clear light of eternal realities, in face of which the passing illusion of worldliness is laid to rest.

Of what good was it to be counted among the greatest fortunes of the empire? Of what use her exceedingly noble blood? Furthermore, what

benefit was there in the effort to be seen well by society, to spend hours on end braiding her hair and grooming herself so as to be considered beautiful?

Her husband's cold, inert body held a blunt answer: recognition from the world had not delivered him from death; neither money nor honours could ever give him the power to move even a finger again.

This perspective, entirely new to Paula, may have drawn even more blood from her soul than the loss of the one she loved. A crossroads opened before her: she could plunge deeper into the world, giving free rein to despair and the enjoyment of pleasures, or she could reach out to Providence, who invited her to seriousness.

Which path would she choose?

Word and example that transform

Surely Paula would not have been able to prevail at such a crucial juncture if this passage of Scripture had not come true for her: "A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter: he that has found one has found a treasure" (Sir 6:14).

Marcella was a patrician lady of another important Roman lineage. Her parents had arranged an advantageous marriage for her, to ensure the continuity of the family. Although she cherished the desire to surrender herself to God, she had fulfilled the wishes of her parents. However, after only seven months she was widowed and, never having loved the world, she turned her palace into a true religious community.

A few years had passed when, one day, a young lady approached that house converted into a monastery and met those who lived there. Still wearing the clothes of mourning, and immersed in an internal struggle, the widow of Toxotius marvelled at the example of the one who had,

in her brief marriage, suffered a fate similar to her own.

Paula opened her soul to Marcella's influence and the latter helped her to shed her worldly vanities, introducing her into divine intimacy. She was, as the disciple herself would later recognize in a letter, "the first to set our kindling alight," urging "with word and example to embrace this kind of life."³

The wisdom of God... is foolishness to the world, says St. Paul (cf. 1 Cor 1: 23-24). Perhaps, even at that time, some "wise man" would have attributed the conversion of the young patrician woman to a serious psychological disorder brought on by the death of her husband... But, in fact, it was grace that worked wonders in the heart of this distinguished lady.

Moving against the stream of the society to which she had once belonged, Paula took large strides towards perfection. She distributed a large part of her wealth to the poor, assisted the needy with extreme dedication, and when family members criticized her for taking from her children to give to others, she answered that she left them a greater and more valuable inheritance than gold: the mercy of Christ.

Meetings with the Doctor of Scripture

Paula was still taking the first steps in her conversion when an illustrious and exceptional presence was felt in Rome, arousing sympathy in some, and antipathy in others.

Amid the luxury and pleasures of the time, he was a stern man who "looked like a portrait of Elijah, the Baptist, or Anthony of Egypt. In his speech, demeanour and gestures he gave the impression of a hermit of great austerity, a monk full of perfection, and a man truly crucified to

the world and transformed into Jesus Christ."⁴

It was Bishop Jerome, who had come to the Eternal City to act as secretary for Pope St. Damasus and to serve as an important biblical adviser. According to some hagiographers, he held a post equivalent to that of today's Secretary of State.

His scholarship and virtues, coupled with a strikingly austere figure, appealed to all who sought sanctification, particularly that group of Christian matrons. It was St. Marcella who, moved by admiration, became the first bridge of communication between them and the Saint, for the latter modestly shielded his eyes from noble ladies.⁵

Finding in them, and in other friends of hers, a genuine desire to progress on the path of perfection, St. Jerome spared no effort in leading them along the ways of virtue. He began by noting that although



With great discernment and patience, the holy man began to guide and forge the character of the Roman patrician lady

St. Jerome, St. Paula, St. Eustochium and Blesilla - Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Genoa (Italy); on previous page, St. Paula - Vatican Pinacoteca

they had consecrated their lives and desires to God, they still retained numerous whims and defects. They were, writes the Saint, “slaves of the world [...], unable to bear the rubbish thrown into the street. They were carried by eunuchs, chafed at the unevenness of the road, found the silk dresses they wore a heavy burden, and felt bothered by the sun, if its rays should happen to intensify even slightly.”⁷⁶

At the request of this group, St. Jerome began to hold meetings at Marcella’s palace, and later at Paula’s, where he explained to them many different passages from the Bible.

True spiritual father of Paula

He gradually became their spiritual director, especially for Paula. If Marcella had been the faithful friend that helped her to choose the good path, it fell to Jerome to engender her “in Christ Jesus through the Gospel” (1 Cor 4:15).

With great discernment and patience, the holy man began to guide and forge the character of the Roman patrician, who in turn saw him more as a father than as a teacher. Thus was established that enduring bond proper to the things of the spirit.

It is related, for example, that Paula’s daughter Blesilla, a fine-looking young woman, but who was given over to the enticements of society, eventually renounced the world under St. Jerome’s guidance. However, malaria brought her to the grave in three months, leaving her mother once again overwhelmed with sorrow, to the point of displaying imbalanced behaviour, such as refusing to eat.

A true spiritual father, St. Jerome was also affected by the separation: “My Paula, I take as my witness Jesus, whom Blesilla now follows; I take as witnesses the Angels, whose

company she enjoys, that I am suffering the same torments that you suffer. I am her father in spirit, her preceptor in charity.”⁷⁷

Notwithstanding the grief thus manifested, St. Jerome very tactfully reminds Paula that the hand of God is behind everything that happens. He explains why such an end was for the best, even for her, the mother. Firmly, he warns her not to give in to a purely carnal affection, comparing her to a pagan woman whose husband had recently died.

During St. Jerome’s four years in Rome, St. Paula was moulded by him to such an extent that she became, more than all his biblical, doctrinal or apologetic writings, “the best letter, the masterpiece”⁷⁸ of the Great Doctor of the Church.

Dignity and fidelity in face of calumnies

It was now the year 385, and Paula, who had already matured in virtue, was ready to bravely face a new storm – and how difficult it would be! She, who had renounced the world to surrender herself to God, would have to defy it once more to seal her allegiance to the chosen path.

With the death of St. Damasus, St. Jerome was divested of his pontifical functions. At the same time, a wave of infamous slander rose against him. He was accused of not being what he showed himself to be. The conversion of Paula, Marcella and so many other ladies was attributed to magical gifts that he used to attract and manipulate people; and even worse, they tried to smear the meetings in the palace of St. Marcella with malicious insinuations.

Thus, they sullied the holy and entirely spiritual bond between Paula, her daughters and St. Jerome. He was portrayed as a de-

praved man who indulged in immorality, and there was even one wretched man who fabricated very serious charges, which he later admitted were false...

But St. Jerome was not to be intimidated, and he regarded the persecution that had been unleashed against him with disdain: “How little anguish have I endured, I who fight under the banner of the cross! They have laid to my charge a crime of which I am not guilty; but I know that I must enter the Kingdom of Heaven through evil report as well as through good.”⁷⁹

Knowing the integrity of his spiritual daughter, and seeing her also reviled, he highlights how her virtues have made her worthy to suffer for Christ: “O envy that dost begin by tearing yourself! O cunning of satan, that always persecutes what is holy! No other women in the city of Rome have occasioned scandal except Paula and Melaniam, who, despising their riches and forsaking their children, have raised the Cross of the Lord as a standard of piety. If they frequented the baths, if they coveted perfumes, if they made of their wealth and widowhood a pretext for luxury and freedom, they would be considered true ladies and even holy ones.”⁸⁰

A soul of solid principles, nothing shook Paula’s surrender to God and her confidence in St. Jerome. In face of the persecution and slander raised against him, this distinguished disciple remained faithful to her father who had led her along the ways of the Spirit.

What a joy for the Doctor of Sacred Scripture, in the midst of that raging sea, to see the fidelity and steadfastness shining in her, fruits of his intense apostolate and sacrifice! In fact, concluding one of his letters of defence, St. Jerome writes: “Give my regards to Pau-

la and Eustochium – who, though not pleasing to the world, are always mine in Christ.”¹¹

Living rule to be followed in the monastery

Still in the tumultuous year of 385, St. Paula leaves the Eternal City on a ship heading East, following the footsteps of her master. In the subsequent months she will become acquainted with the Holy Land, cradle of the Faith, and with Egypt, birthplace of the monastic life. And as she travels through each of the holy places, her pious soul will relive the Gospel.

Master and disciples finally settled in Bethlehem.

There Paula built a monastery for women, of which she was superior, and St. Jerome a coenobium for men. They would also build a house dedicated to the lodging of pilgrims, in reparation for the lack of welcome suffered by the Holy Family in that city.

St. Paula lived for about twenty years in the monastery in Bethlehem. In spite of all the responsibilities that governing the house entailed, she continued to assist St. Jerome in his commentaries on the Sacred Scriptures, especially by raising questions and making observations that would lead him to new explanations. In order to be more useful to her master, she also learned Hebrew. But, following his

example, she principally strove to transpose the biblical teachings into daily life, rather than to study them intellectually.

An exemplary superior, she was the living rule to be followed. No one outdid her in humility or surpassed her in generosity. Combining firmness with compassion and a keen psychological sense, she gave an excellent formation to her disciples and, despite St. Jerome’s warnings, subjected herself to severe penances, saying: “I must disfigure that face which contrary to God’s commandment, I have painted with rouge, white lead, and antimony. I must mortify a body that has given itself over to many delights. [...] I, who once sought to please the world

and my husband, now want only to please Christ.”¹²

From Bethlehem to the Kingdom of Heaven

Having reached fifty-six years of age, Paula was found by God to be ready for Heaven. A terrible illness struck her, and she sensed her end was near. Transforming the throes of agony into praise of God, she only said: “How lovely is Thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the Lord” (Ps 84:1-2).

When they were informed that the virtuous soul was about to leave this world, monks and virgins hastened to the monastery.

They were joined by the Bishops of Jerusalem and of other cities, as well as by many priests and deacons. And at her death, they all praised God for the marvels worked in that noble lady. “We do not grieve that we have lost her, but give thanks to God that we have had her, or rather, for that we have her still,”¹³ St. Jerome later expressed in the funeral eulogy of his disciple.

He pays his last respects to her with words full of poetry and piety saying: “And now, Paula, farewell, and aid with your prayers the old age of those who reverence you. Your faith and your works unite you to Christ; thus, standing in His presence, you will the more readily gain what you ask.”¹⁴ ✧



What a joy for the Doctor of Sacred Scripture, amid that raging sea, to behold such fidelity and steadfastness shining in his disciple

St. Jerome bestows the habit upon St. Paula and St. Eustochium - National Museum of Antique Art, Lisbon

¹ ST. JEROME. *Letter 108*, n.1.

² Cf. GENIER, OP, Raimundo. *Santa Paula*. Barcelona: La Hormiga de Oro, 1929, p.11; 19.

³ ST. JEROME. *Letter 46*, n.1.

⁴ SIGÜENZA, José de. *Vida de San Geronimo*, apud MORENO, Francisco. *San Jerónimo: la espiritualidad del desierto*. Madrid: BAC, 2007, p.44.

⁵ Cf. Idem, p.45.

⁶ ST. JEROME. *Letter 66*, n.13.

⁷ ST. JEROME. *Letter 39*, n.2.

⁸ RUIZ BUENO, Daniel. Introducción, versión y notas. In: ST. JEROME. *Cartas*. Madrid: BAC, 1962, v.I, p.233.

⁹ ST. JEROME. *Letter 45*, n.6.

¹⁰ Idem, n.4.

¹¹ Idem, n.7.

¹² ST. JEROME. *Letter 108*, n.15.

¹³ Idem, n.1.

¹⁴ Idem, n.33.

“Out of Egypt I called my Son”

During their stay in Egypt, how Jesus, Mary and Joseph must have longed to leave that foreign and idolatrous nation! But the Scripture had to be fulfilled...



Sr. Ariane Heringer

The sacred writings contained in the Bible, especially those comprising the New Testament, rarely use language that is convoluted or difficult to understand. However, they are usually very succinct and lacking in particulars, leaving the reader curious regarding details of the facts narrated therein.

Furthermore, many episodes in the God-Man's life remain shrouded in silence and obscurity in the Gospel. This obliges us to reconstruct these events based on historical data, age-old tradition, private revelations or logical deductions based on what we already know.

So it is with the accounts of the infancy of the Child Jesus, and specifically of the flight into Egypt, an episode on which we will attempt to shed some light in the following lines, beginning with a brief overview of the events that preceded it.

Herod seized with unease and trepidation

Eight days after the Divine Infant's birth, in accord with the Law of Moses, the ceremony of circumcision took place, while the Holy Family was still in the Grotto of Bethlehem.¹

Some time later, after the period of purification which every mother was obliged to observe, the Holy Family journeyed to Jerusalem. There, Jesus was presented by His parents in the Temple, giving occasion to Simeon's prophecy:

“Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed” (Lk 2:34-35).

As soon as the fact became known, word rapidly spread among the people that the long-awaited Messiah was already among them. And the appearance of the Magi from the East, seeking the newborn King to worship Him (cf. Mt 2:2), only confirmed the auspicious news...

All these murmurings left Herod deeply perturbed, and so he inquired as to the time and place where, according to the prophets, the King of the Jews was to be born. Seeing that all the answers seemed to be in keeping with what was happening in those days, the perfidious king was seized with unease and trepidation. Fearing to lose his throne, he ordered the killing of all children under the age of two throughout Judea.

Solicitude of Mary and Joseph to the voice of the Angel

At this juncture, the Holy Family had already left Jerusalem, for “when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee” (Lk 2:39).

Therefore, it was in the Holy House of Nazareth, today venerated in Loreto, that “an Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the Child and His Mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the Child, to destroy Him’” (Mt 2:13).

Faithful to the warning received, the Holy Patriarch rose without delay and departed with Mary and the Divine Infant to the distant region where they were to stay until Herod's death, in order to fulfil what was foretold by the prophet: “out of Egypt I called my Son” (Hos 11:1).

From the description given in the Gospel, it is clear that there was no resistance to the divine order from the holy spouses. On the contrary, they rose up “by night” (Mt 2:14) to respond with solicitude to the Angel's call, without complaining about this setback.

In this way, as St. John Chrysostom comments, they served as an



The Flight into Egypt -
Capitoline Museums, Rome

example for us, “so when we begin some spiritual work and feel afflicted with tribulation, we should not be disturbed, nor be overcome with sorrow, but courageously and heroically endure every contradiction.”²²

Long and arduous trip

Egypt was a distant region over which Herod had no power. There, the Child God would be safe from His persecutors.

It is believed that this journey took place in early February, when the piercing cold of winter could still be felt,³ and it is estimated that it was about a two-month journey on foot for the Holy Family, accompanied only by a small donkey carrying the luggage and supplies.

To guard against the threat of Herod, it was necessary to choose the lesser travelled and, in this respect, safer route. But this obliged them to travel more than three hundred and ninety miles exposed to hunger, thirst and the threat of bandits.

Egypt was a distant region over which Herod had no power. There, the Child God would be safe from His persecutors

In his book on St. Joseph, Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP notes how “the trip was most onerous, and certain demons seized the opportunity to make the various hardships even more arduous... There were so many difficulties and problems along the way that St. Joseph thought of changing the destination. He only did not do so because of the heavenly mandate and the prophecies that herald-

ed the Redeemer’s passage through Egypt.”²⁴

During the rugged journey, the Holy Patriarch did everything possible to relieve the sufferings of Jesus and His Most Holy Mother. He acted, according to one of his biographers, as a true Archangel:

“The Angel Raphael, it is certain, could not have been so careful in defending Tobias from the ferocity of the fish that wished to devour him in the waters of the Tigris River as St. Joseph was in safeguarding the Child from His enemies during this flight to Egypt.”²⁵

Having been forced to flee like a fugitive from the rejection and ingratitude of men, the Incarnate God was subjected, at an early age, to the many difficulties of a long and painful journey, during which He had no other shelter and comfort than the arms of the Virgin and her most holy spouse.⁶

Seven years of exile in Egypt

After having journeyed for two long months, the Holy Family finally arrived in Egyptian lands.

According to a pious tradition, as they entered the villages of that idolatrous country, the images of the false gods, veritable representations of the devil, fell to the ground and crumbled to dust. Thus was fulfilled the purpose for which, according to Origen, they were sent to Egypt by the Eternal Father:

“Go, saith the Angel, with the Saviour unto the land of Egypt, a seminary of idolatry, that their idols may be destroyed, the demons confounded and set to flight, and in place of the many temples of their abominations, numerous churches shall arise, transforming vice into holiness and error into the true Religion.”²⁷

It is not known for certain where they stayed. According to one tradition, the Holy Family settled in a modest little house on a site occupied

today by an Orthodox Coptic church in Cairo. However, it is more probable that they went to live near Alexandria, where there were flourishing Jewish communities.⁸

During their stay there, how Jesus, Mary and Joseph must have longed to leave that foreign and idolatrous nation! But in order that Scripture be fulfilled, “out of Egypt I called my Son” (Mt 2:15), Divine Providence saw fit to subject those whom He loved most to this terrible trial for many long months.

It is believed that in the first three days they had nothing to eat except what they received as alms, acquired at great hardship by the foster father of the Redeemer. Only some time later did St. Joseph begin to earn a living by means of his labour.

At first, they lived in such indigence that they had no beds on which to sleep but the hard ground. The Queen of Angels even sought, with the works of her precious hands, to assist her husband, applying herself to tasks of weaving and sewing.

“He shall be called a Nazarene”

Having spent between one and seven years in this distant land – opinions differ among authors⁹ – behold, “an Angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, ‘Rise, take the Child and His Mother,

er, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the Child’s life are dead” (Mt 2:19-20).

Immediately, with his characteristic spirit of readiness and flexibility,

“he rose and took the Child and His Mother, and went to the land of Israel” (Mt 2:21).

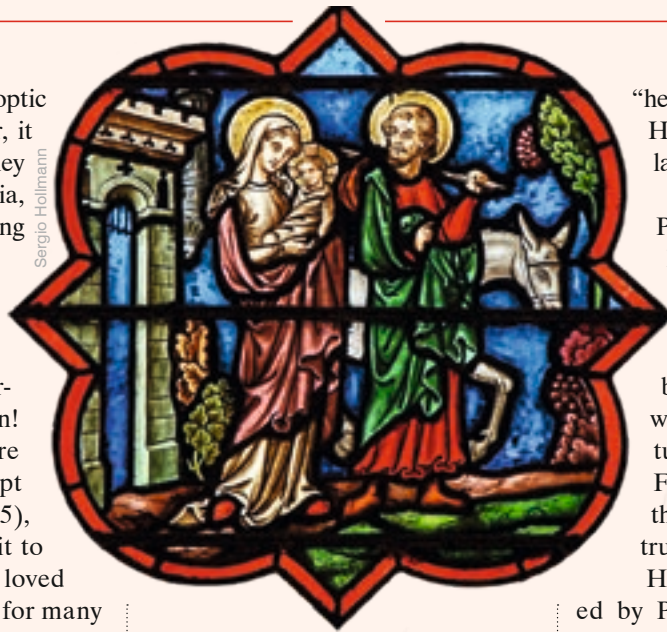
Before departing, the Holy Patriarch prepared the donkey that would be used to transport His Spouse and Son. No doubt they would have been sadly missed by those people of the region who, influenced by the virtues emanating from the Holy Family had eventually opened their souls to adhere to the true Religion.

However, the time appointed by Providence had been fulfilled. New sufferings awaited them on their gruelling return trip. How many times did the Child Jesus suffer hunger and thirst in those arid deserts...

Arriving in Judea, St. Joseph learned that Archelaus, son of Herod, had ascended to the throne in place of his father. So instead of proceeding to Bethlehem, as would have been his initial intention, he turned his steps towards Galilee, where they would be safer from persecution.

At the bidding of the Angel, they settled again in Nazareth, a city under the jurisdiction of the tetrarch Herod Antipas, much less cruel and despotic than his brother. Thus, once again would be fulfilled what was said by the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene” (Mt 2:23).

There they established themselves, leading a simple and quiet life until the time when the Son of God was to manifest Himself to the world. ✧



Fleeing into Egypt - Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris

There were so many difficulties and problems along the way that St. Joseph thought of changing the destination; he only did not do so because of the heavenly mandate

¹ Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *São José: quem o conhece?...* [St. Joseph, Who Knows Him? ...] São Paulo: Lumen Sapientiae, 2017, p.244-249.

² ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, apud ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Catena Aurea*. In *Matthæum*, c.II, v.13-15.

³ Cf. LAMY, apud CASTRO, João Batista de. *Vida do Glorioso Patriarca São José*. Lisboa: Santo Ofício, 1761, p.165.

⁴ CLÁ DIAS, op. cit., p.281.

⁵ CASTRO, op. cit., p.166-167.

⁶ Cf. Idem, p.168.

⁷ ORIGEN, apud CASTRO, op. cit., p.169-170.

⁸ Cf. TUYA, OP, Manuel de. *Biblia Comentada. Evangelios*. Madrid: BAC, 1964, v.V, p.42.

⁹ The Jesuit exegete Andrés Fernández Truyols argues in favour of “an exile in Egypt that lasted no more than a year and

perhaps only a few months” (FERNANDEZ TRUYOLS, SJ, Andrés. *Vida de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo*. 2.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1954, p.73). However, Msgr. João, based on Suárez and other authors, believes that the Holy Family remained there for seven years (cf. CLÁ DIAS, op. cit., p.294).

Atoning for the Infidelities of the Chosen People

On the way to the Promised Land, the chosen people sinned against their calling, greatly displeasing the Lord. However, moved by an abiding love for His legacy, He desired to make amends.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

Divine Wisdom had a purpose in the harsh vicissitudes of this journey. As Dr. Plinio points out, “in the flight to Egypt was the Holy Church, alone, wandering through the desert.”

While the first fruits of Christianity were there, God wanted the Holy Family to make reparation for all the infidelities committed by the Hebrews when they left that nation. In fact, these sins were those which most offended Him in salvation history, before the decisive. For the primordial light of the children of Abraham, that is, the aspect of the Creator they were most called to represent, consisted of faith in the impossible and the unimaginable, believing when all seemed lost. The

deeds of Abraham (cf. Gn 22:10-12), Jacob (cf. Gn 27:22-23), Esther (cf. Est 14:1-19) or of the three young men in the fiery furnace (cf. Dn 3:14-93), among many others, show well that the virtue of the great Saints of this people bordered on the angelic when in a scenario without a human solution.

On the way to the Promised Land, it was precisely against this calling that the chosen people sinned, greatly displeasing the Lord. Nevertheless, moved by His abiding love for His inheritance, He wanted to make reparation through His three most beloved creatures. Thus, cleansed from this guilt before divine justice, Israel could worthily receive the Messiah and the Redemption.

With this objective, all along the journey, the Holy Family stopped at the most symbolic places of the people's revolt against God, making acts of atonement. One such site was the rock of Meribah, where the rebellion due to a lack of water had taken place (cf. Ex 17:1-7; Nm 20:1-13). There, deeply recollected, they prayed to make reparation for that sin against faith. Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, interceded especially for Moses, so that at the time of his death his fault would be blotted out, and would not be imputed to him when he entered Heaven.

Taken, with slight adaptations,
from: *São José: quem o conhece?...*
São Paulo: Lumen Sapientiae,
2017, p.281-283

**The Flight into Egypt, by
Cornelis Massijs – National Art
Museum of Catalonia, Barcelona**



Reproduction



Timothy Ring

Necessity of Devotion to

We were born into the life of grace by the omnipotent intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and our supplications for spiritual progress and perseverance should be directed to Her.



Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort dedicates the first chapter of the *Treatise of True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* to demonstrating the necessity of being a devotee of Our Lady. In what sense? Let us try to explain the Saint's thesis.

Necessity of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

To understand St. Louis' goal, we must read the chapter with great care.

He begins with a preamble and then develops the demonstration. In the prologue, he establishes the scope of the word *necessity*: it is not to say that God absolutely needs Our Lady to save souls, because, being omnipotent and perfect, He needs no one. He is above all things and could have created a world in which Our Lady did not exist and souls would be saved without Her.

The necessity of Mary in the spiritual life is therefore of another kind. Seeing as God created Her by a free act of His will, giving Her certain perfections and attributes, including that of Universal Mediation, devotion to Her becomes necessary.

In other words, the Catholic Church does not maintain that God needs Our Lady, but states the following: The Lord wanted Her to be necessary for our salvation, and therefore made it so by a decree of His superior plan.

Transcendental importance of the Incarnation

The demonstration St. Louis de Montfort makes regarding the necessity of devotion to Our Lady is based on her role in the Incarnation. Therefore, before all else, let us lay some groundwork.

The first thesis that we must remember is the paramount importance of the Incarnation in the work of creation. There is one point in this regard that is debated among theologians. Some say that if man had not sinned, the Eternal Word would not have assumed our flesh; others claim that the Incarnation would have occurred even without original sin.

Hence the former conclude that, though it was an evil, Adam's sin did provide a benefit for humanity; thus the Liturgy sings on Holy Saturday: *O felix culpa...* – O happy fault, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

the Blessed Virgin Mary

Without the fall of our first parents, we would lack the happiness of having the Saviour.

Whatever the case may be, whichever thesis one adheres to, we must recognize that the Incarnation of the Word is not just one episode among others in the history of mankind, but is, like the Redemption, a culminating event.

As God is *He Who is*, there has never been anything – with the exception of the generation of the Word and the procession of the Holy Spirit – even close to the importance of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. It is a fact related to divine nature itself, and that which appertains to God is incomparably more important than that which refers to man. The Incarnation transcends everything in importance, and is intimately linked to the Redemption.

Role of Our Lady in the divine plan

For this reason, the role of Our Lady in the Incarnation clearly establishes her importance in the whole of the divine plan, and does so concerning precisely what is most important and fundamental in it.

For example, it is admirable that Our Lord chose Constantine to take the Church out of the catacombs. But what is this beside Our Lady having been chosen from all eternity to bear the Saviour? Nothing at all. We truly admire Anchieta, because he evangelized Brazil. Now what is evangelizing a country compared to cooperating in the Incarnation of the Word? Nothing!

Let's speak in terms of saving the world from the present crisis and restoring Christ's Kingdom, and suppose that Our Lord were to choose one man for that task. We would consider this a formidable mission, and rightly so. But what would that be in light of Our Lady's mission? Nothing! It lies on a level beyond comparison with the historical role of any other person, including that of St. Peter, even though he was the first Pope.

Concerning Our Lady, one is always obliged to repeat the expression: "beyond comparison." It supersedes human vocabulary. There is such a disproportion between Her and all creatures that the only sure thing to say is "beyond comparison"...

Having recalled these concepts, we can only conclude that to study Our Lady's participation in the Incarnation is to analyse her role in the most important event of all time, together with the Redemption. And what exactly was this role?

St. Louis de Montfort responds by reflecting on the participation of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity in the Incarnation, and then on the cooperation of Our Lady with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Cooperation with the Eternal Father

As Scripture says, Jesus Christ was sent into the world by the Eternal Father to save men. The Old Testament, in one of its prophecies, states of Our Lord: "Lo, I come; in the roll of the book it is written of Me; I delight to do Thy will" (Ps 40: 7-8).



João S. Clá Dias



Thiago Tamura Nogueira

The Church does not maintain that God needs Our Lady, but states the following: The Lord wanted Her to be necessary for our salvation

Above, Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira venerating a statue sculpted by St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre and Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias the statue of Mary Help of Christians in Tabor House, in Caieiras (SP); on previous page, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom - Bela Vista House, Mairiporã (SP)

Jesus Christ constantly speaks of His Heavenly Father as the One who sent Him, and He manifested Himself as His beloved Son. It was the Father He invoked when He gave up His soul, saying, “into Thy hands I commit My spirit” (Lk 23:46).

Now if the Eternal Father sent us Jesus Christ, what was the role of Our Lady in this act?

We must first consider that the world was not worthy to receive Our Lord Jesus Christ. If He was sent to us by the Eternal Father, it was because the Blessed Virgin implored His coming. And He gave Him to Mary as the only one worthy to receive Him.

From this perspective, the lamentation contained in the Gospel of St. John is better understood: “He came to His own, but His own received Him not” (Jn 1:11). His own would not receive Him, but Our Lady would receive Him in a sublime way. This is why He came: because He found Her in the world, otherwise He would not have come down from Heaven.

Christ’s appearance on earth is therefore the fruit of the presence and prayers of the Blessed Virgin. In this way, She collaborated with the act of the Eternal Father by which Jesus was sent into the world.

The fecundity of God the Father is infinite, to the point that the idea He formed of Himself begets a Divine Person. This fruitfulness was transmitted to Our Lady, so that She would bear Jesus and all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Our Lady is, therefore, Mother of the faithful, but not only in the allegorical and metaphorical sense of loving us: She is truly so in the order of grace. And if this Divine Maternity exists, it means that the Eternal Father has somehow communicated His own fecundity to Her.

Applications to our spiritual life

From the fact that Our Lady merited by her prayers the coming of the Messiah, as well as having received the Eternal Father’s fecundity, we can draw some lessons for our spiritual life. To do so, we must first analyse the zeal of the Blessed Virgin for God’s cause.

In her prayer, She undoubtedly noted the state of extreme misery into which the chosen people had

fallen and ardently desired that Israel would be restored to its former situation. She further considered the decadence of humanity, knowing better than anyone how many souls were being lost during that pagan era, and clearly seeing satan’s reign over the world.

The Blessed Virgin Mary thus played the role of St. Michael in Heaven; her prayer, asking that God come into the world, was equivalent to the Archangel’s “*Quis ut Deus?*”²¹ It is She who rose up against this state of things; only her supplication was powerful enough to deal a blow that would transform everything.

Thus, the fullness of time is accomplished: Our Lord Jesus Christ is born and all of humanity is restored, regenerated, elevated, and sanctified. The salvation of a multitude of souls begins, the gates of Heaven are opened, hell is crushed, death is destroyed, and the Catholic Church flourishes upon the face of the earth; and all as a consequence of Our Lady’s prayer.



The fecundity of God the Father was transmitted to Her so that She would bear Jesus and all the members of His Mystical Body

Annunciation, by Fra Angelico - Prado Museum, Madrid

Is it not true that, also in this respect, She presents herself to us as a model? Should we not long for the victory of Our Lord in our days, as the Blessed Virgin Mary desired it in her time? Is there not an absolute analogy between the ardour with which She yearned for the establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth, and the fervour with which we should desire it? Is it not true that if her prayer was necessary for the fulfilment of the Incarnation, it is also indispensable for Jesus Christ's victory in the present world? When we are worn out in the struggle for God's triumph, do we remember to pray to Our Lady? When we pray to Her, do we remember to ask for this grace?

For example, would it not be a good prayer if, as we contemplated the Mystery of the Annunciation during the first decade of the Rosary, we had in mind Our Lady imploring the Saviour's coming, and we prayed to Her that Jesus Christ once again triumph in the world with the future victory of the Catholic Church? Is this not a good application of this mystery to our spiritual life? Is this not how our spiritual life ought to be seen, lived and conducted? Is this not much more solid than protracted pious murmuring?

Without a doubt, these truths nourish our piety and our entire spiritual life.

***Piety based on principles,
not sentiments***

Let us ponder Our Lady hastening with her prayer the coming of the Messiah. Now if Our Lord also comes to us in Communion, we can



Fresco of the Mother of Good Counsel
Genazzano (Italy)

*Should we not long
for the victory of
Our Lord in our
days, as the
Blessed Virgin
Mary desired it
in her time?*

and should ask the Virgin Mary, as we prepare to receive her Divine Son, for some of the same sentiments with which She welcomed Him at the time of the Incarnation.

And if we wish to obtain the grace of daily Communion for someone, would it not be worthwhile to ask Our Lady to obtain for that soul the daily reception of Our Lord, reminding Her of the efficacy of the prayer by which She obtained the coming of Jesus Christ into the world?

Let us consider, on the other hand, Our Lady's participation in the fruitfulness of the Eternal Father in begetting members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

When we pass a baptism, we should remember to say a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, beseeching Her to keep us faithful to the grace of Baptism until death. It was at a baptismal font that we entered into the bosom of the Catholic Church, were born into the supernatural life, and by Our Lady's prayers and the fecundity of the Lord our God we became members of the Mystical Body of Christ, of which Mary is the true Mother.

Furthermore, if we recall that we were born into the life of grace through the same omnipotent intercession of the Blessed Virgin, then we will have every reason to ask Her to keep us securely within the heavenly gifts of Baptism and to fill us with the virtue of a Catholic sense, crowning glory of this extremely intimate union with Christ.

Piety must consist of forming dispositions of spirit based on these principles taught by the Church and theology, not on mere feelings. Such teachings engender a very serious and well-grounded love for Our Lady. This is how true devotion to Mary is forged and an authentic spiritual life founded. ✧

Taken, with slight adaptations,
from: *Dr. Plinio*.
São Paulo. Year VII.
N.74 (May, 2004); p.20-25

¹ From the Latin: "Who is like unto God?"

The Way of Silence and Meditation

Let us listen closely to perceive the eloquent words that Christ murmurs within our hearts. The courage of the martyrs, the wisdom of the doctors, and the eloquence of the preachers are rooted in this effective way of sanctification.



Sr. Clara Tamara Penin, EP

It is only after a long period of rest that a good wine attains its true flavour. And the nuances it acquires over time will be richer and more intense in proportion to the number of years it has spent in apparent inactivity.

This process of maturation evokes one of the most effective and indispensable means used by Providence to sanctify men: long periods of silence and meditation. For as wine matures in the cellar, likewise is the human soul perfected in recollection.

Just as the body needs rest and nourishment...

In our days, life unfolds in a cycle of anxiety and constant activity. For the greater part of humanity, bogged down by a hectic daily routine, the supernatural is blotted out from their field of vision. How many people upon waking, or at any other time of the day, raise their thoughts to God to praise Him, to search into the meaning of life, or at least to briefly thank Him for the goods He has given?

Now, if we must rest and nourish our body in order to gain the necessary strength for our daily work, it is also indispensable for our soul to have moments of recollection, which allow us to recover the energy lost in earlier struggles and strengthen the will for future ones.

Without this, we will not be able to travel the stormy seas that inundate this valley of tears without sinking.

Our life, Msgr. João teaches, “should be a combination of action and recollection. In prayer, the man of faith recovers his strength and acquires new energy for bolder enterprises.”¹

However, all around us we find those who proclaim that it is not necessary for a good Christian to spend time in meditation and prayer. And even more numerous are those who simply omit the practices of piety under the pretext of having too much to do...

Those who do not take due care of their soul end up rendering all their actions sterile, even the merely human ones. Every work that is not united to Jesus sooner or later becomes fruitless.

Prayer is indispensable to attain sanctity

In ascending the mountain with His disciples (cf. Jn 6:3), Jesus gives us an example of how necessary it is to flee from worldly turmoil, so that God's voice may whisper words of encouragement and peace in our hearts.

Silence and solitude are our most eloquent interlocutors.

St. Therese of the Child Jesus relates that, from a young age, she felt a mysterious and gentle force that called her to withdraw into a corner of her room and invited her to reflection. What filled her mind at those times? “I think of Heaven,” she once answered. At the same time, she felt a delicate movement of grace at these moments, teaching her to feel God's presence near her.

Once she became a Carmelite, she often felt profound aridity at the time of meditation. But even so, “at the end of her prayers, Therese is enriched with such brilliant insights that they surprise even her.”²

From the life of the Carmelite of Lisieux, Fr. Thomas de Saint-Laurent draws this great lesson: “Prayer is indispensable for the attainment

of holiness and for the exercise of a fruitful apostolate.”³ And he adds that contempt for prayer was one of the causes of the “sad century in which we live, a century of triumphant mediocrity and disoriented hearts.”⁴

In Him is the font of all wisdom

St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, a man of admirable intelligence, claims to have learned much more during his hours before the Blessed Sacrament than in all his years of study. Why?

The sacred author tells us: “Reflect on the statutes of the Lord, and meditate at all times on His commandments. It is He who will give insight to your mind, and your desire for wisdom will be granted” (Sir 6:37).

And in his famous *Philothea*, St. Francis de Sales adds: “if we remain close to the Saviour, meditating upon Him, and giving heed to His words, His actions and His affections, we shall gradually, by the help of His grace, learn to speak, to act and to will like Him.”⁵

“Seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...”

The Holy Cure of Ars emphasizes that “the Christian’s treasure is not on earth but in Heaven. Our thoughts, then, ought to be turned to where our treasure is.”⁶

And he concludes: “This is the glorious duty of man: to pray and to love.”⁷

What is the point of consuming ourselves in excessive work and business in order to conquer a material profit that easily vanishes, instead of dedicating ourselves to earning our imperishable treasure? Feeding the spiritual life is much more important than running after earthly goods.

During the Sermon on the Mount, the Divine Master invites us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. If we do so, all other things will be added unto us (cf. Mt 6:33).

If we take this divine teaching as a compass for our lives, our souls will be filled with strength, and we will draw down upon ourselves the help of the Holy Angels, sent by God to enlighten, guard, rule and guide us.

This heavenly help may not be as manifest as it was for St. Zita, a humble maid, whose domestic chores were performed by the heavenly spirits while she “fled from service” to be with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Or for St. Isidore, the Farmer, who found the field miraculously ploughed by oxen at the end of his long prayers. But Providence will not fail to make His help and protection felt in some way.

Always well received by our heavenly Father

Only after we have experienced the power of recollection will we be capable of understanding what the psalmist says to us:

“His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers” (Ps 1:2-3).

As we learn to enter into the practice of silence and solitude, our supernatural life will take increasingly firm and decisive steps. And even if we do not manage to recollect ourselves as we would like in moments of meditation, or if we do not feel our heart beating with devotion during our conversation with the Most High, we may always be sure that we are being received with joy by our Heavenly Father, to whom the prayer of His children is very pleasing.

Let us learn to seek Him in our inner cloister. Let us listen closely to perceive the eloquent words that Christ murmurs within our hearts, certain that the courage of the martyrs, the wisdom of the doctors, the eloquence of the preachers and, in short, the virtue of the saints, are rooted in this most effective way of sanctification. ✧

Leandro Souza

¹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. The Finest Loaves in All of History. In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2014, v.IV, p.257.

² SAINT-LAURENT, Thomas de. *Santa Teresa do Menino Jesus*. Porto: Civilização, 1997, p.23.

³ Idem, p.24.

⁴ Idem, p.26.

⁵ ST. FRANCIS DE SALES. *Philothea or An Introduction to the Devout Life*. Charlotte, North Carolina: Saint Benedict Press, TAN Books, 2010, p.61.

⁶ ST. JOHN MARY VIANNEY. Catechetical Instructions

by Saint John Mary Vianney, priest. In: INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ENGLISH IN THE LITURGY. *The Liturgy of the Hours*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1975, v.III, p.1573.

⁷ Idem, ibidem.

True Friendship

Humanly speaking, it is not attainable on this earth. If we place our trust in the human qualities of others we will end up being disappointed. Therefore, what criterion should be used for choosing a friend in whom one can truly confide?



Sr. Adriana Maria Sanchez, EP

In human beings, the instinct of sociability is keenly felt – more deeply, even, than that of conservation. Aristotle went so far as to say that “he who associates not with others is either a beast or a god.”¹

Elaborating on this rudimentary statement of the philosopher, St. Thomas Aquinas explains that only two types of people are capable of living in solitude: the anchorites and those who, by their “uncouthness of mind,”² have become beast-like. The former withdraw to the desert to better give themselves to God; the latter because they cannot bear to live with people.

Everyone needs friends in order to do good

Within society, everyone feels the natural desire to find someone to support them in their difficulties and to share their ideas and dreams, while being, at the same time, the object of their benevolence.

Two people together, says Ecclesiastes, are happier than one, because “if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up” (4:10). And St. Thom-

as Aquinas adds that the happy man needs friends “that he may do good to them; that he may delight in seeing them do good; and again that he may be helped by them in his good work.”³

St. Francis de Sales insists on the importance of reciprocal support in saying: “It is needful for those who are in the world, and seek after virtue, to bind themselves together in a holy and sacred friendship, by means of which they encourage, stimulate, and forward one another in doing good. [...] Those who are on steep and slippery paths support each other for security’s sake [...] those who are in the world need them, to aid and succour one another in the many evils and dangers which they encounter.”⁴

In short, friendship is necessary “in order that man may do well, whether in the works of the active life, or in those of the contemplative life.”⁵ But where to find that great treasure which is an authentic friend who can be trusted blindly, without danger of being defrauded?

There are only two loves

True friendship is identified by Aristotle with the love of benevo-

lence, whereby we wish well to one who is dear to us.⁶ And since eternal beatitude is the supreme benefit to which every man must aspire, only one form of genuine friendship is possible: that which leads us to love another for the love of God, desiring their sanctification.

St. Augustine⁷ teaches that there are only two loves in the world: love of God that leads to forgetfulness of self, and love of self that leads to forgetfulness of God. There is no third option.

In true friendship there is no place for sentimentality, which is not love, but a mere desire to feel emotions that please us. Whenever we seek relationships with others to satisfy our own feelings, without seeking the good of our neighbour, we love ourselves and not God. We want to be loved, admired and understood for ourselves, for our own qualities, without turning to God.

Perfect friendship is founded on virtue

Humanly speaking, true friendship is impossible on this earth. Having been conceived in original sin, we are susceptible to falls while living in this valley of tears.

Imbued with this principle of wisdom, the Book of Sirach counsels: “When you gain a friend, gain him through testing, and do not trust him hastily. For there is a friend who is such at his own convenience, but will not stand by you in your day of trouble” (6:7-8).

If we put our trust in the natural qualities of others, sooner or later we will be disappointed. This is why the prophet Jeremiah warns: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the Lord” (Jer 17:5). It is in God, in Our Lady and in the Saints that we must place all our hopes.

Therefore, when it comes to choosing a true friend, there is always one infallible criterion: the more a person is united to God, the worthier he is of trust.

In his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, the great St. Francis de Sales warns: “Have no friendship save with those who can interchange virtuous love with you, since the more your friendship stands on the foundation of virtue, the more perfect it will be. [...] If your bond of intercourse be charity, devotion and Christian perfection, then indeed will your friendship be precious; precious because it has its origin in God, because it is maintained in God, and because it will endure forever in Him.”⁸

Willing to give one's life for the other

According to the Saviour's teachings, kindness and mutual love are the distinguishing characteristics that separate the children of light from those of darkness: “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35).

However, in this valley of tears, charity towards one's neighbour means being ready for real self-sacrifice. Therefore, immediately after



St. Francis de Sales - Parish of St. Peter the Apostle, Montreal

The great St. Francis de Sales warns: “Have no friendship save with those who can interchange virtuous love with you”

repeating the new commandment, the Divine Master teaches His disciples: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13).

One has to be willing to give one's life for the other at every instant, knowing how to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of his soul even if this involves enduring a daily martyrdom, offered for love of God.

Cornelius a Lapide⁹ teaches that love of neighbour is demonstrated in five ways: humility, renouncing one's own will, preferring charity above all, patience with others, and striving to appease and endure their impatience and anger. If we know how to follow these teachings of the famous Jesuit exegete, it will also be said of us what was said of the first Christians: “the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32).

Analysing others in light of God

If we are all to have “the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil 2:2), we must do nothing out of a partisan spirit or for vainglory. Each one of us, on the contrary, must have the interests of others in mind rather than our own.

God “does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities” (Ps 103:10). In living with others, therefore, we must not analyse them according to their sins, but rather according to the love that Our Saviour has for each one.

He “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:4), and this invites us to do what God himself so often does, and rise above the thousand shortcomings that presently exist in each one of us, to look rather at what we are called to be in eternal life.

To illustrate this point, Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira¹⁰ compared the human soul to an acacia tree: seen from afar it is beautiful, full of colourful flowers; however, when looked at very closely, one soon notices thick thorns, insects, dirt and many other imperfections.

When considering others, we should try to admire the qualities placed in them by God. And if familiarity shows us their defects, let us always try to conserve the noble

and transcendent vision that we had when contemplating them in view of their vocation.

Only in this way will we have the strength to maintain a relationship full of respect, consideration and affection, even with those who do not treat us well.

Friendship cannot be reconciled with sin

To avoid looking at the defects of others, however, does not mean approval or complicity with error.

In contact with people it is almost impossible not to be influenced by their qualities and defects. This prompts us, according to St. Francis de Sales, to be vigilant, because “everyone has plenty of individual failings without assuming those of another, and friendship, far from requiring us to put on one another’s faults, would rather oblige us to strive mutually to overcome such failings.”¹¹

As a consequence, the Holy Doctor invites us “bear patiently with our friend’s faults, but not encourage him in them, still less adopt them ourselves.”¹²

When someone we know turns away from God through sin, we are

left with only two attitudes: as long as there is still hope that he will right himself, I must help him, for “it is a poor and unworthy friendship which can see a friend perishing and not succour him; see him dying of cancer and not have courage to make the sharp incision which would save him.”¹³ However, if he is obstinate in evil so that he is no longer amenable to amendment, I must turn away from him, for “true and living friendship cannot exist amid sin. [...] Sin destroys that friendship where it effects an entrance.”¹⁴

“That is sure to be a false friendship which is entertained towards a vicious man,”¹⁵ concludes St. Francis de Sales. For this reason, the Book of Sirach warns us: “Keep yourself far from your enemies, and be on guard toward your friends” (6:13).

Examples taken from Sacred Scripture

In the Old Testament, we find examples of paradigmatic friendships, based on the love of God, including that which flourished between Ruth the Moabite and her mother-in-law Naomi.

After the death of her husband and her two sons, Naomi decided to return to Judah and advised her two daughters-in-law to return to their family homes. Ruth, however, wanted to remain with her: “where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (Ru 1:16).

Beyond the natural sympathy she felt for Naomi and the earthly ties that bound them, there dwelt in Ruth’s soul an admiration for the Jewish religion. She preferred to worship the one true God at her pious mother-in-law’s side than to return to the paganism in which she was born.

David and Jonathan also gave us a shining example of friendship. The latter being the son of King Saul, he was to inherit the throne of Israel. However, upon seeing David for the first time, after his defeat of the Philistine giant, he “loved him as his own soul” (1 Sm 18:1). Far from envying that poor shepherd whom the people acclaimed as a hero, he was filled with admiration.

Having discerned God’s very high purpose for David, Saul’s son renounced his own condition: “you



Beyond the natural sympathy she felt for Naomi, there dwelt in Ruth’s soul an admiration for the Jewish religion

Ruth decides to stay with Naomi - Bible of St. Louis IX (13th cen.) The Morgan Library & Museum, New York City

shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you” (1 Sm 23:17).

The twelve peers of Charlemagne

Much more numerous are the examples of genuine friendship in the history of Christianity, that era founded on the commandment of love and made fruitful by the Most Precious Blood of Christ.

One of them is found in the twelve peers of Charlemagne, noble warriors honoured with the highest confidence by the great patriarch of medieval Europe. They always fought alongside the emperor, and their union was such that it made them a model of fidelity for all times.

It is said, for example, that when Roland was mortally wounded on the battlefield, he sensed someone approaching and, as he could no longer see, he thought it was an enemy. Thus he struck the man’s head so powerfully with his sword that he almost split it open!

However, it was his friend Olivier, who was coming to assist him... Upon hearing the cry of pain, Roland immediately recognized the voice of his companion and, afflicted, asked: “Did I hurt you?” Nevertheless, the friendship between them was so strong that Olivier answered, without an ounce of resentment or self-pity: “No, my brother! Nothing has happened to me, I am here to help you!”

Kindness and detachment in the Brazil of yesteryear

Dona Lucilia Ribeiro Corrêa de Oliveira, a noble lady of São Paulo, Brazil, born at the end of the 19th century, would fondly recall an episode involving her father, illustrating well the nature of human relationships in Brazil at that time.

When she was very young, the Baron of Araraquara visited the ranch

These historical episodes are nothing as compared with the supreme example given by Our Lord Jesus Christ

that her parents, Dr. Antonio and Dona Gabriela, owned in Pirassununga. Seeing how poorly run it was, the Baron offered to help his friend, asking Dr. Antonio to leave it entirely in his hands for a period of five years.

Dr. Antonio agreed, without the least hesitation. He was extraordinarily talented in the practice of law, but rather inept at farming. During this interval, he simply provided

whatever money his friend requested, without asking him for any explanation.

After the five years had elapsed, the baron met Dr. Antonio and said: “You still haven’t asked me anything about your ranch. Would you like to visit it tomorrow?”

The next day the two travelled to Pirassununga and found the ranch transformed, completely in order and productive.

Christ carried our sorrows

As touching as these historical episodes may be, they are nothing, however, compared with the supreme example given by Our Lord. It is not by chance that He said: “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn 15:15).

Such a sublime affirmation applies not only to the Apostles, but to all the baptized. Christ took upon Himself our infirmities and bore our sufferings (cf. Is 53:4), thus opening for us the way to salvation. He who taught us to lay down our life for our friends, gave us an incomparable, perfect and infinite example of this. Let us duly repay it, loving with all our strength the God who made Himself small for love of us. ✧

¹ ARISTOTLE, apud ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.188, a.8, ad 5.

² ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., II-II, q.188, a.8, ad 5.

³ Idem, I-II, q.4, a.8.

⁴ ST. FRANCIS DE SALES. *Philothea or An Introduction to the Devout Life*. Charlotte, North Carolina: Saint Benedict Press, TAN Books, 2010, p.178.

⁵ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., I-II, q.4, a.8.

⁶ Cf. ARISTOTLE, apud ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.23, a.1.

⁷ “Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from

men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, ‘You are my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.’ (Ps 3:4).” (ST. AUGUSTINE. *City of God*. L.XIV, c.28).

⁸ ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, op. cit., p.177.

⁹ Cf. CORNELIUS A LAPIDE. *Amor al prójimo*. In: BARBIER, SJ, Jean-André (Org.).

Tesoros de Cornélio a Lápide. Madrid-Barcelona: Miguel Olamendi; Herederos de la Viuda Plá, 1866, t.I, p.93.

¹⁰ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 25 Nov. 1989.

¹¹ ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, op. cit., p.187.

¹² Idem, *ibidem*.

¹³ Idem, *ibidem*.

¹⁴ Idem, *ibidem*.

¹⁵ Idem, *ibidem*.

Our Lady of Hope of Pontmain

At the height of the Franco-Prussian war, when the tiny French city of Pontmain was about to be invaded, a very beautiful Lady appeared in Heaven. On that same night, affliction became hope.



Sr. Angelis David Ferreira, EP

On that January 15 of 1871, the year, still young, was offering to the small town of Pontmain, located two hundred miles from Paris, all the hopes and apprehensions proper to the dawn of a new year.

Among this population of just five hundred inhabitants, Fr. Guérin, a great devotee of Mary and parish priest for thirty-five years, sought to gather the people to pray the Rosary. The peasants always joyfully came together to pray, but that afternoon the situation was different: fear and uncertainty assailed the faithful. However much the priest tried to lift their spirits with hymns, only tears could be seen on their faces.

What was the reason for such sadness?

France and Germany were at war. There were reports that the Prussian army, having reached the gates of Laval, was already approaching Pontmain.

A noble Lady appears in the sky

That tragic winter week, snow covered the entire city. Windows and roofs were encrusted with layers of ice.

Two days after the scene we have just narrated, the Barbedette children were at home talking about the

absence of their older brother, summoned by the army to defend their homeland, when the childish colloquy was suddenly interrupted. It was their father, asking them to come with him to the barn to prepare an extra ration for the horses, which suffered greatly from the low temperatures.

Around five forty-five in the afternoon, Eugene Barbedette, twelve, and his brother Joseph, ten, completed their chore. As they emerged from the barn, they were surprised to come upon an extraordinary figure in the sky: it was a Lady with an indescribably beautiful face, standing in the air before them. She was dressed in a long blue gown, adorned with gold stars, and she wore a brilliant golden crown on her head.¹

Before long, they were joined by two little girls: Françoise Richer, eleven, and Jeanne-Marie Lebossé, nine. They also saw the splendid Lady. The children's enthusiastic exclamations eventually caught the attention of virtually the entire village, drawing a veritable crowd to the Barbedette property.

Message written by invisible hands

The peasants who gathered near the Barbedette house wished to see

the apparition of the noble Lady. However, not everyone believed what the children said, because only they were able to see Her.

Fr. Guérin also came to the scene. Though he saw nothing, he was deeply touched by grace and sang the hymn born from the lips of the Queen of Heaven herself: the *Magnificat*. As everyone sang, the children saw a banner appearing beneath Our Lady's feet, on which invisible hands wrote in gold letters: "Pray, my children." And as the crowd went on singing, another mysterious statement was added, "God will hear you soon."

At one point they noticed a great light that shone brighter than the sun, and when it was thought that the Mother of God would depart, a last sentence was inscribed at her feet: "My Son was moved by your supplications." At this mysterious message, everyone remained in silence, praying.

The apparition is prolonged

Not a sound was heard until a voice arose from the small crowd, singing a local hymn in praise of Mary Most Holy as the Virgin Mother of Hope. At that very moment, the majestic Lady raised her hands, gently moving them to the

song, as She looked at the children very tenderly.

However, a hint of sadness could be noted in that benevolent, resplendent countenance. Just as the song said “My sweet Jesus, now is the time to grant Thy great forgiveness to our hardened hearts!” the Virgin pointed to a symbol She bore on her breast. It was a red cross upon which Our Lord was perfectly visible. Above it was a white banner inscribed with the name of Jesus, also in red. The Lady of Heaven’s lips moved in prayer.

By order of the parish priest, all remained in vigil until the end of the apparition, which lasted for another three hours. In addition to the two Barbedette brothers and the two girls, popular accounts relate that three more children saw the Blessed Virgin Mary in the sky of Pontmain. They were six-year-old Eugène Friteau, four-year-old Auguste Avice, and the shoemaker’s very young daughter, who, with her little arms extended seemed to be trying to go to Our Lady with such insistence that her mother could hardly hold her.

The miracle is recognized by the Bishop

As the Mother of God was instilling hope in the hearts of the little town’s inhabitants, She seemed, at the same time, to be intervening in the machinations of the war that caused such dread for the people of the region.

That very night, the commander of the German army, General Karl von Schmidt, received an unexpected order to retreat. And ten days later, France and Germany were signing a peace treaty. Thus came to pass what many would call “the great miracle of Pontmain.”



Simon de l'Ouest (CC-by-sa 4.0)

“My Son was moved by your supplications”

Apparition of Our Lady in Pontmain - Stained glass in the Church of St. Peter, Vaucé (France)

The ecclesiastical authorities conducted a series of investigations to confirm the authenticity of what the children claimed to have seen. After interviewing them individually and submitting them to medical examinations to prove that they did not suffer from hallucination, the authorities were able to attest to the full truth of the accounts made by the seers, who throughout the process behaved with great calm and modesty.

The pastoral letter in which Bishop Casimir-Alexis-Joseph Wicart,

the first Bishop of Laval, gives his opinion on this supernatural phenomenon, which took place in territory under his jurisdiction, concludes as follows: “Having reviewed the reports of two commissions and of the inquiry [...], having reviewed the written testimony of the medical witnesses, having reviewed the report and recommendations of our theological commission [...], we judge that the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, truly appeared on January 17 of 1871.”²

The devotion spreads throughout France

Once the apparition had been verified, She was called Our Lady of Hope of Pontmain. A church in her honour was built on the site, and in 1922, Pius XI instituted her liturgical feast to be celebrated every January 17. Devotion to Her spread throughout France and around the world. And it is no wonder, for even today the memory of the overflowing kindness and maternal protection manifested by the Blessed Virgin Mary towards her afflicted children of Pontmain arouses sentiments of hope.

Let us learn to have recourse to Our Lady in all our needs, and when our crosses seem too heavy or we are faced with seemingly dead ends, we may be sure that She will intercede for us with her Divine Son: “Hail, beautiful Virgin, Mother of holy hope, rightly proclaimed Queen: blessed among all women. O Mary, intercede for us!”³ ✧

¹ Cf. ENGLEBERT, Omer. *Catherine Labouré and the Modern Apparitions of Our Lady*. New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1959, p.172.

² Idem, p.174.

³ From the Latin hymn *Ave Virgo Speciei*.

Soothing Maternal Hand

Reports of new cures and miracles obtained through the intercession of Dona Lucilia are constantly coming to our attention. All of them share a common denominator: besides solving the concrete problem, she brings peace of mind and soul.



Myriam Lacayo

Lord, Lord, that I may see!" This and many others were the pleas that could be heard from the multitudes crowding around the Divine Master. And how many of these people had their requests answered, being cured of their different ills! The mute began to speak, the blind to see, lepers were cleansed, and countless people were freed from the evil spirits that tormented them... As a result, "all who had diseases pressed upon Him to touch Him" (Mk 3:10).

Given the favours received, could these beneficiaries remain silent? Even with Our Lord commanding, "Go and see that no one knows this" (cf. Mt 9:30), as in the case of the two blind men of Jericho, it was impossible to silence the contentment and gratitude of the healed.

Likewise, it is difficult to silence those who today receive innumerable graces through the intercession of persons who were examples of virtue and who died in the odour of sanctity.

The language of facts is eloquent. Testimonies are constantly coming to us that "spread the fame" of a certain maternal lady – Dona Lucilia Corrêa de Oliveira – whom some have come

to know as "the little lady who goes about working miracles." Furthermore, she has shown herself to have a very special gift of bringing peace to souls who are undergoing periods of great affliction.

A mysterious bank deposit

Sandra Aparecida, from São Paulo, tells of a grace obtained at a time when she was experiencing tremendous financial problems:

"Until February of this year I lived with my parents, a sister and a niece. After much prayer, my niece and I – with few means – decided to move to an apartment near Serra da Cantareira.

"In July, I was laid off from the job I had held for twelve years and was hoping to invest the severance pay in something that would allow us to work and to dedicate ourselves to Our Lady at the same time. The problem is that I had yet to receive the money and was still completing all the bureaucratic requirements for starting a company, but in the meantime, the bills kept arriving. Consequently, we found ourselves in dire need, especially since my niece was also not working any more.

"What was I to do in that situation? Follow the advice given by several priests: confide!"

Having been assisted a few months earlier by Dona Lucilia, Sandra decided to take a leap of faith and blindly place her trust in her.

"On July 5 I had to pay the rent for the apartment, but I did not have the necessary amount, which was R\$3,285.23 (Brazilian reais – approx. \$808 USD) in my account. I had only R\$ 959.05, and after the payment would be left with a negative balance of R\$ 2,326.18. I was making a novena to Dona Lucilia, asking her to find a solution.

"The next day, July 6, we decided to go to the Basilica of Mount Carmel, but on the way we had a car accident involving another vehicle! Nobody was hurt and thank God I had insurance. I was just worried about the deductible, because the vehicle was destroyed. I thought to myself, 'One more bill!'

"We had to rent a car – one more bill! – so as not to miss the meeting with a Herald priest we had planned to attend that afternoon. During the gathering, we watched a video of Msgr. João talking about Our Lady



On March 18 of 1968, only a few weeks before her death, Msgr. João took a series of photographs of Dona Lucilia, which reveal this lady's goodness and nobility of soul. She was 92 year of age at the time

Help of Christians. He emphasized the trust we must have in Her and said that She never failed to help a person in need.

"Arriving at home, I asked Dona Lucilia and Our Lady to help us, because if they help everyone, why wouldn't they do the same with these two unfortunate souls? And I was sure that they would intervene, I just didn't know when.

"The next day, I woke feeling discouraged, and went to check the amount in my account, so as to make plans. What a surprise when a deposit of R\$36,022.04 (\$8,858 USD) met my eyes! When I noticed the last figures in the deposit – 22.04 – I immediately started to cry: April 22 is the date Dona Lucilia was born. Then I understood everything, she had left her signature!"

And, to confirm that the help was supernatural, everything took place on the day of one of Dona Lucilia's principal devotions: "This deposit was made on July 5, the first Friday of the month, the day of the Sacred Heart of Jesus!"

Dona Lucilia has shown herself to have a very special gift of bringing peace to souls undergoing periods of great affliction

Although she trusted in Dona Lucilia's intercession, Sandra was intrigued by the amount of the deposit and its origin, so she tried to get some information about what had happened:

"I called the bank and the clerk informed me that the amount had been deposited in cash by the account holder. That is, by me!!! I hung up the phone in amazement, but called back again, hoping to obtain a signature of some sort, or video footage that might show a little silver-haired lady with her

little rolls of money! However, I only managed to annoy the clerk who at one point said: 'Ma'am, this deposit was made by you, in cash, at the bank teller; what is your doubt? Are you confused?' Little did she know..."

And, as if this was not enough, Dona Lucilia even provided the means to get a new vehicle at little cost, greatly favouring Sandra's financial situation:

"The last figures in the amount were clear, but why exactly thirty-six thousand I do not understand. I thought it was to buy a new car, because I need it to go to Mass every day. However, today I received an email from the insurance company informing me that the vehicle was written off and that they would reimburse me for the full value! Another favour from her! I am so grateful for all of these miracles. She truly came to our aid.

"I urge everyone to ask a lot, ask for everything, without ceasing, without losing heart. She is always at our side, sometimes carrying us in her arms, but in return, expecting from us blind trust in her love!"

Driver's licence lost in São Paulo

Antonio Lopes, from São Paulo, also felt the special protection of Dona Lucilia when he appealed to her intercession and experienced her maternal assistance:

"Having left the house to drop my son off at the Santana subway station, I got out of the car to take his place in the driver's seat and did not realize that my wallet with all of my documents fell out of my jacket pocket.

"Already close to home, I noticed the loss and returned to the place where I had stopped the vehicle, but found nothing. I began to worry about all the consequences and problems this could incur.

"That same day, in the afternoon, a Congress of Herald Cooperators was beginning. Being there for the Mass, I asked for graces to reassure me, so that I could take profit from the event, and I appealed to Dona Lucilia's intercession so that some generous soul might locate my belongings and contact me.

"On the Monday after the Congress, I took the usual steps in these matters, and continued my daily routine. On Wednesday, I was in St. Anne Parish, in the north end of São Paulo, kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, when I received a message on my cell phone: it was a niece telling me that a woman, the manager of the São Paulo post office, had called her father – my brother – inquiring after me, because she had located him instead of me in the research she had done, and she was calling to say she had my documents.

"When I had finished my prayers, I called the manager and she explained to me what had led her to give such attention to the case. She said that around two thousand lost documents are left there daily and it is impossible to personally contact everyone. But in my case, when checking the wallet, she saw a photograph of a

lady who really caught her attention. Looking at the birth date on the back of the photo, she thought: 'Perhaps it is his grandmother, certainly not his mother...' She said: 'What I sensed looking at the photo... kindness, serenity and warmth, deeply touched me, because I had just lost my mother recently and I was very shaken, sad, and the picture comforted me. Then I made the resolution: in this case I will call myself.'

"We arranged the day and time to meet at the post office so she could give me the documents. This photo, of course, is closely safeguarded and I always keep it with me."

Speaking with Dona Lucilia

From the city of Pablo Nogués in Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina, Estelvina Acosta writes to tell us



Estelvina Acosta
with a portrait of Dona Lucilia

"When I asked who he was referring to, he told me that every afternoon Dona Lucilia came to talk with him and left him with a great sense of peace."

about an incident that took place with her neighbour, after he had recourse to Dona Lucilia during his terminal illness:

"In November 2014 my neighbour, Pedro Bugeño, was in the final stages of liver cancer, which caused him severe suffering. Someone had given him a prayer-card of Dona Lucilia, encouraging him to ask her for the peace he sought.

"A week before Pedro died, I went to visit him in the evening. When I entered his room, I saw him with his eyes closed, and I thought he was sleeping, so I felt it would be best for me to leave. But when I was about to do so, he said, 'Don't go, I'm awake, I was just talking to this lady. On his bedside table there was the prayer-card of Dona Lucilia he had received.

"When I asked who he was referring to, he told me that every afternoon Dona Lucilia came to talk with him and left him with a great sense of peace. She had prepared him to die well."

An impossible pregnancy

Estelvina also relates to us the case of her friend who, for seven years had been unable to have a child. She heard of the story of Dona Lucilia and had begun to pray before a picture of her she had received, asking her to perform a miracle:

"While she was narrating what had happened, I didn't pay much attention at first since I knew the doctors had told her it was impossible for her to conceive. What a surprise it was for me when, a month later, my friend Silvana told me she was pregnant... Since then, I have become a great devotee of Dona Lucilia, seeing all the miracles she has been working."

Importance of confident prayer

Karla Maia Malveira, from Montes Claros (Brazil), also writes to give her testimony:

"I am from Montes Claros and together with my husband work in the health sector. On May 9 of this year, we were the victims of a robbery at our own clinic. A female employee was overpowered by an armed robber who stole five of the most valuable appliances used in the clinic's treatment.

"The loss of the stolen items could have forced us to close the clinic which had been built up after years of dedicated work, due to the high cost of the equipment which was being used in the majority of the therapies we provided. We endured some very trying times as we lost all our income since the appointments had to be postponed.

"In this great affliction we asked for prayers from the Herald priests and our fellow Herald tertiaries. During this time, we had been invited to São Paulo for the priestly ordination of a Herald deacon whom we esteem very much. Members of our family advised us not to go because of the great difficulties we were facing. However, my husband and I decided to make an act of confidence in Our Lady and we went, also with the hopes that it would help us to take our minds off our problems.

"After attending the ordinations, which were conferred by Bishop Benedito Beni, a Herald providentially presented us with the *Book of Confidence*.

"Upon reading the preface, I could very much identify with the trials that Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, spiritual master of Msgr. João, had undergone. Difficulties that had been promptly remedied in his life by trusting prayer! I saw the preface of the book as a sign! Dr. Plinio, from Heaven, was showing us the way forward in that moment of pain: the way of confidence!

"In view of this, my husband and I decided to confidently entrust our crucial situation to Dr. Plinio and Dona Lucilia.

"And a miracle happened! Upon returning to Montes Claros, contrary to all natural expectations, we learned that the police, after investigating, had located the criminal still in possession of the stolen objects. By the end of the afternoon all the equipment, intact, was back in the clinic!

"Through this account I want to share my eternal gratitude to Dr. Plinio and his mother, Dona Lucilia, who have obtained this immense grace for us, which I see as twofold: they restored to us an important material asset, but, above all, they helped us to understand that confident prayer is never disappointed!

"Dr. Plinio and Dona Lucilia, we beseech you to pray for all of humanity, so lost and unbelieving in the Father's love!"



Aurora Tinoco making her consecration to Our Lady in the Shrine of Sameiro

"One year after the first surgery, on August 27, 2019, my prayers were heard when I heard the doctor say: 'Your blight is gone.'"

"Your blight is gone"

Diagnosed with throat cancer, Aurora Tinoco, from Braga (Portugal), started to pray to Dona Lucilia in order to obtain a cure and, after several operations, her tumour disappeared:

"In mid-2018, doctors diagnosed me with a pyogenic granuloma in the larynx. I had an operation on August 27, 2018. The biopsies were inconclusive, and I was told I would have to go through with yet another operation. I panicked.

"I had been taking antidepressants for a month when I was approached by a friend who began a prayer journey with me.

"I underwent a second surgery on October 15, 2018, St. Teresa's feast day. I was counselled to ask for the intercession of Dona Lucilia. By coincidence, I was sleeping with a magazine that had her picture under my pillow. From that day on, I began to ask for Dona Lucilia's intercession.

In January of this year, I had another operation, because the granuloma appeared again. At the end of this surgery, I asked for my cure. Months later, the doctor verified that the granuloma was diminishing. During these months, I prayed constantly to Dona Lucilia.

"One year after the first surgery, on August 27, 2019, my prayers were heard when I heard the doctor say: 'Your blight is gone.' He himself said that I have always shown myself to be a woman of faith. The proof of that is here!"

* * *

Thus, Dona Lucilia, in a discreet and heartening manner, has favoured countless souls who have had recourse to her, imparting courage and serenity in the face of pain and providing extraordinary physical and spiritual assistance. ✧



United States – From November 24 to 27, a Marian Mission was carried out at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Los Angeles. The daily schedule began with catechesis, the praying of the Rosary and Holy Mass. In following, the Pilgrim Statue was taken to residences, especially those of the sick.



Colombia – The Heralds of the Gospel School was recognized by the Municipal Government of Medellín as one of the best in the city, under the category “Exemplary Management”. The bestowal of the prize took place in a solemn session on November 7, at the Orchid Exhibit gallery of the Botanical Gardens.



Mozambique – The choir and orchestra of the Heralds of the Gospel in Maputo were invited to perform the traditional Christmas Concert held annually at the Nunciature in honour of the diplomatic corps (photo 1). They were also called upon to close the musical presentation offered at the Metropolitan Cathedral to 80 Bishops of southern Africa (photos 2 and 3). Fr. Araújo Mazive, EP, acted as presenter of the event, at the request of the Nunciature.



Fotos: Sebastian Cadavid

El Salvador – Archbishop Santo Gangemi, Apostolic Nuncio, spent a few hours visiting the House of the Heralds in the city of San Salvador on November 8. At his arrival, he was welcomed by the youth that frequent the institution. After a brief conversation with each of them, he celebrated a Holy Mass in the chapel



Fotos: Eric Salas

Spain – After a preparatory course of 10 weeks, 36 persons made their consecration to Our Lady on December 8, following the method of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort. The event was held in the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, in Madrid, during a Mass celebrated by the rector, Fr. José Aurelio Martín Jiménez.



Photos: Sergio Cespedes Rios

Campo Grande – Seven groups were formed for the Mary, Queen of Hearts Shrine in St. John the Baptist Parish in this south-western Brazilian city. The shrines were distributed by Fr. Ricardo Pereira, during the closing Mass of the Marian Mission carried out from November 11 to 17 by the Knights of Mary.



Photos: Eduardo Passero

Recife – On November 17, the Most Rev. Limacêdo Antonio da Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of Olinda and Recife, visited the Heralds' House and administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to eighteen youths. He then blessed the catechetical Nativity scene, visited by thousands from all over Pernambuco State.



Photos: Felipe Cedraz

Salvador – Auxiliary Bishop Estevam dos Santos Silva of the Archdiocese of Salvador celebrated a Eucharist and blessed the catechetical Nativity scene set up in the House of the Heralds in this city on the Brazilian east coast. A dinner followed, prepared by the members of the Institution.



Photos: Augusto Kenji / João Paulo Rodrigues

Bishop Sérgio confirms 156 parishioners

On November 16, the Most Rev. Sérgio Aparecido Colombo, Diocesan Bishop of Bragança Paulista, administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 156 members of Our Lady of Graces Parish, entrusted to the pastoral care of the Heralds of the Gospel. The solemn ceremony took place in the Basilica of Our Lady of Fati-

ma in Caieiras (SP). With words full of fervour, Bishop Sérgio emphasized the importance of holding firm during the times of tribulation which Catholics of all time have undergone and will yet undergo, remaining ever faithful to the Gospel and to the teachings of the Holy Catholic Church. ✧



Photos: João Paulo Rodrigues

Joinville – In his final words, the Bishop of Joinville, Most Rev. Francisco Carlos Bach, described the December 7 concert performed by Herald students as a “true catechism class”, teaching the real meaning of Christmas. The concert was held in the Herald’s House of this city in the southern state of Santa Catarina.



CHURCH AND WORLD EVENTS

Fr. Donizetti Tavares de Lima beatified

During a Mass presided over by Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Fr. Donizetti Tavares de Lima, a dedicated apostle, mystic and wonderworker, was beatified on November 23 in Tambaú, São Paulo. More than twenty thousand faithful participated in the ceremony, also attended by civil authorities and numerous clergy.

Fr. Donizetti was born in Cássia, a Brazilian city in Minas Gerais state, on January 3, 1882, and died

on June 16, 1961 in Tambaú, where he was parish priest of the Church of St. Anthony. Among his many miracles, it is related that, after he authorized a procession to receive an image of Our Lady Aparecida on a day when it was raining heavily in the city, both the image and all the faithful who participated in the entourage remained entirely dry along the route.

Pilgrimage of Uruguayans on feast of Patroness

More than ten thousand faithful gathered in Florida, Uruguay, on November 11, to celebrate the feast of the Virgin of the Thirty-three, the country's Patroness. The Archbishop of Montevideo, Cardinal Daniel Sturla, celebrated the Mass in the national shrine, with the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Martin Krebs, concelebrating. On this occasion, the consecration of Uruguay to Our Lady, originally made in 1988, was renewed.

The statue of Our Lady of the Thirty-three is a beautiful wooden sculpture, of Guarani origin, dating from the 18th century, portraying the Immaculate Conception.

Rare Bible auctioned in Germany

More than one million euros was paid for a precious and rare Bible auctioned in the German city of Hamburg. It is a two-volume edition produced by Johann Fust and Peter Schöffer, successors of Johannes Gutenberg, the famous inventor of the printing press. According to representatives of the Ketterer Kunst auction house, it is "an absolute masterpiece, created while the inventor of the press was still alive."

The Bible was printed in the year 1462 and is surprisingly well-preserved despite being 557 years old. Given the high quality of the impression, this extremely rare parchment edition is considered to match the quality of Gutenberg's own Bibles.

International Catholic Education Congress

On the initiative of the Metropolitan Archbishop, Gil Antonio Moreira, the 1st International Catholic Education Congress promoted by the Archdiocese was held in the city of Juiz de Fora from November 1 to 5. The speakers were Archbishop Gil Moreira, Most Rev. Henrique Soares, Bishop of Palmares, Most Rev. José Francisco Falcão de Barros, Auxiliary Bishop of the Military Ordinariate of Brazil, and other representatives from the academic community.

The keynote speaker was Archbishop Angelo Vincenzo Zani, Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, who came from Rome to attend the event. In an interview with *TV Arautos* [Heralds TV] he underlined the four fundamental points that guided the work done during the Congress: the importance of Christian identity in Catholic educational institutions; the need to act in a spirit of communion, helping students, families and teachers collaborate with one

another; the solid formation and accompaniment that must be provided for educators; and the need to respond to the concrete challenges and problems of today's world.



Above, session with Archbishop Gil presiding; inset, Archbishop Zani with some Herald participants in the congress

Photos: Vagner Martins

American Diocese Restores Historic Cathedral

To celebrate its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Lake Charles, Louisiana, underwent extensive restoration. Built in 1913, it is considered one of the most expressive examples of Lombard Romanesque architecture in the United States, described as such in the National Register of Historical Sites. The work carried out included a careful redecoration of the interior walls and various maintenance projects to mitigate weather damage.

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception dates back to 1869, the year in which St. Francis de Sales Parish was created in Lake Charles. A half-century later, the parish church we see today had already been erected. In 1980, when Pope St.



Conrad Schmitt Studios

The renovated central nave and high altar

John Paul II created the Diocese of Lake Charles, the majestic edifice was raised to the category of cathedral.

Guayaquil Renews Consecration to Sacred Heart of Jesus

On November 21, a solemn ceremony was held at the Metropolitan Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle presided by Most Rev. Ivan Minda, Auxiliary Bishop of Guayaquil, and Most Rev. Aníbal Nieto, Bishop of San Jacinto de Yaguachi, during which the consecration of the Province of Guayas to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was renewed. The event was attended by provincial Governor Pedro Pablo Duart, military and civil authorities, as well as numerous faithful.

On this occasion, the Province was also consecrated to Our Lady of Good Success, whose miraculous image is venerated in the Convent of the Conceptionist Sisters of Quito. For this purpose, a beautiful copy of the statue entered in procession at the beginning of the Mass and was enthroned at the altar.



Photos: Arquidiocese de Guayaquil

Above, entrance of the statue of Our Lady of Good Success; below, Communion procession

STORY FOR CHILDREN... OR FOR ADULTS FULL OF FAITH?

Envy, Love and Devotion to Mary

As a last favour, the young peasant asked his sovereign for a counsel. The king looked him in the eye and slowly replied: "Love is patient and kind..." These words were more than a counsel; they were a true formula for life!

Victor Emanuel Bareiro



In the tranquil countryside surrounding a quaint French village, there were farmer's fields that extended as far as the eye could see. In the middle of them stood two rustic manor houses, somewhat weathered by the passing years. They were the beloved dwelling places of the Beaumont and Fidèle families, whose sons, Benoît, Jean, Michel, Louis and Pierre, were already learning to help their parents a great deal with the work on the land.

In summer, the fields were always tinged with the lovely purple of the lavender which was the main cultivation of the region. Our story, however, takes place in winter, when the fields were thickly cloaked in snow, which afforded the children many innocent hours of play.

At dusk, they would all gather in the Beaumont family home. A generous spread awaited them there, with homemade bread and fresh butter, cheese, sweet biscuits, and hot tea to warm them.

But the good and pious Madame Beaumont never allowed the youngsters to serve themselves without first reading a passage of Scripture to them, and leading a short meditation.

After the repast, she always lit a candle in honour of the Mother of God, and they would gather before a very ancient statue of Our Lady to pray the Rosary. The statue bore no particular invocation, but had a most unique history.

From one carefree day to another, winter seemed to unfold peacefully for the youngsters. Yet, the ills of our fallen nature are never absent... The heart of young Benoît was gradually and subtly being consumed by a hidden blight: the worm of envy. Yes, he was secretly jealous of Jean and little Pierre, for though they were younger

than him, they showed greater skill in building snow figures, and were more agile in sports. He tried not to let his feelings show, but bitter resentment was building up in his soul.

One day, the explosion happened. During an outdoor game, Benoît accused Jean of cheating and suddenly pushed his companion to the ground with astonishing fury. Jean leaped to his feet, and soon the two boys were fighting. The other three were not slow to take sides and enter the fray.

Just then Madame Beaumont's voice was heard in the distance, calling them home, and the boys came to their senses. There was a general feeling of shame for the outbreak, but Benoît felt the greatest remorse. He sensed that his conscience was weighed down with a heavy burden of pride, egoism and lack of love for God and neighbour.

As the boys shuffled inside, still too heated to exchange words or looks, they found the good lady so recollected for the evening prayer that





The other boys also knelt, and together they prayed their evening Rosary with redoubled devotion

she failed to notice anything different in their demeanour. But, perhaps under the inspiration of an Angel, without knowing what had happened, she decided to tell them, then and there, the story of the statue before which they always prayed.

“Over five centuries ago, on a cold winter night, the holy King Louis IX was returning to his castle after a victorious campaign against the enemies of the kingdom.

“As he rode along through these very lands, exhausted after months of travel on horseback, he saw a figure ahead, barely visible in the snowy haze. It was a peasant waiting for him at the roadside, to pay him homage. The young man had skilfully carved a small wooden box to present to the king.

“Drawing near him, the king asked:

“— What are you doing here, my lad, on such a cold night?

“— I await my lord – said the youth.

“And, offering his gift, he added:

“— When I discovered that Your Majesty would be passing close to our humble village, I was eager to pay you a simple gesture of vassalage. So I strove, with the best of my meagre abilities, to make you this little box. It is to thank your Majesty for all you have done for France, and all you will yet accomplish by God’s grace.

“The saintly king listened to the words of his devoted subject with kindly emotion, and then sent one of his squires to fetch a small statue of Our lady enfolded in precious cloths. With a noble and paternal gesture, he placed it in the hands of the awe-struck peasant, who received it with utmost admiration.

“As a final favour, the young man asked his sovereign for a counsel. The king looked him in the eye, and responded by slowly repeating a passage from Holy Scripture:

““Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on

its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. [...] Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things’ (1 Cor 13: 4-5, 7).

“Then he added:

“— There you have, my son, more than a counsel; it is a formula for life! Follow it, and you will keep your innocence. I see that, by Our Lady’s favour, you will yet acquire many other virtues. Your descendants will be many and devout. And I am grateful to the Queen of Heaven and earth for placing you along my path, within the reach of my affection. In her name, I bless you.”

— And that peasant, dear children, – concluded Madame Beaumont – was one of our ancestors. He bequeathed us this beautiful statue, which could well be called Our Lady of Charity.

Finishing her story, Madame Beaumont noted that the atmosphere was especially blessed. Some of the boys had even begun to shed tears during the narration. Without a word, young Benoît went to kneel before the statue, and made a silent prayer to the Blessed Virgin, begging pardon for his wrongdoing. The others knelt too, and together they prayed their evening Rosary with redoubled devotion. At the end of the Rosary, with one voice and one heart they sang a hymn of praise to the Mother of God.

With the change that had been wrought by the value of those contrite prayers, no doubt accompanied by the Angels from Heaven, Benoît approached his friends, one by one, and apologized with sincere humility. Now free from the envy that had been corroding his soul, he thanked his mother for telling that inspiring story and, with a clear conscience, jubilantly invited everyone to the table. ✧



THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY

1. Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

St. Vincent Mary Strambi, Bishop (†1824). Passionist religious who governed with holy wisdom the Diocese of Macerata and Tolentino (Italy). He was exiled for his fidelity to the Roman Pontiff.

2. Sts. Basil the Great (†379 Cappadocia - Turkey) and Gregory Nazianzen (†c. 389 Cappadocia - Turkey), Bishops and Doctors of the Church.

St. Theodore, Bishop (†594). He was persecuted by Kings Chilbert and Gontran. He died in Marseille, France.

3. Most Holy Name of Jesus.

St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, priest (†1871). Founded the Congregation of the Carmelite Sisters of Mary Immaculate in Mannanam, India; collaborated in the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Mother of Carmel.

4. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, widow (†1821). She converted to the Catholic Faith and founded the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph in the United States.

5. Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord (transferred from January 6).

St. Emiliana, virgin (†sixth century). Paternal aunt of St. Gregory the Great; she died in Rome.

6. St. Raphaela Maria of the Sacred Heart, virgin (†1925). Founded the

Congregation of Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; a victim of misunderstandings, she was obliged to renounce the office of superior and spent thirty-two years as a simple nun.

7. St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest (†1275 Barcelona - Spain).

St. Lucian, priest and martyr (†312). He applied himself to the study of Scripture and founded the Biblical School of Antioch. He courageously gave his life as a witness to the true Faith during the persecution of Maximinus Daia.

8. St. George of Choziba, monk and hermit (†c. 614). Native of Cyprus, he went to live as a hermit in Choziba, near Jericho, where he founded a well-known monastery.

9. Blessed Anthony Fatati, Bishop (†1484). He governed the

Diocese of Teramo, Italy, and later that of Ancona.

10. Blessed Anna of the Angels Montegudo, virgin (†1686). Dominican religious born in Peru; she had the gifts of prophecy and counsel.

11. St. Hyginus, Pope (†142). Eighth successor of St. Peter, he fought against the gnostic heresy and for the preservation of the authentic teaching of the Gospel.

12. Baptism of the Lord.

St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, virgin (†1700). Founded the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre-Dame in Montreal, Canada.

13. St. Hilary of Poitiers, Bishop and Doctor of the Church (†367 Poitiers - France).

Blessed Emil Szramek, priest and martyr (†1942). Priest of the Archdiocese of Katowice, Poland, he was deported to the concentration camp of Dachau, Germany, where he died.

14. Blessed Devasahayam (Lazarus) Pillai, father of family and martyr (†1752). He was killed in Aral Kurusady, India, for having converted to the Catholic Faith.

15. Blessed Peter of Castelnau, priest and martyr (†1208). Monk of the Cistercian Abbey of Fontfroide, France, charged by Pope Innocent III with preaching against the Albigenses. He was killed with lances by heretics.

16. St. Joseph Vaz, priest (†1711). Indian



**The Dream of the Saving Raft -
Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin (Italy)**

missionary from the Congregation of the Oratory, in present day Sri Lanka. He translated the Gospel into Tamil and Sinhalese.

- 17. St. Anthony**, abbot (†356 Thebaid - Egypt).

St. Gamelbert, priest (†c. 802). A rich young man, he was ordained priest and gave up all his possessions to found the monastery of Metten, Germany.

- 18. Blessed Maria Teresa Fasce**, virgin (†1947). Abbess of the Augustinian monastery of Cascia, Italy.

19. 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Macarius the Great, priest and abbot (†c. 390). Disciple of St. Anthony, he lived as a hermit in the desert for over fifty years. He gathered several disciples, with whom he founded the Monastery of Scetes in Egypt.

- 20. St. Fabian**, Pope and martyr (†250 Rome).

St. Sebastian, martyr (†fourth century Rome).

Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi, priest (†1964). Cistercian religious born in the Onitsha region of Nigeria. He was baptized and worked for the conversion of pagans. He became a monk in Mount St. Bernard Abbey, near Leicester, England, and died there.

- 21. St. Agnes**, virgin and martyr (†third/fourth century Rome).

Blesseds John Baptist Turpin du Cormier and thirteen companions, priests and martyrs (†1794). Guillotined during the French Revolution in Laval.

- 22. St. Vincent**, deacon and martyr (†304 Valencia - Spain).



Reproduction

St. Raphaela Maria of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

St. Vincent Pallotti, priest (†1850). He founded the Society of Catholic Apostolate. Through his work and writings, he promoted the vocation of all the baptized to generously labour for the Church.

- 23. St. Ildephonsus**, Bishop (†667). Successor of St. Eugenius as head of the Archdiocese of Toledo, Spain; he authored several liturgical books and texts.

- 24. St. Francis de Sales**, Bishop and Doctor of the Church (†1622 Lyon - France).

Blesseds Vincent Lewoniuk and twelve companions, martyrs (†1874). Laity from Pratulin, Poland; they were shot to death by Russian troops of the Czar for refusing to renounce the Catholic Church.

- 25. Conversion of St. Paul**, Apostle.

Blessed Henry Suso, priest (†1366). German Dominican priest; outstanding preacher of the Holy Name of Jesus, who patiently endured many tribulations and illnesses.

26. 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Timothy (Ephesus - Turkey) and **St. Titus** (Crete - Greece), Bishops.

Blessed Michael Kozal, Bishop and martyr (†1943). Auxiliary Bishop of Włocławek, Poland, he died in the concentration camp of Dachau, Germany.

- 27. St. Angela Merici**, virgin (†1540 Brescia - Italy).

St. Vitalian, Pope (†672). He was especially zealous in promoting the evangelization of the Anglos.

- 28. St. Thomas Aquinas**, priest and Doctor of the Church (†1274 Priverno - Italy).

St. Joseph Freinademetz, priest (†1908). Religious of the Society of the Divine Word, sent to the missions in China.

- 29. St. Gildas the Wise**, abbot (†570). He wrote about the destruction of Brittany, lamenting the calamities of his people and rebuking the insanity of princes and clergy. According to tradition, he founded a monastery in Rhuys, on the coast of French Brittany, where he died.

- 30. St. David Galván**, priest and martyr (†1915). During the Mexican persecution, he was arrested and shot to death without a trial, for defending the sanctity of Matrimony.

- 31. St. John Bosco**, priest (†1888 Turin - Italy).

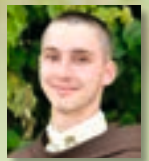
St. Marcella, widow (†410). St. Jerome attests of this Roman lady that, after despising her wealth and honours, she became even nobler through poverty and humility.

Pugnacious Maternal Love



In appearance, the *quero-quero* is a simple and ordinary bird, but seen under the light of faith, it evokes the combativeness of a mother ready to confront every suffering, struggle and danger to defend her beloved child.

Adriel Brandelero



It was a unique scene: a couple of long-legged grey birds walking tranquilly along the straight road, together with their little fledgling. The latter marched in front, as if indicating the way, and the parents followed. At a certain point, the three birds stopped, perhaps to rest a little, and the female bird, approaching her fledgling, covered it with her wings, as a hen does its chicks. The male remained vigilant, observing everything in the vicinity.

The curious trio remained virtually motionless for a few minutes, long enough for the observer to identify them as a family of southern lapwings, known in Brazil as *quero-queros*, the onomatopoeia of their shrill cry.

The entire scene was an invitation to take a closer look at this common and little-appreciated bird, generally only noticed due to the annoyance

caused by its persistent call... I offer the reader the fruit of the brief reflection afforded by this picturesque sight.

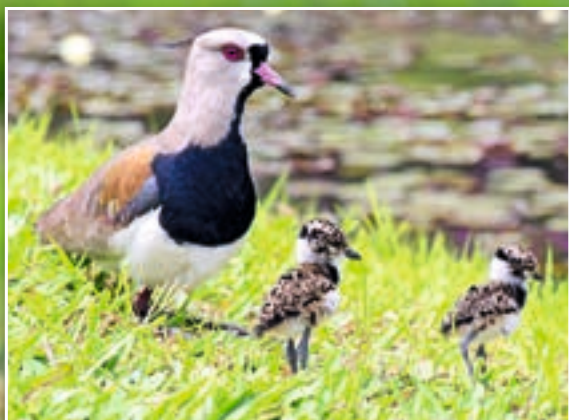
Like all works proceeding from the hands of the Most High, this bird was created in accordance with a divine principle of wisdom, capable, as a symbol, of teaching us a truth that we would otherwise find difficult to understand.

The *quero-quero* bears a slight resemblance to an eagle, but in a bourgeois style, so to speak. It prefers open fields to mountaintops and readily adapts to urban environments, choosing flat and open local habitats, such as parks and gardens. On the other hand, it also has something of the delicacy of the hummingbird, whether in the elegant blending of the tones of its plumage, its straight and pointed beak or the black plume that crowns the back of its head, lending it an un-

mistakable note of charm and gracefulness.

However, these birds are especially characterized by the energetic defence of their nests, threatening and confronting any animal or person who ventures too close. Both the eggs and the nestlings are always under the watchful guard of the mother or father who, at the slightest sign of danger, emit a noisy alarm, which alone is enough to scare off unsuspecting intruders. In the case of an authentic predator, not frightened by the cries, the *quero-queros* drive them off by swooping down in well-aimed attacks.

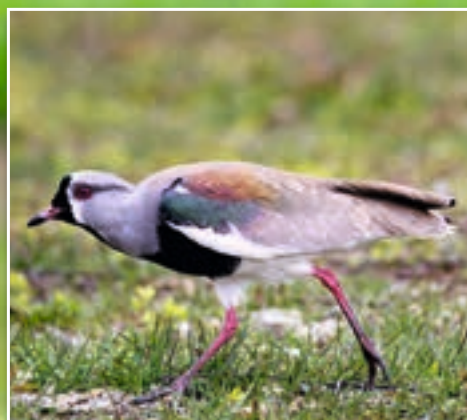
We see, then, that this species lives with its primary attention focussed on its nest and offspring. Thus, it is supremely representative of maternal love, which prompts a mother to undertake every effort for her children, be they many or just one.



RP Ferreira



Eduardo Leite



Feabi



alfnqn



Milton Rodney Buzon



Sandro Salomon

Moreover, this bird has spurs on the edge of its wings, lending it an aggressive air. These are used as weapons in both attack and defence. It is an expressive image that can easily be associated with the maternal capacity to strike and destroy inimical arrogance: “For a father’s blessing strengthens the houses of the children, but a mother’s curse uproots their foundations” (Sir 3:9).

Summing up these aspects, the *quero-quero* appears to us as a symbol of maternal belligerence, of the wrath of a mother, capable of confronting every suffering, struggle and danger to spare her child from being subject to any attack.

Now we know that, due to original sin, “creation was subjected to futility” (Rom 8:20) and anxiously awaits with groaning the manifestation of the children of God. Therefore, our considerations would not be com-

Quero-queros are especially characterized by the energetic defence of their nests, threatening and confronting any invader

plete without imagining how the song of the *quero-quero* would have been in Paradise, and will be like in the Reign of Mary.

Before the fall of Adam, it may have resembled an exhilarating battle hymn, apt to awaken in the soul of those who heard it the noblest élan of courage and heroism...

And when the effects of the Redemption have an even greater impact on created nature, to the point that stones become more beautiful, trees more elegant, animals more graceful, humans more saintly, Angels more sublime and grace more abundant, what will be the role of our simple *quero-quero*?

As its clear, powerful and harmonious song echoes through the air, will it remind people of the torrents of love that the Immaculate Heart of Mary will have poured out upon the world, giving rise to an era of marvels?

In short, perhaps it will symbolize the steadfast and inexhaustible affection of Her who, as the Mother par excellence, is “terrible as an army set in array” (Sgs 6:4) in defence of her Divine Son and of all those whom He Himself entrusted to Her at the foot of the Cross. ✧



The Flight into Egypt, by Fra Angelico
Museum of San Marco, Florence (Italy)

Reproduction

Open to Every Sacrifice

The Blessed Virgin Mary was well aware that her Son would be given up as a Victim in reparation for the sins of humanity, but She knew that the time had not yet come. Upon being informed of the Angel's warning, She transmitted to her spouse some of the highest reasons for this flight, of which he was not cognizant. Recognizing Her as a true teacher

and enchanted to hear her, St. Joseph allowed himself to be instructed, without, however, diminishing his guiding role in the least. This earthly trinity was entirely open to sacrifice, accepting with true docility of heart all sufferings sent them by Providence.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias